

Woden Valley Uniting Church



21 December 2025

Advent 4



Jesus practised radical inclusion! All are welcome here.

WE GATHER AS PEOPLE OF GOD

The Gong is struck three times.

Prelude (*a time for quiet preparation - please be seated*). **O Come, O come, Immanuel**

Acknowledgement of First Peoples.

Gathering Hymn: O Come All Ye Faithful, verses 1 & 7.

Prayer¹

Behold! a teenage girl is pregnant with
the God who knit her in her own mother's womb,
**strange signs from a strange God
who upturns expectations.**
She said yes to divine revolution
even though it meant social condemnation,
**strange signs from a strange God
who upturns expectations.**
God's Spirit stokes subversive dreams in us
to help us defy the status quo,
**strange signs from a strange God
who upturns expectations. Amen.**

¹ Opening Prayer from <https://calltoworshipjournal.org/december-21-2025-fourth-sunday-of-advent/>

Hymn: TIS 307 - The Virgin Mary had a baby boy.

Welcome and Introduction

Passing the Peace

Advent Ritual - Week 4 (*and wax collection for next community candle*)

Light Advent Candles 1, 2, & 3.

We light/have lit these candles, symbols of our community; the light that guides us into loving action, into actions that we take even if they are just moments of kindness or tenderness among people...when we do something decent that we don't need to do².

Light the 4th Advent Candle - Love

Our Advent path is love
We light a flame of love
We come entwined and embraced in love
Wrapped in ever widening circles
Yet the bark makes room for new growing.
Love grows again.

As the heat swells, the trees shed their bark
Self-cleaning, opening their growing layer to the atmosphere
Releasing oils and insects
Love holds and protects
And in love's wisdom, love lets go.
We gather our bark strands
and take up the wise lessons of the trees.
Love grows again.

We bring ourselves, gathering our strands of love
Shedding our old selves as we grow again in God's love.
We bring strands of love
Love that gives and grows
Love that makes room in God's kingdom
We bring loving boughs.
Love grows again.

We now sing the whole Advent song³

² Adaptation with appreciation from Tim Winton.

³ *Advent Song* from Intergen Advent (Year B) Resources for Intergenerational Worship.

Advent Song

Slowly and gently ♩ = 80

We bring seeds of hope Hope our world so needs
 We bring leaves of peace Peace that binds and weaves
 We bring flowers of joy Joy be - yond dark powers
 We bring boughs of love Love that gives and grows

5 F G/F C/E F G C

Hold - ing hope in God's near king - dom We bring hope - ful seeds
 Leaves of heal - ing for the wound - ed We bring peace - ful leaves
 Find - ing joy in God's near king - dom We bring joy - ful flowers
 Love that makes room in God's king - dom We bring lov - ing boughs

1. We bring seeds of Hope
 Hope our world still needs
 Holding hope in God's near kingdom
 We bring hopeful seeds

2. We bring leaves of Peace
 Peace that binds and weaves
 Leaves of healing for the wounded
 We bring peaceful leaves

3. We bring flowers of Joy
 Joy beyond dark powers
 Finding joy in God's near kingdom
 We bring joyful flowers

4. We bring strands of Love
 Love that gives and grows
 Love that makes room in God's kingdom
 We bring loving boughs.

WE REFLECT ON WORDS FOR OUR TIME

Song: Psalm alternative: O come, O come, Immanuel.

1. O come, O come, Immanuel,
 and ransom captive Israel
 that mourns in lonely exile here
 until the Son of God appear.

Refrain

2. O come, O Bright and Morning Star,
 and bring us comfort from afar!
 Dispel the shadows of the night
 and turn our darkness into light.

Refrain

Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
 shall come to you, O Israel.

3. O come, O King of nations, bind
 in one the hearts of all mankind.
 Bid all our sad divisions cease
 and be yourself our King of Peace.

Refrain

Reading 1 – Matthew 1: 18 – 25.

The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah[□] took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³ “Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

Song: Good Joseph.⁴ Tune: "*Kingsfold*"

Good Joseph was a traveller, his journey hard and long,
from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the town where he belonged.
But down he went, with his betrothed, to do as he was bid.
For Joseph was a traveller, when travelling was good.

Good Joseph was a watchful man ev'n though he'd been forewarned,
and stood in silent wonder there when Jesus Christ was born.
With human love he gave this child his nurture as he grew.
For Joseph was a watchful man when watchfulness was due.

Good Joseph was a refugee, escaping grief and pain,
to save God's son from Herod's rage as other boys were slain.
When dreams appeared, his mind was right; God's word he'd understand,
for Joseph was a refugee when refuge was at hand.

Good Joseph was a carpenter, with skills to teach and share.
He gave his all, with no reward, with faithfulness and care.
In Temple days he found his son was ready for the test.
Good Joseph was a carpenter, when righteousness was best.

⁴ *Good Joseph*, words © Tom Gordon 2020, accessed at <https://www.ahpcc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Good-Joseph-Advent-3.pdf>.

