



The Naming & Circumcision of Jesus

1 January 2023

Welcome to St Philip's

We acknowledge the Ngambri and Ngunnawal people, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we worship, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present and emerging. We extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who worship with us.

St Philip's COVIDSafe Plan We are asking folk not attend church if they feel unwell, to be aware of their hand hygiene and to be mindful of social distance. Thank you. Masks are available for those who wish to wear one.

Pew sheet & Order of Service: the full Pew sheet with more news and reflections is available on our website. The QR code in the pews will direct you to the current edition, please use your phone/tablet and follow along. Service cards, Pew Bibles and Prayer Books are also available.

Offertory: at the offertory when our gifts are brought forward, there is an opportunity for you to make your contribution. A self-serve Eftpos machine is available in the foyer, you can use it before or after the service. St Philip's EFT details are also available if you would like to make a direct transfer: 702-389 05202512. Giving cards are in the foyer if you wish to place something in the offertory bag after giving electronically.

Communion: if you are baptised you are welcome to receive communion. If you would like to receive a blessing please cross your hands on your chest as you come forward.

If you'd like to volunteer as a reader, sidesperson, welcomer or another role on the Roster, then please email rosters@stphilipsconnor.org.au

From the Rector

Dear Friends

I hope that you enjoyed your Christmas celebrations and they were a blessing for you whatever you did! I am aware of some who spent the day in isolation with COVID, a reflection of the way things are at present as we live with infection circulating in our community. Perhaps a quiet day at home with a good book for some is the best celebration. As I reflected on in my Advent 4 sermon

if Christmas is simply about family get-togethers then we've missed the point – as joyful as they are for many.

Thank you to those of you who assisted in any way with our Christmas celebrations here at St Philip's, I felt a sense of a return to the days before the Pandemic. Thank you to those of you who sent greetings and gifts to Susan and I, we appreciate it very much.

It is my hope that we are approaching the New Year hopefully, confidently, expectantly. I was reading an interview recently with Nick Cave, the Australian singer and song writer and former chorister at Wangaratta Cathedral. He questions the idea of 'spirituality' preferring religion. *He says: Religion is spirituality with rigour, it makes demands on us, for me it involves wrestling with the idea of faith – that seam of doubt that runs through most credible religions.* The interviewer asks if he is a conservative at heart. Traditionalist, if you prefer that word. *I'm not really drawn to esoteric ideas of spirituality. I'm drawn to traditional Christian ideas. I'm particularly fascinated by the Bible and in particular the life of Christ, it has been a powerful influence on work one way or another from the start.* (See reflections below for some more on this interview)

It's not often that I'm encouraged by a rock star! Happy New Year to you all...

Martin

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Eucharist for The Naming & Circumcision of Jesus

Setting: Christ Church Mass, Philip Matthias 1954-

Introit hymn 297 (TiS)

Come, your hearts and voices raising,
Christ the Lord with gladness praising;
Loudly sing His love amazing,
Christian people, one and all.

See how God, for us providing,
Gave His Son and life abiding;
He our pilgrim steps is guiding
From earth's pain to heavenly joy.

Christ, from heaven to us descending
And in love our race befriending,
In our need His help extending,
Saved us from the cunning Foe.

Jacob's Star in all its splendour
shines with comfort sweet and tender,
Forcing Satan to surrender,
Breaking all the powers of hell.

From sin's bondage that possessed us,
From the prison that oppressed us,
From the sorrow that distressed us,
We, the captives, now are free.

Oh, the joy beyond expressing
When by faith we grasp this blessing
And with thanks we come confessing,
you O Jesus as our Lord.

Gracious Child, in mercy hear us,
From Thy lowly manger cheer us,
Gently lead us and be near us
Till we join the angel choir.

Paul Gerhardt 1607-76

Entrance antiphon

God spoke of old by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a

Son.

Hebrews 1:1-2

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, ✕ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with you all.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Hear the words of the angel to Joseph:

'You shall call his name Jesus,
for he will save his people from their sins.'

Therefore let us seek the forgiveness of God
through Jesus the Saviour of the world.

