



Advent 1 Peace

Worship@Home November 29, 2020

Gathering and Lighting the Advent candles

This week we light a candle for Peace that will travel with us until Christmas Day.

Call to worship

In the evening,
we await, watching the fading year.
In the middle of the night,
we await, peering into the darkness
for hope.
In pre-light cockcrow,
we watch, hopeful of new birth,
new life, a new day.
In the Dawn,
we arrive, the sun in our eyes:
watching the horizon.

God of all dawning, cockcrow,
midnight and evening,
we arrive this Advent,
weary in heart and soul from a year of loss.
We arrive at this Advent
with the exhaustion of pandemic worry.
We arrive in the Advent
as we are: your people,
awaiting the birth of Love
again in our world.

Acknowledging

We await with the First Peoples for a time when this land will know healing and reconciliation: we pay our respects to the First People, their Elders past, present and those emerging to lead the way. This is a sign of Hope.



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

Singing: Come down, O love divine TIS 398

Come down, O Love divine,
seek now this soul of mine,
and visit it with your own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
within my heart appear
and kindle it, your holy flame bestowing.

There let it freely burn,
till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes, in its heat consuming;
and let your glorious light
shine ever on my sight
and clothe me round,
the while my path illuming.

Let holy charity
my outer garment be,
and lowliness become my inner clothing:
true lowliness of heart,
which takes the humbler part
and for its own shortcomings
weeps with loathing.

And so the yearning strong
with which the soul will long
shall far outpass the power of human telling;
for none can guess its grace
till we become the place
in which the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

'Bianco da Siena



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Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



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Prayer

O Lord, you are our parent.
We are the clay,
you are our potter,
as we are the work of your hand.

May Peace greet us in this time of awaiting...

When the heavens tear apart
and we see the glory of all creation,
we know we are but the dust of the clay.
When the heavens tear apart
and we see the glory of all your works,
we know we are but the dust of the clay.
When the heavens tear apart
and we see the beauty of all your people,
we know we are but the dust of the clay.

And, so we make our confession:
and say to God, the potter,
the things that need saying ...

May your hands mould us into shape.
May your fingerprints leave their sign on us.
May your creativity, restore, redeem & renew.
Sin is forgiven: Thanks be to God.

Listening

Read: Isaiah 64:1-9
Read: Mark 13:24-37

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

Reflecting

Rev. Jennie Gordon

The reading from Isaiah opens with a cry filled with deep longing for the presence of God beside us; *"Oh, that you would tear open the heavens and come down."* Now, I don't know about you, but I've had enough of major



cataclysmic events this year and I'd prefer a gentler approach to Christmas for 2020. No rending of the heavens, please.

If you stay with this reading, it becomes tender and personal, the anguished cry is replaced by a claim of close connection, of family relationship; *"Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand."* You can hear the yearning, the longing, the calling out in the dark night of despair from a people in exile, returning to the ruins of their temple and their lives. Calling for the presence of their God who has promised to save them: save them from themselves and from their lost dreams and lack of faith.

We all know people who are calling out in the night-times of their fear and struggles, calling out for rescue, for relief, for release. It may well

Reflection continues P3





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Reflection continues

have been us at some time in our lives. It may well be us, now, resonating with this longing for the sure and strong presence of God-with-us to calm the storm, heal the hurt and offer words of forgiveness and hope.

As a midwife, I worked night-shift for many years. More babies are naturally born in the night hours because, as a species, that's when our predators would also be asleep. Night shift nurses wear soft shoes and try not to talk too loudly. Some parts of the hospital are dark, and corridors are dimly lit. One of the moments that happened over and over again in the birthing rooms, comes to me now as I dwell in the readings for this week. There's a stage in the process of giving birth, when you can feel so overwhelmed that you lose it a little. Anticipation meets agony, courage and coping fail and you shut your eyes tight and try to block it all out.

No way back, no way forward, no way. When this began to happen to a woman in my care, I would gently touch her hand and say, "Open your eyes and look at me." When she did, our eyes would connect. I would meet that fear with calm assurance. "It's going to be ok. We can do this together." Most times we did, and most times it was more than ok, it was, well, it was miraculous.

