



Order of Service
27th November 2022

TiS 272 Come, thou long-expected Jesus

Call to worship

We begin the season of Advent, a time of preparation and anticipation.

We make space, to sense the presence of God in our midst.

We begin the season of Advent, aware of the brokenness in our lives, and in our world.

We make space for Jesus the Christ who longs to bring healing and wholeness.

We begin the season of Advent, hopeful, expectant, longing.

We make space for God's Spirit weaving in and through our lives. Amen.

Acknowledgement of Country

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we are meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of this region.

Welcome

Lighting of Advent candle

Today we light the first candle of Advent that speaks to us of hope.

This is a single flame - fragile, vulnerable, flickering, and dancing with the hopes and dreams we carry within ourselves and in our community.

Even a single candle is enough to shatter the darkness and to find the pathway that leads to peace, justice and compassion in our world.

And so we light this candle with confidence. *The candle is lit.*

Opening Prayer

Hymn - Christ be our light

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.

Longing for truth, we turn to you.

Make us your own, your holy people,

Light for the world to see.

Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.

Shine through the darkness.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in your church gathered today.

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.

Longing for hope, many despair.

Your word alone has pow'r to save us.

Make us your living voice.

Refrain

Longing for food, many are hungry.

Longing for water, many still thirst.



Make us your bread, broken for others,
Shared until all are fed.

Refrain

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
Walls made of living stone.

Refrain

Many the gifts, many the people,
Many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
Making your kingdom come.

Refrain

Bernadette Farrell

Bible Reading Isaiah 2:1-5

Prayer of Confession

God of light and life,
you set before us today
the challenges of laying aside the works of darkness:
of putting on the light of Christ;
of being watchful and prepared for your coming in our midst
in the person of Jesus Christ.

As the people of God in this place,
we know that a crucial part of our witness
is in revealing Christ to the world
through the way we love and care for one another.

Forgive us when people do not see any evidence in us
of the One who is to come.
So many people, young and old, grope helplessly
in the gloom of despair and suffering,
yearning for the light of hope to dawn in their lives.
Remind us that the light of Christ shines through people like us.

Merciful God,
cleanse our hearts and minds of all that hinders us
from loving you and loving our neighbour.
so that our lives radiate faith active in love,
as we watch and wait for your breaking into our world once more
in the person of Jesus Christ. Amen

Words of Assurance

Reach out and touch the kingdom, for it is right next to you. Breathe in, and feel
the Spirit of peace and hope. Trust and believe this good news: God is nearer
than you might ever imagine.

**Thanks be to God, we are forgiven! We can set aside our differences and
embrace everyone, we can seek peace for all in our lives, our neighbourhoods,
our world. Amen.**



TiS 647 Comfort, comfort all my people

Bible Readings: Romans 13:11-14 Matthew 24:36-44

Reflection

Waiting can be difficult and many of you here have vivid experiences of the best and worst of waiting. Waiting for the flood to arrive, waiting for the insurance assessor, waiting for the waters to recede, waiting to cross the causeway, waiting for a medical result, waiting for healing. Many residents of this town are now waiting for repairs and restoration of a home they will one day move back to.

We often find waiting difficult - and so did the early Christians to whom Matthew was writing. Keep in mind that Matthew most likely writes in the early 80's of the first century, or roughly fifty years after the events he describes took place. And like most early Christian communities, Matthew's congregation had been expecting Jesus to return to them for quite some time. In fact, some scholars think that the Gospels themselves were actually written in part to encourage Christians who were confused and discouraged by Jesus' delayed return. For this reason Matthew, following Mark and like Luke, devotes a section of his Gospel to exhorting his congregation to stay awake, keep prepared, and wait with anticipation for Jesus' return. If they aren't watching and waiting, Matthew suggests, they very well may miss God's advent among them through Jesus' second coming.

The trouble is, of course, that nearly two thousand years later, we've been waiting an awfully long time. So long, in fact, that I'd dare to suggest that many people of faith aren't waiting any more. How can we expect people to keep waiting for two millennia? Or could it be that in our waiting we are looking for the wrong thing? Yes – we do expect Jesus to return one day, but in the meantime, as we go about our everyday lives, do we have faith that Jesus is in fact present right now, engaging with us and our communities in many different ways. Are we alert to Jesus' presence?

