

St Margaret's Uniting Church
Dec 2nd 2018 -Advent 1c
Order of Worship for Holy Communion

Leader: : The Rev Ron Gordon

Reader: Marj Hookey

THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE

Introit: Prepare ye the Way of the Lord (Solo, choir and then Congregation)

Collect

Hymn 152 Joyful, joyful we adore you

1

Joyful, joyful, we adore you,
God of glory, God of love;
hearts unfold like flowers before you
opening to the sun above.

Melt the clouds of sin and sadness,
drive the dark of doubt away;
giver of immortal gladness,
fill us with the light of day.

2

All your works with joy surround you,
earth and heav'n reflect your rays,
stars and angels sing around you,
centre of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
flowery meadow, flashing sea,
singing bird and flowing fountain
call to praise you joyfully.

3

You are giving and forgiving,
ever blessing, ever blest,
well-spring of the joy of living,
ocean-depth of happy rest.
You our Father, Christ our brother,
all are yours who live in love;
teach us how to love each other,
lift us to your joy above.

Prayers of adoration and confession

Declaration of forgiveness. **Response: Thanks be to God.**

Early Word - Advent wreath - HOPE

Hymn 289 Chorus, 1st verse, chorus.

*'Christmas is coming'
the Church is glad to sing
and let the Advent candles
brightly burn in a ring.*

1

The first is for God's promise
to put the wrong things right,
and bring to earth's darkness
the hope of love and light.

Choir: "The Temple of your heart" – by Alison McAllister

As you start your life together
At the dawning of each day
May you know the love of Jesus
His tenderness and care.
And the peace of God go with you
as you start your life anew
Just reach out to Him in prayer
and He will guide you through.
Reach out to him together
and He will take your hand,
and guide you through the cross-roads
of temptation doubt and fear.
Reach out to him together
and He will take your hand,
and guide you through the crossroads
of temptation doubt and fear.

As you cross the hills and byways
that life's pressures put you through,
Then just turn to Him in prayer
And He will guide you through.

For the problems you'll be faced with
will evermore depart,
if you have the love of Jesus
in the temple of your heart.
If you have the love of Jesus
in the temple of your heart,
then all doubt and fear will vanish
as the shadows of the night.
If you have the love of Jesus
in the temple of your heart,
then all doubt and fear will vanish
as the shadows of the night.

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

The Book of Psalms, No.25, Verses 1 to 10

¹ To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

² O my God, in you I trust;
do not let me be put to shame;
do not let my enemies exult over me.

³ Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;
let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

⁴ **Make me to know your ways, O LORD;
teach me your paths.**

⁵ **Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.**

⁶ Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.

⁷ Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for your goodness' sake, O LORD!

⁸ **Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.**

⁹ **He leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way.**

¹⁰ **All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.**

The Book of the prophet Jeremiah, Chapter 33, Verses 14 to 16

“The Righteous Branch and the Covenant with David”

¹⁴ The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵ In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: “The LORD is our righteousness.”

The First Letter to the Thessalonians, Chapter 3, verses 9 to 13

⁹ How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? ¹⁰ Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith. ¹¹ Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. ¹² And -may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. ¹³ And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

The Gospel according to Saint Luke, Chapter 21, Verses 25 to 36

“The Coming of the Son of Man”

²⁵ “There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. ²⁶ People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

²⁹ Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰ as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. ³¹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³² Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³⁴ “Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, ³⁵ like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Preaching of the Word

Luke 21:33 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”(NRSV)

Anticipating the Kingdom

Advent means Coming.

Greetings on new year’s day for the Church: the first Sunday in Advent. Advent means coming and of course you know Christmas is coming: a fact which is unavoidable in our culture and its celebration generally requires a fair bit of concentration, planning, and expenditure and that gets us back to the centre of Christmas, the birth of a baby.

Birth is generally a happy event, and Christians like celebrating the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amongst the churches there are different calendars, various dates and customs; some celebrating on the 25th December and some on 6th January, the Feast of the Epiphany (12th day of Christmas).

But Advent has another focus as well. It not only looks back to Bethlehem, and Mary and Joseph and the whole cast of nativity scenes and plays: it also points to the final coming of Jesus Christ (some call it the Second Coming, but Jesus comes to us in the

Spirit at many moments of our lives and under all kinds of circumstances).

This Final Coming to which we look, is in fact the consummation of all things, as we heard in the Gospel of Luke, the appearing of our Lord to judge the living and the dead and to bring the Kingdom of God in all its completeness.