As a minister I've had similar experiences at the bedside of those who are dying, mustering the mysterious presence of angels to guide them home. We are not alone, in our coming or in our going. According to Teilhard de Chardin, our quest for *meaning* might be a quest for *meeting*, our need to find might be more a need to be *found*, to know that down the road, there is someone to meet us and to welcome us home. God-with-us.

The writer of the gospel of Mark takes us into the darkness of waiting, of not knowing, and the necessity of staying awake and being attentive

to the signs of hope around us. Today's gospel passage, as in the reading from Isaiah, begins with irregular and disturbing cosmic events, but then zooms in to the hope contained in the ordinary and tender budding branch of a fig tree with the promise of a fruitful season. We are called to be the doorkeeper, on watch, standing strong for those who sleep, waiting for the master to return. Keeping awake.

Christmas is the story of the opening of heaven, at the same time both cataclysmic and tender. This season of Advent invites us to prepare, to be ready, to be attentive.

We are encouraged to open our lives to the signs of God-with-us, in our midst already, like the new leaves on the fig tree, signalling that all creation waits with us. We are called to live with eyes wide open filled with a calm assurance for those in the darkness and offering the candle of peace.

In this time of Advent, in this year of cataclysmic events and tender signs emerging, be confident that the gaze of God-with-us is holding you in calm assurance.

Amen.



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Prayer: when will you come

(Mark 13:24-37)

will it be in the evening
when the rush of day
seeps out through pores of rest
and sounds are muffled
and shadows dance
and there is little time

will it be at midnight
when door locks guard
against undesirable intrusions
when what is done is done
and what is not can wait
and sleep summons with
a familiar maternal tone

will it be at cockcrow
first glimpses of possibility
when rumour beckons reality
and plans are made
and praises lifted
for the gift of hours

or will it be at dawn
precipice between then and now
when gathering glow
touches and unfolds
an unmarked day

when will you come
because the night is long

²Jennie Gordon

Responding: Prayers for World and Community

(Using Isaiah 64 v 1-9)

Tear open the heavens God.
We come toward the end of a tumultuous year.
Our heavens are singed
with the smell of bushfire.
Our heavens are tinged
by the infection of our very breath.
Our mountains quake and our climate
bears the effects of the way we live.
It has been the toughest time O God
and our community joins in lament.

AND YET, you have shown us ways
to come through in new and different ways.
Our hearts are joined even in the dispersing and
we have enjoyed a collective pause.

We grieve the fragmentation and the
hollowness of a world
that is unaware of its longing for you.

We watch as the poor and marginalised
among us wear the worst
of the consequences of our wanton waste
and neglect.

AND YET, we are the clay upon the wheel.
When we are pliable,
you mould us into new vessels
filled with your love and your blessings
to share lusciously with our communities.

We are so aware of the transience of life,
the short time we have in this world
to be your Body here and now.
Sometimes it feels like
we can no longer see your face
and that we rely on our sacraments
of re-membering.

Prayer continues P5

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Prayer continues

AND YET, again and again
you reveal yourself to us,
sometimes through each other,
sometimes through your Word,
other times
through the Sacraments we share.
And we are renewed and recreated
into new shapes.

We are the clay, you are our potter
and we are all the work of your hand.
We bear your thumbprint,
identified as wonderful
and made afresh
by the working of your fingers.
We can rely on you to care for us,
to care for others,
and we name some of them in our hearts
in our concern for them

*(gentle space here to think of
those for whom we are concerned).*

Yes, we are all your people,
you know our name and call us beloved.
We are gently and lovingly
held and caressed
into new and beautiful works of art.
Praise to you, our awesome God, Amen.

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.**

Passing the peace

If your community is gathering face to face:
turn to your neighbour and see them:
then offer a gesture of peace.
If your community is meeting at home:
ring somebody now and share the peace
of God.
May the Peace of Christ be with you.
And also with you.

Offering

Bring your offering to the place where you are
worshipping.
May the Peace of God fill these gifts to bring
Peace to others this Advent season.

