In the beginning was the Word. Words were transformative at creation. Words are transformative in our lives. The first word a baby utters, eagerly awaited by its parents. The first time you say I love you. Sorry. The hardest word, according to the song. The ‘yes’ to a marriage proposal, a job interview. The words in society bandied about on broadcast and social media that furiously divide. And then, as one ages, words become elusive. There’s a delay in finding the exact word you’re looking for. Finally the last words uttered on one’s deathbed, carefully listened to are held in the heart of those still living.

The words we use express who we are, and they can make a world of difference.

What words would you most like to say to someone tonight? Maybe you are missing someone far away or mourning for someone who has died. You would love to be in their presence and speak to them again. Maybe there are people in your life you would like to say something to. Words of love or honesty. Maybe it is God you would like to say something to tonight? Maybe you have questions, maybe you want to express words of belief, maybe a cry of joy or a cry of despair. Tonight gives you space to ponder those words and say them.

And in the silence of this holy night, God speaks a word to you and me and all humanity. Out of eternity, God speaks. Out of nothing, His word creates. As we look up into the night sky it is not meaninglessness we see.
Because into the darkness God spoke light. A writer called Matthew Henry wrote this: ‘As our words explain our mind to others, so was the son of God sent in order to reveal his Father’s mind to the world.’

The powerful word that God speaks in eternity entered time, entered our world, as Jesus Christ, who, as different bible translations put it, ‘pitched his tent’, and ‘moved into the neighbourhood’.

Christmas stories from other gospels are full of angels and shepherds and stables. John’s gospel strips it down to one basic idea. It starts with the first three words of the Bible ‘In the beginning’. God spoke, and we saw his word become a human being, Jesus Christ.

So, this human flesh we wear is the same material that the divine word wore. Each human being on this earth bears something of God’s image. We find our true meaning and identity when we invite Jesus Christ into the neighbourhood of our lives, and love others because he first loved us.

On this holy night it is as if it were the first holy night. Because Christmas is not just an historical event. God’s love comes down continually. The word becomes flesh always. Christ is born anew. His mercies are new every morning.

Words can change things. The Word can change our lives if we let it. Tonight. Forever.

So tonight I invite you to worship and adore. To speak your heart. I invite you to receive the word made flesh for you and for the world. Receive Christ in the words you hear spoken, in the eucharist, in the silences, in the music, in the eyes of the others here.

Receive Christ in the words you speak, sing and whisper. Allow God’s word to speak to your deepest self and know yourself loved and desired by the infinite.

Let the word be made flesh within your life. God is speaking, and the word is love.