



Weekly Worship



Sunday December 3, 2023



This year we are using the Watery Advent Wreath Liturgy through Advent. If you would like to use candles you can find some liturgies online and also here: uniting.church/engage-together-advent-resource-out-now/

Why a Watery Advent Wreath?

Most liturgies for the Advent season are very 'Northern Hemisphere'. The coming of light in the darkness is appropriate when you are in midwinter. But here in Australia, we can think of Advent in terms of what we long and hope for, water! From a cool drink to a drenching summer storm, relief in bushfires, rolling down rapids or diving into the ocean, water is a living symbol.

The First Peoples of this land know the waters; in ceremony and song lines, holding food and cleansing, and as a means of movement and rest. Salty or fresh, part of the body, life force.

For Second Peoples who came across the sea to live here, sent in chains, fleeing in desperation or setting out with hope for a better life, water has been a boundary to cross. A separation from 'home'.

We all grow in water, breaking through when we are born and we are baptised in water, just as Jesus was. We are predominantly made up of water. The average adult human body is 50-65% water. We feel thirsty and our capacities are impaired when we have lost only 2-3% of that volume.

Most of us cling to the coastlines, our lives dictated by where water can be found. Some live at the mercy of droughts and flooding rains. Now this land is in the grip of bushfire season as El Nino reaches a 'strong' intensity, with a scorching 2024 ahead for our home planet. Water is life and at advent we anticipate the coming of God's life amongst us.

So, get your **Watery Advent Wreath** set up. It can be as big or small as your space and sensibility allows, from 5 small glasses to 5 large vases, or use different water vessels for each week. Drape colourful cloth around them, use fairy lights and stars, use your imagination. Pour chilled water if you want it to bead on the glass. Source water from your local rivers, dams, creeks or beaches. Add a drop of food dye to the vessel for a surprise. Pour the water loudly and let it overflow on Christmas Day without ruining the carpet... let it flow!

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Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

One: The Spirit is here

All: **God's hope is with us**

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

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 in hope, we commit ourselves to be people of the covenant; listening, truth telling and seeking justice for all.



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress





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Singing: Lord of creation TiS 626

*OR: in keeping with our Watery Advent Wreath
- In water we grow TiS 494.*



Prayer

*Give an outline of the concept of the **Watery Advent Wreath**, as described on this page.*

One: As we pour the water for our Advent wreath we remember our deep thirst for God's hope.

ALL: We long for your hope, O God

One: Hope that revives us like that first icy cold drink of water gulped down from the fridge when you've trudged home from school on a 36 degree day.

ALL: We long for your hope, O God

One: Hope that transforms us, like drought-breaking rain on parched land.

ALL: We long for your hope, O God

One: Hope that carries us forward in its mystery, as the endless ocean waves that connect us with the rest of the world.

ALL: We long for your hope, O God

One: Please name people and places that are in particular need of God's hope at this time (some examples follow, ...)

- People dealing with long-term illness
- The people of Ukraine
- People facing the loss of their homes
- Long-term unemployed people
- People battling addictions
- Asylum seekers and refugees
- Australia's First Nations people
- People in the Israel/Hamas conflict
- Friends and relatives of missing persons

...

One: Advent God, we worship you with hope.

ALL: We long for your hope, O Go Amen

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Mark 13:24-37

For these words of faith
and for Jesus the Word

Thanks be to God.





Reflecting

Rev. Sandra Houghton

Annie Dillard "You do not have to sit outside in the dark. If, however, you want to look at the stars, you will find that darkness is necessary."

When the whole eastern sea board of the United States and Canada was plunged into darkness by a huge power outage, Dr Reynolds set up his telescope in his front yard in Ohio and invited all his neighbours to come over after dark to view the wonders of the night sky. That night, free from any artificial light, the sky was a deep, deep dark black. All the galaxies were in plain view and the sky was alive with wonders. It was a night for seeing the stars as they were meant to be seen. In the time of blackout, Dr Reynolds saw an opportunity to provide his neighbours with a time of celebration, joy, learning and fellowship out of what could have been a time of fear and misery.

The Advent wreath came into being as one of the ways that humans sought to deal positively with darkness - the deep darkness of winter prior to the coming of artificial light.

It comes from a custom older than the church itself, going back to pre-Christian times. After the harvest was in and as the nights got longer and longer, and the weather colder and colder, the rural people of northern Europe would take one wheel off the farm wagon. They would lay the wheel on its side. Work would stop. Instead, they would take time in the stillness and quiet of the very dark night sky to linger and look for stars, to light fires and candles, and light up the darkness of the long night.

It's one of many ancient customs that the church took from pagan traditions and gave new meaning. Now the Advent wreath is a symbolic way of helping us focus on the meaning of the Advent season. It is lit each week to encourage

us to take time to reflect on the significance of the coming of the Christ child and to prepare in our hearts for the celebration of Christmas.

