



Advent 2 - Sunday December 4th, 2022 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

We watch and wait,
listen and wonder.
Bear fruit, John cries,
from the wilderness!

Light is promised us,
as is peace. But with both
comes the need to reconcile,
for paths to be made straight,
to re-align ourselves with God.

As we watch and wait,
listen and wonder,
a candle is lit to welcome
the light and peace of Christ.

Let us worship God.

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, O Come Emmanuel TiS 265
OR O bless the God of Israel TiS 284

Prayer



God of wonder,
we offer you our thanks and praise
as you raise up prophets to speak your word.

We find ourselves in awe
as we lean into this season of Advent,

anticipating the wonder and blessing
of the weeks to come.

But we know too that this time cannot be rushed.

In this season of preparation,
we hear the cry from the wilderness
as though it is for us today.
We too need to repent,
to make paths straight,
to prepare the way of the Lord.

Last week we lit a candle in hope,
knowing you bring hope to us,
remembering that through you
we may offer hope to others.

As we prepare to light
a second candle in peace,
we acknowledge places where peace
is sorely needed.

For places of conflict, nation against nation ...
For places of tragedy, flood and earthquake ...
For places close, ourselves and those we love ...

As we light a candle of hope,
may we find courage to make
our own paths right before you,
to be open to the call of the prophet,
and your restoring work in us.
May it be so. Amen.

ADVENT WREATH

2 candles are lit

Reader: On this second Sunday of Advent we
light two candles.

This second candle reminds us of the
promise of peace in Jesus' coming.

All: **We wait for you, Jesus our Christ.
We see hope in the image of a stump
with new shoots
We see the new beginnings of your life
before us.**



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Singing - Come, let's walk

based on Isaiah 2:5

words: Jennie Gordon © 2019

tune: Twinkle, twinkle, little star

**Come, let's walk the path of light
through the darkness of the night.
Now the lost don't walk alone,
hungry ones are welcomed home.
Peace in what we do and say,
peace between us on the way.**

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Isaiah 11:1-10 &
Matthew 3:1-12

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

Reflecting - Rev. Sandra Houghton

The people flocked out into the wilderness of Judea to see and hear John the Baptist.

I believe that when most of us read this sentence we don't think about it much. But travelling out into the wilderness, in those days, was not something that sensible people would have lightly undertaken. For to venture out into the wilderness required real commitment. For the wilderness was, and is, a harsh and dangerous landscape- utterly desolate and dry, replete with snakes and scorpions and wild animals. It was also a place where brigands notoriously lurked (remember the mugging of the traveller in the parable of the Good Samaritan). It was a place where there was no food, no shelter, and long distances between water sources, so you would have had to carry what you needed for survival.

And yet, we are told, "the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and the

region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan confessing their sins." For those who travelled from Jerusalem, and much of Judea, this would have been a long and very difficult journey over rugged terrain.

So, for the people to flock out into the wilderness in large numbers to see John the Baptist can be seen as an expression of their desperation and deep desire for change. It is clear that they were sick of being oppressed and down trodden by the Romans. They clearly didn't think change was going to come from their religious leaders, who notoriously had collaborated with the Romans in return for freedom to worship.

The people longed for freedom, they longed for hope and peace, they longed for an end to poverty, and they wanted change. When they heard of this charismatic preacher out in the wilderness they no doubt thought of the great prophetic figures of old that God had sent to them in times of great need and trouble. Figures like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and most of all, Elijah, and they thought, 'Has God finally sent the promised One to save us? '

And when they saw John the Baptist, they were not disappointed. For they beheld a wild and arresting figure, dressed in camel skins with a leather belt around his waist, looking every bit of an Elijah-like figure (in 2 Kings 1:8 Elijah is described as "a hairy man with a leather belt around his waist"). This was significant, as they had been taught that Elijah did not die, but rather was taken up into heaven, and he was expected to return as a harbinger of the Messiah.

So, when they heard John the Baptist preaching with zeal and passion, like a prophet of old, calling for repentance, they began to hope God had heard their prayers and that real change was coming. Especially when they heard him getting stuck into their religious leaders, pricking their pomposity and their certainty- warning them of the wrath to come.

It is perhaps no wonder that large numbers of the crowd embraced John's call for them to be

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baptised. They, no doubt, hoped that this was the start of a change for the better, especially when John spoke of One who was coming after him who was far more powerful than he. One who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. This proclamation must have excited and encouraged them, even if they didn't fully understand what he was on about.

We can see that John's mission in the wilderness of Judea and his act of baptising followers in the Jordan echoes back to the Exodus- the journey of the exiles through the wilderness and across the Jordan into the Promised Land. John the Baptist has gone out into the wilderness to prepare for a new beginning. He told the crowd to prepare for the Lord, the One who was coming to lead them in the way of the Lord.

We get in this story a glimpse of the turmoil and the oppression that marked the times of Jesus' birth and life. A world in which there was much desperation, poverty, and division. A world in which people longed for peace and hope, and a better world for their children. John the Baptist proclaimed to them, and us, the coming of the one that we know of as the Prince of Peace - Jesus.

We, too, long for peace and hope, and a better world for our children. We, too, despair at the proliferation of divisions and wars and hatred. We, too, need to look to the coming and coming again of Jesus. Let us join with John in preparing the way of the Lord this Advent.

Singing

On Jordon's bank TiS 270

OR The bright wind is blowing TiS 263

Offering

We are grateful for all you have given us Advent God. Bless and unite what we offer with your movement of hope and peace for our world.

Notices

The Uniting Church Assembly has an intergenerational Advent Calendar to help you enter into the Advent season in your home and neighbourhood. See:

<https://uniting.church/2022adventcalendar/>

Responding:

Prayers for World & Community

God of creation, we hear the Psalmist (Ps 72) speak of the blessing of rain upon mown grass and yet we see seasons that are less and less what we expect.

We acknowledge a changing climate and how wealthy nations have benefitted, yet are slow to offer support to many smaller nations impacted by rising sea levels and other climate issues. The recent COP27 gathering has begun to consider support funds and we pray for goodwill and even better leadership and vision to make deep inroads on climate issues.

We pray for places impacted by recent natural disasters, particularly Indonesia with the earthquake in Jakarta. We pray for the many places in Australia that are still inundated with slow-moving flood waters, and for those struggling to recover after many flood events.

We pray for our world ...

We pray for our church as we take time through Advent to prepare the way of the Lord. Be near us in what is typically a busy time, that we remember to watch, wait, listen and be renewed.

We pray for the church ...

We pray for those near to us, and for those things that trouble us ...

As we remember you call us into hope and peace, we pray again the prayer that Jesus taught us:



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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.

Singing

Loving Spirit, Loving Spirit TiS 417
OR Come to be our hope, O Jesus TiS 688

Blessing

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit
of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of
counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and
the fear of the LORD (*from Isaiah 11*).

Siblings in Christ,
The story of our God who brings peace
continues as we move out into the world.
As you depart, go in peace
to love and serve the Lord.

In all you do,
the blessing of God be upon you,
in the name of the
Creator,
Redeemer and
Sustainer.

Amen.

Liturgy: Rev. Arnie Wierenga
Reflection: Rev. Sandra Houghton
Presbytery of Gippsland
Editor: Rev. Arnie Wierenga
pastoral.ucaqipps@gmail.com

