

YEAR B

2023



Advent 2023

Engage Together

Intergenerational worship ideas

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Originally written and produced by Emma Parr, Chris Barnett and Melissa Neumann, 2017 (updated in 2023 by Chris Barnett).

This publication can also be found at
<https://uniting.church/engage-together/>
www.sa.uca.org.au/intergen

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Introduction

WHO IS THIS FOR?

This resource is for churches and communities of faith seeking to explore and play with the idea of intergenerational worship over **Advent**. Alongside suggested readings from the Revised Common Lectionary, this edition of **Engage Together** also includes **Advent** themes of hope, peace, joy and love.

Engage Together recognises the reality that in many contexts the “first twenty minutes” of a service is the most appropriate place for stretching our intergenerational imagination. To this end, **Engage Together** provides a variety of ideas that could be taken up by churches seeking to be more intentionally intergenerational in some aspects of their gathered worship life.

WHAT WILL YOU FIND HERE?

The material in this edition of **Engage Together**, covering the Sundays in December, includes

- links to other resources
- three different options for Advent Wreath/Candle lighting litanies
- five worship service outlines (one for each week of Advent and the Sunday after Christmas)

In this resource you will find a range of suggestions to encourage greater participation by people of all ages and to help foster intentional intergenerational connections. These ideas are highlighted with “Say”, “Prepare” or “Do” symbols. For most weeks you will find creative material that relates to a Call to Worship, Song, Interactive Advent Activity, Prayer of Confession, Bible Reading and the Prayers of the People.

In addition, each service includes a “Take home” idea that encourages ongoing reflection on an Advent theme.

WHO HAS PUT IT TOGETHER?

This **Engage Together** was originally compiled by Chris Barnett (Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania), Melissa Neumann (Uniting Church Synod of South Australia) and Emma Parr (Uniting Church Synod of NSW and ACT) – with production by Merryn Gray (Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania). Graphic design for subsequent updates by Sarah Hellyer (2017, Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania) and Michael Zewdie (2023, Uniting Church Assembly).

We trust that you find it helpful and that it inspires your ongoing adventures in intergenerational worship!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO EXPLORE FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS 2023

Multi-Age Worship Service Ideas (from UCA in South Australia)

www.sa.uca.org.au/intergen/church-resources/all-age-worship/all-age-church-season-worship/christmas-services

Adorable: www.sa.uca.org.au/documents/intergen-docs/resources/all-age-worship/Adorable.pdf

Celebrate and Reflect: www.sa.uca.org.au/documents/intergen-docs/resources/all-age-worship/CELEBRATE-REFLECT-CHRISTMAS-2014.pdf

Four Gifts of Christmas: www.sa.uca.org.au/documents/intergen-docs/resources/all-age-worship/Four-gifts-of-Christmas.pdf

Hope is Born: www.sa.uca.org.au/documents/intergen-docs/resources/all-age-worship/Christmas-2013-hope-is-born.pdf

Merry Christmas, World: www.sa.uca.org.au/documents/intergen-docs/resources/all-age-worship/Merry-Christmas-World.pdf

Three Christmas Trees: www.sa.uca.org.au/documents/intergen-docs/resources/all-age-worship/Three-Christmas-Trees.pdf

Time for Christmas: www.sa.uca.org.au/documents/intergen-docs/resources/all-age-worship/Time-for-Christmas.pdf

Advent & Christmas Resources

Strandz resources: www.strandz.org.nz/advent--christmas.html

Flame Creative: www.flamecreativekids.blogspot.com.au/p/25-advent-activities.html

Going for Growth: www.going4growth.com/growth_through_the_year/advent

Kids Friendly: www.kidsfriendly.org.nz/resourcing/kids-friendly-resources/

Lost Sheep: www.lostsheep.com.au/stories-overview/themes/

Pinterest (Mary Hawes): www.pinterest.com.au/revmaryhawes/advent-and-christmas/

Salvation Army: <https://my.salvos.org.au/toolkit/contributors/childrens-ministry/search/christmas/>

UCA SA: www.sa.uca.org.au/intergen/church-resources/church-seasons/advent-and-christmas

Advent Wreath Litanies

Advent Wreaths are a way of marking the season of Advent, the four Sundays preceding Christmas and the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day. They can be used in churches and in homes. Traditionally, holly or pine wreaths are made with holders for four candles surrounding a central candle. The wreath is laid on a table or stand or suspended from the ceiling.

Often, in churches one candle is lit on the first Sunday of Advent; a second candle lit on the second Sunday of Advent. By the last Sunday before Christmas four candles are lit. Candles are usually red or violet. Sometimes a larger white candle is placed in the centre of the wreath and lit on Christmas day.

In homes, the same pattern could be used with the initial candle lit on the first Sunday and then again at each dinner time across the week. In the second week two candles are lit each time...

An alternative to the Advent Wreath is the Advent Log. This is made from a log at least 30cm long and 6cm in diameter. Some Advent logs are much larger. Sometimes the log is split in half so it can rest safely on a table. Holes are drilled into the top of the log to hold four candles.

There are many variations of the Advent Wreath theme, for example simply using pictures or artificial candles. You can even have a Watery Advent (see Advent Litany on page 12)!

Advent Litanies are well suited for the intergenerational environment. Engaging multiple people in the process provides the opportunity for multi-generational interaction in the preparation and presentation. Having different ages taking leadership provides a visual representation of the contribution of all ages being valued. The repetitive nature of the litanies, when utilized each week, makes it easy for people of all ages to participate.

Here are three litanies, each with a song suggestion, for you to consider using in your context during Advent. In the following intergenerational worship services there is a 'spot' each week to use your preferred choice of one of these Advent Litanies.

- Advent Litany 1 – Call and Response 7-9
- Advent Litany 2 – Multiple Readers 10-12
- Advent Litany 3 – Watery Advent 13-17

Advent Litany 1: Call and Response

PREPARE

Create a wreath to be used throughout Advent. For each week ensure that it is appropriately prepared. Ensure that the words to be used can be easily seen by the congregation (eg. on ppt slides or in the newsletter). Ideally, arrange a multi-generational team of at least three people (two readers and one candle lighter) for each week.

DO

WEEK 1 HOPE

1:

Today is the first Sunday of Advent - the time when we prepare once again for the coming of Jesus.

All:

We light a candle each week to remind us that Jesus brings light into the dark places of the world.

2:

The prophet Isaiah describes a future shaped by peace for all nations as they walk in the light of the Lord. We wait in hope for this prophecy to be fulfilled.

All:

We light the candle of HOPE to proclaim that God's light is coming into the world.

[the first candle is lit]

SONG TiS 286 Light one candle (verse 1)

WEEK 2 PEACE

1:

The glory of the Lord will be revealed, for God has spoken.

All:

Grass withers, flowers fade, but God's Word lasts forever.

2:

We wait with HOPE for the Word of God to come into the world.

All:

We light this candle as a symbol of our HOPE.

[first candle is lit]

1:

God's glory is known when love & faithfulness meet, righteousness and peace kiss.

All:

We long for the day when peace and goodwill is real across the world. We light this candle as a symbol of PEACE.

[second candle is lit]

SONG TiS 286 Light one candle (verse 1 & 2)

WEEK 3 JOY

1:

On this 3rd Sunday in Advent, Psalm 146 and the prophet Isaiah tells:

All:

of a world where the desert sings, rejoices and blossoms.

1:

A world where eyes will see, and ears will hear;

All:

where everyone will want to dance and sing for joy.

2:

We watch and wait for such signs of God's coming kingdom.

All:

We wait in Hope and Peace, and with joy.

[two candles relit]

2:

The God in whom we rejoice, prepares our hearts for the coming of the Lord. We light the candle of JOY.

[third candle lit]

All:

God of grace and truth, may our spirits rejoice in the coming birth of Christ, our Saviour, in whom we experience your mercy and see your glory. Amen

SONG TiS 286 Light one candle (verses 1, 2 & 3)

WEEK 4 LOVE

1:

On this fourth Sunday in Advent we light the candle of LOVE.

All:

No other word captures what we know of our God.

1:

A baby was born, God's love for the world in human form.

All:

We wait in HOPE, and PEACE, and with JOY.

[3 candles relit]

2:

We light the candle of LOVE to proclaim God's LOVE revealed in the Child born in Bethlehem.

All:

We are challenged to proclaim and reveal that same LOVE as we live out our faith here in Australia.

[fourth candle lit]

2:

We thank God for a love beyond our human understanding,

All:

And await the birth of God's LOVE this Christmas. Amen.

SONG TiS 286 Light one candle (all verses)

CHRISTMAS DAY

Four candles are already lit

1:

God, creator and giver of life, be born in us again as you were long ago.

2:

Be born in us again and again in the words and deeds of faithful people.

All:

Be born in us as light, as joy, as peace, as hope for justice.

1:

As we light this candle

[light large candle]

2:

May your light come to all people.

SONG Light one candle for Christ (Tune TiS 286)

Advent Litany 2: Multiple Readers

PREPARE

Create a wreath to be used throughout Advent. For each week ensure that it is appropriately prepared. Ensure that the words to be used can be easily seen by the congregation (eg. on ppt slides or in the newsletter). Ideally, arrange a different multigenerational team of up to five people (multiple readers and one candle lighter) for each week.

DO

WEEK 1 HOPE

1:

The Advent wreath decorating our church is a sign that Christmas is near.

2:

The season of Advent — a time of preparation for Christmas — begins four Sundays before Christmas. Each week we will light one more candle.

3:

The Old Testament of the Bible tells us how God's people waited and hoped for many, many years for the birth of the Christ.

4:

Sometimes waiting is hard because we are impatient. But Jesus is worth waiting for! When Jesus comes we see that all our hoping and waiting have been worthwhile.

5:

We sing together...

[the 1st verse of the song *One Candle*, see <https://www.missionstclare.com/music/advent-music/onecandle/>]

[Light the first Advent candle as the song is sung]

All:

O God, you come to us in Jesus Christ. Help us wait for your coming. Let us feel the hope that your presence brings. Amen.