What really strikes me about this passage is the profound sense of uncertainty that it evokes. No one, Jesus says at the beginning of the passage, knows when the Lord will come, not even Jesus himself. He follows

that up by giving several examples of pairs of people being taken unawares, one taken, one left. And then at the end of the passage, and in case we weren't listening carefully, Jesus underscores again that the Son of Man will come at an unexpected hour.

Uncertainly, surprise, unexpected events. These at least are things we do know something about. Our lives are filled with unexpected, surprising, and life-altering moments. And in the midst of all of this, we are invited — actually, commanded — to keep watch for the presence of the God we know in Jesus. This isn't always easy, especially when the unexpected event is tragic.

Sometimes you have to wait a while to see where God is at work and that can be painfully hard. Yet the promise throughout Scripture is that God reliably meets us at our point of greatest need and accompanies us even and especially in the most difficult of circumstances.

Watching and waiting are difficult for us, just as they were for Jesus' earliest followers. One of the ways we deal with this is to gather in Christian community, as we are doing here today. When we are having difficulty seeing God present in our lives, we gather to support one another in our watching and waiting. If one person has experienced God's love, they can help another. If some are struggling to see God at work, they can receive encouragement from others.



No one knows when tragedy will strike. No one knows when incredible blessing may occur. No one knows. But we do know this: God is present. Sometimes that's hard to see, and then we need help. Sometimes it's apparent to us, and then we can help others. That's the way the body of Christ worked all those years ago and, at its best, still works today.

Martin Luther once described the church as the place where you could count on the mutual comfort and consolation of the faithful. And that tradition continues every time we meet. So as we strain to see God at work in the ups and downs of our lives, we gather to hear words of exhortation and encouragement and read once again the promises of God. We also come to be surrounded by other Christians, some of whom are struggling to see God, and some of whom have recently seen God and can share with us what they've seen.

As this season of Advent unfolds, may this space be that place of mutual comfort and consolation as we watch and wait.

Amen

TiS 442 All praise to our redeeming Lord

Offering

God, you have given us life and love, you are generous beyond measure.

We bring to you our offerings,

May they help build your kingdom here and now.

They are but a sign of all that we offer,

May we be generous with our time and talents

Taking the light of Jesus with us

Wherever we go this week. Amen

Announcements

Prayers for Others and Ourselves

Loving God, as our days grow longer and warmer and Christmas draws nearer, we thank you for the light that wakes us each morning and brightens our way. It reminds us that the light of the world, Jesus Christ, is here and will never leave us.

Hear now our prayers for the world, and help us to listen for your answers.

We pray for anyone who feels powerless within their home, work or community life.

May they find opportunities and people to help them.

We pray for anyone who feels bound to another person or a situation from which they are unable to break free. May they find strength to endure and people to assist them.

We pray for anyone who is trying to follow in the way of Jesus, whatever their situation or circumstances.

May they know your love surrounding them and people to encourage and support them.

We pray today for the government which has been elected to lead Victoria. May all politicians be led by your light to exercise compassion, justice and integrity.

We pray for the people of Ukraine as they endure the relentless aggression of Russian forces. We think especially of those whose have been displaced, and the thousands more who are facing a long dark cold winter. Our thoughts are also with the people of Indonesia who have lost loved ones and homes in the recent earthquake.

And for those who must wait in this town, and other towns and farms across Australia, for flood relief and assistance with rebuilding, we pray your peace and guiding light in these Advent days.



Jesus, light of the world, shine in all dark places and remind us that your light can never be extinguished. We pray for anyone searching for you this Advent, may they find you in all places and people and come to love and follow you.

Jesus, light of the world, hear these prayers prayed in your name.

Our prayer continues with the words you taught us:

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.

TiS 473 Community of Christ

Blessing

Friends, go out from this place knowing you are the beloved of God,
and offer that love to others.

Your life may be the only gospel that your neighbour reads this week.

In all you say and do, spread the grace of God, the love of Jesus
and the friendship of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

TiS 782 Go now in peace

