

# ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



27 NOVEMBER 2022

ADVENT 1 YEAR A



# WORSHIP AT HOME

*This time is an opportunity to be still, seeking to be aware of the presence of God within.*

*Carve out a time for this practice; prepare yourself, as you might for a usual Sunday morning and remember that there are others from the congregation gathering at the same time as you. There are also many from the church around the globe who are gathering to seek the presence of God as we are.*

*Prepare a space in the house; find a comfortable chair, light a candle, turn off distracting noises and close the door if that will help you to be still. This is something that does not need to be hurried.*

## Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all

**And also with you**

## Acknowledgement of First Peoples

From river to ocean, from campfire to hearth,  
may the First People who have cared for this Land be blessed.  
From breath to song, from step to dance,  
may those who follow your ancient stories, guide us on the journey of living honourably in this place.  
From greeting to Amen, from silence to chorus,  
may our worship join with the voices of the First Peoples of this Land.

## Welcome

## Call To Worship

You, of course, understand the significance of the times we are living in.

**It is time to wipe the sleep out of your eyes; to be on your feet, fully alert.**

Salvation is at hand. It has been approaching ever since we first put our trust in God,

**and it is now drawing near.**

The night is almost gone; the new day is about to dawn.

**So, let's make sure that we get rid of any old ways of living that belong to the darkness of our past.**

Let us live our lives in such a way that we'll be able to hold our heads high when the broad light of day shows up everything for what it really is. Let us...

**Avoid the desperate pursuit of pleasure with its common pitfalls of substance abuse, sexual sleaze, hostile belligerence, and crippling jealousy.**

Instead, take on the persona of our Lord Jesus the Messiah

**and don't give any encouragement to the selfish desires that clamour for your attention and seek to hijack your life.**

Thus, at all times, and in all circumstances, let us wait upon the Lord.

**Let us worship God**

Romans 13:11-14 Adapted by Nathan Nettleton and Ron Townsend

# Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy - The lighting of the Advent candle for the first week of ADVENT

ADVENT 1: HOPE -27<sup>th</sup> November 2022

Reader 1: We are people of hope.

Reader 2: God longs for a day when weapons will be replaced with tools for rebuilding.

**People: We see your goodness and signs of new life all around us.**

Reader 1: The first candle of Advent reminds us that we are called to live as people of hope.

Reader 2: We light this candle to remind us to see God's hope shining in our world.

*(Light the candle of hope)*

Reader 1: Let us pray:

**People: Holy One, help us to walk in the light of God. May our lives reflect the warmth and wonder of this flame. Make your church a place of hope in our community. Amen.**

Sing v1 of CANDLE OF HOPE on Advent 1 (27<sup>th</sup> Nov 2022)

## Song: CANDLE OF HOPE (VERSE 1)

*Tune TIS 188: Hanover*

1. The candle of hope we light in this hour  
proclaims that the Lord is coming in power.  
We wait for a future, now hidden from view,  
when Christ in his glory will make all things new.

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## Prayer of Adoration, Confession & Assurance of Forgiveness

ADORATION

Lord,

today we remember that you are the God who never deserts your people. You come to us time and time again. You arrive on our doorstep as the bearer of the Good News of Jesus Christ, coming into our lives.

Dear God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in this season of Advent, come afresh into our lives and into the life of your church and world. Make yourself known and give us the faith and sight to see and truly know you.

We wait upon you Lord! We know in your own time your Kingdom will come on earth in all its fullness. In the meantime, Lord, continue to reveal your truth, love, and grace to us, as we live your Kingdom journey. And, in this in-between-time, convict us with the knowledge that in your Son, that Kingdom is already with us. We pray in the blessed name of the coming Christ. Amen

## CONFESSION

Lord God, even as we sing your praises, yet we still refuse to recognise and accept your coming into every part of our lives. We are blinded by our own inability and unwillingness to recognise grace and love. We prefer to live life in our own image, rather than in the image of the One who is to be born as one of us.

You stand at the door and knock, but our ears are closed to your coming.

You arrive in our midst, and we leave on our own business.

You offer to shape our lives in your own image, the image of love, but our busyness pre-occupies us and precludes your offer of new life.

Your reveal the excitement of your Kingdom arriving in Jesus, and we are self-interested, unseeing, and bored.

Lord Forgive!

Forgive our pre-occupation and busyness that blinds us to your presence in the coming Christ child: God with us, Emmanuel!

Despite our faithlessness, come Lord Jesus, come! Come Lord Jesus and make us whole!