WEEK 2 PEACE

One candle is already lit.

1:

Advent is a time of preparing for Christmas. The Advent wreath decorating our church is a sign that Christmas is near.

2:

Last week we lit the first candle — the candle of hope.

3:

The Bible tells us that when Jesus was born he was called the Prince of Peace.

4:

As we learn ways of peace and practice making and keeping peace in our homes, in our neighborhoods, and in our world, we are preparing for the coming of the Prince of Peace.

5:

We sing together...

[the 2nd verse of the song One Candle, see <https://www.missionstclare.com/music/advent-music/onecandle/>]

[Light the second Advent candle as the song is sung]

All:

Jesus, you come to teach us peace. Help us to learn your ways and to walk in your paths of peace and justice. Amen.

WEEK 3 JOY

Two candles are already lit.

1:

Advent is a time of preparing for Christmas. The Advent wreath decorating our church is a sign that Christmas is near.

2:

Last week we lit two candles — candles of hope and peace. Today we will light the candle of joy.

3:

The birth of Jesus is a time of joyous celebration.

4:

God's people had waited and prepared for the birth of the Messiah for many years. Then when Jesus was born, it was such a joyful event that the angels sang about it.

5:

We sing together...

[the 3rd verse of the song One Candle, see <https://www.missionstclare.com/music/advent-music/onecandle/>]

[Light the third Advent candle as the song is sung]

All:

We are filled with joy, O God of love, as we await the celebration of the birth of your Son. Help us share our joy with all people by the things we do and say. Amen.

WEEK 4 LOVE

Three candles are already lit.

1:

Advent is a time of preparing for Christmas. The Advent wreath decorating our church is a sign that Christmas is near.

2:

Last week we lit three candles — candles of hope, peace and joy. Today we will light the candle of love.

3:

Christmas is a time when God's love for us is shown in a surprising way.

4:

God's son Jesus is sent to this world as a human baby.

5:

We sing together...

[the 4th verse of the song One Candle, see <https://www.missionstclare.com/music/advent-music/onecandle/>]

[Light the fourth Advent candle as the song is sung]

All:

Thank you, God, for giving us your love in Jesus. Amen.

CHRISTMAS DAY

Four candles are already lit.

1:

Though waiting is sometimes hard, Jesus is worth waiting for! Our hoping and waiting through Advent has been worthwhile.

2:

Today we welcome the birth of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

3:

Jesus' birth is a time of joyous celebration. As angels and shepherds rejoiced, so do we.

4:

God shows love for us in a surprising way, sending Jesus as a vulnerable, dependent baby.

5:

Having lit candles that called us to Hope, Peace, Joy and Love throughout Advent, today we light the Christ candle as we sing TIS318 Away in a Manger.

Litany produced by Mission Resourcing, Uniting Church SA.

Advent Litany 3: A Watery Advent

Many litanies for Advent candle ceremonies have 'Northern Hemisphere' imagery. The coming of light in the darkness is very appropriate when you are going into midwinter, and the days are getting shorter. In Australia, though it might be good for a change to think of Advent in terms of what we long and hope for most at this time of year – water! From a cool drink to a drenching summer storm, to protection from bushfires, water is possibly the symbol of what we most need at this time of year.

In this instance, the 'wreath' is constructed using empty glasses instead of unlit candles. Each week water is poured into another glass, just as each week you would light a candle on the usual Advent wreath. So on the second week, you'd pour water into two glasses, and so on.

A couple of hints: it is good to have the water in the jug as cold as you can, so that it forms beads on the glass when it is poured into it, and if you can pour it from a height and get the sound of the water too, even better. Before pouring the water you might even want to make sure there is a little food dye in the bottom of the glass – creating a more colourful wreath!

As for the construction of the wreath, be as creative as you wish. For example, you could use a couple of cloths in shimmery fabric that look green in some light and red in other, with some gold stars embroidered on them. Some pearlescent gold beads strung on wire could make the 'wreath'. You might even want to use a distinctive glass (eg. a tall pilsener glass) with some gold stars just on Christmas day. NB. This idea has been graciously shared by Annette Buckley.

See https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/1408/watery_advent_wreath_pdf.pdf or contact Annette directly via buckleyannette@gmail.com for further explanation/clarification.

PREPARE

Create a wreath to be used throughout Advent. For each week ensure that it is appropriately prepared. Ensure that the words to be used can be easily seen by the congregation (eg. on ppt slides or in the newsletter). Ideally, arrange a different multi-generational team of at least three people (two readers and one pourer) for each week.

DO

WEEK 1 HOPE

1:

As we pour the water for our Advent wreath we remember our deep thirst for God's hope.

All:

We long for your hope, O God.

[Pour water into the first glass.]

2:

Hope which revives us like that first icy cold drink of water gulped down from the fridge when you've trudged home from school on a 36 degree day.

All:

We long for your hope, O God.

1:
Hope which transforms us, like drought-breaking rain on parched land.

All:
We long for your hope, O God.

2:
Hope which carries us forward in its mystery, as the endless waves which connect us to the rest of the world.

All:
We long for your hope, O God.

1:
I invite you to name aloud people and places which are in particular need of God's hope at this time (some examples follow, but you may have more):

- People dealing with long-term illness
- In war torn places
- People facing the loss of their homes
- Long-term unemployed people
- People battling addictions
- Asylum seekers and refugees
- Australia's indigenous people
- People facing famine
- Friends and relatives of missing persons
- Parents of children in hospital
- People dealing with the effects of drought in Australia and other places

1 & 2:
Advent God, we worship you with hope.

All:
We long for your hope, O God. Amen.

SONG SUGGESTION: Real Hope (Colin Buchanan) – see www.youtube.com/watch?v=rC3v18JiEiM

WEEK 2 PEACE

1:
As we pour the water for our Advent wreath we remember our deep thirst for God's peace.

All:
We long for your peace, O God.

[Pour water into the first and second glasses.]

2:
The peace of a long soak in a hot tub after a hard day's work.

All:
We long for your peace, O God.

1:
The peace of steam rising around a home saved by the sweat and sacrifice of a community of firefighters and their supporters.

All:
We long for your peace, O God.

2:

Peace as deep and mysterious and teeming with life as the vast oceans.

All:

We long for your peace, O God.

1:

I invite you to name aloud people and places which are in particular need of God's peace at this time (some examples follow, but you may have more):

- Between neighbours who disagree
- People who have been victims of crime
- People facing medical procedures
- People living with grief
- In war torn places
- With families involved with the Family Court

1 & 2:

Advent God, we worship you with peace.

All:

We long for your peace, O God. Amen

SONG SUGGESTION: The silver stars are in the sky (William James) - see www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhsvRVgRtZ8

WEEK 3 JOY

1:

As we pour the water for our Advent wreath we remember our deep thirst for God's joy.

All:

We long for your joy, O God.

[Pour water into the first, second and third glasses.]

2:

Joy which soaks into us and makes our world stand still, like a sudden summer downpour.

All:

We long for your joy, O God.

1:

Joy which makes our soul dance like kids under a sprinkler on the lawn.

All:

We long for your joy, O God.

2:

Joy which becomes the centre of our life with others, like the water boiling in the kettle for a cuppa with friends.

All:

We long for your joy, O God.

1:

I invite you to name aloud people and places which are in particular need of God's joy at this time (some examples follow, but you may have more):

- People spending Christmas far away from loved ones
- People feeling pressure to buy expensive presents
- People living with mental health problems, especially depression
- People around the world suffering the effects of disasters
- People facing the possibility of losing their homes or farmland
- People living in isolation
- People living with the loss of their abilities and independence
- People struggling to be faithful in difficult circumstances

1 & 2:

Advent God, we worship you with joy.

All:

We long for your joy, O God. Amen

SONG SUGGESTION: Bethlehem Bop (Johnny Burns) - see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkGhCcF6FnY>

WEEK 4 LOVE

1:

As we pour the water for our Advent wreath we remember our deep thirst for God's love.

All:

We long for your love, O God.

[Pour water into four glasses.]

2:

A tsunami wave of love, overpowering, all-enveloping, overwhelming, sweeping all up before it and changing the landscape forever.

All:

We long for your love, O God.

1:

Love which has the patience to seep into us, one drop at a time over aeons, forming stalagmites of beauty in the darkest places.

All:

We long for your love, O God.

2:

Love which holds us with the silent ethereal mystery of mist on a mountain top.

All:

We long for your love, O God.

1:

I invite you to name aloud people and places which are in particular need of God's love at this time (some examples follow, but you may have more):

- Victims of violence
- People who feel unloved
- Children who are wards of the state
- Those in nursing homes far away from loved ones
- People who have lost loved ones this year

- People living with broken relationships with their family
- Child soldiers throughout the world

1 & 2:

Advent God, we worship you with love.

All:

We long for your love, O God. Amen.

SONG SUGGESTION: That's why he came (Beth Barnett) - see www.ctmresourcing.org.au/?rf=kw&kw=That%27s+why

CHRISTMAS DAY

1:

As we pour the water to complete our wreath, we celebrate the coming of Jesus.

[Pour water into all five glasses.]

All:

We thank you for coming as one unlike anyone else.

2:

We remember the one who came by water and blood, the one who cried for his dead friend, the one who was thirsty and asked a woman for a drink.

All:

We thank you for coming as one unlike anyone else.

1:

We remember the one who walked on water, the one who calmed the waves, the one who turned water into wine.

All:

We thank you for coming as one unlike anyone else.

2:

We remember the one who is living water for us here and now.

All:

We thank you because our thirst for God is quenched in you. Amen.

SONG SUGGESTION: The Greatest Present (Snack Music) - see www.snackmusic.com.au/products/oh-have-you-heard/

Advent 1B: Hope

3 December 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

SAY

We acknowledge the _____ people, the first inhabitants and custodians of this place from time beyond remembering.

GREETING AND WELCOME

SAY & DO

Today is the first Sunday in Advent.

