



Advent 2 Hope

Worship@Home December 6, 2020

Gathering and Lighting the Advent candles

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" Mark 1:2-3.

We light the candles of peace and hope, fragile flames dancing in the breezes, bobbing like paper boats on the stormy seas of change.

Here is where you are,
and here we are together.
Come, the way is being prepared.

Call to worship

Psalm 85:8-13

Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.

Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.

The LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.

Righteousness will go before him, and will make a path for his steps.

Acknowledging

Imagine the earth beneath the floor, beneath your feet. We are on sacred land that holds the stories of feet who were one with this land long, long before Europeans came. We honour the First Peoples as traditional custodians of the lands and the waters that surround us. We pay respects to elders whose stories belong here in the past, to those of the present and to those who come after and commit ourselves to walking together in justice and truth.



Singing: Comfort TiS 647

**Comfort, comfort all my people with the comfort of my Word.
Speak it tender to my people:
all your sins are taken away.**

Though your tears be rivers running,
though your tears be an ocean full,
though you cry with the hurt of living:
comfort, comfort.

Every valley shall be lifted,
every mountain shall be low,
every rough place will be smoother:
comfort, comfort.

**Comfort, comfort all my people with the comfort of my Word.
Speak it tender to my people:
all your sins are taken away.**

Though your eyes see only darkness,
though your eyes can see no light,
though your eyes see pain and sorrow:
comfort, comfort.

Every night will have its morning,
every pain will have an end,
every burden will be lightened:
comfort, comfort.

**Comfort, comfort all my people with the comfort of my Word.
Speak it tender to my people:
all your sins are taken away.**

¹Robin Mann





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Prayer

Today we hear the reading from the start of the gospel of Mark. The beginning of the good news... the cry of the prophet.

God of beginnings,
we see you in the sunrise,
in the caterpillar,
in the opening bars of a song,
in the prophets who prepared the way
and in a baby,
promised but yet to be born
in a strange and unlikely place.

We are thankful
for those who have cried out,
calling us to turn around
to let go of old ways of seeing,
to notice your new beginnings
and to wonder at how they unfold
into extravagant life
and unbelievable possibility.

For the times when we have closed our ears
and our minds to the cries of the prophets
showing us the way,
preferring to listen to other voices
choosing to travel
different and destructive paths.
Forgive us, God of beginnings.

For the times when we have preferred
to stay in the darkness of doubt
and the cocoon of our own delusions
rather than face the uncertainty
of your offer of liberty and life.
Forgive us, God of beginnings.

For the times when we have kept silent
too scared or too slow to speak your truth
even when you put the words
into our mouths
Forgive us, God of beginnings.

(time of quiet to bring your heart to God)

*2 Peter 3:9a The Lord is not slow about his promise,
as some think of slowness, but is patient with you.*

Hear this; Our God is a God of beginnings.

Today is a new beginning,
what we have been is now in the past,
what we will become has yet to be revealed, for
now, know this:

We are all forgiven, healed and held
as God's beloved children:
bundles of extravagant life
and unbelievable possibility.

Thanks be to God, Amen.

Listening

Read Isaiah 40: 1-11

Read Mark 1: 1-8

For these words of faith
and Jesus the Word:

Thanks be to God.





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Reflecting

Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson

I wonder what it is that you hope. Do you hope for love and laughter? For economic prosperity? For a happy family?

When we hope, we look forward, we yearn for something, even when it appears unlikely or even impossible. Many of the birth narratives in the Bible allude to a strange hope, an against the odds, “they won’t be expecting that!” sort of hope. Hannah, Elizabeth, Mary, Sarah even Hagar. Their stories contain a strangeness that tells of an unpredictable God who delights in the unexpected. The phrase that comes to mind for me is, “Well,.. what do you know!” It is hope that contains the mystery of the not-yet-known.

Hope seems challenged sometimes. Will we be able to hold onto it even when all seems lost? This week’s lectionary readings lead us in the direction of this strange hope. There is a yearning among God’s people and the pathway has been opened up, flattened even!