**Merciful God, our maker and our judge,
we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,
and in what we have failed to do:
we have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves;
we repent, and are sorry for all our sins.
Father, forgive us.
Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Almighty God, who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith: pardon you ✕ and set
you free from all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life, through
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Kyrie 757(a) (TiS)

**Lord, have mercy
Christ, have mercy
Lord, have mercy**

Gloria 757(b) (TiS)

**Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to God's people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
 we worship you, we give you thanks,
 we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
 Lord God, Lamb of God,
 you take away the sin of the world:
 have mercy on us;
 you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
 receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High
 Jesus Christ,
 with the Holy Spirit,
 in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

Prayer of the day

Let us pray:
God our Father,
You gave to your incarnate Son the name of Jesus
to be a sign of our salvation:
may every tongue confess
that he, who for our sake became obedient to the law,
 is both Lord and Christ,
to your eternal glory;
for he now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Today's readings

A reading from the book of Numbers (6:22-27)

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ²³Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the Israelites: You shall say to them,
²⁴ The Lord bless you and keep you;
²⁵ the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;
²⁶ the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.
²⁷ So they shall put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.

Psalm 8

O Lord our Governor:
how glorious is your name in all the earth!

**Your majesty above the heavens is yet recounted:
by the mouths of babes and sucklings.**

You have founded a strong defence against your adversaries:
to quell the enemy and the avenger.

**When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers:
the moon and the stars which you have set in order,**

What are we, that you should be mindful of us:
what are we, that you should care for us?

**Yet you have made us little less than gods:
and have crowned us with glory and honour.**

You have given us dominion over your handiwork:
and have put all things in subjection beneath our feet,

**All sheep and oxen :
and all the creatures of the field,**

The birds of the air and the fish of the sea:
and everything that moves in the pathways of the great waters.

**O Lord our Governor:
how glorious is your name in all the earth!**

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Galatians (4:4-7)

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. ⁶And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' ⁷So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

Gradual hymn 319 (TiS)

Child in the manger,
infant of Mary;
outcast and stranger,
Lord of all;
Child who inherits
all our transgressions,
all our demerits

on Him fall.

Once the most holy
Child of salvation
gently and lowly
lived below;
now as our glorious
mighty Redeemer,
see Him victorious
o'er each foe.

Prophets foretold Him,
infant of wonder;
angels behold Him
on His throne;
worthy our Savior
of all our praises;
happy forever
are His own.

Mary Macdonald 1789-1872

Alleluia,

Alleluia!

God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'

Galatians 4:6

Alleluia!

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke (2:15-21)

Glory to you Lord Jesus Christ.

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.'¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.¹⁸ But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.¹⁹ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

²¹ After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

For the gospel of the Lord,

praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

The Sermon

The Nicene Creed

Let us affirm the faith of the church

We believe in one God,

**the Father, the almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

**the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,**

**was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he
suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge
the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son
who with the Father and the Son
is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the
forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
* and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Prayers of the people

In our prayers we remember all in need, particularly: Ben, Hugh, Sarah, David, Otto, Bob, Noel, Deborah, Sue, Molly, Katherine, David & Margot, those unable to gather with us, those in hospital or residential care.

We pray for our international mission, the Vanuatu Integrated Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Project. We pray especially:

- for the small staff of the Anglican Church of Melanesia and their many volunteers working on this project;
- for the communities whose health will benefit from the project;
- that we will be generous in supporting this important work of our sister Anglican Church in Vanuatu.
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We commend to God the recently departed, those whose anniversaries fall at this time, the victims of war, disaster, pandemic and tragedy all whose memories are dear to us, and those who have no one to remember them.

Here is our prayer for the parish for use in your daily prayers for the coming month:

Gracious God, you call us to follow our Patron Philip

encouraging others to 'Come and See.'

Raise up Churchwardens and Councillors from among us

to faithfully serve your people and administer your community.

We pray in the name of the one

who reconciles to you and to one another,

Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The greeting of peace

Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace
to all in whom he delights.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Luke 2:14

Offertory hymn 316 (TiS)

O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see you lie!
Above your deep and dreamless sleep

the silent stars go by:
yet, in your dark streets shining
the everlasting light,
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in you tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary;
and, gathered all above,
while mortals sleep the angels keep
their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King,
and peace to all on earth.