What is Advent? **[pause and take responses from congregation, offer any further info as listed here]**

Advent means “coming” and it is a time of waiting and preparation as we look forward to the day when we celebrate the coming of Christ to our world, God in human form, on Christmas day.

The season of Advent covers the 4 Sundays before Christmas day. Advent is also the start of the Church year.

On the other hand sometimes Christmas can feel like it takes forever to come, looking at the calendar and waiting, waiting, waiting. Raise your hand if you feel like you’ve been waiting forever for Christmas this year.

All through the Old Testament, God’s people were waiting in hope for the promised Saviour. They didn’t just wait a year, they waited for centuries!

Sometimes Christmas can feel like it’s arrived, all of a sudden, and we haven’t prepared. Where has the year gone?! Raise your hand if you feel like this.

In the New Testament, the promised Saviour – Jesus – arrives! God’s people were surprised by this even though they’d been waiting. The Saviour is here, now?!

Today is the first Sunday in Advent, Christmas is four weeks away, we don’t need to feel like it will be forever and we don’t need to feel rushed. With God, we have all the time we need.

Each Sunday in Advent we will focus on a different theme that encourages us in our waiting and preparing. This first Sunday in Advent we are focusing on Hope. I invite us all to say “Hope” on the count of 3. 1, 2, 3 “Hope”. This time let’s all count on our fingers to 3 and when we say hope, point upwards, symbolically pointing to God. Ready? **[hold up hand and put up fingers as count]**, 1, 2, 3, Hope **[point up]**. Great work. We’ll need to remember that for next week too!

We are the people after the New Testament. We wait in hope for Jesus to return again. Every year Advent is an opportunity to wait in hope for our

promised Saviour. Every Christmas is a time to celebrate our Saviour's birth. Advent and Christmas are reminders of God's bigger story of renewing and reconciling the whole world to God through Jesus Christ. What a wonderful hope we have!

SONG TiS560 All my hope in God is founded.

CALL TO WORSHIP

SAY & DO

Hope involves looking to the future for better times to come. Part of this hope is crying out to God to bring about this better future. We know that through Jesus, God has already started to bring this better future into being.

Today's Psalm is calling on the Lord God All-powerful to "smile on us and save us". Find someone near you and share one or two things that helps to change your frown in to a smile.

[allow less than a minute]

I wonder what might change God's frown to a smile?

In our Call to Worship, we are going to read parts of Psalm 80 in different age groups and say the parts in bold together. When we do the together parts, I invite you to frown, raise your hand in front of your face, like a mime, and turn your frown into a smile. Let's practice that. Great frowns and lovely smiles.

Let's worship God!

DO

Psalm 80:1-7,17-19 (CEV)

Over 60 years old or oldest 1/3 of congregation:

**Shepherd of Israel, you lead
the descendants of Joseph,
and you sit on your throne
above the winged creatures.**

**Listen to our prayer
and let your light shine
for the tribes of Ephraim,
Benjamin, and Manasseh.
Save us by your power.**

Our God, make us strong again!

[Raise hand in front of face and change frown to smile]

All:

Smile on us and save us.

30-60 years old or middle 1/3 of congregation:

**Lord God All-Powerful,
how much longer will the prayers of your people make you angry?**

**You gave us tears for food,
and you made us drink them by the bowlful.**

**Because of you,
our enemies who live nearby laugh and joke about us.**

[Raise hand in front of face and change frown to smile]

All:

**But if you smile on us,
we will be saved.**

Under 30 years old, or youngest 1/3 of congregation:

**But help the one who sits at your right side,
the one you raised to be your own.**

Then we will never turn away.

**Put new life into us,
and we will worship you.**

**Lord God All-Powerful,
make us strong again!**

[Raise hand in front of face and change frown to smile]

All:

Smile on us and save us.

ADVENT LITANY HOPE

PREPARE

This is an opportunity to use a traditional Advent wreath and light a candle each week or use water. Three litanies, along with a suggested song, are provided on pages 6-16. Just use the first week, Hope, from the litany (with song) you have chosen to use throughout Advent 2020.

INTERACTIVE ADVENT HOPE (AND TAKE HOME ACTIVITY)

PREPARE

To assist people to remember the theme of each week in Advent and to also focus on this theme in their homes during the week, we invite you to prepare the following Advent Activity.

PREPARE FOR THE WORSHIP SERVICE: Prior to the service, prepare 16 triangles that will create 4 sets of bunting, one for each week of Advent. The first week will look like this:



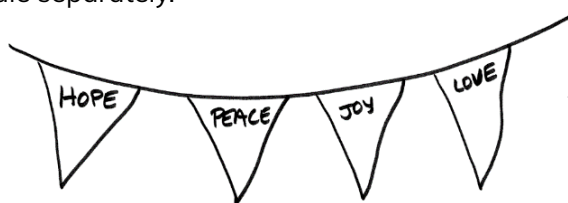
You could hang the bunting:

- on a Christmas tree like tinsel, make it large enough to be read but small enough to fit

- around the room, make it larger, particularly if hanging around walls/rafters
- on meaningful places/items in the church, such as put the 'hope' bunting on the cross, the 'peace' bunting on the baptism font, the 'joy' bunting on the piano/ organ and the 'love' bunting on the speaker's lectern. You could invite people to consider which words should go where in the church.

Choose a size that will be most effective based on where you will hang the bunting. The triangles could be made from paper or material. The top of the paper/ material can be folded over string/ribbon and stapled in place. Before each service have the triangles preattached but add the letters during the service.

PREPARE FOR HOMES: Also prepare individual triangles, one per household or person in your congregation. Please note we suggest this activity each week during Advent so you will need 4 triangles per household/person in total for all of Advent. The image below is for the final week when the triangles could all be attached together. Instead you may encourage people to just add a loop to each triangle to hang on their tree or a door handle separately.



INSTRUCTIONS FOR WEEK 1 HOPE

This first week needs 4 triangles and each triangle has one letter on it so it spells H O P E. Before the service have these 4 triangles pre-attached, ready for the letters to be added during the service. You can pre-select a volunteer to write the letters on the triangles or choose a volunteer in the moment.

Also prepare individual triangles, one per household or person in your congregation. You will need a texta or pen/pencils for each person and if you want to provide it, some ribbon and staplers. You may also like to have a Bible verse or prayer printed and ready to glue on to the back of the triangle (unless, pre-printed on the triangle) – for example, Psalm 80:1-7,17-19 “Smile on us and save us.”

SAY

Today as we celebrate the first week of Advent let's decorate our church and our homes with the word 'Hope'. I have invited (name) to write 'Hope' for us today. **[Volunteer comes forward and writes H O P E on the prepared triangles/bunting].**

While [name] does this, I invite you (or each household) to each take a triangle and texta/pencil and write the word Hope on it. Also take the Bible verse/prayer and glue it on the back of your triangle (unless pre-printed on the triangle). We invite you to attach a loop of ribbon to your triangle to hang it on your Christmas tree at home or on a door handle.

DO

Write letters on the bunting and then, if safe to do so, hang it in the church.
Begin the following song/carol during the activity and as people finish their own triangle, invite them to join in the song.

SONG Prepare the Way by Darrell Wayne Evans and Eric Nuzum

PREPARE

The suggested song is an Advent song that you can view here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=sq9K3Yri1qw

This is a link to where the music can be purchased from: <http://www.onlinesheetmusic.com/prepare-the-way-p283192.aspx>

You might like to consider including this song across the four weeks of Advent, using it at this point in the service each time.

SAY

During the chorus, I invite you to do the following simple actions, when we sing:

Make ready our hearts
[hands crossed over heart]

Make ready our homes
[arms outstretched above head, fingers together pointing upwards]

Make ready the people of God
[arms outstretched, palms upwards]

DO

Sing Prepare the Way and lead actions as appropriate.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

PREPARE

You will need 2 people to present this. It would be good if they were different generations, perhaps the younger person could read the prayer adapted from Isaiah 64 (CEV) and the older person could model the actions and sound effects. You could have a 3rd person who reads the prayer sections between the Isaiah verses.

The sound effects can be made using voices to imitate each sound eg of ripping paper, of water boiling. Have the Bible passage displayed with the words in bold.

PREPARE

Our prayer of confession is adapted from Isaiah 64: 1-9. You can follow this on the screen.

When we get to the words in bold, I invite you to make the sound effect or follow (name/actions).

BIBLE READING Isaiah 64:1-9 and Prayers

Lord God,

Rip the heavens apart!

[Riiiiippppp!]

Come down, Lord;

make the mountains **tremble**.

[Tremble – hit palms on thighs]

Be a **spark** that starts a fire

[Spark – click fingers]

causing water to **boil**.

[Bubble, bubble, bubble]

Then your enemies will know who you are;

all nations will **tremble**

[Tremble – hit palms on]

because you are nearby.

[Tremble – hit palms on thighs]

Your **fearsome** deeds

[Fearsome – ohhhh gasp]

have completely **amazed** us;

[Amazed – wow!]

even the mountains **shake**

[Shake - hit palms on thighs]

when you come down.

You are the only God

ever **seen or heard** of

[Seen or heard – point to eyes and ears]

who works miracles

for his followers.

We are sorry Lord God for not believing that you can act,

we are sorry for not coming to you first when things get difficult,

when life **rips, trembles, sparks, boils, shakes**.

[rips, trembles, sparks, boils, shakes]

You **help** all who **gladly obey**

[Help – high 5] [Gladly obey – thumbs up]

and do what you want,

but **sin** makes you **angry**.

[Sin – thumbs down] [Angry – growl.]

We are sorry Lord God for not **obeying you**.

[Thumbs down]

We think now of the things from this past week that we did or did not do in disobedience to you. **[Pause]** We are sorry.

Only by your **help**

[Help – high 5]

can we ever be **saved**.

[Saved – stand up]

We are unfit to worship you;

each of our good deeds

is merely a **filthy** rag.

[Filthy – hold nose, ‘ewwww’]

We dry up like **leaves**;

[Dry leaves – scrunch, scrunch]

our sins are storm **winds**

[Winds – woooosh]

sweeping us away.

No one worships in your name or remains faithful.