We pray in the name of the one soon to be born in the stable in Bethlehem, God with us, Jesus the Christ who will come again to complete his Kingdom

AMEN

## ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Do not just wait for or expect forgiveness, but know that in Christ you ARE forgiven and granted new life, so I declare to you all,

Our sins are forgiven

**Thanks be to God**

## The Peace

The Peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all

**And also with you**

Let us share the Peace of Christ

## Hymn: TIS 272 Come Thou Long-expected Jesus

## Scripture

Your Word is a lamp to our feet  
**and a light to our path.**

ISAIAH 2:1-5

The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. <sup>3</sup>Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup>He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. <sup>5</sup>O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!

PSALM 122 *To be read responsively*

<sup>1</sup>I was glad when they said to me,

**“Let us go to the house of the LORD!”**

<sup>2</sup>Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup>**Jerusalem—built as a city that is bound firmly together.**

<sup>4</sup>To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD,

**as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD.**

<sup>5</sup>For there the thrones for judgment were set up,

**the thrones of the house of David.**

<sup>6</sup>Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:

**“May they prosper who love you.**

<sup>7</sup>Peace be within your walls,

**and security within your towers.”**

<sup>8</sup>For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, **“Peace be within you.”**

<sup>9</sup>For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,

**I will seek your good.**

ROMANS 13:11-14

<sup>11</sup>Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep.

For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; <sup>12</sup>the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; <sup>13</sup>let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup>Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

The Word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

MATTHEW 24:36-44

<sup>36</sup>“But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>37</sup>For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup>For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup>and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>40</sup>Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. <sup>41</sup>Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. <sup>42</sup>Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup>But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. <sup>44</sup>Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.

The Gospel of the Lord

**Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

## Song: Here’s a promise we can count on

*Tune: Infant Holy (TIS 292)*

1. Here's a promise  
we can count on!  
It's the word Isaiah saw:  
one day coming,  
God's own mountain  
will be highest of them all.  
All the nations

will be yearning  
for God's teaching,  
and returning,  
they'll find guidance in God's law.  
They'll find guidance in God's law.

2. On that day of  
celebration,  
all will listen to the Lord.  
God will judge  
between the nations  
till all justice is restored.  
Out of weapons  
made for harming  
they will fashion  
tools for farming  
and they'll put aside the sword.  
And they'll put aside the sword.
  
3. One great day,  
the prophet told us,  
God will triumph! It is true.  
Lord, we trust this  
word of promise  
as we hear your word anew.  
When we're lost among the mountains  
of the world's ways  
that confound us,  
show the path that leads to you.  
Show the path that leads to you.

Biblical Reference: Isaiah 2:1-5

Tune: Polish melody ("Infant Holy, Infant Lowly")

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## Reflection

### THE PROMISES OF GOD

#### Are we there yet!?

Mardie and I have just completed a journey to the far North of NSW and back – a journey of some 4,000 kms! Now I am sure we both felt like asking many times that typical travel question – ARE WE THERE YET!?! Of course, when we were very young and went on a long trip with our parents, we blurted it out with monotonous regularity – ‘ARE WE THERE YET?’.

There is even a children’s book about a family travelling around Australia called ‘Are we there yet!?’ I am sure you have all asked this question many times: ARE WE THERE YET?

And then you, the parent, say to your kids, ‘no!’ ‘Sorry, not there yet, but in the meantime let’s play a game of “I spy with my little eye, something beginning with ‘T’ and it is outside the car.”

And then finally, when you actually do arrive at your destination, the question is answered with a resounding ‘YES!’ and there issues forth lots of cheering and celebration and running down to the

beach or to favourite trees to climb or settling in to read the next 6 books in the murder mystery series that has you enthralled etc, etc, etc!

Today is the first Sunday in Advent, the beginning of the Christian Year, and it too, is about a journey, or at least, the beginning of a journey.

But before we do some unpacking of this Advent Journey, let me make one point very firmly about Advent. It is NOT just, in fact, NOT PRIMARILY about pre-Christmas preparations, which is what I think it is often understood to be.

So, what is Advent, then? Let me quote from the Uniting Church's Revised Common Lectionary, about the meaning of Advent

*'Advent comes from the Latin word 'adventus' meaning 'Coming.' This 4 week season before Christmas has been set aside as a time of preparation since the 6th century. Advent is a time for preparing for Christ's second coming, even as we remember and celebrate his first coming at Christmas.'*

Let me repeat that last sentence

*Advent is a time for preparing for Christ's second coming, even as we remember and celebrate his first coming at Christmas.*

And, just as for those long car journeys, there are three aspects to this all-important journey of the Christian, which begins with ADVENT.

