



# Moderator's Christmas Letter

.. for members of the Uniting Church in the Northern Synod

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December 2024

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we come to Christmas again, it is good to go to John's Gospel and hear again his story. John tells us that this Word became flesh and came and lived amongst us. In the book of Genesis, we are told that God spoke creation into being, you know . . . *God said, "Let there be light." And there was light.* and so on, right through the whole creation story. God spoke a word and it became real. It is this same powerful word that God spoke in Jesus; and Jesus became real in this world, because God spoke the word. Jesus is the Word spoken by God. That is what John is telling us.

When God speaks, things happen! And the thing that happened at the beginning, according to John, is that God spoke Jesus into existence. This is a high poetry sort of story-telling that John is sharing with us. It stretches our thinking and makes us wonder about the identity of Jesus. Who was he? It's a good way to think about the story of Jesus and to prepare for the celebration of Jesus' birth on earth.

Christmas is a time of family gatherings and celebrations; it's a time of holidays and gifts; and above all else, it's a time to remember that God came amongst us as Jesus of Nazareth in a way that changed the world. It is beautiful poetry. It is wonderful theology.

## **No Room at the Inn**

Many years ago, I heard a little story about a Christmas play at a school.

They chose a likeable boy of seven years old to play the role of the innkeeper at Bethlehem. Generally this young fella had no problem learning his lines, but for some reason he had difficulty with the part where he had to turn away Mary and Joseph and say, "There is no room at the inn."

He practiced a lot and he knew his lines well by the end of the rehearsal period. Then came the big night with his proud mum and dad looking on from the first row. At the right time he boomed out "There is no room at the inn!" with great authority.

His parents heaved a silent sigh of relief.

But then the young fella couldn't resist adding, "But come in anyway, and have some milk and cookies!"

That wasn't how the play was supposed to turn out.

But that's what happens when we let Jesus into our hearts. That little boy had let Jesus into his heart. It's not just the baby of Bethlehem that makes a difference, but it's our response to this baby who became a man. How we respond to Jesus, that is what makes a difference in the world. Are we willing

to step out of the crowd and to break the rules; to change the script; to live with compassion? Are we willing to invite them in for milk and cookies anyway? Or give some food and drink on the streets of Darwin when we are humbugged?

## A Tough Year

A friend of ours said to me this week, that although it's been a tough year in a lot of ways, it's been her best year ever, because of the new baby in her family. I thought about that.

And Margie said to me, "Of course. The baby just gives love and acceptance. The baby does not have any memory of past failures and hurts. The baby just affirms and loves."

Yeah! True aye?

As we walked in the Darwin Christmas Pageant the other week, with people from Darwin Memorial Uniting Church, we had a manger on wheels with a baby doll as baby Jesus. Lots and lots of people, adults and children, cried out in delight and pointed to the baby. And it occurred to me why we celebrate the baby Jesus. Because babies bring joy into our lives. The way that God loves us is the same: No thought is given to past failures and hurts. God loves and affirms us just as we are; total acceptance.

This year as we think about the birth of Jesus, we proclaim that Salvation has come; the Messiah has come; New Life has come; and Peace has come, because the Word of God has come amongst us and lived as one of us.

The law indeed was given through Moses, but the grace and truth of God became real amongst us in the baby of Bethlehem. That baby grew up and lived amongst humanity as the man Jesus and continues to exist as the eternal Word of God, the Christ who is in our hearts, our minds and our souls. We are not alone. God is with us in the good times and in the bad times.

Happy Christmas everybody. Now, let's get out there and share our milk and cookies.

Grace and Peace.  
The best is yet to come,



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*Living on Larrakia land*  
*Born on Jaitmatang land*  
*Raised on Jaitmatang, Woiworunn, Maarku and Larrakia land*



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