



## WODEN VALLEY UNITING CHURCH

10.00 a.m. Worship 15 December 2024



**Leader:** Joan Pratt

**Music:** Brendan O'Loughlin

**Prayers:** Libby Coates

**Reader:** Merrelin Robbins

**Technical:** John Schmidt, Bill Bogar

**Morning Tea:** Carolyn Curnow, Sue Baglow

### WE GATHER AS PEOPLE OF GOD

**The gong sounds, calling us to attention**

**The Prelude**

*The first and second Advent candles are lit.*

#### **Acknowledgement of First Peoples**

We acknowledge that we live, work and worship on the land of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples. They have made this land sacred as we seek to make our lives sacred. We honour their elders – past, present and emerging – and commit to working for understanding, respect and justice for all.

#### **Prayer of approach**

Loving God,

Thank you for your presence here with us this day.

Thank you that you always welcome us, accept us and love us in every season of life.

Thank you for this Advent season of preparation and waiting.

Help us to open our hearts to you this day and help us to bring our whole, unfiltered, honest selves before you now. **AMEN**

**Hymn** - TiS 161 Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord!

## Welcome and Introduction

### Advent Liturgy - Justice for all

Jesus the Christ, we seek you through our Advent journey. Jesus, Bread of Life, we pray for the hungry. Jesus, Living Water, we pray for the thirsty. Teach us that what we do for others, we do for you and show us where and how justice for all is part of your design of the world.

Jesus the Christ, we wait for you.

**Jesus the Christ, we welcome you.**

Longing for food, many are hungry.  
Longing for water, many still thirst.  
Make us your bread, broken for others,  
Shared until all are fed.

*Christ be our light!  
Shine in our hearts,  
Shine through the darkness.  
Christ, be our light!  
Shine in your Church, gathered today.*

We will light a candle for Justice in our world,

**For the divine spark that resides within us and all people.**

*The third candle is lit.*

### Passing the Peace

Deep peace of the running wave to you  
Deep peace of the flowing air to you  
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you  
Deep peace of the shining stars to you  
Deep peace of the Son of peace to you     (*From the Iona Community*)

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with you!

**And also with you.**

## WE REFLECT ON THE WORD FOR OUR TIME

**Isaiah 12:2-6**

I trust you to save me, Lord, God,  
and I won't be afraid.  
My power and my strength come from you  
and you have saved me.  
With great joy, your people will get water  
from the well of victory.  
At that time you will say "Our Lord, we are thankful,  
and we worship only you.  
We will tell the nations how glorious you are  
and what you have done.  
Because of your wondrous deeds  
we will sing your praises everywhere on the earth.  
Sing, people of Zion! Celebrate the greatness  
of the holy Lord of Israel.  
God is here to help you.

**HYMN** Here to celebrate God's loving *Please stay seated.*

1. Here to celebrate God's loving,  
in this moment called to share,  
Partners in love's gracious purpose,  
God invites us all to care.

2. Here to celebrate God's working,  
there's a task for everyone;  
none is greater, none is smaller;  
just love's service to be done.

*Hang out the hallelujahs,  
hang out a loud amen.  
love is God's final word in Christ,  
A love that knows no end.*

3. Here to celebrate God's goodness,  
here to listen, here to pray;  
sent from worship into service'  
Called to live Christ's loving way.

*By Colin Gibson. No 58 in Hope is our Song*

### **Philippians 4:4-8**

Paul writes to the church in Philippi: Always be glad because of the Lord! I will say it again: be glad. Always be gentle with others. The lord will soon be here. Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything. With thankful hearts, offer up your prayers and requests to God. Then, because you belong to Jesus Christ, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel. Finally, my friends, keep your minds on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly and proper.

### **Luke 3:7-18**

John's baptism became the 'in thing' and people flocked out to be baptised by him. John was not convinced by them though, and bellowed, "You slippery bunch of snakes! What makes you think that running down here for a quick wash will get you off scot free when the judgment comes? You've got to walk the walk. Show by your actions that you've turned your lives around as you say you have. And don't go thinking that you've got the inside running just because you can trace your family tree back to Abraham. I'm telling you straight: descendants of Abraham are thick on the ground and, at the snap of a finger, God could turn these rocks into a few more. Family trees count for nothing. It is what sort of fruit the tree bears that matters. If the fruit is rubbish, God will have no hesitation in wielding the axe, cutting the tree off at the ground and tossing it on the fire."