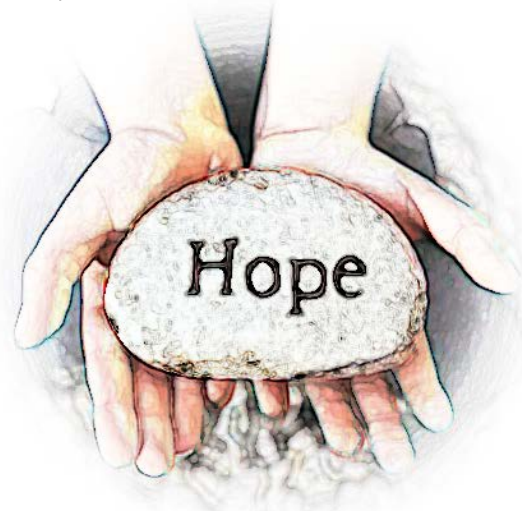
All but a strange few of the pushbike riders amongst us love the flat bits. When I went on my first Great Vic Bike Ride, I took a group of students with me from school. One of the teachers made us a little flip book with alternative words and phrases to use instead of “hill”. Undulation, rise, incline, hillock, summit... there were so many words that sounded better (and easier) than hill. In the end though, they were all hard work. In the Isaiah passage, the hills, the speedbumps and any obstructions are gone and the path is open. Something is going to happen, something is in preparation. The anticipation is building. Like bushfires and electrical storms, we can read the signs of impending impact.

2 Peter 3:8-15a gives us a little shift. Prepare, but then be at peace and trust God. Ready yourself, turn (repent) from the things which distract you and focus on living well. But do prepare. “In accordance with his promise, we wait...”

The Psalm (85:1-2, 8-13) tells us that “righteousness and peace will kiss each other”. Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet, faithfulness springing up from the ground and righteousness looking down. Righteousness goes before him, making a path. This righteousness becomes the path then, (another word for righteousness is justice). Righteousness will flatten out its path and become a highway.

My hope then is tied up in justice and peace. Let us prepare the way for Jesus to ‘enter in’ by practicing steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, peace and love. Perhaps we will give the kissing a miss because it’s hard to do from a socially appropriate distance! Let us prepare the way for Jesus to enter into our own lives, but also into the lives of our faith communities and the wider community until it is more infectious than a virus.

Prepare the way of the Lord and make straight the paths.





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Responding: Prayers for World and Community

“Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.”

Psalm 85

We come to pray: to listen for the messenger:
the voice in the wilderness calling
Prepare, Prepare, Prepare:

Make a way for the lost: Bring Comfort O God

To those who feel they have lost a year:
The final year VCE students
The first year university and vocational students
Those recently bereaved who have been even more isolated than usual.

Make a pathway for the sick: Bring Comfort O God

May all health care workers who have borne the strain of his pandemic know relief and rest:
May those who have endured the Corona Virus continue to find and experience healing and recovery.
May the ones who have received challenging diagnosis find treatment and help.

Make a road for our leaders Bring Comfort O God

From the responsibility we owe to each other in leading our day-to-day lives, help us prepare the way for the Christ Child:

For the ones who lead our local communities:
the councillors, small business owners,
teachers, librarians, council staff, district nurses;
the people who clean our gutters and mow the lawns: sustain their focus and work for all.

For our State and Federal leaders: that they may continue to work for the health and welfare of all

people, striving to be and focus on the Bigger issues rather than petty power plays. Sustain, refresh and inspire their leadership, that it may reflect integrity and grace.

Make a way in the wilderness Bring Comfort O God

Open hearts this Advent, Loving God,
that comfort may be made real
in the simple and practical acts of serving our neighbours.
May we reach out with the Love of Christ.

Make a pathway to the door of Hope
as we pray as Jesus taught his disciples:

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.**





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Passing the peace

Do you know someone who is struggling to find hope in their lives? Reach out with a flower, a smile, a message, a prayer written on a paper boat. Passing on the peace of God that you carry within you multiplies it, makes a way in the wilderness of someone else's lostness and blesses you in the giving. Pass the peace.