[No one – thumbs down]

You have **turned** your back on us

[Turned – turn away from front]

and let our **sins melt** us away.

[Sin – thumbs down] [Melt – be seated]

We are sorry Lord God for how unfit we are to worship you.

We are sorry that our sins make us stink like **filthy** rags,

[Filthy – hold nose, ‘ewwww’]

and that our sins **blow** us away from you.

[blow – woooosh]

We are sorry that we are **not faithful**.

[Not faithful - thumbs down]

You, Lord, are our Father.

We are nothing but **clay**,

[clay – thumb fist into palm of other hand]

but you are the potter

who **molded** us.

[molded - squeeze hands together]

Don't be so **furious**

[furious – growl]

or keep our **sins**

[sins – thumbs down]

in your thoughts forever!

Remember that **all of us**

[all of us – hold hands with those around you]

are your people.

We thank you Lord God for

forgiving and forgetting our **sins**.

[sins – thumbs down]

Please keep **moulding** us.

[moulding - squeeze hands together]

Thank you that **we are your people**.

[we are your people – hold hands with those around you]

Amen

SONG TiS738 My Jesus, my Saviour

READING Mark 13:24-37

PREPARE

Prepare four different areas, three in the worshipping space and one in another large room, if possible. Each station should have multiple copies of the Bible passage, instructions and reflection questions.

The three stations in the worshipping space are:

- **Mark 13: 24 – 27 Drawing.** It will need: a table or clipboards with A3 and A4 white paper, crayons, textas and pencils. The Bible passage and instructions/ reflections could be displayed a few times.
- **Mark 13: 28 – 31 Craft.** It will need a pot with a bare tree branch in it, a table with green paper/card, scissors, textas/pencils and some way to attach the leaves to the tree branch eg sticky tape. The Bible passage and instructions/reflections could be displayed a few times.
- **Mark 13:24-37 Bibles.** Have a pile of Bibles available for people to look up and quietly reflect on these verses on their own. Invite people to gather in a circle of chairs to share their reflections if wanted. The Bible passage and instructions/reflections could be displayed a few times.

The fourth station preferably goes in another large room so a team can rehearse/act out these verses.

- **Mark 13: 32-37 Drama.** You may like to provide some props, like angel costumes, servant costumes and a clock that is easy to move the hands on.

STATION 1: Mark 13: 24-27 Drawing – draw one or more of these images

- Choose 1 or 2 people to read the passage aloud to the group
- Choose one or more verses to draw on your own
- While drawing, either on your own think about or with others at the station, share your responses to these verses:
 - * What surprises you or challenges you or what is your favourite part?
 - * What do you think these verses might mean?

When the Son of Man Appears (CEV)

In those days,
right after that time of suffering,
The sun will become dark,
and the moon will no longer shine.
The stars will fall,
and the powers in the sky will be shaken.

Then the Son of Man will be seen coming in the clouds with great power and glory. He will send his angels to gather his chosen ones from all over the earth.

STATION 2: Mark 13: 28-31 Craft – making leaves

- Choose 1 or 2 people to read the passage aloud to the group
- Draw and cut out leaf shapes from green paper and attach to the branch
- While making leaves, discuss some other ways that creation show us that summer is near (eg flowering jacaranda trees; warmer weather; longer days)

- You might like to write your responses on the leaves
- Also while making leaves, either on your own think about or with others at the station share your responses to these verses:
 - * What surprises you or challenges you or what is your favourite part?
 - * What do you think these verses might mean?

A Lesson from a Fig Tree (CEV)

Learn a lesson from a fig tree. When its branches sprout and start putting out leaves, you know summer is near. So when you see all these things happening, you will know that the time has almost come. You can be sure that some of the people of this generation will still be alive when all this happens. The sky and the earth will not last forever, but my words will.

STATION 3: Mark 13:24-37 Bible reflection

If you would like to do this station on your own, read the passage then reflect on these questions:

- * What surprises you or challenges you or what is your favourite part?
- * What do you think these verses might mean?

If you would like to do this reflection with others, read the passage together, either aloud or silently, then reflect on these questions:

- * What surprises you or challenges you or what is your favourite part?
- * What do you think these verses might mean?

STATION 4: Mark 13: 32-37 Drama

- Choose 1 or 2 people to read the passage aloud to the group
- Share your responses to these verses:
 - * What surprises you or challenges you or what is your favourite part?
 - * What do you think these verses might mean?
- Decide how to act out these verses, for example as a drama performance or as a “photo/freeze-frame” with narrator.

No One Knows the Day or Time (CEV)

No one knows the day or the time. The angels in heaven don't know, and the Son himself doesn't know. Only the Father knows. So watch out and be ready! You don't know when the time will come. It is like what happens when a man goes away for a while and places his servants in charge of everything. He tells each of them what to do, and he orders the guard to keep alert. So be alert! You don't know when the master of the house will come back. It could be in the evening or at midnight or before dawn or in the morning. But if he comes suddenly, don't let him find you asleep. I tell everyone just what I have told you. Be alert!

SAY

The gospel reading today has three parts to it. You can choose which part to explore through an intergenerational activity or reflect on the whole passage through quiet reflection and conversation.

There is a station over here for drawing; a station over there for craft – creating leaves; a station over there for performing a drama and a station

over there for quiet reflection and conversation. Each station begins with reading the verses and a short reflection together. Further instructions are at each table.

It would be preferable to not move stations, just choose one. You'll have up to 10 minutes at the station. When our next song begins please return to your seats.

Please ensure everyone at the station is invited to join in and participate in the conversation and activities.

DO

Assist people to choose a station and to engage in the reflections and activities at that station.

After 8 - 10 minutes, invite the musicians to begin playing the next song to call everyone back together.

SONG There is a hope (Stuart Townend)

see www.youtube.com/watch?v=qyMWBx6vvJo&list=RDqyMWBx6vvJo&t=20

SERMON

OFFERING AND DEDICATION

NOTICES

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE (based on 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 CEV)

PREPARE

Have the phrase in bold on display for people to read.

It may be helpful to have two readers, one for the parts that Paul wrote and one for the prayers.

SAY

As we share our prayers of the people, there will be particular points where we will pause for you to reflect silently or share aloud your prayers. We will repeat the phrase in **bold together**. This prayer is adapted from 1 Corinthians 1:3-9.

Pray-er 1:

Let us pray. Our prayer is that God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

All:

will be kind to you and will bless you with peace!

Pray-er 2:

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: I never stop thanking my God for being kind enough to give you Christ Jesus, who helps you speak and understand so well.

Pray-er 1:

We pray for each person here at (name of church) to know and understand the gift of Jesus and ask for his help in sharing our faith and the hope that we have in Jesus this Advent. [pause]

Our prayer is that God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

All:

will be kind to you and will bless you with peace!

Pray-er 2:

Paul wrote: Now you are certain that everything we told you about our Lord Christ Jesus is true.

Pray-er 1:

Thank you God for the gift of faith to believe in Christ Jesus. We pray for people with doubts about Jesus. Help our church community to be a safe place to doubt and to explore and grow in faith. Help each of us to have enough faith to keep believing even when we doubt. [pause]

Our prayer is that God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

All:

will be kind to you and will bless you with peace!

Pray-er 2:

Paul wrote: You are not missing out on any blessings, as you wait for him to return. And until the day Christ does return, he will keep you completely innocent.

Pray-er 1:

Thank you God for your Spirit at work in us, encouraging us to live in the ways of Jesus. We thank you for your blessings, particularly your blessing of hope. We pray for people who have not heard about Jesus or who do not understand about having hope in Jesus this Advent. [pause]

Our prayer is that God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

All:

will be kind to you and will bless you with peace!

Pray-er 2:

Paul wrote: God can be trusted, and God chose you to be partners with God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Pray-er 1:

Thank you God that we can trust in you. Thank you for choosing us to partner with you in sharing the good news about your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray for people who have been hurt by the church, by those who follow Jesus, those who have been hurt by us and who now struggle to trust you.

Help us to live our faith in action so that all may know hope in Christ.

Our prayer is that God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

All:

will be kind to you and will bless you with peace! Amen.

SONG My hope is built on nothing less (Edward Mote)

see www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkMapZB8qMk

COMMISSION AND BLESSING

Advent 2B: Peace

10 December 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

SAY

We acknowledge the _____ people, the first inhabitants and custodians of this place from time beyond remembering.

GREETING AND WELCOME

Today is the second Sunday in Advent, Christmas is coming, we don't need to feel like it will be forever and we don't need to feel rushed. With God, we have all the time we need. Each Sunday in Advent we are focusing on a different theme that encourages us in our waiting and preparing.

This second Sunday in Advent we are focusing on Peace. I invite us all to say "Peace" and make the peace symbol with our fingers. On the count of 3; 1, 2, 3 "Peace" [hold up peace symbol with fingers].

Does anyone remember last week's theme and action? (Hope).

Let's put last week and this week's actions together.

Let's all count on our fingers to 3 and when we say "Hope" point upwards, then say "Peace" and make the peace symbol with our fingers.

Ready? [hold up hand and put up fingers as count], 1, 2, 3, Hope [point up].
Peace [make peace symbol].

Whenever you hear the word peace in our worship today, I invite you to show the peace sign.

CALL TO WORSHIP AND OPENING SONG

PREPARE

This call to worship invites people to learn actions for the opening song **Prayer for Peace** (David Haas). A YouTube version of the song can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cw0gMW6gk0w

SAY

As we reflect on the peace the Christ brings, let's move our bodies to reflect these words of the song **Prayer for Peace:**

Peace before us [**hold out hands in front of you like holding a gift**]

Peace behind us [**move hands behind your back, with palms open and up**]

Peace under our feet **[reach towards the ground, as much as safe/able]**

Peace within us **[place both hands on tummy]**

Peace over us **[reach high above your head]**

Let all around us be Peace **[circle hands around yourself, you may turn around if safe/able]**

Now let us use these actions as we sing our opening song together.

DO

Play the song or use a YouTube version, for all to use new actions.