Unless you have been nourished on this kind of material you may find it all a bit confusing. In fact it required a special kind of Jewish and Christian literature to express its ideas. This goes back at least to the Book of Daniel (200 BC?) and may have been expressed in even earlier prophets.

It was alive and well in the earthly life of Jesus for he seemed to know it and used it in his preaching. It is echoed throughout the New Testament and is still around, given emphasis today by the prophets of doom who come to your door trying to explain to you the current state of the world and your immediate need to join them before certain catastrophe overtakes us all.

This literature is called 'apocalyptic'. The final book in the New Testament's name is translated by most Protestants as the Book of the Revelation of St. John the divine. In the Catholic Bible it is simply called 'The Apocalypse'. It is the playing out of the drama of God's salvation on a cosmic scale. It is the making known of what has been hidden about the purposes of God.

These writings have been a source of great spiritual strength to persecuted Christians fearing for their lives during the past 2000 years: a source of comfort in the sense of making strong to be able to stand and bear witness to their Lord. It asserts the victory of God and God's people over everything which stands in the way

of God's kingdom of truth and love. Apocalyptic literature is an unveiling of hidden things, a revelation of what is really going on when we awaken to the fact that things and people are not often what they seem.

Jesus and the Kingdom.

In Mark, the first written Gospel, in its first chapter, Jesus, after his baptism and the arrest of John the Baptist, came to 'Galilee proclaiming the good news of God and saying "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near (is at hand); repent and believe in the good news."'

His stories are parables of the kingdom, opening up to people the presence and growth of the kingdom; his deeds are works of the kingdom restoring people to health of mind and body and spirit. In his Last Supper with his disciples he says with the wine: Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God' (14:25)

There is no doubt that Jesus knew the kingdom to be a reality, pressing upon him closely, and what he said and did was under that pressure. At his trial before Pilate Jesus when asked if he were a king, responded "My kingdom is not from this world.' It is not a territory or sphere of dominion: it is simply God acting as ruler. That is, it is not like the empire Pilate represented, and most which have preceded and followed it, based on tyranny, murder and plunder.

It is a coming kingdom in which God's name is kept holy; God's will is done; where sins are forgiven, and where we have all we need; where the poor are blessed; where those who mourn are comforted; where the meek inherit the earth; where our hunger and thirst for right to prevail is quenched and filled; where mercy

abounds for all; where peace reigns without any kind of threat; and where the persecuted find their way into the kingdom of God. This is what Hans Kung wrote in 'On being a Christian':

It will be a kingdom that cannot be described, but only made known in metaphors: as a new covenant, the seed springing up, the ripe harvest, the great banquet, the royal feast. It will therefore be a kingdom – wholly as the prophets foretold – of absolute righteousness, of unsurpassable freedom, of dauntless love, of universal reconciliation, of everlasting peace. In this sense therefore, it will be the time of salvation, of fulfillment, of consummation, of God's presence, the absolute future.
(Kung.p215)

Don't we all long for that coming kingdom? But there is a cry, sometimes an agonizing cry – How long O Lord? We keep praying for the kingdom, waiting for the kingdom, suffering even for the kingdom – when? Jesus refused to speculate about a time and only seems to have given suggestions about events which point to its presence about to break into the world. He thought that speculation about times and dates is worthless. Only God knows, but Jesus was convinced that God would act to consummate God's working plan.

Jesus was aware, and invites his followers to share his awareness, that no matter the date on the calendar, no matter how long since his birth, his cross and resurrection, no matter the number of unbelievers and cynics: the kingdom is as close as our latest breath – it is so close. It is to be anticipated with great expectation, fervent prayer and the expectation that hope will be rewarded with great joy.

How do we anticipate the Kingdom?

If we tried to translate apocalyptic writing into our common language how would it appear and sound? Tsunamis, global nuclear war, alien invasions, global warming in full strength, an everlasting drought – all to Star Wars music?

How can it be related to who and where we are now and our immediate future?