May the Peace of Christ be with you all
And also with you.

Offering

Loving God,
receive the gifts we bring
money, time and talents
and use them
to bring good news to the broken
new life to the lost
and to make a pathway for your love
in Jesus' name, Amen.

Notices

How did you find the daily devotions for last week? Is there a new thought or idea that you would like to share? You can email Jennie at pastoral.ucagipps@gmail.com or find someone close to you and chat over a cuppa (in a Covid-safe way). We hope that you enjoy this next week of daily devotions for Advent from the Shearwater Ministry Team.

*Who will you sing the next song for?
Is there a particular person, or people,
place or nation that needs a blessing of hope?
Is it for you also? Yes, it is...
Hold all this in your heart as you sing the prayer.*

Singing: Come to be our hope O Jesus TIS 688

Come to be our hope, O Jesus,
come to set our people free.
From oppression, come, release us,
you alone give liberty.

Come release from every prison
those who suffer in our land.
In your love we find the reason
still to live and understand.

Come to build your new creation;
show the way of servanthood;
give new life to every nation,
changing evil into good.

Come and open our tomorrow
for a kingdom now so near.
Take away all human sorrow,
give us hope against our fear.

²Jaci Maraschin





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Re-Collection

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus the Christ and his righteousness and justice.

Blessing

Hear what God the Lord will speak,
for he will speak peace to his people,
to his faithful,
to those who turn to him in their hearts.

Psalm 85:8

Keep on walking the path
through whatever wilderness you encounter,
listening for the words of the prophets
and tuning your steps
to the heart sounds of the earth,

and may you find yourself
in the company
of the Prince of Peace,
always and ever, Amen.

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

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



¹TIS 647 Comfort, comfort all my people Used with Permission CCLI 241 739 .i Robin Mann 1949- .k DOROTHY
²TIS 688 Come to be our hope, O Jesus Used with Permission CCLI 241 739 .i Jaci Maraschin alt. .k VEM , JESUS Marcilio de Oliveira Filho (1989)





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Daily Devotions for Advent - December 7 to December 12, 2020

MONDAY

Phrase: "Comfort, O Comfort my people" (Is 40:1)

Wonder: After a year of the pain of isolation, can you be open today to receive this promised comfort?

Meditation: The tender voice of God calls life to the people. It calls to a new pathway to a new day.

You: Can you watch the grass today? Watch to see the little world there: whisper a prayer of thanks

WEDNESDAY

Phrase: Prepare the way (Isaiah 40:3 & Mark 1:3)

Wonder: In what way can I make way for the coming of the Christ amongst us?

Meditation: God who dares to come amongst us, take away all those mountains of excuses, and valleys of despair that distract me from your love. Let my hands be ready and my heart be open. Let the pathway lead straight to you.

You: Could you send a card today to someone who would not expect one, offering peace and hope?

FRIDAY

Phrase: Make a path (Mark 1 v 3)

Wonder: Perhaps speed-bumps are easier for me to create than wide open pathways.

Meditation: Make way! Make Way! Open to me the paths of your righteousness and justice.

You: May I open them to others also.

TUESDAY

Phrase: Speak tenderly (Is 40 v 2)

Wonder: Do I hear the tenderness in God? Do others hear tenderness in me?

Meditation: I long for your tenderness, gentle God. I long to share it with others.

You: This asks a lot of me!

THURSDAY

Phrase: Do not Fear (Psalm 85)

Wonder: If the Angel of the Lord said to you "Do not Fear", would you dare believe?

Meditation: With every fear today, 'I lift it to the God of Love: and seek to hold that promise.'

You: when the wobbly 'fear' moment arrives in your day, breathe in the presence of God: breathe out the fear.

SATURDAY

Phrase: Cry out (Isaiah 40:6)

Wonder: Why should I cry out, when my breath blows away with the flowers in the wind?

Meditation: Let the words of my mouth make a straight path for others to hear, a path to hope and wholeness, and let me hear them also.

You: Get you up to a high mountain, or make a phone call or send an email, and release words of wonder into the world.