ADVENT LITANY PEACE

PREPARE

This is an opportunity to use a traditional Advent wreath and light a candle each week or use water. Three litanies, along with a suggested song, are provided on pages 6-16. Just use the second week, Peace, from the litany (with song) you have chosen to use throughout Advent 2020.

INTERACTIVE ADVENT PEACE (and Take Home Activity)

PREPARE

To assist people to remember the theme of each week in Advent and to also focus on this theme in their homes during the week, we encourage you to use the Advent Activity as described earlier (see p. 19).

This week requires 5 triangles and each triangle has one letter on it so it spells P E A C E. Before the service have these 5 triangles pre-attached, ready for the letters to be added during the service. You can pre-select a volunteer to write the letters on the triangles or choose a volunteer in the moment.

Also prepare individual triangles, one per household or person in your congregation. You will need a texta or pen/pencils for each person and if you want to provide it, some ribbon and staplers. You may also like to have a Bible verse or prayer printed and ready to glue on to the back of the triangle (unless, pre-printed on the triangle) – for example, Romans 5:1 “Because of our Lord Jesus Christ, we live at peace with God”.

SAY

Today as we celebrate the second week of Advent let’s decorate our church and our homes with the word ‘Peace’. I have invited **[name]** to write ‘Peace’ for us today. **[Volunteer comes forward and writes P E A C E on the prepared triangles/bunting].**

While **[name]** does this, I invite you (or each household) to take a triangle and texta/pencil and write the word Peace on it. Also take the Bible verse/prayer and glue it on the back of your triangle (unless pre printed). When you get home, you might like to attach a loop of ribbon to your triangle to hang it on your Christmas tree at home or on a door handle.

DO

Write letters on the bunting and then, if safe to do so, hang it in the church. Begin the following song during the activity and as people finish their own triangle, invite them to join in the song.

SONG The Greatest Treasure (Colin Buchanan)

See www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPMwpyJ3loU

OR

SONG Prepare the Way by Darrell Wayne Evans and Eric Nuzum

PREPARE

The suggested song is an Advent song that you can view here:

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=sq9K3Yri1qw

This is a link to where the music can be purchased from:

- www.onlinesheetmusic.com/prepare-the-way-p283192.aspx

You might like to consider including this song across the four weeks of Advent, using it at this point in the service each time.

SAY

During the chorus, I invite you to do the following simple actions, when we sing:

Make ready our hearts [hands crossed over heart]

Make ready our homes [arms outstretched above head, fingers together pointing upwards]

Make ready the people of God [arms outstretched, palms upwards]

DO

Sing Prepare the Way and lead actions as appropriate.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

PREPARE

Arrange for two people (of different generations or from one household) to practice leading the prayer as indicated below. Arrange for the words of the prayer to be displayed appropriately (on a screen or in a pew sheet).

1:

Loving God,

In this season of Advent, we are often distracted by lots of decorations and thinking about what we want for Christmas presents.

God, we confess those times we do not see the homeless person or our friend in need, who are more important than shiny things or parties.

2:

God of Grace and Mercy

All:

Help us be people of peace

1:

At a time when we might be preparing to visit family or have family come to stay. God, we confess those times we grumble about or fight in our families, or when we fail to visit and show love to our relatives. Or when we don't call or write to those we cannot visit.

2:

God of Grace and Mercy

All:

Help us be people of peace

1:

Loving God, we also pray silently for those things on our hearts which we want to confess to you and say sorry.

[leave a 10 second pause]

2:

God of Grace and Mercy

All:

Help us be people of peace

All:

Thank you God, that you forgive us when we are sorry and invite us to be part of your family.

Amen.

SAY

Let us come to God with our prayers of confession, admitting to God that we are not always the people God wants us to be. When you hear the words "God of Grace and Mercy", please respond with **"Help us to be people of peace"** – remembering to make the "peace" sign.

Let's practice that: "God of Grace and Mercy"...**"Help us be people of peace"**.

At the end of the prayer, we will remain seated and, as a response, sing the refrain from the song Comfort, comfort all my people (TiS 647) twice.

DO

Let's pray together...

SONG TiS 647 Comfort, comfort all my people

[remain seated and simply sing the refrain twice]

BIBLE READING Isaiah 40:1-11 (CEV)

PREPARE

Add these words into your slides or order of service so that people can join in the bible reading.

SAY

Today's Bible reading comes from the Old Testament, Isaiah 40:1-11. We are going to read this as a whole congregation, alternating between the left side and the right side as the text moves from bold blue to bold orange

L:

Our God has said: "Encourage my people! Give them comfort.

R:

Speak kindly to Jerusalem and announce: "Your slavery is past; your punishment is over. I, the Lord, made you pay double for your sins."

L:

Someone is shouting: "Clear a path in the desert! Make a straight road for the Lord our God.

R:

Fill in the valleys flatten every hill and mountain. Level the rough and rugged ground.

L:

Then the glory of the Lord will appear for all to see. The Lord has promised this!"

R:

Someone told me to shout, and I asked, "What should I shout?" We humans are merely grass, and we last no longer than wild flowers.

L:

At the Lord's command, flowers and grass disappear, and so do we.

R:

Flowers and grass fade away, but what our God has said will never change.

L:

There is good news for the city of Zion. Shout it as loud as you can from the highest mountain.

R:

Don't be afraid to shout to the towns of Judah, "Your God is here!"

L:

Look! The powerful Lord God is coming to rule with his mighty arm.

R:

God brings what God has taken in war, and God rewards God's people.

L:

The Lord cares for the nation, just as shepherds care for their flocks.

R:

God carries the lambs in God's arms, while gently leading the mother sheep.

READING Mark 1:1-8

SERMON

OFFERING AND DEDICATION

NOTICES

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

PREPARE

By way of a follow-up to this prayer suggestion, you might like to arrange for some popcorn makers to be accessible over Morning Tea time for people to make (and consume) some popcorn together.

SAY

For our Prayers of the People, I invite you to join in a ‘popcorn prayer’. I’ll introduce some things we can all pray for and you can call out a word or two for our prayer, shot up like a piece of popping corn. Just a simple word (or two) that is something you’d like us to pray for as a community.

DO

Let us pray...

God of the whole universe and everything seen and unseen, we pray for the earth and the environment:

[space for popping prayers]

God of our nation, we pray for those who lead us and serve us:

[space for popping prayers]

God of this city and all cities, we pray for the situations which concern us:

[space for popping prayers]

God of this church, we pray for our leaders and ministry activities:

[space for popping prayers]

God of our everyday, we pray for our friends and family who are on our heart today:

[space for popping prayers]

God who knows all our thoughts before we speak, hear these our prayers for situations beyond ourselves.

In Jesus name we pray.

Amen.

SONG TiS 613 Lord of all hopefulness

COMMISSION AND BLESSING

Advent 3B: Joy

17 December 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

SAY

We acknowledge the _____ people, the first inhabitants and custodians of this place from time beyond remembering.

GREETING AND WELCOME

SAY & DO

Today is the third Sunday in Advent, Christmas is coming, we don't need to feel like it will be forever and we don't need to feel rushed. With God, we have all the time we need. Each Sunday in Advent we are focusing on a different theme that encourages us in our waiting and preparing.

This third Sunday in Advent we are focusing on Joy. I invite us all to say "Joy" and give someone a high-5! On the count of 3; 1, 2, 3 "Joy" [give a high-5].

Does anyone remember the last 2 week's themes and actions?
[Hope and Peace]

Let's put all of these actions together.

Let's all count on our fingers to 3 and when we say "Hope" point upwards, then say "Peace" and make the peace symbol with our fingers and then say "Joy" and give a high-5.

Ready? [hold up hand and put up fingers as count], 1, 2, 3, Hope [point up].
Peace [make peace symbol]. Joy [give a high-5].

CALL TO WORSHIP *(based on Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 and incorporating Scripture in Song 81 Rejoice in the Lord always!)*

PREPARE

Arrange for the words of the prayer and song to be displayed appropriately (on a screen or in a pew sheet). Liaise with those leading the music to ensure they understand the process.

SAY

I wonder what kind of week you have had? Perhaps it has been basically good – and you're here with a spirit of joy. Put up your hand if that is you today...I'd like you to read the bits labelled "1" in our call to worship this morning. Perhaps your week has had its fair share of challenges – and you're not feeling as positive as usual. If that's you, I'd like you to read the bits labelled "2". Put up your hand if you're not sure where you are today - I'd like you to read the "2" bits as well **[apply appropriate pastoral sensitivity as you facilitate this process]**. Lastly, I'd encourage us to all join in with the song "Rejoice in the Lord always" where indicated.

DO

Let's worship God together...

1:

We come to worship Christ

2:

Who proclaims good news to the poor, binds up the broken-hearted, frees the prisoner and comforts those who mourn.

All Sing:

"Rejoice in the Lord always!"

1:

We come to worship Christ

2:

Who gives us a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

All Sing:

"Rejoice in the Lord always!"

1:

We come to worship Christ

2:

Who rebuilds ancient ruins, and restores broken places.

All Sing:

"Rejoice in the Lord always!"

ADVENT LITANY JOY

PREPARE

This is an opportunity to use a traditional Advent wreath and light a candle each week or use water. Three litanies, along with a suggested song, are provided on pages 6-16. Continue with the third week, Joy, from the litany (with song) you have chosen to use throughout Advent 2020.

INTERACTIVE ADVENT JOY

(and Take Home Activity)

PREPARE

To assist people to remember the theme of each week in Advent and to also focus on this theme in their homes during the week, we encourage

you to use the Advent Activity as described earlier (see p. 19). This week requires 3 triangles and each triangle has one letter on it so it spells J O Y. Before the service have these 3 triangles pre-attached, ready for the letters to be added during the service. You can pre-select a volunteer to write the letters on the triangles or choose a volunteer in the moment.

Also prepare individual triangles, one per household or person in your congregation. You will need a texta or pen/pencils for each person and if you want to provide it, some ribbon and staplers. You may also like to have a Bible verse or prayer printed and ready to glue on to the back of the triangle (unless pre-printed on the triangle) – for example, “1 Thessalonians 5:16-17 Always be joyful and never stop praying”.