How silently, how silently
the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming;
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

O holy child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin and enter in,
be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
their great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Emmanuel.

Philips Brooks 1835-93

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer,
which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become the bread of life.

Blessed be God for ever.

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit
of the vine and work of human hands.
It will become our spiritual drink.

Blessed be God for ever.

Jesus, true joy of loving hearts,
we turn unfilled to you again.
Come and be known to us in the breaking of the bread.

Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere,
mighty creator, ever-living God,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We praise you that on the eighth day
he was circumcised in obedience to the law of Moses,

that he might fulfil the law and reveal to us your grace and truth.

For here is foreshadowed
his perfect self-offering upon the cross,
the shedding of his blood to set us free from sin and death.

In baptism we die with him and are raised in him,
that we might walk in newness of life,
and proclaim the wonders of his saving name.

Therefore with angels and archangels
and with all the company of heaven
we proclaim your great and glorious name
for ever praising you and singing:

Sanctus & Benedictus 757(c&d) (TiS)

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth and full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Merciful God, we thank you
for these gifts of your creation,
this bread and wine,
and we pray that by your word and Holy Spirit,
we who eat and drink them
may be partakers of Christ's body and blood.

On the night he was betrayed Jesus took bread;
and when he had given you thanks
he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying,
'Take, eat. This is my body given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup,
and again giving you thanks
he gave it to his disciples, saying,
'Drink from this all of you.
This is my blood of the new covenant
shed for you and for many
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do, this, as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.'

Therefore we do as our Saviour has commanded:
Proclaiming his offering of himself
made once for all upon the cross,
his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension,
and looking for his coming again,
we celebrate with this bread and this cup,
his one perfect and sufficient sacrifice
for the sins of the whole world.

Great is the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.**

Renew us by your Holy Spirit,

unite us in the body of your Son,
and bring us with all your people
into the joy of your eternal kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
with whom and in whom,
in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
we worship you, Father,
in songs of never-ending praise:
Blessing and honour and glory and power
are yours for ever and ever. Amen.

As our Saviour Christ has taught us, we are confident to pray,

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

The breaking of bread and communion

As this broken bread was once many grains, which have been gathered together and made one bread:

so may your Church be gathered from
the ends of the earth into your kingdom.

Agnus Dei 757(f) (TiS)

Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.
Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.
Jesus, redeemer of the world, grant us your peace.

The Gifts of God for the People of God. Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

Communion antiphon

What are we, that you should be mindful of us:
what are we, that you should care for us?

Psalm 8

The sending out of God's people

Let us pray:

Eternal God,
whose incarnate Son was given the Name of Saviour:
grant that we who have shared
in this sacrament of our salvation
may live out our years in the power
of the Name above all other names,
Most loving God, **you send us into the world you love. Give us grace to go thankfully and**
with courage in the power of your Spirit.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

The love of the Lord Jesus draw you to himself,

the power of the Lord Jesus strengthen you in his service,
the joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts;
and the blessing of God almighty ✠ the Father, the Son,
and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Go in the peace of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

Recessional hymn

Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:
Lord of the word, receive Your people's praise.

Lord, for our land in this our generation,
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care:
for young and old, for commonwealth and nation,
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

Lord, for our world when we disown and doubt him,
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain,
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him:
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

Lord for ourselves; in living power remake us -
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,
past put behind us, for the future take us:
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

Timothy Dudley-Smith 1926-

Reflections

The following is an interview between Seán O'Hagan and Nick Cave, an excerpt from the book *Faith, Hope and Carnage*, a collection of conversations between the two.

I know you don't like looking back, but I'm going to throw some of your old quotes at you.

Really? Must you?

Don't worry, they're not from interviews. I was re-reading your lecture, "The Secret Life of the Love Song," from 1998. You wrote, "the actualising of God through the love song remains my prime motivation as an artist." Is that still the case?

