

Order of Service 29th November Advent 1

Welcome

Welcome to worship with Brunswick Uniting Church on this first Sunday of the Advent Season. My name is Amelia Ware and this week we will be setting our Advent Wreaths up at home and lighting the first candle for hope.

We will ask ourselves what hope looks like in our world and explore how we can wait in an active state of hope, knowing that God's future is a future of hope.

Now let us prepare to worship.

Call to Worship

Breathe - feel your weight extending deep into the earth, carried by the hope that sustains us.

Breathe - reach up to the open sky, let yourself be moved by the hope that uplifts us.

Let us worship God together, remembering that God's future is a future of hope and God's future is not distant, it is here with us today.

Song: O Come O Come Emmanuel TIS265

1. *O Come, O come Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.*
 2. *O Come, O come, great Lord of might who to the tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times did give the law in cloud and majesty and awe.*
 3. *Come, O key of David, come and open wide our heavenly home;
make sure the way that leads on high and close the path to misery.*
 5. *O Come, O dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by your advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night and death's dark shadows put to flight.*
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SONG: *O come, O come Emmanuel*, anonymous, tr. John Mason Neale,
from *Together in Song*, Harper Collins Religious, PUBLIC DOMAIN

Acknowledgement of Country

Dave Hall

Speaking from outside William Cooper's home in West Footscray, flowing on from Robert's acknowledgement last week from the site of the Cumera gunja walk-off, led by Cooper.

We acknowledge and respect
the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation,
the traditional custodians of this land
since time immemorial.

We are learning that the land
is not ours to own, but to look after;
and that if we listen,
we may hear in it the calling of the eternal Spirit.

**Responding to this call, we commit ourselves
to work for justice, reconciliation,
and care of the earth.**

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Refrain: MV19 Maranatha

The ancient Aramaic prayer “Maranatha” means “Come Lord”

*Maranatha, maranatha,
come, Lord Jesus, come
Maranatha, maranatha,
come, Lord Jesus, come.*

Let us pray:

God of all times and places,
You call us to share in your future of hope,
Help us to see your signs of hope and meet them with our own,
Show us how to answer your call now, breathing new life into the world.

Jesus, the one who is coming and he who waits with us,
You live with hope even through times of suffering.
Guide us to the suffering places where hope is needed,
encourage us to continue your work for good when despair seems overwhelming.

Holy Spirit, faithful presence, guiding light,
Your flame keeps hope alive in us,
Allow us to glimpse God’s future within our own hopes,
Let our time of waiting be a time of creation as we reach for your future.
Amen.

Word of Grace

Trust in God’s future and do not lose hope,
For Jesus said “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”
In Christ, through Christ and because of Christ, our sin is forgiven. **Thanks be to God.**

*Maranatha, maranatha,
come, Lord Jesus, come
Maranatha, maranatha,
come, Lord Jesus, come.*

Hebrew Scriptures: Isaiah 64:1-9

Brad Coath

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence - 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!

When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. 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.

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.

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.

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.

Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

Advent Candle Lighting with the children

Dave H
with Anya and Jessica Kvansakul

The children / young people focus during Advent worship will be centred around the Advent wreath and candle-lighting. Dave to share a few words about the wreath tradition, hope, and Anya's design.

The psalmist cries out
Restore us, O God of hosts;
Let your face shine, that we may be saved. Psalm 80:7

We pause, we wait, we hope.
In the darkest of times we glimpse God's future.
We look for signs of hope.
We claim this hope for ourselves and for all the earth.
God's future is a future of hope.
We light this candle for hope.

Photos and artwork: HOPE

Candle Lighting Song

Flame of Love

1. *Flame of love come*

Holy Spirit
Make in us your
Cradle home
For the Christ Child
Who will meet and
Walk with us til
We are grown

Flame of love come
Holy Spirit
Make in us your
Cradle home

2. *Light of laughter*

Balm in sorrow
You have been our
Cradle home
Call our names in
to the Silence
Flame of love by
You we're known

Flame of love come
Holy Spirit
Make in us your
Cradle home

Words: Julie Perrin, written for Advent worship 2016
Music: Helen Burnham & Julie Perrin, Arranged: Julia Potter & Elaine Potter

Gospel Reading: Mark 13:24-37

Michael Cameron

"But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory.

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.

"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. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

"But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. 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.

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, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

Reflection

Ian

What does hope look like? Well, thanks for asking, let me show you. Here is a picture of hope.

This is an RNA strand. And I'm sure there are people sharing in this reflection today who know what that is and can explain the difference between DNA, RNA and mRNA. Friends, I am not one of those people. I've been to Wikipedia and I know we're talking about molecules and genes and I have a vague, 1970s-year-8-chemistry level knowledge of those. But today, despite my ignorance, the acronyms just roll off my tongue. For now, all my hope is founded on the DNA, RNA and mRNA of SARS-CoV-2 the virus causing COVID-19 and the vaccines derived from them. Yes, friends, today hope looks like a strand of RNA. The hope of an END to this pandemic and a NEW BEGINNING in the post-pandemic world.

