

# ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



3 DECEMBER 2023

ADVENT 1B



**THE ADVENT OF CHRIST CREATES REAL HOPE.**

# WORSHIP AT HOME

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

*Set aside 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. We join with them all.*

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

**And also with you**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY:

As we look upon the hills and valleys, we see the love poured out upon this Land by those who have cared for this Land since time beyond measure.

We honour those who have gone before and those who are yet to come.

May we be mindful of the calling God places on humanity to care for Creation.

May we take the lead from the First People, whose stories are entwined with the stewarding of this place. May we learn from them and walk with them.

## WELCOME:

The first week of Advent is upon us. We are always surprised when the season of Advent rolls around. But there is more to Advent than waiting for the Christ Child – Christmas to come.

Yes, of course, we are waiting for the Christ Child, but Advent asserts that we are in a time of waiting and preparation for when the resurrected one comes again, to bring to pass his glorious Kingdom on earth! Fanciful rubbish. Not according to the biblical record, over and over and over again!

Advent reminds us that we are waiting; we are looking forward; we are preparing, we are leaning into what is coming. And the *what* is, for us, a *who*.

We discovered last week that this sweet baby was and is the King of Kings who comes as Judge - to pass judgement on us and the world – but oh what a judgement – one full of grace and love - so we wait and prepare and anticipate the coming of the one who completes the very heart of HUMAN life: HOPE, PEACE, JOY, FAITH and LOVE, in his very own self.

Welcome to Advent worship at Ormond!

## CALL TO WORSHIP:

**Come Lord Jesus, Come!**

Rip open the sky,  
make planes divert their flight paths,  
tell the mountains to duck,  
and rush into this sanctuary.

**Come Lord Jesus, Come!**

Come and silence the violence,  
stop stray bullets that kill the innocent,  
expose dealers who peddle addiction,  
make your enemies know you and tremble in your presence.

**Come Lord Jesus, Come!**

We may fail to notice your presence  
in everyday living,  
in casual conversations,  
or in blessings disguised as “coincidences.”  
Still we cry ...

**Come Lord Jesus, Come!**

*(Based on Isaiah 64:1-9)*

## ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING LITURGY WEEK 1 YR B:

*Maybe you could set up your own ADVENT WREATH with the 5 candles at home and light one more candle until you light the Christ Candle on Christmas Day. Ring Ron if you want some help with this.*

**Voice 1:** During Advent we progressively light four Advent candles over the four Sundays of the season.

**Voice 2:** Perhaps you could consider following this practice at home, as well see above)? Let's light the candle for the first Sunday of Advent – the candle of hope.

**Voice 1:** The prophets call, and the psalmist sings to announce that hope comes from God.

**Voice 2:** “O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence.” *(Isaiah 64)*

“We shall see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.” *(Psalm 27)*

**Voice 1:** The world cries for justice and transformation. Advent summons us to watch, to wait and to hope. In the destruction of the current order is the promise of a new order beyond our imagination. Signs of hope are all around us if we have the patience to wait and to see them.

**Voice 2:** Holy are you, Source of all new life among us.

**Jesus Christ comes as the hope of the world.**

**Voice 2:** We join with all creation and lift our hearts in joyful praise.

**We light this candle to bear witness to hope.** *(the Candle of Hope is lit)*

Sing verse 1 of CANDLE OF HOPE

# SONG: Candle of Hope – Tune: HANOVER (TiS 133 or 188)

*Each week of Advent we will sing an additional verse.*

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.

## A LAMENT FOR THE NEW LITURGICAL YEAR:

O, God if you would only tear open the heavens and come down!  
Come and shake us out of our apathy.  
Come and unite us with your compassion.  
Come and heal us with your presence.

### **WE HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF OUR RUBBLE!**

Our rubble is not made of fragmented stones from fallen city walls and a devastated Temple. Our rubble is more subtle, but just as real. It is the rubble of a world turned in upon itself.

We are tired, God.

We are tired of being besieged, restricted and killed by a virus.

We are tired of being at war with our neighbor.

We are tired of tyrants who turn citizens into desperate refugees.

We are tired of fearing the stranger.

We are tired of the continual threat of destruction.

We are tired of people misusing their positions of power against others.

We are tired of acts of terror – and tired of our failure to imagine any other way to respond than the creation of terror in return.