SAY

Today as we celebrate the second week of Advent let's decorate our church and our homes with the word 'Joy'. I have invited **[name]** to write 'Joy' for us today. **[Volunteer comes forward and writes J O Y on the prepared triangles/bunting].**

While **[name]** does this, I invite you (or each household) to each take a triangle and texta/pencil and write the word Joy on it. Also take the Bible verse/prayer and glue it on the back of your triangle (if you have not pre-printed the triangles). When you get home, you might like to attach a loop of ribbon to your triangle to hang it on your Christmas tree at home or on a door handle.

DO

Write letters on the bunting and then, if safe to do so, hang it in the church. Begin the following song during the activity and as people finish their own triangle, invite them to join in the song.

SONG Prepare the Way by Darrell Wayne Evans and Eric Nuzum

PREPARE

The suggested song is an Advent song that you can view here:

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=sq9K3Yri1qw

This is a link to where the music can be purchased from:

- www.onlinesheetmusic.com/prepare-the-way-p283192.aspx

You might like to consider including this song across the four weeks of Advent, using it at this point in the service each time.

SAY

During the chorus, I invite you to do the following simple actions, when we sing:

Make ready our hearts **[hands crossed over heart]**

Make ready our homes **[arms outstretched above head, fingers together pointing upwards]**

Make ready the people of God [*arms outstretched, palms upwards*]

DO

Sing Prepare the Way and lead actions as appropriate.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

PREPARE

Arrange for three people (of different generations or from one household) to practice leading the prayer as indicated below. Arrange for the words of the prayer to be displayed appropriately (on a screen or in a pew sheet).

Reader 1 & 2:

Gracious God, we give thanks that your loving attitude towards us does not change, that your concern for justice and righteousness was so strong that you came in human form to share that concern with us. We confess that often we hesitate to speak or act when we see people being treated unjustly.

Lord have mercy: **Lord have mercy**

Reader 2 & 3:

God, forgive us the times when we have been happy to hear the gospel without truly living it. God, forgive us for our uncaring attitudes when we judge others by what they own, how they look, what they say, or how they live, rather than accepting them for who they are - people made in your image.

Christ have mercy: **Christ have mercy**

Reader 1 & 3:

God, forgive us when our longing to live simply and with humility is defeated by other selfish desires - for pursuing success and profits rather than living your ways of love, peace and justice. Forgive us for placing our hope in things other than the Christ-child born in a poor stable.

Lord have mercy: **Lord have mercy**

Readers 1, 2 & 3:

God remind us by your Spirit that our hope lies in the promise of your mercy for those who believe in you from generation to generation. Heal, restore and bless us through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

Readers 1, 2 & 3 + Worship Leader:

May the God of peace cleanse us through and through. The promise is that our whole being - spirit, soul and body will be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. So we declare to you Christ's word...

Our sins are forgiven. **Thanks be to God!**

SAY

Today our prayer of confession will be led by [name], [name] and [name]. I invite you to join in with the responses in .

DO

Let us pray...

SONG TiS 717 Give thanks with a grateful heart

SAY

We are about to sing the song **"Give thanks with a grateful heart"**. As we prepare, I wonder what you might like to give thanks for? Take a moment to think of something (or even a few things) and share it with someone near you, preferably someone you don't usually talk to. Don't worry if you have to move a little to find someone. In a little while, I'll ask you to call out some of the things we are thankful for and then we'll stand to sing the song.

DO

Follow the process as outlined above and then invite the congregation to stand and sing...

READING 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 (CEV)

PREPARE

Arrange for the Bible reading to be displayed appropriately (on a screen or in a pew sheet). Make sure the person reading the Bible is comfortable, and appropriately skilled, as well as prepared in advance to facilitate the process outlined below.

SAY

Our Bible Reading this morning begins with the phrase "Always be joyful". As the Bible Reading is read, I'd like to invite this third of the church (indicate which third you mean) to keep whispering quietly "Always be joyful, always be joyful, always be joyful...". Let's practice that...well done!

DO

Reading from 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24...

Always be joyful and never stop praying. Whatever happens, keep thanking God because of Jesus Christ. This is what God wants you to do.

[pause and affirm those who have been whispering "Always be joyful". Point out, though, that you have noticed the passage also says "Never stop praying". Invite another third of the church to join in by whispering "Never stop praying, never stop praying, never stop praying..." as you begin the reading again...]

Always be joyful and never stop praying. Whatever happens, keep thanking God because of Jesus Christ. This is what God wants you to do.

[pause again and be affirming of both “thirds”, but note that it also says “Keep thanking God”. Invite the final third of the church to join in, as the others keep whispering their phrases, by whispering “Keep thanking God, Keep thanking God, Keep thanking God...” as you begin the reading again...]

Always be joyful and never stop praying. Whatever happens, keep thanking God because of Jesus Christ. This is what God wants you to do. Don't turn away God's Spirit or ignore prophecies. Put everything to the test. Accept what is good and don't have anything to do with evil. I pray that God, who gives peace, will make you completely holy. And may your spirit, soul, and body be kept healthy and faultless until our Lord Jesus Christ returns. The one who chose you can be trusted, and he will do this.

EARLY WORD

SONG TIS 412 God sends us his Spirit to befriend and help us

READING John 1:6-8, 19-28

SERMON

SONG TiS 161 Tell out my soul

OFFERING AND DEDICATION

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

PREPARE

Arrange for the words of response to be displayed appropriately (on a screen or in a pew sheet).

By our words, prayers and actions, may we be pioneers of your kingdom of love, peace & justice.

PREPARE

As we pray together today, I invite you to join in with these actions for the phrase

- By our words [**touch cheeks with forefingers**],
- prayers [**place palms together, pointing fingers upward**]
- and actions [**outstretch arms, with palms upward**].

And say together “May we be pioneers of your kingdom of love, peace & justice.”

Let’s have a go all together: “**By our words, prayers and actions... may we be pioneers of your kingdom of love, peace & justice.**”

DO

Let us pray...

God, as John the Baptist came proclaiming your message of justice, may we, be prophets for our own time. Help us to make governments more aware of their responsibilities to those under their authority- those who are rich or poor, black or white, male or female, whatever their politics or religion.

By our words, prayers and actions, may we be pioneers of your kingdom of love, peace & justice.

God, as John the Baptist came to prepare the way for your coming, may we, seek to prepare the way for you to enter the lives of others. Help us to follow Christ so that in all our relationships with other people something of his love may be seen, something of his nature understood.

By our words, prayers and actions, may we be pioneers of your kingdom of love, peace & justice.

God, as John the Baptist came to call the people to repentance, may we, offer to others by our words and actions, an alternative way of life, based on love and truth, rather than selfishness and complacency. May our values reflect our faith and not the values of the society around us.

By our words, prayers and actions, may we be pioneers of your kingdom of love, peace & justice.

Amen.

SONG TiS 671 Made in God’s likeness

COMMISSION AND BLESSING

Advent 4B: Love

24 December 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

SAY

We acknowledge the _____ people, the first inhabitants and custodians of this place from time beyond remembering.

GREETING AND WELCOME

Today is the fourth and final Sunday in Advent, Christmas is this week! We don't need to feel like it will be forever and we don't need to feel rushed. With God, we have all the time we need. Each Sunday in Advent we are focusing on a different theme that encourages us in our waiting and preparing.

This fourth Sunday in Advent we are focusing on Love. I invite us all to say "Love" and place your hands on your heart. On the count of 3; 1, 2, 3 "Love" **[place hands on heart]**.

Does anyone remember the last 3 week's themes and actions?
(Hope, Peace, Joy)

Let's put all of these actions together.

Let's all count on our fingers to 3 and when we say "Hope" point upwards, then say "Peace" and make the peace symbol with our fingers, then say "Joy" and give a high-5, and then say "Love" and place your hands on your heart.

Ready? **[hold up hand and put up fingers as count]**, 1, 2, 3, Hope **[point up]**. Peace **[make peace symbol]**. Joy **[give a high-5]**. Love **[place hands on heart]**. Well done!

CALL TO WORSHIP

PREPARE

In a slide, on a wall, or in your pew sheet, put some heart shapes to prompt the discussion. Arrange for the words to be displayed appropriately.

SAY

We gather together to worship a God of Love, and this fourth week of Advent we particularly remember the love of the mother Mary, and the love of God coming in our Emmanuel, "God with us", Jesus. Let us join in a call to worship together. In each response when we say together "God of Love" put your hands on your heart, or fingers in the shape of a heart in front of your chest.

Creator God, come to us in the breeze of a summer afternoon.

Breathe on us, God of Love.

Holy Jesus, come to us in the voices of our neighbours.

Speak to us, God of Love.

Sustaining Spirit, come to us in unexpected moments of joy in the everyday.

Energise us, God of Love.

SONG TiS 398 Come down, O Love Divine

ADVENT LITANY LOVE

PREPARE

This is an opportunity to use a traditional Advent wreath and light a candle each week or use water. Three litanies, along with a suggested song, are provided on pages 6-16. Continue with the fourth week, Love, from the litany (with song) you have chosen to use throughout Advent 2020

INTERACTIVE ADVENT LOVE (and Take Home Activity)

PREPARE

To assist people to remember the theme of each week in Advent and to also focus on this theme in their homes during the week, we encourage you to use the Advent Activity as described earlier (see p. 19).

This week requires 4 triangles and each triangle has one letter on it so it spells L O V E. Before the service have these 4 triangles pre-attached, ready for the letters to be added during the service. You can pre-select a volunteer to write the letters on the triangles or choose a volunteer in the moment.

Also prepare individual triangles, one per household or person in your congregation. You will need a texta or pen/pencils for each person and if you want to provide it, some ribbon and staplers. You may also like to have a Bible verse or prayer printed and ready to glue on to the back of the triangle (unless pre-printed on the triangle), for example Romans 1:7 "God loves you and has chosen you to be God's very own people".

