



## Advent 4 - Sunday December 24th, 2023

### The Fig Tree Worship Resource

We are using the **Watery Advent Wreath Liturgy** through Advent. For an explanation please see *The Fig Tree Resource for Advent 1*. If you would like to use candles you can find some liturgies online and here: <https://uniting.church/engage-together-advent-resource-out-now/>

Here are links to a couple of great YouTube clips you might want to use in worship this week:

[Holy Is Your Name \(Magnificat\) David Haas acoustic guitar cover lyrics](#)  
[Hey Mary Lyric Video](#)

### Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

One: The Spirit is here  
All: **God's love is with us**  
*Light the candle - Christ is with us.*

### 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 - Let all creation dance TiS 187

OR: Let earth and heaven combine TiS 305



### Prayer

One: As we pour the water  
into the first three vessels,  
we remember our thirst for hope,  
and for peace, and for joy

As we pour the water  
for the fourth time in Advent,  
we remember our deep thirst  
for God's love.

All: **We long for your love, O God**

One: A rolling wave of love, overpowering,  
all-enveloping, overwhelming,  
sweeping all up before it  
and changing the landscape forever.

All: **We long for your love, O God**

One: Love that has the patience  
to seep into us, one drop at a time  
over aeons,  
forming stalagmites of beauty  
in the darkest places.

All: **We long for your love, O God**

One: Love that holds us  
with the silent ethereal mystery  
of mist on a mountain top

All: **We long for your love, O God**

One: You are invited to name people and  
places that are in particular need of God's love at  
this time, some examples follow;

*People who feel unloved  
Children who are wards of the state  
Those in nursing homes away from loved ones  
People who have lost loved ones this year  
People living with broken relationships  
Child soldiers throughout the world  
Victims of violence*

One: Advent God, we worship you with love.

All: **We long for your love, O God**

### Passing the peace

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

### Listening

Read: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Responsive reading of Luke 1:46b-55:  
"My soul magnifies the Lord,  
**and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,**

for he has looked with favour  
on the lowliness of his servant.

*The Fig Tree Worship Resource comes to you from the Friends of the Fig Tree, Uniting Church in Australia  
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**Surely, from now on  
all generations will call me blessed;**

for the Mighty One  
has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.

**His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.**

He has shown strength with his arm;  
**he has scattered the proud  
in the thoughts of their hearts.**

He has brought down the powerful  
from their thrones,  
**and lifted up the lowly;**

he has filled the hungry with good things,  
**and sent the rich away empty.**

He has helped his servant Israel,  
**in remembrance of his mercy,**

according to the promise he made  
to our ancestors,  
**to Abraham and to his descendants  
forever."**

Read: Romans 16:25-27  
Luke 1:26-38

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

#### ***Reflecting - Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson***

At one level, the Old Testament readings this week are quite confronting and I am not sure what to do with them. God and Nathan and David are in conversation about a home. This covenant with David is quite problematic to me in the current circumstances in the Middle East. David is

offered a settled and peaceful home. Yet David is not the one to build God a home, but rather his offspring. David has much blood on his hands. I don't know how to see this now, and so I sit in the uncertainty and sadness of it. It is the faithfulness of God's steadfast love that I nestle into, in the distress I feel from these verses.

I am a bit more comforted when I read the New Testament passages this week. Roman's beautiful doxology that reminds us that God's strength is provided to us in the sufficiency of God's grace. "The revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages....", disclosed to us in Jesus. This beautiful mystery is where we sit through Advent as we 'wait' for the revelation in Jesus. And the best news is that we are ALL loved and included wherever we sit on the faith spectrum, even us Gentiles are given a place at the table. This speaks to the inclusion of us all in this glorious God. How can this be?

Well, Mary's song holds a hint. This topsy turvy Kin-dom of God includes the least and the lost, the hungry will be filled with really good things, rather than the rich. Mary and Elizabeth are both examples of this, neither of them expected to conceive in the circumstances in which they find themselves. Mary is a vulnerable young woman living in precarious circumstances, made more precarious by her encounter with the Holy Spirit. We tend to tame the nativity stories into something soothing and beautiful, but they are so radical in nature. This is a peasant girl, living with lowly means and likely having experienced hunger. If we know that God stands with the lowly rather than the powerful, I wonder why we so often look to stand alongside the powerful.

