

Opening verse on screen:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.
Philippians 4:4

Gathering, Greeting and Call to Worship**Amelia**

Good morning, on this third Sunday in Advent we will light the candle for joy. So let's begin by breathing in the memory of our joys of the past few days; feel your lungs push and release, fed by delicious smells, the brightness of green leaves and purple flowers, the sound of leather on willow, the faces of our friends as we gather to worship God. So many good things that sing through our bodies with joy.

Please stand for the Word as we sing together.

Song of praise: A voice is heard, NCYC 99.10

*Chorus: Come let us praise our God,
Come let us sing for joy,
With a heart of thanks we give honour
You are a mighty God,
You are the source of life
Creator God we give praise*

- 1. From the deepest seas (a voice is heard)
From the highest hills (a voice is heard)
From the rich dark earth (a voice is heard)
All creation sings! God is heard! **Chorus:***
 - 2. Through the darkest night (a voice is heard)
Through the breaking dawn (a voice is heard)
Through the heart of life (a voice is heard)
All creation sings! God is heard! **Chorus:***
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SONG: [A voice is heard](#), by Trisha Watts & Monica O'Brien © Willow Connection 1998, from [It all depends](#), NCYC '99 Songbook, Uniting Church in Australia, Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502

Acknowledgement of Country**Clem and Ella**

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.**

Welcome and Introduction

Amelia

Good morning, my name is Amelia and together with our minister Ian, and all of our community gathered here, and online, I welcome you as we worship together.

Today our worship will be full of joy as we celebrate the baptisms of Benjamin and Samantha, and share the happiness of their families.

We will hear more about John the Baptist and try to understand what baptism meant and looked like to him, and how this might challenge us to change the way we move through the world. After the service, please join us in the hall for morning tea.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession including Word of Grace

Amelia

God of desert skies and hidden springs,
We cherish the life-giving water of your creation:
deep oceans, nourishing rain and rivers that ebb and flow.
Forgive us for standing by as your processes unravel,
encourage us to consider the wider significance of our everyday actions.
Help us to support the healing of the Earth,
and appreciate the joy that healing brings,
even as the comforts we know are challenged.

Jesus, who comes bearing hope of new beginnings,
we renew ourselves in you, following your ways
and hoping to share your peace.
Forgive us for the times we have been uncaring
and open our eyes to the needs of others.
Help us to build a community that shares in one another's joys
and supports each other in our difficulties.

Holy Spirit, that penetrates the blueness of the sky and the flame red of the rocks,
joyfully connecting us through the earth to one another and to God.
Forgive us for ignoring the life that we are called to be part of.
Teach us to listen for you in the voices of those that are pulled by the currents.
Stop us from discriminating based on the colour of a person's passport,
and help us to challenge the workings of the world.

Amen

Word of Grace

Jesus himself said: I am with you always, to the close of the age.
Believe the Good News that comes from God: In Christ we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

Advent Candle Lighting

Dave & Ian

We light this candle for joy.

God of joy let us rejoice as we reach out to each other with gentleness.

Song: Flame of Love

- 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
Holy Spirit
Make in us
Your cradle home*

2. *Light of laughter
Balm in sorrow
You have been our
Cradle home
Called our names in
to the Silence
Flame of love by
You we're known*

*Flame of love
Holy Spirit
Make in us
Your cradle home*

SONG: Flame of Love, Words: Julie Perrin,
Music: Helen Burnham & Julie Perrin, Arranged: Julia Potter & Elaine Potter

With the Children

Dave, Ian

A brief look at the Nativity scene, add some animals, then the joy of four baptisms. To get ready for the baptisms, let's listen to these words from the Bible.