SAY

Today as we celebrate the fourth week of Advent let's decorate our church and our homes with the word 'Love'. I have invited [name] to write 'Love' for us today. **[Volunteer comes forward and writes L O V E on the prepared triangles/bunting].**

While [name] does this, I invite you (or each household) to each take a triangle and texta/pencil and write the word Love on it. Also take the Bible verse/prayer and glue it on the back of your triangle (if you have not preprinted the triangles). When you get home, you might like to attach a loop of ribbon to your triangle to hang it on your Christmas tree at home or on a door handle.

DO

Write letters on the bunting and then, if safe to do so, hang it in the church. Begin the following song during the activity and as people finish their own triangle, invite them to join in the song.

SONG Prepare the Way by Darrell Wayne Evans and Eric Nuzum

The suggested song is an Advent song that you can view here:

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=sq9K3Yri1qw

This is a link to where the music can be purchased from:

- www.onlinesheetmusic.com/prepare-the-way-p283192.aspx

You might like to consider including this song across the four weeks of Advent, using it at this point in the service each time.

SAY

During the chorus, I invite you to do the following simple actions, when we sing:

Make ready our hearts

[hands crossed over heart]

Make ready our homes

[arms outstretched above head, fingers together pointing upwards]

Make ready the people of God

[arms outstretched, palms upwards]

DO

Sing Prepare the Way and lead actions as appropriate.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

PREPARE

For this prayer you'll need some pebble stones (around 2-3cm in size) and a plastic tub full of water. Before the service, prepare the tub of water placing it near the communion table, possibly use some blue cloth to visually connect it to a cross on the communion table. You'll also need some baskets to pass around the pebble/stones, or arrange for volunteers to pass them out before the service or when you are about to begin the prayer.

In addition, arrange for appropriate music to be played and the words of the prayer (with instructions) to be displayed appropriately...

SAY

I invite you to take a stone and squeeze it tightly in your hand, feeling how hard it is. These stones are a symbol of the weight of our wrongdoing. For our prayer of confession today, we will include a ritual action of leaving our confessions to God, cleansed by the renewing of water. There will be a time for personal prayer where we will have some soft music playing and you

are invited to come forward and toss your stone into the water, turn around and walk back to your seat without looking back. Leave those confessions behind you.

DO

Let's pray...

God of love, we come to you now with our prayers of confession. Admitting the things we've done which we should not have done, and those things left undone. In the silence we say sorry...

[Allow space for silent prayer]

...but we do not have to hold onto this hard weight! When you are ready, please come forward, toss your stone into the water – leaving that hard weight for God - and turn around, walking away to begin afresh this week.

[Allow space for prayer and moving to toss each stone in the tub. After an appropriate time, conclude by praying the words below]

God of love, we bring to you these our confessions, the hard things that have weighed on our hearts and lives. Take them from us so that we may love more like you. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

BIBLE READING Luke 1:46b-55

PREPARE

Prepare a way to display the responses. Have one ppt slide for the first time through and another slide for the second time.

SAY

Sometimes called the Magnificat, this reading from Luke Chapter 1 verses 46-55 is Mary's Song of Praise in response to the news that she will give birth to Jesus, God's Son. It begins with the phrase "With all my heart I praise the Lord". I invite you to say that with me... **With all my heart I praise the Lord.**

Excellent! As I read the passage, whenever I place my left hand on my heart like this **[place left hand on heart]** we will say together...**With all my heart I praise the Lord.** You might even like to place your hand on your heart as well.

DO

1st time through:

[place left hand on heart]

With all my heart I praise the Lord

2nd time through:

[place left hand on heart]

With all my heart I praise the Lord

... and I am glad because of God my Saviour. God cares for me, God's humble servant. From now on, all people will say God has blessed me. God All-Powerful has done great things for me, and God's name is holy. God always shows mercy to everyone who worships God.

1st time through:

[place left hand on heart]

With all my heart I praise the Lord

2nd time through:

[clench hands together in prayer pose]...

With all my soul I praise the Lord

The Lord has used a powerful arm to scatter those who are proud. God drags strong rulers from their thrones and puts humble people in places of power.

1st time through:

[place left hand on heart]

With all my heart I praise the Lord

2nd time through:

[place pointer fingers on either side of head]

With all my mind I praise the Lord

God gives the hungry good things to eat, and sends the rich away with nothing. God helps God's servant Israel and is always merciful to God's people. The Lord made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his family forever!

1st time through:

[place left hand on heart]

With all my heart I praise the Lord

2nd time through:

[make strong person action with arms]

With all my strength I praise the Lord

Well done! One day many years later Jesus was asked what the most important Commandment was. He said "You must love God with all your heart **[place left hand on heart]**, soul **[clench hands together in prayer pose]**, mind **[place pointer fingers on either side of head]** and strength **[make strong person action with arms]**.

Let's practice those actions together...

heart **[place left hand on heart]**

soul **[clench hands together in prayer pose]**

mind **[place pointer fingers on either side of head]**

strength **[make strong person action with arms]**.

Jesus encourages us to love God with our whole being. I'm going to read the passage again. This time you are encouraged to watch me and respond with whatever action I choose, for example...

[place left hand on heart]...

With all my **heart** I praise the Lord

[clench hands together in prayer pose]...

With all my **soul** I praise the Lord

[place pointer fingers on either side of head]...

With all my **mind** I praise the Lord

[make strong person action with arms]...

With all my **strength** I praise the Lord

Let's read the passage again... (see above 2nd time through)

SONG TiS 172 My soul gives glory to God my heart

EARLY WORD

READING Luke 1: 26-38

SERMON

OFFERING AND DEDICATION

NOTICES

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

PREPARE

Invite a family/household or at least three people from different generations to choose some images in the week prior to the service that will prompt prayers for others. Some suggested topics might be

- The world and environment
- Our country and leaders
- Our local community needs
- Our church mission and ministry
- Our close family and friends

Invite them to choose some appropriate music as background. Arrange for the images to be displayed and music to be played during the prayer time. Ensure the final image/slide contains the final words to be spoken together (see **Do** on the next page)

SAY

For our prayers of the people today, **[insert name/s]** have chosen some visuals to help us pray together. I invite you to pray silently as we view these images, knowing that we don't always need to speak our prayers out loud.

DO

Display the images as the background music is played. Conclude the time with...

Leader:

We pray together

All:

God of love, we bring all these prayers to you. Today and all days, hear the silent and spoken prayers we pray as we engage with the world around and beyond us. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

SONG TiS 217 Love divine, all loves excelling

COMMISSION AND BLESSING

Christmas 1B: Belonging

31 December 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

SAY

We acknowledge the _____ people, the first inhabitants and custodians of this place from time beyond remembering.

WELCOME & GREETING

SONG TiS 268 Joy to the world

PREPARE

Arrange a collection of simple musical instruments (triangles, tambourines, shakers, etc.) to make available for anyone who wants to participate in this way.

SAY

How was your Christmas this year? What was the best bit for you? Find someone who was born in a different decade to you and share with them what you liked about your Christmas this year [allow time for these conversations to take place]. Over Morning Tea you might like to start a few conversations with people you don't usually talk to by asking them about their Christmas.

For many people Christmas is a time of joy. We also know that for some people Christmas can be very difficult and sad. Hopefully, as we gather here today we can build one another up and offer a space, even in the midst of difficulties, to celebrate that the Lord is come. Our celebrations of Christ coming aren't just for the Christmas season but can be for the whole year!

DO

Let's celebrate with joy – using these instruments if you want to – as we sing together "Joy to the world!"

CALL TO WORSHIP Based on Psalm 148

PREPARE

Arrange for the words to be displayed appropriately (on a screen or in a pew sheet).

Praise the Lord from the heavens and in the heights;
the angels, the sun, moon and shining stars.

**Praise the Lord who established heaven and earth
and everything within them;**
every animal and bird, every fish and creature of the seas;

**every mountain and hill, every tree and plant, every
river and stream, praise the Lord.**

Praise the Lord every ruler and government, all people of every age and every colour.

**Praise the Lord whose name alone is exalted, whose glory the angels
sang: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace,
goodwill among all people."**

SAY

I would like everyone who has an instrument (see previous Song) to move and pair up with someone who doesn't have an instrument ...Go! (allow time for pairs to form). During our Call to Worship, when we come to the words in bold, I would like each pair to stand up (as they are able) – with those with instruments to play whilst those without instruments in the pairs to say the words – and then both sit down when the phrase has been read. For those who are not in a pair, please put your hands up, the invitation to you is to stand and say the plain words and then sit down (you can put your hands down now). Let's practice that...1, 2...

Praise the Lord from the heavens and in the heights;
the angels, the sun, moon and shining stars.

Great, well done!

DO

Let's join together in our call to worship...
...and let's collect up all the instruments now.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

PREPARE

Arrange for the following words to be displayed appropriately (on a screen or in a pew sheet).

Slide 1

We think now of times when our lives lack mercy, compassion and kindness – when we know in our hearts that this weakens our relationship with God and with other people.

[A time for silence]

Slide 2

We think about people - adults and young people - in parts of the world where suffering is a daily happening and to imagine what it would be like to be in their shoes.

[A time for silence]

Slide 3

Our sins are forgiven

Thanks be to God!

Arrange for three people (ideally a school-aged young person, a young/middle-aged adult and an older adult) to prepare and practice leading the prayer prior to the service. Each of these people needs to come up with their own response for the spaces indicated.

SAY

Today we are going to be led in our prayer of confession by [name], [name] and [name]. Let's pray together...

DO

Person 1:

Jesus had to become like us in every respect so that he might be merciful and faithful. These qualities formed the very foundation of Jesus' life. So he was able to share human pain and human happiness, human times of testing and human joy in observing and caring about people and the beauty of the world.

Person 2:

We think now of times when our lives lack mercy, compassion and kindness – when we know in our hearts that this weakens our relationship with God and with other people.

Person 3:

When...

Person 1:

When...

Person 2:

When...

[display slide 1, allow time for silence]

Person 3:

We think about people - adults and young people - in parts of the world where suffering is a daily happening and to imagine what it would be like to be in their shoes.