We are tired of how our lusts and the distortion of our desires erode every relationship and destroy the lives of our children.

We are tired of greed and the way it forms systems that benefit the few on the backs of the many.

We are tired of our bluster, pride, and arrogance. Our divisive political rhetoric is pushing us to the point of exhaustion.

We are tired of keeping up appearances and expending all our energy for things that will not last.

We are tired of the idols of amusement that sedate us into apathy.

We are tired of drowning in information while starving for wisdom.

We are tired of floods, quakes, and winds. We cannot take any more death, and destruction.

And we are tired of that deep inner sense of fear that we are unwittingly awakening those primeval forces of chaos that we cannot control.

With Judah, we begin a new year sitting in the rubble our sinfulness has made... morally, emotionally, spiritually and physically exhausted to the point of despair...

We have fallen into a gap of iniquity that seems to be swallowing all of creation with it...

**YET... You are our Father.**

**YET... You are the potter... we are your clay.**

So, we gather at the Baptismal Font and around your table reminded that you are present in our suffering.

But more than that, we gather around your table - not in fear of scarcity

**- but in the abundance of Advent hope that...**

your light can penetrate the darkness of our despair...

your goodness can overcome the chaos of our evil...

your grace can transform the rubble of our sin...

your life can make all things new.

We come around your table of grace as prisoners of hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

**WAKE US UP, GOD, LEST SLEEP BE OUR DEATH!**

Pardon and redeem us, that we may escape the judgment we are bringing on ourselves. Send your light that it may shine through us into a needy world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## PRAYER OF RECONCILIATION AND FORGIVENESS:

Father God, we thank you for your gracious mercy and forgiveness, even as we lament and cry in a wilderness of our own making. We thank you that you have promised to be with us no matter what difficult circumstances invade our lives. Along with ourselves, we lift up our many brothers and sisters in Christ who are facing increasingly hard times. We are watching and waiting for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, soon, and join with the Spirit in praying: "Come Lord Jesus, Come!" In these increasingly difficult times, we ask for your strength and courage to face whatever lies ahead, knowing that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us... and that nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. AMEN.

## HYMN TiS 491: Father Welcomes All His Children

### SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM: BAPTISM OF CHLOE ROSE KAKAVELIS.

*We celebrated the Baptism of CHLOE KAKAVELIS on Sunday -if you would like to hear more about it or receive a copy of the Baptism Service give Ron a ring*

## BAPTISMAL HYMN TiS 494: In Water We Grow

### SCRIPTURE: Reader: Gary Richter

Your Word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet,  
**A light to our path.**

ISAIAH 64:1-9

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence—<sup>2</sup>as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! <sup>3</sup>When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. <sup>4</sup>From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for

him. <sup>5</sup>You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed.

<sup>6</sup>We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. <sup>7</sup>There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. <sup>8</sup>Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. <sup>9</sup>Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

The Word of the Lord  
**Thanks be to God**

MARK 13:24-37

<sup>24</sup>“But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light,

<sup>25</sup>and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

<sup>26</sup>Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. <sup>27</sup>Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

<sup>28</sup>“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. <sup>29</sup>So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. <sup>30</sup>Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. <sup>31</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

<sup>32</sup>“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>33</sup>Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. <sup>34</sup>It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. <sup>35</sup>Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, <sup>36</sup>or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. <sup>37</sup>And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

The Gospel of the Lord  
**All Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.**

## SERMON: The Source of HOPE

How lucky are we - today, the first Sunday of the Christian year, ADVENT 1 - we have celebrated the Sacrament of Baptism – one of the 2 sacraments of the UCA. Thank you, Sarah and Costa for bringing Chloe to be Baptised, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Let’s give Chloe (and her parents) a big clap! (*Clapping*).

And as we heard in the Lighting of the first Advent Candle, on this day we remember HOPE! So, it is certainly not a ‘stretch’ to suggest that Chloe and her Baptism are that SIGN of HOPE! Not just for her but for us all.

I mean, I’m sure Chloe, herself, creates hope in her family, for her Mum and Dad and her wider family, and friends, and for us, too, the OUC community - just by being Chloe! Despite all around us that might get us down, she gives us hope! Surely that’s true and it is true for any small child! They are all signs of hope!

But as I said above, for Chloe, or for that matter, any child or any adult, baptism takes on an even deeper meaning centred on HOPE!

