

**Being the Church at Brentwood**  
**Emmanuel - God /s With Us**

**Matthew 1:18-14**  
**(Hymns – 154, 153)**

**December 25, 2011 – Christmas Day with Burnaby Taiwanese**

For Matthew, names are important.

In his account of the birth of Jesus Christ,  
two names are highlighted:  
Jesus – the one who saves us from our sins, and  
Emmanuel – the one in whom God is with us.

So, Christmas is about God coming to be with us  
in order to rescue and deliver us from our sins,  
from those activities that separate us from God.  
In Jesus Christ we are reconciled to God.  
We are restored and freed to be the blessings  
God created us to be.

God is with us to free us from sin,  
to free us to flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ.

That is the primary gift of Christmas.  
All other gifts, for Christians at least,  
represent and reflect that gift of grace.

The gifts we have placed around the Mitten Tree this year  
for the children being cared for at Dixon House;  
the gifts we opened last night or this morning  
in our homes;  
the gifts we will take to family and friends this afternoon or evening;  
the gifts we give for the support of our congregations;  
the gifts we give to support agencies serving the most needy in our communities;  
all these gifts flow from the Love that came to be with us  
that first Christmas night so long ago.

In the midst of all the fuss and frenzy of our modern Christmas,  
it is good to take time to worship together here in our sanctuary,  
in this space where God is with us in Jesus Christ  
through the workings of the Holy Spirit  
in an especially powerful way.

As we sing and pray and consider Scripture and give,  
God meets us afresh  
with renewed tenderness and love,  
touching our lives at ever deeper levels  
with the power of his grace and mercy.

In these times of worship and learning and fellowship,  
we remember the ways in which the Love of God came to be with us.  
He came in Jesus Christ as a loving friend,  
as a courageous teacher of a different way of living,  
as a self-giving saviour who freed us from all of our fears.

God came to be with us in the person of Jesus Christ  
to re-connect us with himself.  
Out of his deep love for us,  
he reconciled us to himself.

This is the true source of a flourishing life for human beings.

So, what are we going to do in 2012 with gift of flourishing?  
What will the love of God revealed at Christmas inspire in you this coming year?

Imagine with me what next week might be like  
if we all took the gift of God's Love and passed it on to others.

We would celebrate the power of that love in everything we did next week.  
We would generate new ways of caring for each other.  
We would forgive more readily.  
We would find the courage to really care for others.  
We would connect with others with humour and joy.  
We would respect ourselves and others as beloved friends of God.  
We would witness to the fact the God *is* with us  
in everything we did and said.

And we would walk this way not just next week,  
but the week after that, and the one after that,  
and so on throughout 2012.

People would see and hear and feel that God is with us  
by the way we are with them.

Amen

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