Baptism Bible Readings

Lyn

In the letter to the Galatians, Paul writes:
As many of you who were baptised into Christ
have clothed yourselves with Christ.
There is no longer Jew or Greek,
there is no longer slave or free,
there is no longer male and female;
for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. [Galatians 3:27-28]

Jesus himself said:
All authority in heaven and on earth
has been given to me.
Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,
baptising them in the name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
teaching them to observe
all that I have commanded you;
and lo, I am with you always,
to the close of the age. [Matthew 28:18-20]

Song: Rejoice in the Lord

*Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice
Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice
Rejoice! Rejoice! And again I say rejoice.*

*Rejoice! Rejoice! And again I say rejoice.
Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice
Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice*

SONG: [Rejoice in the Lord](#), Traditional, anonymous. Words Philippians 4: 4

Service of Baptism

Benjamin Smith, Samantha Siemensma.

Ian: Jesus said, Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs (Matthew 19:14). Truly I tell you ... whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. (Matthew 18:5)

Presentation

Elder presents the families

Amelia: Friends, the church council of this congregation has received a request for baptism from Rebecca and Ross for their son Benjamin and from Jessica and Nick for their daughter Samantha. This important decision has been prayerfully and carefully considered. The families have met with our minister Ian and pastor Dave to reflect and prepare. The council was delighted to approve these requests, and I am glad to welcome them here today and present them to you.

Dave introduces Benjamin and Samantha

It is with great joy that I offer a few words of introduction for the two children about to be baptised – to the congregation gathered here, and those watching online.

Benjamin Andrew Smith was born on January 14, 2020 to Rebecca and Ross. In a bit over a month he will celebrate his second birthday. Benjamin was the clear name both Bec and Ross agreed on – a good choice as it's also my middle name. Benjamin is a bit of a whiz with the shape puzzles we have in the kids corner.

Andrew is Bec's dad's name, and Bec's grandfather was Frank Measday, a Uniting Church minister in South Australia.

And I believe that all four of Ross's grandparents are here in attendance. Welcome.

Samantha Jean Louise Siemensma was born on October 13, 2020 to Jessica Smead and Nick Siemensma. Jess tells the story that when she was pregnant she had a dream that her baby was a girl, and the name Samantha was in the dream. Sounds pretty consistent with our Biblical tradition, here! Both Jess and Nick liked the name Samantha, so here she is. Harriet was the back-up name (hello Harriet). Jean is Jessica's middle name and Louise is a middle name of the family.

Samantha prefers vacuum cleaner nozzles as toys, and also loves water.

I believe Samantha has six grandparents here today, (equalling the BUC record) and a good contingent from the family. Welcome everyone.

Introduction

Ian: Rebecca and Ross, Jessica and Nick what do you ask of God's church for your children?

We ask that s/he/they be baptised into the faith and family of Jesus Christ.

Ian: Your children have been brought for baptism that they may be grafted into Christ as a member of his body the Church, to grow up into the faith of Jesus Christ and become his faithful witness and servant.

Ian touches Benjamin and Samantha's ears and mouth saying:

Benjamin and Samantha,
may the Lord open your ears to hear his word
and your mouth to proclaim his praise.

Meaning of Baptism

Ian: Baptism is Christ's gift.

It is the sign by which the Spirit of God
joins people to Jesus Christ
and incorporates them into his body, the Church.

In his own baptism in the Jordan by John,
Jesus identified himself with humanity
in its brokenness and sin;
that baptism was completed in his death and resurrection.

By God's grace,
baptism plunges us into the faith of Jesus Christ,
so that whatever is his may be called ours.
By water and the Spirit we are claimed as God's own
and set free from the power of sin and death.

Thus, claimed by God
we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit
that we may live as witnesses to Jesus Christ,
Share his ministry in the world and grow to maturity,
awaiting with hope the day of our Lord Jesus.

In baptism today, Benjamin and Samantha are assured of the love that God has for them.

Affirmation

Ian: The Uniting Church, in baptising children,
takes responsibility for their instruction
and nourishment in the faith.

Rebecca and Ross, Jessica and Nick that we may know
that you hold the Christian faith
and claim your membership
in Christ's Church, we ask you:

Do you turn from darkness to the Light of Christ?

I do.

Do you believe in God,
trusting in Jesus Christ as Saviour,
and in the Holy Spirit
as God's power and presence along the way?

I do.