1. First, it IS about a destination. It is about setting our sights on our ultimate destination as Christians. Advent is not just about us waiting for the birth of God on earth BUT is about the coming of the resurrected one (the Second Coming as it is often called). HOW COMMITTED ARE WE TO **THIS** CHRISTIAN DESTINATION, because God is!?

Is it a destination we yearn for and are truly devoted to – a destination above all others in our life? A destination with which we will faithfully engage?

Just last week, the last Sunday of the previous Christian Year we reflected on this destination. The Lectionary calls it, 'Christ the King' Sunday.

Our final destination is the Kingdom – the realm of God – where God is our one and only King, Regent and Ruler. And according to the Promises of God, this Kingdom, this Holy Destination, has all the beautiful trees we could ever imagine, to run to and yes, climb, no more crook knees and hips there; in God's Kingdom we will be able to climb them AND visit all our favourite beaches to swim and luxuriate in; AND the list of wonder, beauty, hope, peace, joy, life and love is endless in this destination – God's Kingdom. Beats all those expensive resorts we dream about!

In the final chapters of the book of Revelation, John shares his vision about this destination – let me share some of it.

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup>And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; <sup>4</sup>he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." <sup>5</sup>And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am*

*making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.”<sup>6</sup> Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. (Rev 21:1-6)*

2. Secondly, Advent is about OUR PREPARATION FOR THE JOURNEY, including a bit of route planning and where and when and why and how we might travel. The readings today are full of what it takes to prepare for this journey.

To focus on our Kingdom destination we are called to be peacemakers (Isaiah and the Psalm), to work for justice, decency, uprightness, honesty; ‘putting on the armour of light’ and ‘putting on the Lord Jesus Christ,’ (Romans) and in the reading from Matthew there is a call to urgency in terms of our preparations (<sup>36</sup>“But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.)

Rev Dr Anita Monro, the Principal of Grace College in the University of Queensland in her commentary in WLTTW suggests an even more important element in our preparation for his coming. I quote

*‘The hope of the vision of God’s realm, fully realised, should never be a threat, IT IS A PROMISE. We are called to live out of and towards that promise.’*

‘God’s realm is a promise, not a judgement or a threat – WE ARE CALLED TO LIVE OUT OF AND TOWARDS THAT PROMISE’. We are called to approach it with enthusiasm and hope, to see it as an opportunity rather than a high hurdle to be negotiated.

3. Thirdly ADVENT is also about GETTING THERE – THE ACTUAL JOURNEY. And a major element of that is: WHO ARE OUR TRAVELLING COMPANIONS on the way there? Much could be said about this, but I’ll mention just two matters
  - a. Jesus calls us into his community, the Church. Why? Because God wants us to build his Kingdom? No, of course not – that is impossible (more on that in a moment). This community – OUC for example – is critical in God’s plan – in God’s destination. We are called into this community to live as his Gospel people, people connected by his love; to worship and care and enable and support and love those here and those beyond on our way to the Kingdom. We are Good-News-Kingdom people, precisely because God calls us to be that – that’s all! We live humbly under the grace and love of God together, on the journey to his REALM.
  - b. BUT, the travelling companion who truly matters, is Jesus himself. It is he who reveals the promises of God to all his children on the way to the Kingdom. Those promises?
    - i. Jesus has travelled before us to the Kingdom by way of the cross and resurrection and new life – the first.
    - ii. And through that journey of the cross and the resurrection and by means of God’s Amazing Grace, he has already established the Kingdom of God on earth for all God’s children!!!! Yes – that’s the promise!
    - iii. Furthermore, he travels with us now, in the time between the present and the final consummation of the Kingdom of God.Please don’t ask me to explain these promises, because not I, nor any of us can ever fully explain these mysteries of the faith – but they are God’s promises to all his children. We read of them widely in the biblical witness.

Let me conclude.

God is screaming God’s good news to us if we have the eyes and ears of faith to see and hear – Surely he is saying to us: ‘live in and through and with and like Jesus, NOW! and in the blink of an eye – that’s God’s eye – the Kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven. I promise,’ says God.



I finish with a marvellous quotation from Eugene Boring, a prominent Matthean Scholar:

*'We are called to be agnostics about the time of Jesus' return. We simply do not know. What we do know is what we are supposed to be doing in the meantime....the deeds of mercy, forgiveness, and peace that characterize kingdom people.'*

Come, Lord Jesus, Come!