Yes, I suppose so. As I've said, the songs I write these days tend to be religious songs in the very broadest sense. They behave as though God exists. They are essentially making a case for belief itself, even though they are at times ambivalent and inconsistent about the existence of God. I guess ultimately what I'm trying to do is to put forward the idea that being alive is of some consequence. That we are of some spiritual value.

I read that interview you sent me, the one with the writer Marilynne Robinson. It's an amazing interview. She's putting forward an idea of religion as essentially reflective and contemplative, that contemplation of the divine is a big part of what it is to be religious. That really chimed with me. Religion is asking the question: "What if?" And to me, that question is also, in its way, a completely adequate answer. Do you understand what I mean?

I think so: that it may be enough for us to just contemplate the possibility of God?

Yes. That is what my songs have asked for some time: "What if?" A question unencumbered by an answer. Having said that, religion is of little value if it doesn't serve some larger function—the welfare of others.

Yes, of course. But just to stay with the “what if” question, does it not in itself leave room for doubt as well as wonder?

Yes. Doubt and wonder. Well put.

That’s quite a dynamic, though—almost contradictory.

Well, I think the only way I can fully give myself over to the idea of God is to have the room to question. To me, the great gift of God is that He provides us with the space to doubt. For me at least, doubt becomes the energy of belief.

That’s fair enough, I guess, but it’s starting from the premise that God exists and allows us to doubt, which an atheist would argue is essentially flawed logic. What would you say to that?

Well, Seán, since when has belief in God had anything to do with logic? For me, personally, it is the unreasonableness of the notion, its counterfactual aspect that makes the experience of belief compelling. I find that leaning into these intimations of the divine, that for me do exist, as subtle, softly spoken and momentary as they may be, expands my relationship with the world—especially creatively. Why would I deny myself something that is clearly beneficial because it doesn’t make sense? That in itself would be illogical.

That is certainly an interesting way of looking at things—the rationality of the irrational. Okay, so here’s another quote of yours: “Ultimately the love song exists for me to fill the silence between ourselves and God, to decrease the distance between the temporal and the divine.”

It’s strange to hear these quotes. I don’t even know where that essay came from, but I think that is quite aptly put. Songs have a particular power. I don’t really know of any other form of expression that has that sense of ascension that can transmit or evoke a sense of rising awe—especially in terms of the collective power of a concert.

I do wonder how lasting that is, though. Or how transformative it really is. It’s kind of hard to measure that.

Well, perhaps “transformation” as a word is a little problematic, because transformation essentially means a sudden marked change, and one that has a feeling of permanence. That is not necessarily the effect that music has. Rather, it has the ability to lead us, if only temporarily, into a sacred realm. Music plays into the yearning many of us instinctively have—you know, the God-shaped hole. It is the art form that can most effectively fill that hole, because it makes us feel less alone, existentially. It makes us feel spiritually connected. Some music can even lead us to a place where a fundamental spiritual shift of consciousness can happen. At best, it can conjure a sacred space.

You actually touched on that idea of spiritual ascension in “The Secret Life of the Love Song” when you said, “The love song is the sound of our endeavors to become Godlike, to rise up and above the earthbound and the mediocre.”

Yes, well, I am not sure about that now. I think, these days, I would be more considerate towards the mediocre in us all. Well, maybe not the mediocre, but our ordinariness, our sameness. It’s interesting that one of the most common concerns from people who write in to The Red Hand Files is a feeling of meaninglessness or emptiness. Also a deep bitterness and cynicism towards the world, that the world and humanity is essentially s***. And a loneliness, too. I guess what I try to do through the songs and through The Red Hand Files is to make the case that our lives are more valuable than perhaps we sometimes think them to be, or, indeed, than we are told they are. That our lives are, in fact, of enormous consequence, and that our actions reverberate in ways we hardly know.

Well, to be fair, many atheists would agree with that.

I’m sure you’re right. Still, there seems to be a growing current of thought that tends towards the opposing view, a sort of cynicism and distrust of our very selves, a hatred of who we are, or, more accurately, a rejection of the innate wonder of our presence. I see this as a sort of affliction that is, in part, to do with the increasingly secular nature of our society. There’s an attempt to find meaning in places where it is ultimately unsustainable—in politics, identity and so on.

