



## Sunday January 1st, 2023 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

### Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

The Son of Man in all his glory says, "Come, you that are blessed of my Father..."

Come and seek the way of insight.

Come and seek the Holy One.

**Holy Wisdom calls to all who will listen:**

**Come to me, and live.**

We light this candle at the very beginning of a New Year.

O LORD, our Sovereign,  
**how majestic is your name in all the earth!**

For everything there is a season,  
**and a time for every matter under heaven:**  
This is a time to worship God.

### Acknowledging



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 - TiS 474 Here in this place

OR TiS 187 Le all creation dance

OR TiS 281 When God almighty came to be one of us

### Prayer



God of the New Year,  
of new beginnings and fresh starts.  
You are God with us. God in us. God for us.  
You daily renew the work of your creation.  
You are God of life,  
In the largest moon and the brightest star  
we see the work of your hands.  
In the smallest insect and the darkest cave

we see the breath of your Spirit.

**God, source of life,  
Jesus, firstborn of all creation,  
we offer you our praise.**

You are God of hope,  
In the dampness of dew and the  
cold of mountain streams  
we feel the work of your hands.  
In the whistling wind and the heat of the desert  
we feel the breath of your Spirit.

**God, source of life,  
Jesus, firstborn of all creation,  
we offer you our praise.**

You are God of peace,  
in the songs of birds and the calls of animals  
we hear the work of your hands.  
In the crash of glaciers and in  
bubbling hot springs  
we hear the breath of your Spirit.

**God, source of life,  
Jesus, firstborn of all creation,  
we offer you our praise.**

For our foolish or careless misuse of the  
abundance of blessings you gave us to steward:  
Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

For our indifference to the needs of others, your  
children for whom you died:  
Christ have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For ever willing to help us make a new beginning:  
Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

And the one who was seated on the throne said,  
"See, I am making all things new." *Revelation 21:5*

Those who are in Christ are a new creation;  
everything old has passed away;  
see, the new has come!  
All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself  
through Christ.  
Hear then Christ's word of grace to us:  
"Your sins are forgiven."  
**Thanks be to God.**



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### ***Passing the peace***

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

### ***Listening***

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Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1–13; Psalm 8;  
Matthew 25:31–46

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

### ***Reflecting - Rev. Sandra Houghton***

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The beginning of a new year is always a transitional moment. As we contemplate the year before us, we can't help but think about all that has gone on in the past twelve months. We might rather forget some of it, but the media always reminds us by reprising highlights and low-lights of the past year.

But we, as Christians, can affirm that no matter what has or hasn't happened over the past year, good or bad, God is still present and can be trusted to be with us through it all. At Christmas we sung the carol, "O Little Town of Bethlehem" which includes the words, "the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight." The truth of these words stretches beyond Christmas, and into all of the year.

And, this last year, we have many hopes and more than a few fears. Or perhaps, in other words, blessings and curses. On the world stage, we would have to admit that 2022 was probably not that good a year for many, many people. Wars and insurrections have raged, refugee crises have deepened, famine has devastated the Horn of Africa, the COVID pandemic has continued to cause much illness and death, and floods have caused huge damage especially in NSW and Victoria. These are some of those fears/curses that we name in our prayers.

On a more personal note, there were the deaths of loved ones, and other crises like illness,

relationship breakdown, employment problems, and financial struggles.

Hopes and blessings are, perhaps, easier to identify at a personal, congregational and local level, then at a national or international level. Blessings may have been present, for example, in the birth of babies, in academic and employment success, in the growth of loving relationships and families, in productive years in business and farming, and in successful events. And, of course, in happy occasions where love and generosity and kindness have abounded.

At a national and world level hopes might appear to be thinner on the ground. Perhaps a glimmer of hope is in the way that countries cooperated to develop vaccines against COVID 19 which has led to the opening up of the world for travel and business, and perhaps also, the way that so many countries have responded to The Ukraine's cry for support in their fight against the Russians.

These hopes and fears are perhaps some of the things we think of as we pull down the old calendars and put up the new ones and change over to our new 2023 diaries. We may particularly think of those things that have impacted personally on us, and wonder about the year that lies in front of us.

As we reflect on these things it may be helpful to be reminded that God is the Creator and Redeemer of all things including time.

God is the God of "chronos" – that is chronological time. The God who has created and sees over centuries, years, months, weeks, days, hours, minutes ... God is the God of every second.

But God is also the God of "kairos", which we could translate as the "right time," "season" or "opportunity."