In Baptism, Chloe is conjoined (*clasp my hands together*) – bound together with – Christ: into his birth, his life, his death and his resurrection to new life – in Him Chloe is given fullness of life. Therein lies her everlasting hope and indeed the only real hope for all our

lives and the life of the World. Indeed, the HOPE of new life for the whole of Creation, according to the biblical witness. Of course, this is a profound mystery that is well beyond human explanation, nevertheless it is at the heart of Christian belief. The 19<sup>th</sup> Century Hymn writer, Robert Bridges in one of his greatest hymns, begins with these words: “All my hope on God is founded”!

This is the Hope Christians have declared and lived in, for over 2 Millenia! And in that hope is to be found all that is trustworthy, just, wholesome, joyful and loving.

This hope in and through Christ is the hope Chloe and every person on the planet is called to trust in – especially when the world seems to thwart, delay, frustrate, pervert and corrupt that hope.

For example, despite what any national leaders (usually male) say about offering hope to their people by, for example, waging war with their enemy, which results in the needless slaughter of 5,000 Chloes and counting – that is not living out the hope we are celebrating today, and which is entrusted to us humans as a precious gift. In fact, it is an absolute blatant denial of that hope and one in which we humans are all too complicit. So long as there is a single child, one single Chloe, in the world who is denied the chance to live life with real hope, freedom peace justice and love, then we have all failed and we NEED someone to rescue us – someone to save us from such a brutal betrayal of real Hope! And PEACE! And JOY! And LOVE!

What, Who, can rescue us!?

There is an answer to that question about the real Source of Hope to hold, in that apparently very bleak reading from Mark’s Gospel, which Gary shared earlier.

You find that hard to believe?

Briefly, let me explain and it might help us to understand how we might be rescued from hopelessness and despair.

The Jesus of Mark uses a form of language called apocalyptic. This is language and imagery the readers of that time would have understood. It highlighted the desperate times they lived in. The Hopelessness that surrounded them because of the state of their world! For them, Advent meant Jesus coming again (as he promised) to put to right their horrific world, once and for all. Through faith in Jesus this was the HOPE that sustained those early Christians in the midst of their desperate times. So, their Advent anthem was: Come Lord Jesus Come! Come and complete your Kingdom of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love on earth as it is in Heaven!

So, what about us 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christians? How are we to regard this beginning of the Christian new year, this Advent of Jesus, his coming?

Perhaps, for modern day Christians, ADVENT is nothing more than the lead up time to the birth of the sweet Baby Jesus!

Can I suggest we need to mentally, faithfully, push, a little to one side, at least, the ‘sweet lovely baby Jesus is coming’ image, and see something else there as well!

Apocalyptic maybe!??

Well that feels a bit extreme: the sun darkened, moon giving no light, stars falling and the powers in the heavens shaking things to bits!

I don’t think that’s the modern way of expressing our sense of despair and hopelessness. Maybe its more like: ‘There is no God!’ How could a God of love let all those horrible things happen?!

Yes, of course, there are events and images in our world which depict HOPELESSNESS and Despair, rather than real HOPE.

Senseless killings, too many wars, too many dead, floods and fires and earthquakes, rapidly developing and destructive climate change destroying lives and submerging whole countries, despotic men with terrible powers, truth the victim of political power plays, inflation, the cost of living – I could go on!

However, as Christians we are called to be people of HOPE – holding to the belief that God’s Promises of a NEW EARTH can be trusted – there is ultimate hope and it’s ultimate

fulfilment! When, in faith, we open our hearts and our thinking about Advent, that Jesus has promised to come again and complete His Kingdom on earth, when we grapple with our sense of hopelessness in this way, THEN, we can grasp the deeper meaning to the season – a more sustaining , hopeful one.

In the meantime, with Faith and in Hope, we wait, we anticipate, we prepare, we love, we forgive, we feed the hungry, we lift up the downtrodden and cry for justice and most importantly we remember over and over again the one who in pure love and gave himself for us and opened the gates to Heaven on Earth: Jesus Christ Our Lord.

A little later in our worship we will remember him, this one who brings to life the Hope of the world, as we share Holy Communion.

Therein lies Chloe's hope and hope for us all, the HOPE of Advent. The hope of his coming into our lives means now and in God's good time, the fulfilment of his hope for us all, and of the whole created order! Come Jesus Come!