But, hang on, are you saying atheism—or secularism—is an affliction? And that you equate it with cynicism? I mean, come on, non-believers can have a sense of wonder at the world—with nature, the universe, with the wonders of science, philosophy and even the everyday.

No, I am not saying secularism is an affliction in itself. I just don't think it has done a very good job of addressing the questions that religion is well practiced at answering. Religion, at its best, can serve as a kind of shepherding force that holds communities together—it is there, within a community, that people feel more attached to each other and the world. It's where they find a deeper meaning.

What kinds of questions, in particular, would you say religion is more adept at answering?

It deals with the necessity for forgiveness, for example, and mercy, whereas I don't think secularism has found the language to address these matters. The upshot of that is a kind of callousness towards humanity in general, or so it seems to me. And I think callousness comes out of a feeling of aloneness, people feeling adrift or separated from the world. In a way, they look for religion—and meaning—elsewhere. And increasingly they are finding it in tribalism and the politics of division.

The decline of organized religion may be one reason for that, but there are others, of course, social and political.

Well, whatever you think about the decline of organized religion—and I do accept that religion has a lot to answer for—it took with it a regard for the sacredness of things, for the value of humanity, in and of itself. This regard is rooted in a humility towards one's place within the world—an understanding of our flawed nature. We are losing that understanding, as far as I can see, and it's often being replaced by self-righteousness and hostility.

That would seem to be the case. In another lecture from 1996, "The Flesh Made Word," you talked about the influence of the Old Testament on your earlier songs and how, through that, your songwriting "blossomed into a nasty new energy."

I think that's pretty understandable, given that the Old Testament is full of the most wonderful and violently outrageous stuff—powerful, at least it was for a young man of my apocalyptic tastes! Whereas in the New Testament, particularly the Gospels, the language is softer, but more penetrating.

When you started to delve into the New Testament, how influential was that on the way you wrote songs? I'm thinking particularly of The Boatman's Call (in 1997), in which there was a definite change of tone and, indeed, a different kind of song.

I think so, yes. When I reacquainted myself with the Gospels, in my thirties, I found the language so beautiful, it touched a need in me. It seeped into everything, especially my songs. There is nothing quite like the Gospels in literature—and the great human drama at its centre, the story of Jesus.

I have always liked the passage where Jesus loses it and clears the hustlers and money-lenders out of the temple.

Yeah, well, you would!

Jesus the anti-capitalist! You also wrote about the particular resonance of the line, "the kingdom is inside you and outside you," which suggests that it is also possible to have a private and unmediated relationship with the divine.

Yes. That line gave me a sense that there was some personal agency around the idea of belief, rather than needing the church to deliver it to you. I liked that idea, because on a personal level, at that time, organized religion just didn't do it for me. Even when I was a heroin addict, I was in and out of church, trying to find some relationship with the whole thing. That line helped me form my own relationship with God or belief, something more flexible, and not feel that I had to go somewhere else to find it.

A song I love from that period is "Brompton Oratory." How did it come about?

Well, it is exactly as it says. I had broken up with Polly Harvey, and I was distraught, to say the least. The song is an explicit description of my situation—sitting in the Brompton Oratory in London, listening to the Gospel—

The reading is from Luke 24

Where Christ returns to His loved ones

I look at the stone apostles

Think that it's alright for some

—and just writing down the song as it happened. But it remained open-ended for a while. I couldn't work out how to finish it, so it just sort of hung around, part-written. Then a couple of months later, I was walking past the massive Pentecostal Church in Notting Hill and these lines sort of dropped out of the sky:

*No God up in the sky
No devil beneath the sea
Could do the job that you did
Of bringing me to my knees*

I was very pleased with that. Suddenly I had an ending to the song! Sometimes songs feel like little triumphs over your misfortunes. Little acts of revenge! I wrote the music to it in a flat in Basing Street, off the Portobello Road, on a tiny Casio synth I had bought down the market. The drumbeat is the “rock” setting on the Casio slowed right down. I have nothing but affection for that song. I’m glad you like it.

