



First Sunday in Advent, December 1st, 2024

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

You may choose to prepare an Advent wreath, at home, or in your gathering space. You can find many different varieties online. Generally they have 3 purple candles and 1 pink candle (for each week of Advent) around a central white Christ candle (which is lit on Christmas Day). Often they have leaves and flowers. You might like to invite a younger member of your gathering to play the tune to the candle-lighting song (*Twinkle-twinkle little star*).

Welcome to worship on this first Sunday of Advent, the first Sunday of the new liturgical year.

Holding the conflict in the Holy Land, we hear the words of the prophet Jeremiah with hope:
Jeremiah 33:14-16

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

We light this candle as a sign of hope as we begin our active advent waiting.

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.
Hope in what we do and say,
hope between us on the way.

Light the first Advent candle - the candle of hope.



Acknowledging



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

As we gather, we acknowledge the (please name those where you are) Traditional Custodians of these unceded land and waters. We pay respect to Elders past and present. 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 - Come, O God of all the earth **TiS 181**

OR: Love Divine, TiS 217

OR: O come, O Come, Emmanuel TiS 265 (this will need a pastoral preface relating to the ongoing conflict in the Holy Land. Click on the name for a re-written version by [Sue Wickham](#)).



Prayer

Responses are in bold. They are the psalm readings. Hold a space of silence between each one. You might want to end each silence with the ring of a bell, chime or gentle sound.

Psalms 25:1-10 - 'The Message' translation

Bringing all that bothers and distracts us,
all that distracts and delights us,
we come in prayer to you,
God who listens and loves.
Hear us as we pray this ancient psalm,
as we lift up our heads and hearts to you,
as we ask for forgiveness,
and wait on your grace.

**ALL: My head is high, GOD, held high;
I'm looking to you, GOD;
No hangdog skulking for me.**
(space of silence, ... then gentle sound)



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**ALL: I've thrown in my lot with you;
You won't embarrass me, will you?
Or let my enemies get the best of me?**

**Don't embarrass any of us
Who went out on a limb for you.
It's the traitors
who should be humiliated.**

(space of silence, ... then gentle sound)

**ALL: Show me how you work, GOD;
School me in your ways.**

(space of silence, ... then gentle sound)

**ALL: Take me by the hand;
Lead me down the path of truth.
You are my Saviour, aren't you?**

(space of silence, ... then gentle sound)

**ALL: Mark the milestones
of your mercy and love, GOD;
Rebuild the ancient landmarks!**

(space of silence, ... then gentle sound)

**ALL: Forget that I sowed wild oats;
Mark me with your sign of love.
Plan only the best for me, GOD!**

(space of silence, ... then gentle sound)

**ALL: GOD is fair and just;
They correct the misdirected,
Send them in the right direction.**

(space of silence, ... then gentle sound)

**ALL: They give the rejects *their* hand,
And lead them step-by-step.**

(space of silence, ... then gentle sound)

**ALL: From now on every road you travel
Will take you to GOD.
Follow the Covenant signs;
Read the charted directions.**

(space of silence, ...)

God who is grace,
you release us from the mistakes of our past
and set us on the pilgrim path.
Siblings in Christ,
know that you are loved and forgiven.
Hold your heads high and live as if you believe it.

ALL: We will.

Thank you God, Amen

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: 1 Thessalonians 3:9- 13

Luke 21:25-36,

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

Reflecting - Rev. Sandra Houghton

Thirty years ago, I was at the end of more than three years of preparation for what I anticipated would be a life-changing moment. And it was life changing, for on the 11 th December 1994 I was ordained a Minister of the Word in the Uniting Church at a service at Wesley Church in Melbourne.

Soon afterwards, I moved from inner Melbourne to rural Tasmania to take up my first parish appointment with the responsibility for caring for five churches spread over a large area. I had anticipated that being a country minister would be a sometimes difficult, and often demanding role, and it was. I anticipated struggling to work out how to be an effective and pastoral leader in the parish and beyond, and I did. I was concerned about coping with pastoral emergencies, caring for the dying, funerals, and helping people going through relationship break down; and it was sometimes quite hard.