Apostles Creed

Ian: (addresses whole congregation)

In unity with the whole Church,
let us affirm the faith
into which we are baptised.

Just as we acknowledged the ancient people of this land earlier, now we acknowledge the ancient people of our faith. The Apostle's Creed contains ancient words said at

baptisms for millennia which give expression to some of the symbols of our faith. The Creed doesn't say it all, nor does it say it in words that all of us may be comfortable with. But in expressing ourselves in this way we unite with all Christians who have come before us, as we continue to find new words to say about God.

Do you believe in God?

***I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.***

Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

***I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.***

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

***I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.***

Blessing the water and oil

Ian explains that the oil was made from the olives on our trees and the water is collected from our rainwater tank.

Dave pours water into the font, Ian hold oil.

Ian: Let us pray:

Dear God, send your Spirit like a dove
upon this water and oil
to bless it for the holy purpose
to which we put it.

May Benjamin and Samantha,
being buried with Christ in baptism,
rise with him to newness of life;
and being born anew of water
and the Holy Spirit
remain forever in the number
of your faithful children.

Through Jesus Christ our source of living water. Amen.

The Baptism

Ian addresses Benjamin and Samantha:

Benjamin, Samantha,
for you Jesus Christ has come,
has lived, has suffered;

for you, he has endured the agony of Gethsemane
and the darkness of Calvary;
for you, he has uttered the cry,
“It is accomplished!”
For you, he has triumphed over death;
for you, he prays at God’s right hand.
All for you, little Child,
even before you were born.
In baptism, the word of the apostle is fulfilled:
“We love, because God first loved us.”

Ian pours water on Benjamin and Samantha’s head 3 times saying:

Benjamin/Samantha
I baptise you
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Ian marks the sign of the cross on Benjamin and Samantha’s forehead with oil saying:

From his day forward the sign of the cross is upon you.

Benjamin and Samantha are now received into the faith and family of Jesus Christ
– the church in all the world.

Peace be with you Benjamin and Samantha.

All sing: For You Deep Stillness

*For you, deep stillness of the silent inland;
for you, deep blue of the desert skies;
for you, flame red of the rocks and stones;
for you sweet water from hidden springs.
From the edges seek the heartlands,
and when you’re burnt by the journey,
may the cool winds of the hovering Spirit
soothe and replenish you.
In the name of Christ, in the name of Christ.*

SONG: For you Deep Stillness. Words: Julie Perrin, Music: Robin Mann. Words © 1996 Julie Perrin, PO Box 235, Clifton Hill Vic 3068. Music © 1996 Robin Mann, 54 Currawong Crescent, Modbury Heights SA 5092. Reproduced with Permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502

Promises

Ian: Rebecca and Ross, Jessica and Nick, your children belong to God in Christ. From today they will have a home in the Christian community and there will always be a place for them here. I ask you now to respond to God’s graciousness to your children by making these solemn promises:

Will you encourage Benjamin and Samantha’s growth
within the Christian community,
guiding them through participation
in the worship, nurture and fellowship
of the Church to a mature Christian faith?

With God’s help I will.

Will you, by word and example,
teach Benjamin and Samantha the way of Christ
until the Spirit draws them
to make their own response in faith and love?

With God's help I will.

Ian addresses the godparents:

Ben's godparent is Danielle (Bec's sister), Samantha's godparents are Amy, Nick and Steph (Steph won't be present).

Danielle, Amy, Nick will you support Rebecca and Ross, Jessica and Nick, as they live out these promises, and will you be there for Benjamin, Samantha to nurture and encourage them as they grow in the faith and learn the way of Christ?

With God's help we will.

Ian addresses the congregation:

Friends in Christ,
will you promise to maintain
the life of worship and teaching,
witness and service,
that Benjamin and Samantha, and all the children among you
may grow in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
and the knowledge and love of God.

***With God's help,
we will live out our baptism
as a loving community in Christ:
nurturing one another in faith,
upholding one another in prayer,
and encouraging one another in service
until Christ comes.***

Prayer

Ian: Let us pray:
God of love, we have seen you at work here today
in this Sacrament,
and have been touched by your renewing Spirit.
We praise you for all you have done for us.