Notices

A visit to the Uniting Church Synod website can
keep you up-to-date with the life of the Church
across the State:
<https://victas.uca.org.au>

Singing: O Come, O Come Emmanuel TiS 265

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, O come, great Lord of might
who to the tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times did give the law
in cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

Hymn continues P6





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Hymn continues

O come, O key of David, come,
and open wide our heavenly home;
make safe the way that leads on high
and close the path to misery.
Rejoice! rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, O branch of Jesse, free
your own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell your people save
and give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, O dayspring,
come and cheer
our spirits by your advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night
and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

³John Mason VENI EMMANUEL

Re-Collection

This first week of Advent opens a period of expectant waiting. After a year of waiting, how will you await the birth of Love this Advent?

Blessing

The sun may be darkened,
the moon may give no light
And even if the stars begin falling;
Whether Evening, midnight,
cock crowe or dawn,
we will await the Lord,
the birth of Love in our world.
Leave here in the assurance and hope
that Love is born.
Therefore, keep awake.

*Rev. Jennie Gordon (Reflection),
Rev. Dcn. Wendy Elson, Rev. Ian Turnidge.*

*Shearwater Congregations: Toora: Fish Creek:
Foster: Tarwin Lower: Inverloch: Wonthaggi:*



¹Used with Permission CCLI 241 739 Bianco da Siena d.1434 tr Richard Frederick Littledale DOWN AMPNEY

²(Poem by Jennie Gordon, from Dad & Daughter, 2012)

³Anon., Latin, 18th cent. or earlier. based on Antiphons from 9th cent. or earlier, tr. John Mason VENI EMMANUEL





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Daily Devotions for Advent-November 30 to December 5, 2020

MONDAY

Phrase: Restore us (Psalm 80: 3)

Wonder: Like gazing upon a Sun rise, what would it be for you to imagine gazing into the smiling face of God?

Meditation: "When you gonna make up your mind? When are you going to love **you**, as much as **I** do?" (Tori Amos: Little Earthquakes EMI) You are loved: "I am loved by God": an affirmation in your day's awaiting.

You: How might your perspective change if you allowed yourself to feel loved by God?

WEDNESDAY

Phrase: Tear open (Is 64:1)

Wonder: How does God break apart the barriers between us?

Meditation: God of promised presence, sometimes you feel so far away. Come close to us in this Advent waiting, tear open the barriers that prevent us from seeing you, in the world, in each other and within ourselves. in the name of the coming Christ child, Amen.

You: How do you respond to this plea from Isaiah for God's presence?

FRIDAY

Phrase: Keep awake (Mark 13 v 37)

Wonder: What does it mean to await the coming when Jesus is already here?

Meditation: Already and not yet God. You are present but we await you. Help us seek you in everyday ordinariness, present among us in so many ways. Yet still coming, Amen.

You: Wise ones still seek the Christ in every moment.

TUESDAY

Phrase: Wait for the revealing (1 Cor 1:7)

Wonder: In this Advent waiting time, what is mine to do in preparation for the coming One?

Meditation: "By repentance we are made clean; by compassion we are made ready; and by yearning for God we are made worthy." (Julian of Norwich). We come to be cleansed and prepared in love for your revealing. Open us to new visions of you. We are ready, Amen.

You: Where does my compassion lead me and what is mine to do in the revealing?

THURSDAY

Phrase: Come down (Isaiah 64: 1)

Wonder: And if God was with you enjoying a cup of tea, what is your conversation today?

Meditation: Some think God 'comes down' to us in epic moments. Often the "God" moment is a glimpse in the everyday: if only we were attentive to notice it.

You: what if today as you walk to the mailbox you might be open to a sense of Christ walking with you?

SATURDAY

Phrase: Not lacking (1 Cor 1:7)

Wonder: What does it mean, that we have been given enough in this waiting time?

Meditation: Giver of all gifts, help me to see your grace in the lives of those around me, and to know that, together, we are not lacking in this waiting time. Keep my eyes open to the tender signs of your presence. Amen

You: What spiritual gifts do you hold and how do you bring them to those around you?