The reassuring light of the candles on the Advent wreath reminds us of the light that no darkness can put out.

The irony is that a symbol that was once associated with quiet and stillness is now surrounded by so much frantic busyness. The problem with this is that something precious can be lost. That is the opportunity for reflection, preparation and expectation.

Christmas is a mysterious and awesome event, worthy of pondering and reflecting upon. For it is God's mysterious way of unexpectedly bringing light into the world in the form of a human baby. Maybe we need to recapture some of that expectancy that we had as children when we would eagerly count off the days to Christmas and enjoy all the rituals of the season.

Expectation is part of what is precious about the season of Advent. For in Advent and Christmas we are anticipating and celebrating an event that changed the world and one which is important to our faith, as we celebrate the coming of Christ into the world. Jesus came into the world bringing the light of God to the darkness of people's lostness and despair. It happened in a totally unexpected way, not at all in the way anticipated by those who had been praying for the Messiah to come. It reminds us that God can come into our darkness in totally unexpected ways: in creative ways, breaking through the hurts and losses and shining the light of God's love.

Jesus came into the world to teach humanity God's love and forgiveness, and he demonstrated that love with every aspect of his life and death.

Reflecting continues

Weekly Worship. Season of Advent 2023. Presbytery of Gippsland, Fig Tree Worship Resource



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



Weekly Worship



Advent 1

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Reflecting continues

Surely that is worth pondering? Surely that is worth stepping aside from the busyness of the season to anticipate with joy? For something new is preparing to be born, nurtured on a vision of a God-filled world, sustained by the knowledge of God's past faithfulness, and consumed by the fire of God's love for the earth, a new incarnation is coming to this old world. It promises to come to remake us as well.

And we have something else to ponder in this Advent season. This is something that our Gospel reading reminds us of in Jesus' teaching about his return to earth in judgement. For we are people who live in creative tension- the tension between the long-told story of Jesus' birth and the long-anticipated coming of Christ again; the tension between the promise of a restored and redeemed world and the pain that accompanies such transformation, and the tension of living in the Christian community as it waits.

Sometimes waiting can be difficult. For many in the Christian community the period of waiting for Christ's return has been so long that any anticipation has dissipated. It's hard to keep anticipating something wonderful coming over many years.

But our calling is to be those who continue to live in expectancy; to be those this Advent who still have hearts open to the wonder of God's revelation both in the first birth and incarnation at Bethlehem all those years ago, and in his coming again- which we anticipate with joy for we so long to see him again. For he is the one who loves us and shows us God's unexpected and amazing love and forgiveness.

So let us live in expectation, open to wonder, open to love, open to joy, open to hope, open to peace.

And may we feed that expectation with ritual- whether it be in lighting candles, or pouring water, or decorating trees, or unwrapping nativity scenes or perhaps even making one, or in telling the stories to our children and grandchildren or in singing the carols, or in silent meditation, doing all that we are able to keep alive this good news and this expectation in our hearts.

Singing: Light one candle TiS 286

*OR: If your congregation collect funds at this time for Act For Peace's Christmas Bowl Appeal, you might like to use this song: **An***

empty bowl, uplifted hands:

revdocbob.blogspot.com/2013/11/a-hymn-for-christmas-bowl-appeal.html?sref=fb





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Advent 1
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Offering

God of abundant love, as we commence this Advent time, help us to be bearers of hope. Hope that holds us in the waiting, hope that connects us to each other. Bless these gifts and bless our small deeds, that they may bring hope where it is needed.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Notices

Today is the International Day of People with Disability. More info here: www.idpwd.com.au/

Nov 5th is International Volunteer Day (hands up who is a Volunteer amongst us!)

Nov 9th is International Anti-corruption Day.

Responding: Prayers for World & Community

God whose love flows without measure, abundantly and freely,

we pray for those who thirst;
for clean drinking water
for an end to violence
for relief from pain
for medical help
for hope to hold on to
for reunion with loved ones
for education, equality, inclusion
for adequate housing
for reconciliation
for justice
for peace

You may like to invite others to add to this list or simply hold a time of silence.

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 for ever. Amen.**

Singing: Come down, O love Divine TIS 398

*OR: Come, O Come Emmanuel - TIS 265
There is an alternate version by Sue Wickham
set to the same tune, but with more modern lyrics
and ideas. See the Singing from the Lectionary
Facebook Group for lyrics.*

Or: Sent forth by God's blessing - TIS 531





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Advent 1
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Blessing

As you wait, and watch, and wonder,
go to be vessels of Living Water;
shaped by the Source,
filled by the Son,
and blessed by the Spirit,
Holy Three-in-One,
Holy One-in-Three

and may this life flow through you,
to others that you meet,
blessing them with hope,
this day and always,

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 hope of Advent,
flow through us, from you.

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