



The Uniting Church in Australia  
**SHEPPARTON UNITING CHURCH**

**Order of Service of the Word and Sacrament**  
**5<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

**Introit:** 121 (TiS) 'God himself is present'.  
(People may be seated)

May the PEACE of the Lord be always with you.  
**And also, with you.**

**Acknowledgement:**

**Call to Worship:**

We leave our worries on the threshold of this moment and come inside a time of PEACE.  
**God spreads a canopy of PEACE across our time together like a sheltering, fragrant tree.**

In this cool, gentle gathering we are remembered and shown, again, the way of PEACE.  
Let us worship God.

**Lighting of the Advent Candle**

Reader One: Because of war, because of violence in our communities, because there is still so much unrest in Jerusalem, we light a candle of PEACE...

Reader Two: Because hatred is still so strong, because so many swords have not yet been beaten into ploughshares, we light a candle of PEACE... (*Light the second candle in the Advent wreath*)

Reader One: May the light from this candle overwhelm the world.

Reader Two: May the light from this candle say to all that God's PEACE is coming on earth as it already is in heaven.

Reader One: Friends, be not afraid, God's PEACE is at hand!

**Hymn:** 264 (TiS) 'Hark! a herald voice is calling'.

**Prayer of Thanksgiving and Confession:**

How glorious to be remembered! How wonderful to be recalled to a better way, a clear and even path out of the wilderness.

**Thank you, God, for making us a part of your plan for the love of creation.**

We remember the times of overflowing love; the times of knowledge and insight that led us to know what is best, to be our best, to love most fully.

**Remember us always, with overflowing love, O God.**

Allow us to be your light in the world, spilling into every shadow with hope.

O God, you are already among us, and yet we act as if we are still waiting. We wait to get it right, to be pure and true, to love others as you love us.

**But it is you who waits.**

You wait for us to remember you, as you remember us.

**Forgive us for keeping you waiting, loving God.**

You wait, hungry and tired, asking for food and rest that we do not supply. You wait, afraid and alone, asking for companionship that we deny.

You wait, worn and bruised, asking for shelter from violence that we do not acknowledge. You wait, angry and empty, asking to be met with compassion that we keep in short supply.

**Forgive us Lord. We will renew our promises; we will not keep you waiting any longer.**



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**Declaration of Forgiveness:**

The capacity of God for waiting for us to come to ourselves and to remember our high calling to compassion is boundless.

No matter our forgetfulness, we are always remembered with kindness and deep acceptance.

We are forgiven!

**Thanks be to God.**

**Doxology:** 771 (TiS) 'Now to him who loved us, gave us every pledge that love could give'.

**Readings:** Malachi 3: 1-4, Luke 3: 1-6

**Sermon:** 'PEACE is a Son'.

1. The promise of PEACE.

"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, he is coming," says the Lord of hosts. (Mal.3: 1)

The coming of the Lord to His temple as heralded by the messenger of the covenant will not be as pleasant as many people thought. He will come with the purpose of refining, purifying and cleansing His people, so that they can offer to Him righteous sacrifices, which they aren't offering now because of their sinfulness.

At the time of Luke, the Jews were ruled by foreigners, and religiously, Annas and Caiaphas had been illegally put into their positions by the Roman authorities, and constantly use their power to line their pockets and increase their authority.

The names that are mentioned is to show how far Israel had fallen. As in Genesis 49 the sceptre had departed from Judah. The religious and political condition of Israel was so fallen and corrupt, it was time for the Lord to intervene as He has done before in the history of His people. Only this time it will be different. It will be a "coming" to His temple, not just a voice from the pillar of cloud or from the mountain top with a covenant. He is to be the COVENANT! He is not the messenger but the Message, the Word made flesh.

2. Preparing for PEACE

The voice of the one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His path straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

John came preaching a baptism of repentance. He is preaching a message of judgement. Preparing for the coming of the Lord/PEACE is not cheap. It is costly. For the people of God, it means cleaning up our lives and our acts and their minds. It also means a preparation of release from sin. A release from being captive to sin

Repent and be baptised is the proper way of preparing for the coming of the Lord.

It is then that we experience inner peace and joyful waiting when we surrender our little selves, our selfish pretence of being at the centre of the universe and start labouring in love.



### 3. Waiting for PEACE

The peace that we anticipate and are waiting for in this season of Advent is a PEACE already born to us in Jesus Christ. In Him through faith and baptism we know that the security and peace that we crave and rest on in this world is insecure, self-serving and destructive.

Whatever the circumstances we find ourselves in today, even with the threat of the pandemic, God is engaging us in our waiting. In Him, we come to know ourselves as we are meant to be, not as pain prone bodies, but as free and incorruptible people who can welcome to our ourselves as His temple.

All our destructive feelings of unworthiness, fear, anxiety and the like melts away.

**Amen.**

#### Notices:

#### Joys and concerns:

#### Offering:

We give joyfully, whatever we can.

It is the act, not the amount, that signals our hope for a better world.

May our gifts proclaim your nearness, loving God.

May these gifts draw us nearer to your hopes, loving God:

Your hope for a world of PEACE, your hope for a world of gentleness; your hope for a world attuned to you.

**May we be your hope to the world, loving God. Amen.**

#### Prayers of the People:

Loving God, your promises of PEACE and beauty extend to all the earth and all who live upon the earth. Your promises are true in the quiet of the morning and the glory of the sunset; through the hush of night and in the buzz of midday. But there are those among us and in your world whose access to the fullness of your promises seems blocked: Those whose bodies or minds are hurting and refusing them PEACE. Those whose circumstances are void of beauty.

#### **Show us how to clear the way, O God.**

In the news this week we have heard of so much and so many that denies your PEACE and beauty: war, famine, unrest and greed.

In our own lives, and the lives of those we love, for the path to your PEACE and beauty is not always clear.

*We pray especially for those whom we name before you in silence...*

You are always ready, waiting, to come into the world with your PEACE, O God.

**Show us how to clear the way. Amen.**

#### Sacrament of the Lord's Supper:

**Hymn:** 545 (TiS) 'Shout for joy! The Lord has let us feast'.

#### **The Institution of the Lord's Supper:**

**The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving:** *(People may stand)*

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**



Prayer:

...And so we praise you with the faithful of every time and place, joining with choirs of angels and the whole creation in the eternal hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

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 forever. Amen. *(People may be seated)***

The breaking of the bread:

Lamb of God:

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,  
**have mercy on us.**

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,  
**have mercy on us.**

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,  
**grant us your PEACE.**

**Communion:**

**Prayer after Communion:**

**Hymn:** 569 (TiS) 'Guide me, O thou great Redeemer'.

**Blessing:**

The tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high, break upon you, to give you light and to guide your feet into the way of PEACE.

In the name of God, the Ancient Promise,  
in the name of Christ, the Way of Love,  
and in the name of the Spirit, Breath of PEACE,  
**Amen.**

778 (TiS) 'Shalom to you now, shalom my friends'.

