



Sunday Dec 19th, 2021 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Gathering & Lighting the Candle

As we light the fourth candle of Advent we dare to dream of peace

We watch the flame flicker into life, and pray that peace will be nurtured from gentle flickers and be inflamed in our hearts, and the heart of our nation, and to the ends of the earth.

Bring Peace Jesus, for you are the one of Peace.

Call to worship

Our Advent candles of Hope, and of Love, and of Joy and of Peace are alight.

The candles bring our attention to the prophet and to the ones who, like John, have prepared the way making the paths straight. Now we wait for the lighting of the Christ Candle, reminding us of the Presence of the Christ born ever new in us.

Peace be with you **And also with you.**

Acknowledging



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

As we gather, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and these waters. We pay respect to elders past, present and emerging. As First and Second Peoples walking together, we commit ourselves to be people of the covenant, listening, truth telling and seeking justice for all.

Singing - O come Emmanuel (TiS 265)

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.

*Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel.*

O come, O come, great Lord of might
Who to the tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times did give the law
In cloud, and majesty, and awe.

O come, O Key of David, come
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.

O come, O branch of Jesse, free
Your own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell your people save
And give them victory o'er the grave.

O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by your advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

W: Anon, Tr: John Mason Neale
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Prayer (Psalm 80:1-7)



Give ear to us, O Shepherd of Israel, our prayers are full of tears. How long will you be angry with our prayers?

For the times we have not sought peace but rather our own agenda, forgive us and restore us.

As we face this busy preparation week with all its overwhelming rush and anxiety, remind us anew that you are already present with us. Re-order and restore us, break into our world and disrupt our fantasy that our own plans can lead us to salvation.



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Give ear to us, O God of compassion and grace.

Restore us, let your face shine upon us, and bring us Peace. Amen

Mary's Song of Praise

Read: Luke 1: 46-56

Prayer of Thanksgiving & Praise

Mary's song brings us to prayer.

Nurturing, Birthing God we come in awe and wonder before you.

We are grateful for your mercy and the gifts of good things.

We are ever mindful of the hungry and ask that the rich will give with generosity.

We ask for peace and disruption in equal measure, for while there are some who are poor and hungry, we have service to perform and mission to engage in.

We thank you for your promises to every generation, and for your mercy.

Birth again in us we pray. AMEN

Listening

Read: Micah 5:2-5a
Luke 1:39-45

For these words of faith and for Jesus the Word:
Thanks be to God.

Reflecting - Rev. Deacon Peter Harvey

Have you ever wondered what brought Mary to her understanding of the revelation of God that she received, and how that message from the angel Gabriel brought forth from her a song of praise and worship that we have come to know as *The Magnificat*, and which is still in use in a lot of churches today?

I don't think any of us can fully imagine what it would have been like for Mary after Gabriel told her she was going to have a child, and not just any child – but the Son of God! What must have been going through her mind – excitement, fear, wonder. And in the midst of all these competing emotions, Mary goes to visit the one person who would have a chance of understanding – her cousin Elizabeth – someone else who was expecting a miraculous child. Both women, it seems, were devout Jewish women. They would have known of God's promises of redemption and the coming Messiah. But I'm sure that even though they hoped to be able to witness these promises during their lifetime, neither of them expected that they would be smack in the middle of it all!

Both women were carrying extraordinary children. Both women had been filled with the Holy Spirit. Both women praised and worshipped God. The news of the redemption of God's people was being shared between, and through, these two women.

Women, who did not feature prominently in society in New Testament times, do feature in the gospel narrative. It is almost as if the writers of the gospels are saying, just because society doesn't see women as important, God does. And yet, there is great humility in both women featured in this part of the narrative. They know that what is happening in their lives, even though they might not understand it fully, it is because of the wonderful mercy and graciousness of God.

But as beautiful as Mary's song is, and as often as we hear it, what does it mean for us today? Despite all that might have been going on in Mary's life, her first response was to praise God, and this should be our response too. You and I both know that this is something that is much easier to say than do, but it is something we need to do. Our God is faithful; our God is steadfast; our God is merciful; our God is gracious; our God is loving – this, is what we praise God for. This is why we worship God. When we focus on the



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holiness and majesty of God, we can praise God regardless of what is going on around us.

Mary's song is a song that can be, and perhaps should be, our song in this Advent season. As we have prepared for the coming of the Christ Child, now we too can sing in thanksgiving, in celebration, in remembrance, in worship, and in proclamation of the promise made to those who have gone before. Like Mary and Elizabeth, this is the time for us to celebrate the promise that comes to us in Jesus. We raise our voices in a great shout bringing glory to our God. We come in worship of the light of the world who came to this dark place to bring light and to redeem God's people. We come to declare that God is our God.

Responding: ***Prayers for World & Community***

O God, you so clearly love the lowly and the vulnerable, and so with you we raise them up through our prayers.

We lift up the hungry and ask that they be filled with good things. May we play our part in restoring to them the blessings they deserve through your promise. And not just at Christmas but through the tough times of the new year and those who are impacted by the closing of services for Christmas holidays. This time of year brings higher costs and often less available resources.

At this special time of year when we celebrate the birth of a child to a young refugee mother in difficult circumstances, we think of those who seek shelter and safety, who desperately seek belonging and a space to call home. We long for prejudice to give way to peace and understanding. We lift the homeless and those on the margins of society. Loneliness is made more extreme at Christmas and so we hold those who are isolated and alone.

We lift those who are silenced and abused, the dispossessed and those subjected to injustice.

We hold up those in need of liberation, those who are addicted, those seeking freedom.

At this time of year, we lift those who are incarcerated and their families. We lift those experiencing grief and the first Christmas without the presence of loved ones. Those too, who have fractured relationships and deep tensions made worse by the intensity of Christmas. For some, Christmas is a time of heightened violence and pain and so we lift those who for whom this experience is an unrelenting reality.

We lift those experiencing sickness and disability, in particular we hold in our hearts those we know who are struggling.

Look with favour on our dear ones and our neighbours. We also pray for our enemies and those who challenge us.

Make your face to shine on us, O God. May we be the Peace and the presence of God for which we long.

The Lord's Prayer

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 forever. Amen.

Passing the peace

May the Peace of God dwell with you:
and also with you.



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Offering

You have indeed endowed us with good things.
Take our gifts, our talents and our time. We long
to see others lifted up and so we offer all we have
in your service.

Singing - I sing to my saviour

Tune: ASH GROVE 6.6.11.6.6.11 D

I sing to my Saviour, for God has shown favour
on one who is lowly, of humble degree.
Now each generation, with great celebration,
will speak of God's mercy to people like me.
They'll pass on the story that God who is holy
Shows mercy to those who
respect God's good ways.
Though times are distressing,
I know of God's blessing.
My Spirit rejoices! I give thanks and praise.

I sing of God's power o'er those who devour;
God scatters the proud
in the thoughts of their hearts.
God casts down the mighty and lifts up the lowly;
God offers us justice and hope and new starts.
God fills up the hungry,
surrounds them with plenty,
and sends out the rich people, empty, away.
As God has long promised to save and to bless us,
So God walks beside us in love every day.

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Blessing

Go out in anticipation that Emmanuel,
God-with-us, walks with you.

In the busyness of each day,
remember whose you are.

Walk in awe and wonder and look for God in the
hidden places.

And may you know Peace, Peace and more Peace.

Reflection: Rev. Deacon Peter Harvey

Liturgy: Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson
Presbytery of Gippsland

Editor: Rev. Arnie Wierenga
pastoral.ucagipps@gmail.com