Person 1:

For...

Person 2:

For...

Person 3:

For...

[display slide 2, allow time for silence]

Persons 1,2 & 3:

Loving God, forgive us when we fail to care for others. Clothe us with the mercy, compassion and kindness fully revealed to us in Jesus. Strengthen us by your Spirit so whatever we do, in word and deed, we do in the name of Jesus. Amen

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

SAY

Worship Leader: Jesus became like us “so that he might ...make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people”. In other words, because Jesus “himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.”

[display slide 3]

Our sins are forgiven.

All:

Thanks be to God!

SONG Isaiah 53:6 (Colin Buchanan)

PREPARE

Beginning with <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWRvX0C3Hd0>, decide which way of doing this song is most appropriate for your context. Think carefully about how you will explain the language/theology – especially “The Lord has laid on him, the iniquity of us all”.

SAY

For some of us this song will be an old favourite, for others it will be new. So, for the first time through, all I want you to do is join in with the **Baa, Baa, Do, Baa Baa Isaiah 53:6 Huh!** bit.

Let's practice that...1,2... **Baa, Baa, Do, Baa Baa Isaiah 53:6 Huh!**
Excellent!

DO

Please remain seated as we sing...

...Well done. Did you notice that there were some strange words in there - “The Lord has laid on him, the iniquity of us all”. You might be wondering what this means. Well, [use the words you prepared earlier to explain this phrase]. Now we have a better idea of what this might mean, let's stand and sing together...

TAKE HOME ACTIVITY

Sheep craft/brooch activity pack

PREPARE

Prepare the instructions (see end of this service) and the materials (as listed below) in a ziplock bag (enough for each person in the congregation).

You may also like to provide scissors, sticky tape and PVA glue at a table during morning tea after the service to assist anyone who wants to make their sheep before they go home.

Materials per person:

- white lightweight card, cut in an 8cm circle
- a sheep head and one pair of legs (lightweight card, white or brown)
- 5 cotton balls
- 2 googly eyes
- Large safety pin

(Activity sourced from Carolanne Strickland)

SAY

“We all like sheep have gone astray” and yet, God’s grace extends across us all. Sheep are also present at the birth of Jesus, who is our Good Shepherd and the Lamb of God. The Bible is filled with sheep/shepherd themes and stories, primarily because sheep and shepherding were a central part of the lives of first century Jews. To help us remember Jesus, our Good Shepherd and that we are his sheep, I invite you to take home a simple sheep craft after the service today. The instructions and materials are provided, except for scissors, sticky tape and glue. If you need assistance with this, there is a table set up for you to make your sheep during morning tea.

DO

At the end of the service, hand out the sheep craft packs to each person.

READING Hebrews 2:10-18 (CEV)

PREPARE

Make sure the person reading the Bible is comfortable, and appropriately skilled, as well as prepared in advance to facilitate the process outlined below. Arrange for the Bible reading to be displayed appropriately (on a screen or in a pew sheet).

HEBREWS 2:10-18

Everything belongs to God [?]

Everything belongs to God, and all things were created by God's power. So God did the right thing [?]

So God did the right thing when God made Jesus perfect by suffering, as Jesus led many of God's children to be saved and to share in his glory. Jesus and the people he makes holy all belong to the same family [?]

Jesus and the people he makes holy all belong to the same family. That is why he isn't ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters. He even said to God, "I will tell them your name and sing your praises when they come together to worship." He also said, "I will trust God." Then he said, "Here I am with the children God has given me."

We are people of flesh and blood. That is why Jesus became one of us [?]
That is why Jesus became one of us. He died to destroy the devil, who had power over death. But he also died to rescue all of us who live each day in fear of dying [?]

Jesus died to rescue all of us who live each day in fear of dying. Jesus clearly did not come to help angels, but he did come to help Abraham's descendants. He had to be one of us, so that he could serve God as our merciful and faithful high priest and sacrifice himself for the forgiveness of our sins. And now that Jesus has suffered and was tempted, he can help anyone else who is tempted [?]

Jesus can help anyone else who is tempted.

SAY

As we engage with the Bible together today, whenever we get to a [?] I would like you to say **"Really?"** (if I remember, I might even point to you at the right time).

Let's practice that...[point to congregation]...excellent!

DO

Begin the Bible reading and, after each [?]/**Really?** Begin the next sentence by saying "Yes!".

SONG TiS 323 Born in the night Mary's child

READING Luke 2:22-40

SERMON

SONG TiS 293 Unto us a son is born

OFFERING AND DEDICATION

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

PREPARE

Arrange for suitable background music (perhaps the tune to the final song) to be played during this prayer time. Arrange a suitable number of tables for your space.

On each table place three “piles” of items

Pile 1:

Christmas “left-overs” (eg. wrapping paper, tinsel, cards, maybe even some food)

Pile 2:

Symbols of the church (eg. Cross, Bible, bowl of water, hymn book)

Pile 3:

Items from nature (eg. flowers, pictures of animals, images of a sunset)

With each pile, place a card as follows...

Prayer Card 1 (younger person)

Loving God help us to pause, in this space between Christmas parties, and those of the New Year, between gift unwrapping and cleaning up, between longing and thanksgiving, between endings and beginnings, between dismay and joy, between Sacred and ordinary...

God help us to find Jesus: **in the way we love each other.**

Prayer Card 2 (older person)

Help us to pause and remember Whose we are, and Whose we will always be. To pause and remember in Whose name we pray, and Whose love we seek, and hold, and give away.

God help us to find Jesus: **in the way we love each other.**

Prayer Card 3 (anyone)

Help us to pause and pray so all may see the world with the eyes of wonder of the newborn Christ, with the loving heart of God’s act of self-giving.

God help us to find Jesus: **in the way we love each other.**

Prepare a slide (or sheet) for the final part of the prayer with the following words...

Help us to pause and pray that we may all treat one another with the honour and adoration Mary and Joseph, shepherds and wise ones, angels and all the heavenly choir showed to the tiny child. God help us to find Jesus in the way we love each other. Amen.

SAY

For our prayers of the people today, in a moment, I’m going to invite you to move to a table. There you will see three piles of items for you to reflect on and a prayer card. Once you have gathered around the table, identify a younger person to read the first card, an older person to read the second card and a third person to read the final card. I will let you know when it is time to start reading. We will pause between each prayer and I will prompt you when to read the next card. Note, too, the response each time to **“God help us to find Jesus”** will be “in the way we love each other”.

Please move to a table now.

DO

Once people are standing around the tables and have identified the readers, invite the first (younger) person to pray.

Allow time for silence, then invite the second (older) person to pray. Again allow time for silence before inviting the third person to pray. After a final time of silence, invite everyone to face the front and read the words on the screen (or sheet).

SONG TiS 322 The North wind is tossing the leaves

COMMISSION AND BLESSING

Sheep Brooch

Materials:

White lightweight card, 8cm circle
A4 lightweight card, white or brown
to photocopy head or feet onto

3 cotton balls

2 Joggle eyes

Large safety pin

Preparation:

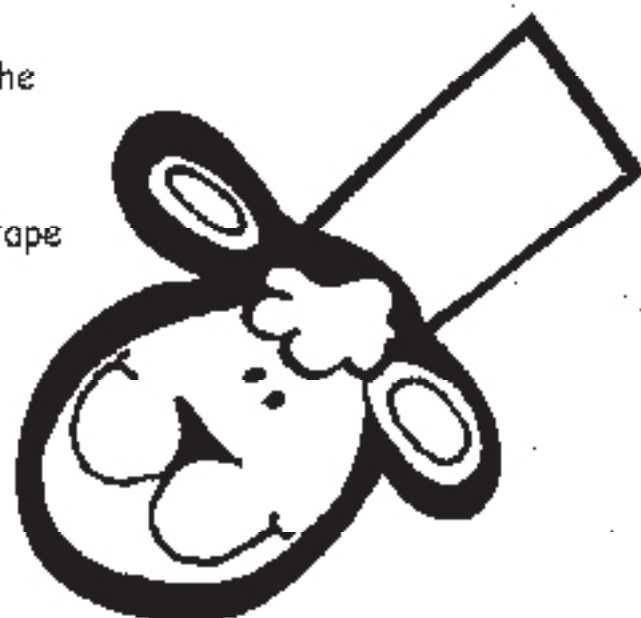
Cut out head and legs shapes

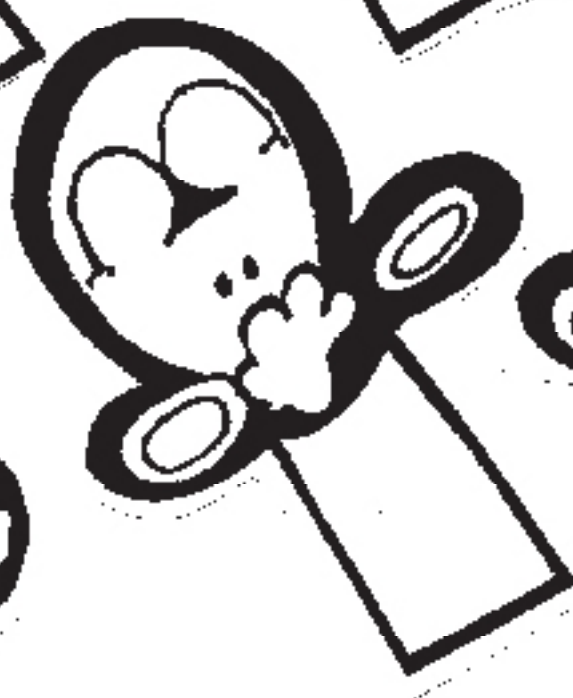
Equipment:

Stickytape, PVA glue.

Method:

1. Stickytape feet in position, to the back of the circle card.
2. Fold down head flap, and stickytape this so it sits above the feet.
3. Stickytape safety pin to the back of the circle.
4. Glue on joggle eyes.
5. Glue on cotton balls to the circle and a small bit between the ears on the sheep's head.





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