Good people, when you're called to serve and travel on God's way;
to watch and wait, in joy or pain, in work, or rest, or play,
in worship times, in family life, to do what you can do,
and be as good as Joseph was – this servant-guide for you.

Reading 2 –Time of the Child - *Niall Williams*⁵

‘And as it continued, in the same unbelievable way as all of ordinary life, Doctor Troy had the sense that in that small and crowded church in Faha was a spirit of generosity that in this world had not yet been vanquished. He did not know if he believed in the Holy Spirit, but if asked he would have said that night was the closest he came, that there was an otherness, a largeness apparent and invisible there at the same time, something that did not exist in the textbooks but was the same thing that had been since the beginning, which was that there was something more than the perimeter of flesh, something else and beyond explanation, and which was felt in that part of us that, for lack of any better, was given the word soul...

But isn't it funny, at that moment, eyes lifted and a smile breaking the line of his lips, there, at Midnight Mass in the sloping, slowly sinking church of Faha, the congregation filing up and down the channel of the Long Aisle like a tide...that was exactly what Doctor Jack Troy felt would happen. **A miracle.**

Reflection

Music for personal reflection: O Come, O come, Immanuel

WE RESPOND TO THE WORD

Song - I have a dream.⁶

1. I have a dream
A song to sing
To help me cope
With anything
If you see the wonder
Of a fairy tale
You can take the future
Even if you fail. **Chorus**

Chorus
I believe in angels
Something good in everything I see
I believe in angels
When I know the time is right for me
I'll cross the stream
I have a dream

⁵ Niall Williams, *Time of the Child*, Bloomsbury Publishing (AUS), October 29, 2024.

⁶ *I Have a Dream* was released in December 1979 as the fourth international and final single from the group's sixth studio album. Lyrics accessed at <https://genius.com/Abba-i-have-a-dream-lyrics>.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>2. I have a dream
 A fantasy
 To help me through
 Reality
 And my destination
 Makes it worth the while
 Pushing through the darkness
 Still another mile. Chorus</p> | <p>Chorus
 I believe in angels
 Something good in everything I see
 I believe in angels
 When I know the time is right for me
 I'll cross the stream
 I have a dream</p> |
|---|---|
3. I have a dream I have a dream
 A song to sing
 To help me cope
 With anything
 If you see the wonder
 Of a fairy tale
 You can take the future
 Even if you fail. **Chorus**

Offerings

We give thanks for the gifts of faith and trust, hope and love, which we bring with our offering today and our offerings of so many kinds that are given to our congregation and wider community during the rest of the week. **Amen.**

Light the Caring Candle

Prayers of the People

We give thanks for
 Mysterious paradoxes that collide in today's story.
 A story of a baby,
 Born into nothing,
 Yet born into everything.
Born in a shed,
But born in love,
And is love

The paradox of a young woman,
 Not yet wedded,
 Blessed to bring life,
 Into this world that needs life
 Needs hope

Requires love.
She trusted that it was she
Who God entrusted this life
This bundle,
This hope.
And brings love.

And the young man,
That carpenter,
Who trusted the voice that said
Love her
Support her
Guide her.
And contrary to anything
And everything
That society said,
He did love her
Support her
Guide her.

Today, we give thanks that this baby is born again.
Like Joseph and Mary, we give thanks
Trusting that today it is us
Who are blessed to bring
Hope, and Love to support and guide those around us.⁷

In our home, our country, divisions occur when different opinions on race, religion, politics, gender – and sometimes even sport – are rejected rather than discussed with tolerance and respect for multiple perspectives.
We pray, we hope, that those challenging both old and new ideas will do the right thing.

Lord's Prayer⁸

Heavenly Father, heavenly Mother,
Holy and blessed is your true name.
We pray for your reign of peace to come,
We pray that your good will be done,
Let heaven and earth become one.

⁷ Extract from Lauren Mallaby, *Mysterious Paradoxes*, accessed at <https://worshipwords.co.uk/mysterious-paradoxes-a-christmas-reflection-lauren-mallaby-australia/>

⁸ Lords Prayer by Parkere J. Palmer accessed at <http://www.orucc.org/wp-content/uploads/Alternative-Lords-prayers.pdf>

Give us this day the bread we need,
Give it to those who have none.
Let forgiveness flow like a river between us,
From each one to each one.
Lead us to holy innocence
Beyond the evil of our days —
Come swiftly Mother, Father, come.
For yours is the power and the glory and the mercy:
Forever your name is All in One. Amen

WE GO OUT INTO THE WORLD

Hymn: TIS 289 - Christmas is Coming, verses 1-4.

Blessing

Soon, but not yet ...
Always, and yet to be ...
Now, and then ...
Birth, life, another day.
Go in peace to wait, to watch, to wonder.
Go in peace to think, to do, to dream.
Go in peace to welcome the Christ child into the world and walk with him,
enlarging all the sheltering goodness around us. **Amen**

Postlude (*A time for quiet reflection — please remain seated*). **Mary Did You Know?**

The Worship and Community Candles are extinguished.

This Week at Woden Valley Uniting Church

A time of community to share notices, sharing, comments, significant birthdays, anniversaries.

Acknowledgements:

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