*Well, it has that collision of the sacred and profane that is pure Nick Cave. As in the lines:
A beauty impossible to endure
The blood imparted in little sips
The smell of you still on my hands
As I bring the cup up to my lips*

Yes, that’s a wicked little landmine hidden in the song. It has a lovely visceral charge! I love the little rising internal rhyme of “cup” and “up.” It’s fun to sing.

Have you heard Mark Lanegan’s version?

Of course! It is amazing—all those seasick horns, and his beautiful, ragged voice. It sounds like a New Orleans funeral march or something. It sounds like an act of love. He made that song his own.

Given the circumstances of your life at that time, would you say there was a desperation in your religious seeking back then?

I don’t know about that, but I guess they were desperate times. My beliefs, such as they were, were very much a solitary concern. I had plenty of people to take drugs with, but very few who would accompany me into a church. It wasn’t really desperation, though, but it was more than “vague spiritual beliefs.” Ever heard of that term?

No, where does it come from?

When I went to my first rehab, they presented me with a list to fill in: twenty things that were indicators of whether I was a drug addict/alcoholic or not. One of them was “Vague spiritual beliefs.” I always thought that was kind of funny—you know, you’re damned if you do, and you’re damned if you don’t—it suggested that my going to church was just a symptom of my sickness. Maybe they were right.

You have lived your life between extremes—heroin and God.

I guess. Yes. I don’t know. Maybe.

And not one after the other—it’s revealing somehow that you were exploring the divine even when you were using.

I guess that’s true. But it could be that using heroin and the need for a sacred dimension to life were similar pursuits, in that they were attempts, at that time, to remedy the same condition.

Which was?

A kind of emptiness, I guess, and a hunger.

A hunger for what?

More.

A reflection on today's festival by The Rev'd Paul White, Team Rector of Rye Team Ministry, in the County of East Sussex, UK in the Diocese of Chichester.

The *circumcision* of Jesus reminds us that the story of God's relationship with his people does not start with Jesus but actually reaches all the way back to the beginning of the Old Testament. Jesus was a Jewish baby and he was circumcised on the eighth day following his birth for the same reason that Jewish babies still are today and that is because of the covenant between God and Abraham established in Genesis 17.

"This is my covenant, which you shall keep between me and you and your offspring after you. Every male among you shall be circumcised...Throughout your generations every male among you shall be circumcised when he is eight days old."

So Jesus stands firmly in the tradition and in the line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and because Jesus did, so do we, which means that we know that whatever 2023 brings for us we have deep roots that stretch back, literally, for millennia and we cannot easily be shaken.

However, although we have that continuity we should not forget that Jesus himself represented considerable change and challenge – the very fact that the story of Jesus is told in the New Testament tells us that in Jesus God was doing something he had not done previously – he was reaching out to his people no longer through the law or the prophets but through the person of his Son. Jesus reinterpreted both the law and the prophets through his own words and actions – he didn't dispense with the Old Testament or even the covenant between Abraham and God but he *fulfilled* it.

You may be interested to know that the early church had a very mixed understanding of whether Christians, particularly gentile converts to Christianity, were also required to be circumcised and this led to some very colourful language from St Paul, which you can look up for yourself. But some of you may be relieved to know that the Council at Jerusalem, which is to be found at Acts 15, decided that gentiles did not need to be *unsettled* by such requirements.

The person of Jesus, the person of whom we are part of as members of the church and as we share communion therefore represents both continuity with the old and substantial discontinuity and change. Therefore we can face change knowing that God can and does use change in creative and amazing ways – without change there would be no newness and without change there would have been no room for Jesus in the story of God's relationship with his people.

And so, as we face both the excitement and the uncertainty of a new year we have both the stability of all that has gone before but we also know that God works out his purposes for us through doing new things – and if that is sometimes hard to see at the time we should remember both the distance and the closeness between the events of Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

Finally, we turn our thoughts to the fact that Mary and Joseph did not just circumcise Jesus on the eighth day but they also gave him the name which the Angel Gabriel commanded that they should give him – the name of Jesus.