And endings and new beginnings is the flavour of the month right now, because today is the first day of the Christian new year, the first Sunday of Advent, which is the Christian festival of endings and new beginnings. Advent leads up to Christmas and the major new beginning celebrated then, the birth of Jesus and the genesis of our faith. But first, today, we begin with the end. Traditionally on the first Sunday in Advent we hear apocalyptic readings about the end of the world – such a jolly way to see in the new year – *in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken*. There will be cosmic disruption.

How many times this year have you heard someone say, "We are living in apocalyptic times" – many, if your experience is anything like mine! And the biblical apocalypse with its images of cosmic disruption, persecution and suffering does resonate with what humanity has lived through this year. So, are we living in apocalyptic times? I say, yes, we are. But I also say that every time in history has been an apocalyptic time. Because in every age people have experienced suffering and injustice and have needed to find hope for living in the midst of it. That is what apocalyptic literature does – it speaks to the experience of suffering in all times and says, "This does not negate the love of God. All this is just the labour pains of the birth of God's new creation. Even here in this darkness, the light of God's love, promise, mercy and grace are revealed" – revealed – that's what the Greek word "apocalypse" means: a revelation.

I think it is arguable that in apocalyptic terms our time is worse than any before. Yes, there have been pandemics and bushfires and wars and racial injustices before. But have people ever experienced the extent of cosmic disruption that we are facing from human induced climate change?

So does that mean this is the actual end of the world and Christ is about to come in the clouds to fix everything for us through a great revelation of saving power? Many Christians are saying that. Is that our hope? – that God is developing a vaccine of peace and the virus of suffering will one day soon just disappear like a miracle – and all we have to do is wait it out? Is that our hope?

In a way that's what we are doing now with COVID-19. Personally, I am not contributing anything to the development of a vaccine – I am just waiting for others to do the work. BUT my waiting is not passive. No, I am actively seeking with others to nurture a healthy community so that people don't die before the vaccine comes. I'm doing that by keeping a healthy distance between me and others and wearing a mask when I can't; by washing my hands and cleaning shared surfaces; and by radically changing my lifestyle. Here in Melbourne, we have shown that by doing this together with millions of others we can control the virus while we wait for the vaccine. But it isn't easy, is it? I have found the lockdown deeply emotionally disruptive and I had it easier than many. It is real work, hard work, that we've been doing while we wait in hope for that vaccine.

And I think this is a good illustration of the apocalyptic hope that Jesus offers us in the gospel. Today Jesus says, "Don't just sit back and wait for God, sleeping your life away in a spiritual sense. Keep awake! Be alert and engaged in your waiting. Do the work of the reign of love, the kingdom of God, in your waiting."

Christian hope does not mean waiting helplessly for what God is going to do in the future, because God has already started doing it in the past and continues to do it in the present. God continues to save the world by becoming part of it in Jesus and giving us God's own Spirit so that we can join in that saving work with Jesus. That work involves death and resurrection, the apocalypse at the heart of our faith, it is very hard work. But it is already happening even though it is not yet complete. Christian Hope exists in that tension between the already and the not yet, between the dying and the rising, and it is expressed in the work that we do in that place.

I get the irony of using COVID vaccines as illustrations of Christian hope in an age when science and faith are often seen to be in conflict. But actually, I see this religious understanding of hope as being deeply compatible with science. Science shows us ways to channel the work we are called to do in faithful hope, in our active waiting. Science tells us how creation operates and gives us places to get involved in the Creator's work – the work of building the Reign of Love and growing the New Creation of Peace before God brings them to fruition.

So, what does hope look like? What does alert, active, awake waiting look like? It looks like nurturing community in online spaces and connecting with those who can't get online while we prepare to return to our in-person activities. It looks like support for those who have been doing it tough even when we are struggling ourselves. Hope looks like unmasked faces in outdoor spaces on sunny summer days. It might even look like being part of a vaccine trial just to see if it works – what a hopeful thing to do.

Hope looks like compassionate love in harsh suffering, warm light in cold darkness, communal peace in divided brokenness.

Hope looks like life's new beginning in death's hard ending.

It looks like you, working faithfully in the waiting.

Song

MV19 Maranatha (short)

*Maranatha, maranatha,
come, Lord Jesus, come*

*Maranatha, maranatha,
come, Lord Jesus, come.*

Offering

During Advent we will focus on the Christmas Bowl Appeal. Each week we will hear from people in different parts of the world to whom offerings from the Christmas Bowl are extended.

Christmas Bowl video included in Offering Video

Dedication of the offering, Christmas Bowl Worship Resource

Hope-bringing God, we thank you that through the Christmas Bowl Appeal we can support those in need, bringing hope into difficult situations.

By our words and actions, in giving and our daily living, may your seeds of hope be planted and grow. **Amen.**

Prayers of the People

Helen Burnham

Loving and faithful God, you are always there when we reach out to you with our hopes, our dreams, our prayers. And we know You will hear us.

Our hope is for a Church without division. For the willingness to hear each other and to act in your name. For eyes that see need and hands that do something.

We hope for peace in our world. For fighting to stop so we can live our lives. We hope for leaders who work for the people and not their own pockets. For justice, equality, safety from violence and exploitation.

