



## Fourth Sunday in Advent, December 21st, 2025

### The Fig Tree Worship Resource

#### Call to worship & Lighting the Candles



Here we are!  
Gathered in the Advent waiting room.  
Longing for a sign.  
Searching for a whisper of wonder.  
Straining to hear a newborn cry.  
Come, Jesus, come,  
already and not yet,  
into our world, into our hearts.  
And all the people say: **Amen**

We light the candle of hope

We light the candle of peace

We light the candle of joy

We light the candle of love

Into a world of rules and customs  
that often create exclusion and rejection,  
a world where shame and status  
threaten our ability  
to show compassion and mercy,  
we bring this light of love.

*There's a candle-lighting song here you can use  
each week to the tune DIX TiS 314 "As with  
gladness":*

[\*'Light a Candle Bright and Tall' A Hymn for  
Advent | Singing the Sacred\*](#)

#### Acknowledging



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander  
Christian Congress

The Ancient of Days breathed life into this land  
and her peoples. From time beyond our reckoning  
the *(please name the people on whose land you  
gather)* People, the Traditional Custodians, have  
blessed this place through their law and customs,  
their care and life. We pay respects to their Elders  
and leaders past and present, and pray for the

future of their communities. May we walk gently  
and respectfully on this Land.

#### Singing - The King of glory comes TiS 279

OR: Come thou long expected Jesus TiS 272

OR: Come, O God of all the earth, TiS 181



#### Prayer

God of all, Source, Son and Spirit,  
we give you thanks  
for all the ways you come close to us:

In dreams and visions  
and in the mystery of existence.

In the words of ancient texts  
and from the mouths of children.

In the busyness of getting ready  
and the quiet after a storm.

In our grief and our gladness,  
in our waking and our sleeping,  
in our paying attention and drifting off,  
in our birthing and our dying,  
you always come near to us.

Thank you for your undying love,  
more transformative than we can comprehend,  
and for coming to us in Jesus,  
so we might come closer to you.

In the quiet we hold our gratitude for your  
constant presence:

*Keep a time of quiet*

*Our prayer continues with Psalm 80*

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,  
you who lead Joseph like a flock!  
You who are enthroned upon the cherubim,  
shine forth  
before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.

Stir up your might, and come to save us!



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**Restore us, O God;  
let your face shine, that we may be saved.**

O LORD God of hosts,  
how long will you be angry  
with your people's prayers?

You have fed them with the bread of tears  
and given them tears to drink in full measure.

You make us the scorn of our neighbours;  
our enemies laugh among themselves.

**Restore us, O God;  
let your face shine, that we may be saved.**

*Our prayer continues:*

In all our living,  
we have opportunities to choose the way of love,  
the way of compassion, the way of peace,  
and yet, we confess, so often we fail  
and walk a path of hate, exclusion,  
fear and retribution.

In the quiet we bring these times  
and our thoughts and actions to you,  
Asking for forgiveness and a change of heart.  
*(hold a time of quiet)*

When we are faced with situations beyond us,  
God who is love,  
Help us to pause before we act,  
to hold silence before we speak,  
to stay our actions until we can respond in love.

Siblings in Christ, know this,  
that God sent Jesus into the world,  
not to condemn us,  
but so that we might know life in all its fullness.  
We are forgiven, free to live in love,  
**Thanks be to God, Amen.**

### ***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: Isaiah 7: 10-16,  
Matthew: 1: 18-25

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

### ***Reflecting - Rev. Anneke Oppewal***

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In Isaiah 7 we meet King Ahaz. He is caught between a rock and a hard place, between Judah and Aram. His country is under threat from two enemies who would both appreciate his help against the other.

Ahaz however does not budge and keeps to the advice coming from God through Isaiah: not to squander his loyalty to either of them but to remain his own man, trusting that God will be with him. Trusting the promise that before a little boy is to be born to his household, who will be able to distinguish between right and wrong, his enemies will be no more.