"Jesus", a shortened form of "Joshua", or "Yeshua" in Hebrew, was a common name for pious Jews to give their sons. The meaning of names was important, and Yeshua meant "Yahweh, God, is salvation." Matthew explains that this child is named Jesus because he will save his people from their sins (Matthew 1.21). This extension of the meaning of Yeshua from "God is salvation" hints at this baby's divinity.

The same applies in Luke's Gospel, although the angel's explanation to Mary is slightly different: this child will be great, the Son of the Most High, and will inherit David's throne and reign over the house of Jacob for ever (Luke 1.32-33). This recalls Isaiah's words about a child's being born who will inherit David's throne for ever, being called "Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9.6).

But none of that prophetic weight of meaning would be obvious to look at this child, born in a stable in a strange town, looking and crying like any other eight-day-old baby, with a name that did nothing to draw attention to his future. Only Mary and Joseph knew the particular reason for it, and, unlike the naming of John, no one thought it odd.

Luke is setting up the story of Jesus's ministry by telling us that, although a few people had special insight into who Jesus was, most people thought he was an ordinary good Jewish boy. As the Gospel unfolds, people will have to respond to Jesus's actions and his words in order to understand that he is indeed God's salvation living among them. And those who do come to understanding and make the confession that this Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, have the joy of calling his father our father, "Abba".

God's name imparts God's blessing. We who bear the name of Jesus today — Jesus now revealed to be the Son of God and bearing the Messianic name "Christ" — are blessed in him. That is cause for celebration on this feast of the Naming of Jesus, when we begin a new calendar year of our Lord.

Whatever the new year brings we know this for certain: Jesus is God's salvation for us, his is the name above all names and he will be with us whatever comes throughout the whole of year even, I believe, all the way to our next celebration of Christmas, whatever the Mayan calendar may say.

God Bless and Have a great New Year.

This week @ St Philip's

Today *The Naming & Circumcision of Jesus*
 9am **Sung Eucharist with hymns**

Tuesday 3 January *Tuesday in the Christmas Season*
 10am **Eucharist** – Sir Leslie Morshead Manor - *Subject to restrictions*

Thursday 5 January *Thursday in the Christmas Season*
 10am **Eucharist**

Sunday 8 January *The Epiphany of our Lord*
 8am **Eucharist**
 10am **Sung Eucharist with hymns**

Readings: Isaiah 60:1-6, Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14, Ephesians 3:1-12, Matthew 2:1-12

Rosters

<u>December</u>		1-Jan-23		8-Jan-23		15-Jan-23
Sunday of Month		1st		2nd		3rd
Liturgical Season		Second Sunday after Christmas		Baptism of The Lord (First Sunday after the Epiphany)		Second Sunday after the Epiphany
Flowers		Flower team		Flower team		Flower Team
Celebrant		<i>n/a</i>		Rev'd Canon Scott		Rev'd Martin
Preacher (if different to Celebrant)						
Sidespeople				Alison & Alistair		Rhonda & Susan
Liturgical Assistant				Ellie P		Rev'd Martin
1st Bible reader - OT				Alison D		Julianne S
2nd Bible reader - NT				Alistair D		Rebecca P
Celebrant		9am		Rev'd Martin		Rev'd Martin
Preacher (if different to Celebrant)				Rev'd Canon Scott		
Sidespeople & Welcomer				Helen & Hardy		Janene B & Richard G
Liturgical Assistant				Rebecca K		Rev'd Martin
Musician(s) & Singers/Soloist				Colin F		Colin F
1st Bible reader - OT				Ashton R		Brian M
2nd Bible reader - NT				Jos G		Kerry-Anne C
Morning Tea				self serve		self serve
Additional details/notes				<i>School Holidays</i>		<i>School Holidays</i>

For your Diary

Saturday 14 January	Pandora's reopens
Wednesday 22 February	Ash Wednesday
Sunday 26 February	Parish AGM
Friday 7 April	Good Friday
Sunday 9 April	Easter Day
Sunday 7 May	SS Philip & James
Fri 8 - Sun 10 Sept	Diocesan Synod, Canberra GS

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