Thank you for declaring your love
for Benjamin and Samantha today.
Guide and guard them all their days.
May your love hold them,
your truth direct them,
your joy delight them.

Bless Rebecca and Ross, Jessica and Nick
that Benjamin and Samantha may grow up
in a secure and happy homes.
Give to them wisdom and courage,
laughter and peace, and the love that endures all things.

We pray together as Christ 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 for ever. Amen***

Presentation of Baptism Candle and Certificate

Dave and SMP kids to light baptism candles

Dave: Benjamin and Samantha,
you belong to Christ the light of the world.
May you always walk as children of the light.

Recollection of baptism

Children sprinkle water

Ian: Sisters and brothers:
Always remember you are baptised,
and be thankful.

Children go to SMP. Congregation returns to pews. Singing as we do so.

Song: Rejoice in the Lord

*Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice
Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice
Rejoice! Rejoice! And again I say rejoice.
Rejoice! Rejoice! And again I say rejoice.
Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice
Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice*

SONG: [Rejoice in the Lord](#), Traditional, anonymous. Words Philippians 4: 4

Bible Reading: Luke 3:7-18

Matilda

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise."

Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you

with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word:

Thanks be to God

Reflection: The Bible as an Incendiary Device

Ian

Here we are on the Advent Sunday of joy, and a baptism Sunday to boot, having a great old time! And then we went and ruined it with that gospel reading just now. Earlier this week, when I first glanced at our lectionary (that list of bible readings set for each Sunday), and saw a story about John the Baptist baptising people, I thought, “You beauty, how appropriate!” But then I read it and was reminded that it is ancient scripture at its most alienating. A story where a man berates people who have come seeking baptism with moral strictures about appropriately repentant behaviour in order to avoid the unquenchable fire, calling them a brood of vipers and comparing them to an unfruitful vine which should be chopped up and burnt – I hope regulars here would say, that’s not really our style at BUC. So, I’d like to spend the next 10 minutes or so explaining, perhaps justifying, why we’ve just heard that story read rather than one of the more joyous, peaceful alternatives that were available to us.

It all began earlier this week when I was looking at grumpy, judgemental, moralistic John the Baptist and thinking, well obviously we won’t be reading this story on Sunday. And it so happened that fresh in my mind at that moment, was a passage from a novel which I had just finished reading. It’s called *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood (?), the recently published sequel to her jolly old laugh a minute romp through dystopia, *The Handmaid’s Tale*, which has had a bit of a moment recently since it’s been made into a TV Series. If you don’t know it, *The Handmaid’s Tale* is set in the near future in North America where the Republic of Gilead has been established following a second American Civil War. Gilead is what Margaret Atwood calls a Puritan Theocracy – a fundamentalist Christian state ruled by a brutal corrupt totalitarian cabal of men. Women are subjugated in Gilead in various ways, one being by the denial of education (just as is happening in some places in our world today). Only men are allowed to read in Gilead, and only from an approved list of the titles that survived the book burnings. Now the bible is on that list, obviously, but here is how it is read as described by Offred, the Handmaid of the title:

The Commander crosses to the large leather chair reserved for him, takes the key out of his pocket, fumbles with the ornate brass-bound leather-covered box that stands on the table beside the chair. He inserts the key, opens the box, lifts out the Bible, an ordinary copy, with a black cover and gold-edged pages. The Bible is kept locked up, the way people once kept tea locked up, so the servants wouldn’t steal it. It is an incendiary device: who knows what we’d make of it, if we ever got our hands on it? We can be read to from it, by him, but we cannot read.

The bible is a dangerous thing in Gilead – an incendiary device. Only certain parts of it are suitable to be read to women. *For lunch it was the Beatitudes.* Offred explains. ... *Blessed are the merciful. Blessed be the meek. Blessed are the silent. I knew they made that up, I knew it was wrong, and they left things out, too, but there was no way of checking...*

And this made me wonder, what do we leave out? Progressive Christians, like those who tend to gather here, are constantly accused of selective reading of the Bible. And we reply by forcefully accusing our accusers of the same thing. Those conservative Xns quoting their selective verses out of context, we’d never do that.

