



## Sunday Jan 9th , 2022 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

### Gathering & Lighting the Candle

On this new day, in this new year, let us remember Christ's presence as we light the candle.

### Call to worship

*But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. (Isaiah 43:1)*

Come you who are called by name and, in the joy and wonder of this knowledge, worship the Lord of Creation

### 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 - Lord your almighty word (TiS 447)

Lord, your almighty word  
chaos and darkness heard,  
and took their flight:  
hear us, we humbly pray,  
and, where the gospel day  
sheds not its glorious ray,  
let there be light.

Saviour who came to give  
those who in darkness life  
healing and sight,  
health to the sick in mind,  
sight to the inly blind,  
now to all humankind,  
let there be light.

Spirit of truth and love,  
life-giving holy Dove,  
speed forth your flight;  
move on the waters' face  
bearing the lamp of grace,  
and in earth's darkest place,  
let there be light.

Holy and blessed Three,  
glorious Trinity,  
Wisdom, Love, Might;  
boundless as ocean's tide  
rolling in fullest pride,  
through the world far and wide,  
let there be light.

W: John Marriott, M: adapt. from Felice Giardini  
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### Prayer

Loving Lord, we come to you as your people and remember that your voice is over the mighty waters, over the thunder, it is powerful and full of majesty, flashes forth flames of fire, causes the oaks to whirl and strips the forest bare.

And all his people say "**Glory**" (Psalm 29)

May you give us strength and peace.

We know that we forget your wonder and try to do things in our own strength.

**Forgive us**

We forget that we are your people and behave as the world does.

**Forgive us.**

We forget the need to care for the resources of the world and your command to love our neighbour.

**Forgive us.**

We are loved, forgiven people.

**Thanks be to God**

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### **Listening**

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Read: Acts 8:14-17  
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

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

### **Reflecting - Rev. Arnie Wierenga**

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I suspect that sometimes we elevate Jesus to unreachable heights. Of course this makes sense if we focus on Jesus as fully divine, the holy Son of God.

John the baptiser is clear too. 'One more powerful than I is coming'; 'I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals' ...

While John is right to invite us to revere the one we know as the beloved Son of God, the story of God with us is also very grounded.

It is grounded in God's wilful vulnerability. We've just become grandparents and through it have been invited into the wonder, awe, mystery and the gift of life. We also know how dependent and vulnerable a new-born baby is.

So how is it that the creator of all allows love to be born in our world like that? The story of Jesus' birth is profound. Consider that Luke tells us he was born among animals into a feeding trough. Consider that he was born to a teenage girl. Consider that as an infant he was a refugee with his family.

It is a long way from the usual human narrative where kings and rulers are protected by power and money, so that safety, security and luxury is assured at the expense of the vulnerable.

John baptises Jesus and ushers a different kind of power. As John metes out water from the river, the Holy Spirit is invoked and descends on Jesus like a dove. A voice from heaven declares to all

who Jesus is. 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

This may seem like a clash between stories, or a confusing mix of powers, but I see the two as hope for us all. For one, the voice from the cloud reminds us that Jesus is God with us. But consider too the work of the Holy Spirit. Whenever we are baptised by water in the name of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is invited into our journey of faith. The Spirit moves within us, animating us, connecting us viscerally to our creator. Water is gift, and so is Spirit.

The voice from the cloud is specific and personal in this account from Luke - *you are my Son, the Beloved*, but we also believe that in Jesus Christ we all belong and are beloved children of God.

Whatever the divinity of Jesus Christ may mean, it does not mean that God is distant or unreachable. Rather his ministry suggests the opposite, that it is God's desire to call each of us by name - *you are my beloved, with you I am well pleased*.

Returning to the narrative of Luke's gospel there is even more good news. As Jesus is born into vulnerability, the love of God is especially for those who are vulnerable.

*Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the kingdom of God.  
Blessed are you who are hungry now,  
for you will be filled.  
Blessed are you who weep now,  
for you will laugh. (Jesus in Luke 6)*

John feels unworthy to untie the thong of Jesus' sandals, but in earthy and grounded ways, Jesus leads by example. As he washes the feet of others, Jesus invites us into a similar ministry.

Inspired by Christ, the church has a long history of lifting those on the edges and giving them a place of welcome, love, and safety. We have been challenged through COVID times to consider what the hospitality of God means when safety and welcome clashes due to vaccination status. All



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who feel vulnerable in this space belong to the kingdom of God, and we are called to be bearers of God's kingdom in this reality.

The Spirit is at work as Jesus comes to be baptised. It is that same Spirit that guides our path. As the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus as a dove and equips his ministry, so we join him through our own baptism in water and Spirit.

#### **Responding:**

#### **Prayers for World & Community**

Loving God

We come to you in this year of 2022 after two years of pandemic, loss, change, fear, lockdowns and insecurity and we pray for hope. We pray that in our faith, we know that you have hope for us. Hope for change to make a world where love, peace and justice are more important than power, greed and fear.

We pray for the leaders of our world that they may choose advisors and make policies that benefit all people.

We pray for leaders of countries, states, cities and the church that they have wisdom to see inequity and the courage to make change happen.

We pray for leaders who do more than talk but listen, consider and take time to make decisions.

We pray for our community which in these times extends well beyond our town or neighbourhood across state and international borders. We thank you for families and friends who have reconnected and pray for those who cannot. Let us be kind to those who are lonely and disconnected, demonstrating love for our neighbour.

We pray for our families and ourselves, the prayers we don't say aloud but you know are in our hearts and we pray together the prayer Christ taught us:

#### **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.**

#### **Offering**

God of the beloved, with whom you are well pleased, bless these offerings and enliven us with your Holy Spirit, as we seek to bear your light to the world.

#### **Singing - Loving Spirit (TiS 417)**

Loving Spirit, loving Spirit  
you have chosen me to be -  
you have drawn me to your wonder,  
you have set your sign on me.

Like a mother you enfold me,  
hold my life within your own,  
feed me with your very body,  
form me of your flesh and bone.

Like a father you protect me,  
teach me the discerning eye,  
hoist me up upon your shoulder,  
let me see the world from high.

Friend and lover, in your closeness  
I am known and held and blessed:  
in your promise is my comfort,  
in your presence I may rest.



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W: Shirley Erena Murray, M: Colin Alexander Gibson  
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***Blessing***

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Do not fear, for I am with you, I have called you  
by name.

Go, safe in this knowledge with hope in your  
hearts.

In the name of the Creator, Redeemer and  
Comforter.

**Amen**

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