In the meantime. Stay awake to this hope! Live his way in your world: hope, peace, joy, love and the way of Christ the light of the World, in all your living!

He's coming! He's coming. 'Come Lord Jesus, Come!'

How will he find you?

Let us pray.

## PRAYERS FOR OTHERS: David Northwood

"As we prepare for our prayers for others, we light this candle to remember all those who are part of our church community but who are not at worship with us today."

*Light the candle*

A few weeks ago the referendum on the voice to parliament was defeated. Time to move on. There are more important things to be concerned about. Interest rate rises, cost of living pressures; will we be able to afford the baubles and bangles that are essential to our lives?

But some people still feel a sense of disappointment even despair over the referendum result.

But our prayer for this beginning of advent is based on hope. Hope is sometimes born from the ashes of despair. This is the hope of new beginnings and different outcomes in the future.

Let us pray.

The land I came through last was dumb with night. And in this land my soul grieved.

My country Australia, a land of noble, enlightened and compassionate people has stumbled. Not fallen, just stumbled.

Our hope, the hope of advent and beyond is that the next generation or the generation after of noble, enlightened and compassionate Australians will recognise that we have three heritages, our indigenous heritage, our British heritage and our multicultural heritage. And that this next generation will support an indigenous voice in some form.

But the land I am in now is still dumb with night. And in this land my soul still grieves

Amen

This is a responsive prayer:

And the Lord declares:

**Keep awake!**

Let us pray

Lord, we pray for your people and world.



For the Church: that we may be awake to the life you offer each day: rouse us from sleep-walking through life, and free us from avoidance of issues of faithfulness, justice, peace and love.

And the Lord declares:

**Keep awake!**

For those who have wandered from their relationship with you: that the memories and hopes of this Advent-Christmas season will open doorways to your love.

And the Lord declares:

**Keep awake!**

For world leaders: that they may take the long view of human history and choose to protect and promote life and peace for all people, rather than shoring up their own reputations and interests.

And the Lord declares:

**Keep awake!**

For all who are suffering from violence, famine, persecution, or neglect: that you will destroy the bonds that imprison and open doors of mercy and compassion.

And the Lord declares:

**Keep awake!**

For all refugees, immigrants, and displaced persons who need a home: that You will impress upon the minds and hearts of law-makers: the provision and housing of those without a home.

And the Lord declares:

**Keep awake!**

For all who are being persecuted for their religious or political beliefs: that You will give them courage and relief from their suffering.

And the Lord declares:

**Keep awake!**

For all who must wait: that You will strengthen and comfort all who are waiting upon the sick, those awaiting a diagnosis, those separated from loved ones, and those who are held unjustly.

And the Lord declares:

**Keep awake!**

For these and many other needs we pray, particularly for the ill: that you will heal the sick, give strength to those who care for them, and guide all who are working on cures and vaccines.

In the name of the One who comes to make all things New and Whole:

Jesus, our Lord.

**Amen**

**HYMN TIS 272:    Come, thou long-expected Jesus**

## DISMISSAL: *Read by Ron and Gary*

If someone is hungry, **then feed them.**

If someone is naked, **then clothe them.**

If someone is lost, **then show them the way.**

If someone is afraid, **then show them that he is strong!**

If some are excluded, **include them.**

If someone is empty, **then introduce them to the one who can fill them up.**

If there is no shelter to house the people, **build it.**

Be the hands that lift your sisters and brothers up.

**We have work to do before the Saviour comes.**

Don't let him catch you asleep on the job.

**Stay alert, stay diligent, and KEEP AWAKE!**

Be the church that Jesus brags about to his Father.

**May his hope and peace surround you until we meet again. Amen.**

## BENEDICTION:

Christ the Sun of righteousness shine upon you and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory; and the blessing of God, the Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always. AMEN

## WORD OF MISSION:

Go in Hope to love and serve the Lord

**In the name of Christ, Amen**

*Various Parts of this Order use/adapt resources from Advent 1B 2020 of the United Methodist Church, Discipleship Ministries. Website: [Discipleship Ministries | Equipping World-Changing Disciples \(umcdiscipleship.org\)](https://www.umcdiscipleship.org)*

## POSTLUDE

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

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Music: Peter Hurley

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