In Matthew 1:18-25 Joseph is also between a rock and a hard place. He is engaged to Mary and we are told the couple does not yet live together. But Mary is pregnant, the father unknown, and, according to Deuteronomy 22:20-21, by law this means she could be stoned to death.

As a righteous man Joseph is compelled to follow the laws of God. But he is also a man of compassion, so he decides not to bring an accusation against her but to leave quietly instead.

Then an angel appears to Joseph in a dream and gives him a message: the child in Mary's womb is the promised Emmanuel - God with us - and he will save God's people.

This knowledge does not make Joseph's life any easier but it does shed divine light on his predicament. When Joseph wakes up, he gets out



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of bed with a new resolve that is motivated by his love and trust in God.

Joseph would not have been any more certain than we would be waking up after a vivid dream that this was really a message from God. The fact that he lets the dream inspire him to listen to his inner feelings of compassion and love rather than to follow the law, shows what kind of man he is: a man with his heart and faith in the right place. And that is what keeps Mary and the baby in her womb safe and alive.

Ahaz and Joseph both met the challenge. The challenge of staying true to their faith and close to the heart of God, rather than succumb to pressure from outside or blindly follow law or custom.

What is the dream God has given you? And what is it that challenges you to keep to your faith and trust? Do you believe there is a power out there strong enough to make a change? Seeking to be born in our midst, waiting to make a difference? Like Ahaz did? Like Isaiah did? Like Joseph did?

#### ***Singing - Joseph, your love of life TiS 328***

*(great words but the tune CHRISTE SANCTORUM 1 TiS 246 will fit and is probably better known).*

OR: Let earth and heaven combine TiS 305

#### ***Offering***

All that we have and all that we are belong to you, God who comes to us. Bless these gifts, signs of your abundance and our gratitude, bless them and use them to birth love in your world, in communities, homes and hearts. In Jesus' name, And all the people say: **Amen.**

#### ***Notices***

The celebration of Christmas is a time of joy, and can also be a time of struggle for many reasons. How will your faith community make sure visitors feel safe and welcome when they come to worship with you on Christmas Day? How will you notice and care for those who are grieving, for children

who may not know the ways of church, for those who are lonely or missing loved ones or just a bit wobbly and feeling at odds with all the joy?

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

##### Love

1 Corinthians 13: 4-7 - *The Message* translation:

*If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love.*

*Love never gives up.  
Love cares more for others than for self.  
Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.  
Love doesn't strut,  
Doesn't have a swelled head,  
Doesn't force itself on others,  
Isn't always "me first,"  
Doesn't fly off the handle,  
Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,  
Doesn't revel when others grovel,  
Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,  
Puts up with anything,  
Trusts God always,  
Always looks for the best,  
Never looks back,  
But keeps going to the end.*

*Hold a small space of quiet between each line.  
You might want to light a candle for each one.*

God of all, we pray for your world.

Let your love be known in places of war,  
**birth your love**

in the corridors of power,  
**birth your love**

behind prison bars  
**birth your love**

in places of education and training,



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#### **birth your love**

in the streets of homelessness,  
**birth your love**

in hospitals and clinics  
**birth your love**

in homes that are broken  
**birth your love**

in all that are lost  
**birth your love**

with those who are dying  
**birth your love**

in bushland, ocean and sky  
**birth your love**

in the hearts of all  
**birth your love**

*You might want to invite people  
to add phrases, then use the response...*

We pray together then as Jesus taught us:

#### ***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 - O bless the God of Israel TiS 284***

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OR: Long ago, prophets knew TiS 283  
Or if you can play a YouTube clip, or have the music, - it would  
be great to end with this song:  
Star Child, by Shirely Erena Murray:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQxERztfU5I>

#### ***Blessing***

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Go out from this gathering  
singing the ceaseless song of hope,  
with all you are and in all you do.

And may the carols in the supermarket  
become signs of promise  
and fall gently on your ear this year.

May you see threads of the fabric of peace  
in tinsel trimmed decorations,  
woven through families, communities and nations.

May the jolly red Santas and unseasonal snow  
be signs of outrageous joy.

And may nativity scenes remind you  
that love is born,  
that love is always born.

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

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