1. Apocalyptic writings assert against all contrary indications, that the Lord God reigns. The death of Jesus on the cross appeared to be his defeat, but that is not so, it was in fact his triumph going against all human expectations, for God justified him and raised him as Lord and Messiah.
2. We believe that the Kingdom is in God's hands. It will not be taken out of God's hands by our laziness and greed, by our unbelief and cynicism, by our exploitation of the earth which was given into our care, by our cruel oppression of our sisters and brothers. God's hand will not be forced by all the things we do to the world and to each other: we do not rule and God will not abdicate in our favour. God will continue to rule in justice, truth and love, and God's joy will resound through the universe in peace.
- 3 We are not to be fearful even if cataclysmic things happen around us or to us. Jesus says in a word of reassurance to us: "Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. (Luke 21:28)

4 For Jesus the future was never a remote thing so that he could put off attending to people and things here and now. We are amazed when we think of what he accomplished in his couple of years of ministry but that was done with the vision and energy of God's Kingdom pressing upon him. We can live and work and express our Christian faith and hope and love under the same strengthening presence of God's presence and purpose: the very imminence of the kingdom pressing upon us.

5 Read through the 25th chapter of Matthew's Gospel with the parables of the kingdom of heaven, especially the one about the last judgement. There you see how we may anticipate a kingdom which has already broken through into this world in Jesus and now is awaiting his final consummation.

It by recognizing and caring for the very least of his brothers and sisters who are hungry and thirsty, lacking clothing and shelter, and in prison; it is by being aware of the world in which we live, both near and far – a world peopled by folk in great need. We must not allow ourselves to be exhausted or overwhelmed by the need of so many folk across the world. Remember that the word charity means love. Love never ends, neither should our charity.

Back to Advent (another quote from a commentary): Things are not what they seem. Normalcy and predictability have disappeared for ever. The pregnancy of one more teenager is no longer an ordinary matter; indeed the pregnancy of this particular teenager provides the overture to a cosmic event. In the birth of a helpless baby all the powers of the universe find that the days of their own power are numbered. Nothing will again be the same. Watch!
(TfP:C.p.9)

A last word from the Book of the Revelation:
The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord
and of his Christ and he will reign for ever and ever.

To which there is only one appropriate response: Hallelujah!

Brief period of silence

Hymn 432 Christ is made the sure foundation - verses 1,3 and 5

1

Christ is made the sure foundation,
Christ the head and cornerstone,
chosen by the Lord, and precious,
binding all the Church in one,
holy Zion's help for ever,
and her confidence alone.

3

Here among us, where we call you
come, O Lord our God, today;
with your gentle lovingkindness
hear your people as we pray,
and your fullest benediction
pour upon us here today.

5

Praise and honour to the Father,
praise and honour to the Son,
praise and honour to the Spirit,
ever Three and ever One,
one in might and one in glory
while eternal ages run.

RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE

Notices

Offering and dedication

Prayers of the people

Children "Show and Tell"

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

and also with you.

HYMN 495 Father, we give you thanks

1

Father, we give you thanks, who planted
your holy name within our hearts.

Knowledge and faith and life immortal

Jesus your Son to us imparts.

2

Lord, you have made all for your pleasure,
and given us food for all our days,
giving in Christ the bread eternal;
yours is the power, be yours the praise.

3

Over your Church, Lord, watch in mercy,
save it from evil, guard it still,
perfect it in your love, unite it,
cleansed and conforming to your will.

4

As grain, once scattered on the hillsides,
was in the broken bread made one,
so may your world-wide Church be gathered
into your kingdom by your Son.

INVITATION

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you. **and also with you.**
Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

..... We rejoice with all that you have made,
as we join the company of heaven in their song.

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

To Adam and Eve.....

Through him, in him and because of him,
we affirm the Church's faith

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

.....we worship you in joyful song:

**Blessing and honour and glory and power
are yours for ever and ever. Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be you name.

**Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in
Heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us 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.

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

Let us receive what we are;
let us become what we receive - **The body of Christ.**

LAMB OF GOD

Lamb of God, **have mercy on us.**

Jesus, bearer of our sins, **have mercy on us.**

Jesus, redeemer of the world **grant us peace.**

THE COMMUNION

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

HYMN 531 Sent forth by God's Blessing

1

Sent forth by God's blessing, our true faith confessing,
The people of God from this Table take leave.

The Supper is ended: may now be extended
The fruits of his service in all who believe.

The seed of his teaching, our hungry souls reaching,
Shall blossom in action for all humankind.

His grace shall incite us, his love shall unite us
To work for his Kingdom, his purpose to find.

2

With praise and thanksgiving to God ever-living

The tasks of our everyday life we will face,

Our faith ever-sharing, in love ever-caring,

Embracing as neighbours all those of each race.

One feast that has fed us, one Light that has led us,

Unite us as one in his life that we share.

Then may all the living, with praise and thanksgiving,

Give honour to Christ and his Name that we bear.

BLESSING

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ AMEN.

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