Except here’s John the Baptist testing our resolve. He’s ripping into the crowd of people who have come to him to be baptised. And I don’t like it. But then I don’t have to like it. I’m not a

fundamentalist literalist who thinks that everything in the bible has to be taken at face value. I don't have to accept John's words unquestioningly. We're all about historical context here – and John's talking about the world as it was 2000 years ago.

So, bring it on, John – we'll listen with our 21st century detachment and scepticism, you won't be able to touch us. And John says, "You can't be baptised without changing your life and transforming the world around you." Repentance is the word John uses – and that's what John means by it, changing your life, changing the world. As we see when all the people around him say, "What does that mean for me, John?"

And John spells it out, "It means that people who have possessions like clothes and food must share what they have with those who have nothing. It means wealthy, powerful and privileged people who get their position in society from colonialism, like those tax collectors who collaborate with the Roman Imperialists, they must not use their position to unjustly increase their wealth. It means soldiers (and here I think we can fairly extrapolate from John's soldiers to men in general, or to anyone with undeserved power), soldiers must not use the power society gives them to abuse, threaten or extort. Or else, you know, unquenchable fire."

That's what JB reckons baptism requires: a change in the power dynamics of his world as they are shaped by wealth and privilege and gendered power. And now suddenly John the Baptist is sounding like a woke leftist progressive Social Justice Warrior as well as a ranting fire and brimstone preacher. Confused? I am.

There are all kinds of reasons why these ancient teachings needn't apply to us in the modern world. They are completely irrelevant unless we are baptised, have possessions and enough to eat, benefit from colonialism, are male or otherwise have power that we didn't earn – and if you're none of those things, you're in the clear today. Personally, I am all those things. So I'm thinking, maybe we should just leave this passage out and focus instead on more spiritually uplifting matters.

Back to Gilead. There is one group of women in Gilead who are allowed to read. They are called the Aunts and are like an order of nuns who serve the state of Gilead by overseeing the world of women on behalf of the Commanders. In *The Handmaid's Tale* they are violent collaborators in the oppression of women. But in the sequel, *The Testaments*, Margaret Atwood gives us a more nuanced view of them. We follow one young woman, Agnes, who becomes a supplicant, someone in training to become an Aunt. This means at the age of 16 Agnes begins to learn to read. Here's what she says:

I've described our life as peaceful, and to the outward eye it was; but there were inner storms and turmoils that I have since come to learn are not uncommon among those seeking to dedicate themselves to a higher cause. The first of my inner storms came about when, after four years of reading more elementary texts, I was finally granted reading access to the full Bible. Our Bibles were kept locked up, as elsewhere in Gilead: only those of strong mind and steadfast character could be trusted with them, and that ruled out women, except for the Aunts.

Becka [Agnes' close friend and fellow supplicant] had begun her own Bible reading earlier—she was ahead of me, in priority as well as in proficiency—but those already initiated into these mysteries were not allowed to talk about their sacred reading experiences, so we had not discussed what she had learned.

The day came when the locked wooden Bible box reserved for me would be brought out to the Reading Room and I would finally open this most forbidden of books. I was very excited about it, but that morning Becka said, "I need to warn you."

"Warn me?" I said. "But it's holy."

"It doesn't say what they say it says... They leave things out."

Agnes does indeed discover that she has been lied to –given an edited, distorted and misinterpreted version the bible. She says:

It came as a painful shock: ... Up until that time I had not seriously doubted the rightness and especially the truthfulness of Gilead's theology. If I'd failed at perfection, I'd concluded that the fault was mine. But as I discovered what had been changed by Gilead, what had been added, and what had been omitted, I feared I might lose my faith.