Amen

## **Song: No one knows the day or hour (Offering will be received during the singing of the hymn)**

Tune: TiS 312 - IRBY 8.7.8.7.7.7 ("Once in Royal David's City.")

1. No one knows the day or hour  
when the Son of Man will come —  
not the angels singing, "Glory!"  
And not even God's own Son.  
No one knows, so watch and wait.  
Serve the Lord! Don't hesitate.
2. Long ago, the friends of Noah  
lived their lives the same old ways.  
Eating, drinking, joy and struggle  
filled their ordinary days.  
Surely, they were all surprised  
when they saw the waters rise.
3. Though we do not know the hour,  
Christ, you've told us what to do.  
You have called us to be watchful,  
ready for a world made new.  
May we focus on the ways  
we can serve you in these days:
4. May we give to those who hunger,  
and give thirsty ones their fill.  
May we welcome in the stranger,  
clothe the naked, help the ill.  
May we visit prisoners, too;  
so, we'll be prepared for you.

*Biblical Reference: Matthew 23-25*

*Tune: Henry John Gauntlett, 1849 ("Once in Royal David's City")*

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# Prayers of the People

prepared by Mardie Townsend

**This is a responsive prayer: to the bidding “In your mercy and with your love” please respond “Come Lord Jesus, come!”**

In your mercy and with your love  
**Come Lord Jesus, come!**

Let us pray

Lord, we pray for a world that is pre-occupied with its own cultures, ways, and interests; and unable to see the wholeness offered by the coming of Jesus into its midst. Lord, open the eyes, minds, hearts, and souls of all people to hear and live in accord with the good news of Jesus Christ.

In your mercy and with your love  
**Come Lord Jesus, come!**

In your world, Lord Jesus, we remember those places where men refuse to beat swords, ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks – and thus, war flourishes and too often it is the innocent children, women and the elderly who suffer and die! We remember particularly those hurting because of the war in Ukraine and the ongoing struggle in the Middle East. Sow seeds of peace and calm, Lord of all. Sow seeds of a willingness, to talk, listen, reconcile, forgive, and start anew.

In your mercy and with your love  
**Come Lord Jesus, come!**

We pray today for those who lead and, particularly the heads of nations around the world and the leaders of our own State and National governments. May the politicians who represent us discover new ways of being; ways that more truly represent your ways: ways of genuine justice, true equity, and endless compassion: ways that reflect winning for ALL, not just for their own.

In your mercy and with your love  
**Come Lord Jesus, come!**

Lord, there are many who this day are suffering or in pain. We recall those who are hospitalised, those contemplating important surgery, those with incurable diseases of body or mind. May all people truly be open to the healing you offer, even when trapped amid their human pain and suffering.

In your mercy and with your love  
**Come Lord Jesus, come!**

We pray today for those who are experiencing loss and loneliness – those who grieve, those who are cast aside by society: the homeless, the mentally ill and the powerless ones. Too many of your people are unwanted and unloved. Today, especially, we remember those who are fleeing from their homes and for their lives, seeking a new land: refugees and asylum seekers. Lord, through your servants on earth, come! Come with your deep compassion, care, and support for the lonely, the lost, the vulnerable and those fleeing for their life.

In your mercy and with your love  
**Come Lord Jesus, come!!**

Finally, Lord, we pray for ourselves that we will be open to your coming, open to your will, open to your leading and most of all, open to your love

In your mercy and with your love  
**Come Lord Jesus, come!**

Let us now join in praying together the prayer our Lord taught us

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and forever Amen.

## Hymn: TIS 279 The king of Glory Comes

### Sending Out

Beloved in Christ, go into your world to live in anticipation of Christ's coming – right there!  
**We promise to live in the excitement at the anticipation of his coming; the excitement that enlivens us to welcome the new life of Jesus Christ into our own life and into all that exists in God's world.**

Go forth now, to wait upon God, and in his name, serve and love all. **Amen.**

### Blessing

May the grace of God inspire your transformation, the love of Jesus, fill your whole being, and the enlivening presence of the Spirit, sustain you.

**Amen**

### Word of Mission

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord  
**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

## POSTLUDE

*You can find a copy of today's sermon along with other congregational information on the church website.*

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Rev. Ron Townsend

Music: Karen Roberts

Church Office

Tuesdays, 9.30am-12.30pm

Fridays, 9.30am-3.30pm

Phone: 0411 958 127

[office@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au](mailto:office@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au)

Website: [www.ormondunitingchurch.org](http://www.ormondunitingchurch.org)

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