The questions sit heavily on me this Advent, where waiting for the birth of Jesus into our world holds ever-richer meaning. I am disturbed by the fact that the hungry are still empty, the powerful still seem to be in control, the lowly are still stuck at the bottom of the hierarchy. In particular, this lectionary selection draws my



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mind toward homes. The homeless are not specifically mentioned in the Magnificat, yet this is a baby born without a home, born in a stable. So many people will have no homes this Christmas, or some will be living in inadequate housing and places that are not safe and comfortable.

A modern parable might look like this: A poor young woman sits in a bus stop and is told she will become pregnant and will give birth in the car she lives in. Then shortly after that she will be caused to flee to another country because people are out to hurt her child. In fact, other babies born at this time are killed, because the greed for power has become too much for those who are challenged by the child's future potential. Or maybe she might be told her baby would be born in the rubble of her town. Or placed in a humidicrib in a hospital with no electricity, or a detention centre, or taken into exile or a hostage situation. Or born with a body we might call disabled or deformed. So, when we talk about homes for Kings and building a home for God to dwell in, I am reminded of this God who lives with the homeless, God who is not static and settled into a building but calls us to be people on a pilgrimage, on the way. God, born in a stable, a borrowed bed, a refugee existence, to parents who must have been frantic at times in their fear for the safety and wellbeing of this child.

Again, it is the faithfulness of God's steadfast love that I nestle into, God who IS my home. God who shows mercy and lifts up the lowly does not forsake us. Let it be with us according to God's word.

### ***Singing - Tell out my soul TiS 161***

OR: The angel Gabriel from heaven came TiS 302

### ***Offering***

Holy God, giver of life, what we bring often feels like it isn't enough. We often feel like we aren't enough. But here on Christmas Eve, bless these gifts, and bless us. Send your blessing so that we

might make a way to the manger for those who need to see the miracle of your love made flesh. For all of us,  
And all the people say, **Amen.**

### ***Notices***

Yesterday, Dec 23rd, was the anniversary of the Wiki Decision (Native title) in 1996.

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

*You may choose to have a bowl of sand and some taper candles and simply hold this space as a time of quiet amidst all the busyness of the season.*

We pray for our world,  
in need of God's hope, peace, joy and love.

We hold before you in prayer,  
great giver of life,  
those whose loneliness is especially heavy,  
those who live in fear of violence,  
those who know the pain of loss,  
and all who are doing it tough  
for so many different reasons.  
*time of quiet*

We hold before you in prayer  
great giver of life,  
all who are working to keep us safe  
on the road, in our hospitals, shops  
and gathering places, at this time.  
*time of quiet*

We hold before you in prayer,  
great giver of life,  
all who are worn and weary  
and making their way to holidays,  
near and far.  
*time of quiet*

We hold before you in prayer,  
great giver of life,  
ourselves and those near and dear to us,  
*time of quiet*

In Mary's song we hear



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that you always exceed our expectations,  
you lift us above our limited imaginations.  
You birth your life amongst us,  
so we might get closer to you.  
So our prayer today is this;  
Come, Lord Jesus, Come  
*time of quiet*

As we pray together as Jesus 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.

#### **Singing - Not the powerful TiS 288**

*(you can sing it to STUTTGART TiS 272)*

OR: Come thou long-expected Jesus TiS 272

OR: Long ago, prophets knew TiS 283

#### **Blessing**

Go into this holy time  
with hope as your constant companion.  
Let peace be the gift that flows from you  
and joy bubble up and burst forth  
when and where you least expect it.

Go knowing that you are loved,  
so loved, by One who will not fail you.

And all the people say: **Amen.**

#### **Watery Advent Blessing Song**

*Tune: NOEL NOUVELET TiS 665*

Living water flowing,  
'cross the dusty plains  
thirsty landscapes bursting  
with new life again.

Come, Jesus, come and  
quench our longing too.  
Let the love of Advent,  
flow through us, from you.

#### **Watery Advent Wreath:**

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