But what I hadn't anticipated was that I would absolutely adore Tasmania (and still do!), and even more importantly, experience so much love, nurturing in faith, encouragement and support from the wonderful people in my parish



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and from my colleagues in ministry. That's not to say that sometimes there weren't conflicts or disagreements, but there also was a deep unity and a commitment to Christ and his church. And there was much love shown in generous hospitality, in encouragement and care, in support in times of difficulty, and a willingness for each to do their part in the building up of the body of Christ. When I broke my ankle, my parish

extended this love and care to my parents who came to care for me.

When I read today's verses in the book of 1 Thessalonians (and the rest of the beginning of chapter three), I see the same sort of gratitude expressed by Paul to that church that I feel for my Tasmanian parish. Paul is commending them for their love and faithfulness, and their steadfastness and endurance in the face of persecution. My Tasmanian parish hasn't faced persecution, but it has faced significant trials and tribulations but remains faithful and loving.

As we enter the season of Advent, we focus on the coming into the world of Jesus as a baby born in Bethlehem who grew into a man who showed us how to live as true disciples of God. As part of that we are reminded of the Old Testament prophecies that pointed to Jesus' coming here to earth including today's reading from Jeremiah which refers to him as a Righteous Branch- justice and righteousness being two of the hallmarks of Jesus' character, teaching and actions.

But as the reading from 1 Thessalonians reminds us, love lies at the heart of Jesus' life and teaching. Jesus taught us that loving God and loving each other is the principal calling of anyone who seeks to be his disciple. As Jesus said in John 13:34-35, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

As we move through Advent towards the celebration of the coming of the Christ child at Christmas, let us explore how we might express that love in word and deed and share the good news of the season. Perhaps we might promote the Christmas Bowl appeal, or buy our friends and

relatives goats or toilets or vegetable gardens from the TEAR catalogue, or share the Christmas story with children and grandchildren so that they may know the true meaning of Christmas, or make a concerted effort to visit those who are isolated or lonely, or make Christmas biscuits for your neighbours, or invite someone who is on their own to your family's Christmas Day meal.

Sharing love brings to life the true blessings of the season. May we be to each other, the blessing that the Thessalonian church was to Paul and his companions Timothy and Silvanus.

Singing - Come, thou long expected ***Jesus, TIS 272***

OR: In faith and hope and love, TIS 628

OR: Brother, sister, let me serve you, TIS 650

Offering

God whose love knows no measure,
What we bring is small,
and the needs of the world are huge.
But we continue to offer what we can,
knowing that you will bless these gifts
and use them
to grow your love and peace
in ways we may never know,
Amen.

Notices

Today is World Aids Day

Dec 2 is the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery.

Dec 3 is the International Day of People with a Disability.

December 5th is International Volunteer Day.



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Prayers for World & Community

(This prayer is from the Act for Peace - Christmas Bowl resources for 2024 and was written by Hannah Staines)

<https://christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/resources>

God of all strength and wisdom,
We pray for those impacted by climate change,
and particularly think of our neighbours
in Indonesia.

For those whose livelihood is impacted
by natural disasters
and unpredictable weather changes.

For those who have been displaced
from their homes and communities.
For those who are rebuilding their lives.

Move in our hearts,
to know what we can do to reach out.
Move in our hearts,
so that we might seek justice
and become better stewards of the earth.
Move in our hearts,
to show compassion, embrace our siblings,
and love our neighbour as ourselves.

Give us the wisdom to be silent
and listen to what they need.
Give us the gift of generosity,
to share what we have with others.
Give us the courage to have hope
and share this hope with our neighbours.
Loving God, you are our hope.
Strengthen us in our time of need. **Amen.**

We pray together then 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 - Christ be my leader TiS 624

OR: We are marching in the light of God TiS 666

Blessing

Embrace us, God of Grace,
as we carry your life and light. .

Come to us, Child of Peace,
as we make space for you in our world.

Accompany us, Spirit of hope,
and bless the work of our hands and hearts.

Go knowing that you are loved
with outrageous abundance,
and share that love, as best you can,
Amen.

Reflection: *Rev. Sandra Houghton*
Retired Minister, Sale

Liturgy & Editor: *Rev. Jennie Gordon*
Shearwater Ministry Team - Cowes