Bruce Epperly describes kairos as the 'lively moments of creative transformation. Just as there are "thin places," (or holy places) where divine



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energy opens the door to new possibilities, there are also "thin times," moments in which God's vision awakens us to holiness amid the quotidian (ordinary) endeavours of life.'

As Christians we are called to be open to God's dynamic, transformative, Spirit at work in the world and in our lives, believing that God can transform and renew our lives and our churches and communities. We believe that there is no situation, no matter how bad, where God is not present. We believe that God can transform these situations and that we are called to be part of this transformation, and that we should not give up, as no situation is hopeless. We also believe that God will give us the strength and guidance to endure and even thrive. The God of "kairos" can change people and situations.

St. Benedict in his Rule for monasteries writes "always we begin again." This means that God gives unlimited fresh starts, and that every new day offers a new start. Forgiveness, renewal and reconciliation lie at the heart of the Christian faith.

A helpful start to the year may be to put the change of the year and our need for renewal and transformation in the context of our faith, and our understanding that we need God's forgiveness, guidance, strength and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit for any real and lasting change to succeed.

In this context it can be very helpful to spend time in reflection, thinking about all that has happened over the year, offering to God all that is painful and in need of healing and seeking forgiveness for all our failings. At the same time, we need to be open to being thankful and expressing gratitude to God for our lives and our experiences. Life is a gift, a precious gift, and we need to be open to its possibilities. Gratitude opens the door to appreciation, inspiration, and openness to the future.

As the theologian Bruce Epperly has written, "The great "yes" we proclaim is not assent to injustice, global climate change, racism, sexism, homophobia, and consumerism. It is a "yes" to

God's life moving through all things, calling us forward to changed lives and changed communities. With the Hebraic (Jewish) tradition, New Year's is the call to choose life moment by moment amidst our responsibilities to our communities and the planet. Death holds too much power in our lives; but love casts out the fear and embraces abundant life for us and for all creation. Gratitude and appreciation open us to life-transforming love".

So let us trust in God's presence and guidance for the year ahead and say "yes" to the possibilities and opportunities that will come in 2023.

Happy New Year!

### ***Singing - TiS 316 O little town of Bethlehem***

#### ***Creed***

We are not alone,  
we live in God's world.

We believe in God:  
who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus,  
the Word made flesh,  
to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others  
by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:  
to celebrate God's presence,  
to live with respect in Creation,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
our judge and our hope.  
In life, in death, in life beyond death,  
God is with us.  
We are not alone.  
Thanks be to God.

*The United Church of Canada, General Council 1968,  
alt. 1998*



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### **Offering**

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May the Holy Spirit be upon us now  
to cleanse our hearts,  
to hallow our gifts,  
and to perfect the offering of ourselves  
in this new year  
for love of Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **Notices**

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Since 1968, the Catholic Church has celebrated today as the world day of peace.

Many churches will hold a vigil on new year's eve to pray in the new year. Some places also offer a New Year's Eve labyrinth walk.

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

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We pray for the whole of creation:  
Lord let us see the ways we might partner with you to bring restoration to the world you love. May you work all things together for good, until, by your design, your children inherit the earth and order it wisely.  
**Let the whole creation praise you, Lord our God.**

We pray for the Church of Jesus Christ: that, begun, maintained and promoted by the Holy Spirit, it may be true, engaging, glad, and active, doing your will.  
**Let the Church be always faithful, Lord our God.**

We pray for enemies, as Christ commanded; for those who oppose us or scheme against us, who are also children of your love. May we be kept from infectious hate or sick desire for vengeance.  
**Make friends of enemies, O God.**

We pray for those who govern us, for those who make and administer our laws.  
May this country always be a land of free people who welcome exiles and work for justice.  
**Govern those who govern us, O God.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

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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 - TiS 681 Lord let me see**

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OR TiS 47 Our God, our help in ages past  
OR TiS 268 Joy to the world

### **Blessing**

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Go from this time of worship  
knowing the home of God is in you.  
God has taken up residence in your life.  
Every moment is holy.  
In all your ways this week acknowledge and trust  
in the God who loves you and is for you.

And the blessing of the God  
of new creation be upon you  
in all you say and do. Amen.

*Liturgy: From 'Uniting in Worship 2',  
adapted Rev. Veronica Bradley  
Reflection: Rev. Sandra Houghton  
Presbytery of Gippsland  
Editor: Rev. Arnie Wierenga  
[pastoral.ucaqipps@gmail.com](mailto:pastoral.ucaqipps@gmail.com)*