That got their attention!

"What should we do then?" they asked him.

John replied, "Live differently. If you have two coats and someone else has none, then share. If you have food, do the same again – share. That's the sort of thing you should do."

Even some of the people who collected taxes for the Roman occupation forces came out to be baptised. "Teacher, what should we do?" they asked.

John replied, "Don't rip anybody off. Collect only what the law prescribes and no more."

Some members of the security forces came too and asked, "What about us? What should we do?" "No stand-over tactics and no protection rackets," John replied. "No intimidation or throwing your weight around to extort money out of people. You get paid your wages – be satisfied with that."

John's activities struck a chord with the deep yearning for a national saviour, and people began to speculate that perhaps John might be the one who God had chosen. John was quick to hose down such ideas, saying, "I'm only baptising you with water. The One who is coming is way out of my league – the chance to polish his boots would be more than I could aspire to. When he gets started, it won't be just water that he'll be plunging you into. He'll baptise you with the Holy Spirit

and fire. He's ready to start with his flame thrower in hand. He'll release an uncontrollable fire into the dry bushland of your lives, completely incinerating the rubbish and germinating the good seeds that lie in wait for that day."

John made a lot of speeches like that. He was constantly on the job, getting the word out, bringing the people up to speed with the good news about what God was doing.

*Translation by Nathan Nettleton [www.laughingbird.net](http://www.laughingbird.net)*

For the word of God in Scripture **Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ**

## **Reflection**

### **Music for personal reflection**

## **WE RESPOND TO THE WORD**

**Hymn TiS 409** O breath of life come sweeping through us

### **Offering**

### **Prayers of the People**

We cannot merely pray to you, O God, to end war;  
For we know that You have made the world in a way that people must find their own path to peace within themselves and with their neighbours.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end starvation;  
For You have already given us the resources with which to feed the entire world, if we would only use them wisely.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to root out prejudice;  
For You have already given us eyes with which to see the good in all people, if we would only use them rightly.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end despair;  
For You have already given us the power to clear away slums and to give hope, if we would only use our power justly.

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end disease;  
For You have already given us great minds with which to search out cures and healing, if we would only use them constructively.

Therefore we pray to You instead, O God, for strength, determination and will power,  
To do instead of just pray,  
To become instead of merely to wish.

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Eternal Spirit,  
Source of all that is and ever shall be,  
Loving Parent in whom we discern heaven,  
May knowledge of your holiness inspire all peoples,**

**And may your commonwealth of peace and freedom flourish on earth  
Until all of humankind heed your call to justice and compassion.**

**May we find the bread that we need for today,  
And for the hurts we cause one another  
May we be forgiven in the same measure that we forgive.  
In times of trial and temptation, help us to be strong;  
When life seems overwhelming, help us to endure;  
And thus from the yoke of sin deliver us.  
May you reign in the power of human love,  
Now and forever.  
Amen.**

*Translation by Tom Hall in the New Zealand prayer book.*

## **WE GO OUT INTO THE WORLD**

**HYMN TiS 687** God gives us a future

### **Blessing**

Go now and rejoice in the Lord always.  
Do not be afraid or worried about anything, but in everything trust God and pray.  
Bear fruits worthy of repentance, sharing what you have, valuing justice and being gentle with all.  
And may God rejoice over you with gladness; May Christ renew you with his love. And may the Holy Spirit give you peace beyond understanding to guard your hearts and minds in Christ.

**We go in peace to love and serve the Lord. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN**

### **Postlude**

*Extinguish the candles.*

### *References*

CCLI licence #546647;

[www.churchofscotland.org.uk](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk);

<https://laughingbird.net/index.php/occasion/b37/2024-05-05/>

<https://www.billloader.com/LkAdvent3.htm>

## **'This week' at Woden Valley Uniting Church**

*Notices and announcements*

*Significant birthdays, anniversaries or events*

### **Fellowship**

*Morning tea will now be served.*

*You are invited to share in a time of fellowship and discussion.*