We hope for our fragile world, for it's not only animals facing extinction and our land facing devastation, but we ourselves if we do nothing.

We hope for a vaccine, the promise is there but we wait for the reality. A vaccine not only for the rich or the privileged, but for everyone.

We hope and wait.

But ours are the hands, the eyes, the words, the skill, the imagination that works your will in the world.

Your Kingdom Come.

Amen

Notices Matthew and Michael

Good morning.

I'm Matthew Cameron

And I'm Michael Cameron

And this is the BUC News

Okay so what's on your list today

The Christmas Bowl Appeal and Blue Christmas. How about you?

Interesting well I've got Worshipping on-site and Advent.

Let's get started and see what else comes up.

First up - worshipping on-site.

A very hot topic.

Yes the worship committee has begun offering in person worship services at 2pm on Sundays initially to people who have not been able to access online worship

These services will be gradually opened up during Advent to more people.

There are lots of things that need to be addressed including registration and RSVPs, social distancing and movement in and through the space and contact tracing processes

It's worth noting that we are limited to 80 people in the main worship space as part of this.

Keep up to date in the Olive Press and an on our website.

Look for 'Moving towards COVID normal'.

Tell me about the Christmas Bowl Appeal.

Ah yes well we dedicated the Christmas Bowl during the offering and heard our first Christmas Bowl story

I'm assuming we'll be hearing a new story each week.

That's right.

How do we support the Christmas Bowl?

You can make a donation through the Act for Peace website or using the enveloped that you might have received in your Advent worship pack.

And what about the Christmas Bowl catalogue?

Yes that too. It's too late to order biscuits but most of the rest of the catalogue is available for one more week.

And don't forget you can make a bid on Ann's watercolours, a beautiful window into Spring.

Now about those Advent worship packs - how did we go with delivery?

Amazingly - I believe that nearly everyone in our congregation has received a pack.

A big thank you to everyone who made that possible.

It's so great that we all have the same resources for Advent.

I agree and if you want more to give to family or friends you can collect them from the Manse.

Speaking of Advent did I see some of Mum's plants in the worship space?

Yes and if you would like to loan a plant or two for the Advent garden give Ian a call.

I think you had Blue Christmas on your list.

I definitely did.

The Blue Christmas service provides a space to reflect on difficult times and experiences.

There's certainly been a lot of that this year. When is the service?

Wednesday 16th December at 7:30pm.

So how is it working?

Good question. Blue Christmas will be an open service on-site.

Please see the Events calendar on the website for more details.

I've just remembered. Last week we talked about angels.

Correct. The big filming event is happening on Tuesday 1st December at 7pm.

How do children and youth get involved.

Easy contact Dave and be ready to Zoom in as an angel. It's 20 minutes of fun you won't want to miss!!

And to finish up the COVID reference group continues to work with ministry groups and committees to study the changing government guidelines for religious gatherings.

Synod is assisting with advice for use of our halls for groups and activities.

Groups that have been meeting on Zoom will continue to do so until the New Year, of course with the usual Summer holiday break

As with worship check for weekly updates on the Moving towards COVID normal page.

Join Ian Ferguson for the post worship Zoom chat

Check out the Olive Press on our website for full details of all the news.

Goodbye and thanks for listening. Now here's Ian with a Pastoral Care Review update.

Ian: The 5 year review of our Pastoral Care structures is winding up and the report is being written. Anne Mallaby has been to many of our groups and meetings, but if you haven't had a chance to speak to her, there is one more opportunity. Next Thursday 3rd December at 7:30pm there is a zoom meeting. Check our website or Facebook Group for the link and come on along to have your voice heard.

Sending Song

GA293 He came down (verses in different order than printed)

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1. *He came down that we may have hope (x3)
Hallelujah for evermore.*
 2. *He came down that we may have peace...*
 3. *He came down that we may have joy...*
 4. *He came down that we may have love...*
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SONG: [He came down](#); Cameroon Traditional, transcribed & arranged by John L Bell
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Blessing

Go in the strength, knowledge, grace and power of God
who is Source, Word and Breath of Love
We will watch and wait, looking for signs of God's presence in our lives,
nurturing the hope that is God's gift and sharing that hope with others. Amen.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be upon you now and always.

In the name of Christ.

Amen

Thank You's

Liturgist:
Amelia Ware

Advent Candle Lighting
with the Children:
Dave Hall (Pastor:
Children, Youth and Young
Adults)
Anya and Jessica
Kvansakul
Advent Prayer
by Saide Cameron

Acknowledgement of
Country:
Dave Hall

Bible readings:
Brad Coath
Michael Cameron

Reflection:
Ian Ferguson
(Minister of the Word)

Prayers of the People:
Helen Burnham

Musicians:
Alistair Hunter
(co-ordinator)
James Balsillie
Courtney Rohde

Advent Song:
Flame of Love
Julie Perrin
Helen Burnham
Julia Potter
Elaine Potter

Notices:
Michael Cameron
Matthew Cameron
Ian Ferguson

Advent Garden Plants:
Faye Findlay
Saide Cameron

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Worship space photos
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