Here's the best way to say it: the Christmas story reminds us that hope will never be found if we look horizontally. True hope is found only when we look for it vertically. It's not enough to say that God gives us hope. What the Christmas story declares to us is that God *is* hope. And that hope is attached to two glorious aspects of his character. First, God is *perfectly holy* in every way. It is the holiness of God that causes him to be angrily intolerant of sin. Now, I want you to think about God's anger. You could argue that God's anger is the hope of the universe. If God weren't angry about sin, there would have been no cross and no hope of salvation for sinners. You would not want to live in a world where the one ruling the world was incapable of righteous anger. God's anger with sin is a product of his holiness.

But there is more. God is not just perfectly holy, he is also *bountifully loving*. Because he is bountiful in love, God's anger with sin didn't cause him to wipe out sinful humanity forever, but to lovingly gift us with his Son to provide rescue, forgiveness, transformation, and ultimately deliverance. Jesus came to die, and it is on the cross of his death that the Father's holy anger and his bountiful love meet in a violent moment of righteous judgment and gracious redemption. God is our only source for steady, unshakeable, eternal hope. His holiness is our hope. His love is our hope. He is angry at what is destroying us, and in love he rescues us. The Christmas story preaches to us both the holiness and the love of God.

But, true hope won't be found without looking within ourselves, because we won't first look to God unless we recognise our need. We will never seek the vertical hope that only God can give if we don't first confess that we are a sinful people. It's only when we humbly admit that we have a wandering and rebellious heart that we will reach out for God's forgiveness and his transforming power. But we must admit to something else; we must admit that we have no ability on our own to escape. To say that "I'm a sinner", is not just to confess to some wrong behaviours, but to admit that sin is a condition of our nature. And because it is, we can't escape it. We have no ability to run from ourselves. The Christmas story confronts us with our inability, because if we had any ability whatsoever to save ourselves from sin, the birth of Jesus would not have been necessary.

The Christmas story reminds us that hopelessness is the only doorway to true and eternal hope. It's only when we give up on ourselves, that we seek and celebrate what God, in holy love, offers us in the person and work of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. True and eternal hope isn't a thing; it's a person, and his name is Immanuel. Let us celebrate hope this Christmas.

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St Laurence's Anglican Church Barraba
52 Fitzroy St Barraba
Phone – 6782 1037
Email – office@barrabaanglican.org
Website – barrabaanglican.org

This is our God; we have waited for him that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. [Isaiah 25.9]

25th December, 2022 – Christmas

Today		1st January, 2023
Isaiah 9:1-7	(p 1072)	
Psalm 96:7-13	(p 934)	
Hebrews 1:1-9	(p 1862)	
Matthew 1:18-25	(p 1497)	**Luke 1:67-80**

The incarnation tells us who God is and who we are, and believing both is what gives us hope.

Paul Tripp – O Come Let us Adore Him. Readings for Advent

Because we are made in God's image, we are hardwired for hope. You and I are always putting our hope in something. We communicate with the language of hope all the time. The language of hope is on our lips so much because we live in a world where hope seems temporary or is often dashed. In our work, in our families, as citizens, and in our own personal lives we all deal with so much broken hope. It's not unusual for the thing in which we willingly placed our hope to fail us. In fact, we get to the place where we're afraid to hope anymore, because we're sure we'll be disappointed once again. But we can't stop hoping, because God created our lives to be propelled and directed by hope, and he meant our capacity for hope to drive us to him.

One of the extraordinary things about the Christmas story is that within it we are reminded where true hope is to be found. Though Christmas trees have a beauty all their own, like all else in creation, that beauty will fade. Even those we celebrate with can't be our source of hope, for like us they too are weak and needy. And holiday joy can't deliver, because we all know that the Christmas spirit quickly fades by boxing day.

Date	Garden	Church Clean	M'Tea	Count	Sunday Club	Prayers	Bible Text	Preach	Bible Read	Lead	Greet
1 Jan HC	Peter HS & Dale	Charm	Charm & Dale	Hamilton & Lee		Peter	Luke 1:67-80		Peter Wendy Jenni	Peter	Evi
8 Jan MP	Peter HS & Dale	Elaine	Debbie & Elaine	Steve & Mary		Penny	1 Thess. 5:12-28		Dean Daniel Jenni	Dean	Jenni
15 Jan	Peter HS & Dale	Evi	Sue & Elaine	Dean & Peter		Mary	Titus 1	Peter	Hugh Mary Phoebe	Hugh	Dean
22 Jan	Peter HS & Dale	Dale	Mary & Evi	Lee & Elaine		Dean	Titus 2	Dean	Peter Will Lee	Peter	Penny
29 Jan	Peter HS & Dale	Charm	Penny & Alison	Will & Hamilton	Dean & Alison	Dale	Titus 3	Bishop	Penny Pam Barbara	Penny	Trevor

Dates to Remember

Christmas eve	11 pm at St Laurence's
Christmas day	9 am at St Laurence's
8 January	Daniel's last service
23 January	Matthew & family arrive
29 January	Bishop's welcome of Hearne's to parish
30 January	Church office reopens
18 February	Matthew's ordination

Christmas Day

Greet	Pam
Lead	Daniel
Read	Daniel, Jenni, Leah
Prayers	Daniel
Counting	Elaine & Hamilton

Christmas Collect

Almighty God you have given us your only Son to take our nature upon him, and at this time to be born of a pure virgin: grant that we, being born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

Direct Debit Giving Information
Account name: Barraba Anglican Church
BSB: 932-000
Account No.: 11685 (add S3 if transferring from RAB. Omit if not)