Margaret Atwood clearly knows her bible. She knows how dangerous it can be. The bible can lead to the rejection of faith, or at least the rejection of the church – we see this happening all around us in our world. People read stories like this one about JB today and hear confirmation of the judgemental, patriarchal, moralistic religion that our society has learnt from the church of Christendom and has rightly rejected. And I guess that is a good reason for being selective about which parts of the bible we read publicly here. But Margaret Atwood points us to other dangers as well. In her vision of religious totalitarianism, the bible has to be locked away, because it is a threat to the status quo. Its teachings undermine the human tendency to take power over one another on the basis of gender, race, class, socioeconomic status, or any of the other things we use to divide and rank people. And it's dangerous to speak against that power. It certainly was for John. The powers that be cut his head off because he threatened the status quo.

And remember, this little story about JB is just part of the introduction to the story of someone else. JB is here to prepare the way for Jesus. And Jesus' teaching will be even more incendiary. Like John, Jesus will end up dead because of it. And yet, here we are 2000 years later blithely baptising little children into his family, into his body, into his life in the world, promising to teach them the life changing, world transforming way of Christ. Perhaps we should have read JB first so we could have had the chance to say, "No way are we risking baptism and all that it might mean for our living – far too dangerous!" Too late, we've already promised.

We may not like John's style, I certainly don't. But through all the discomforts, contradictions and challenges of his story, can we hear the call that John makes upon the people of his day, a call to a new way of being, a baptismal way of being, a world transforming way of being? And can we hear it as a call to us? What do you hear today?

Offering Song

TiS268 Joy to the World

-
- 1. Joy to the world! The Lord is come; let earth receive her king;
let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.*
 - 2. Joy to the world! The Saviour reigns; let us our songs employ;
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.*
 - 3. He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.*
-

SONG: [Joy to the world](#), by Isaac Watts, 1674-1748,
from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins *Religious*, PUBLIC DOMAIN

Prayers of the People

Geoff

Let us pray:

As the words of joy that we have sung still reverberate in this sanctuary:
we are mindful of those for whom joy is hard to find,
for those who don't have enough clothes,
for those who don't have enough food,

for those who don't have enough (or any) shelter,
for those who don't have enough protection and justice.

God of joy, bring justice to the world.

We pray this day for those, who like the crowds who went out to listen to John,
long for spiritual renewal,
for those who have been strong in faith, but now find their spirit parched.
for those for whom hope and fullness of spirit is elusive
for those whose spirits have been crushed by injustice, prejudice or hate

God of joy, heal their broken spirits

We pray that we, who follow your Son, Jesus Christ, the one to whom John pointed, may still
hear the voice of John calling us to bear the fruits of repentance, the fruits of our baptism:

In our words and deeds,
in our attitudes and behaviour,
in the use of our money and comforts, may we live Christ-like lives.

God of joy, we again pray that you will help to live out our baptism so that Benjamin and
Samantha and all who gather here are nurtured in Christlike-ness, hope and joy.

We pray that the disruptive renewal of Spirit prophesied by John would disrupt the powers of
injustice, indifference and ignorance that pervade our world. We pray especially for our nation
where so many of the powerful
cover injustices with lies,
foster contempt for the weak,
use power for their own gain,
mislead the ignorant, and whose work yields sorrow rather than joy.

God of joy, blow your disruptive spirit among the powerful, that those who do seek justice may
be emboldened and that those who deceive and obscure may repent.

As we continue this advent journey,
We thank you, loving God, for your presence among us
your creation around us,
and the future which you promise us.
Help us to live in to the joy of the Gospel.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

*Parts of this prayer are drawn from the prayer for Advent 3C written by Rev. Stephen M. Fearing
and published at www.stephenmfearing.com". They are used with permission.*

Notices

Amelia

Sending Song: You shall go out with joy, TIS755

*You shall go out with joy
and be led forth in peace
And the mountains and the hills
shall break forth in singing.
There'll be shouts of joy, and the trees of the field
Shall clap, shall clap their hands,
And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
And you'll go out with joy.*

Blessing and Sending

Ian

Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice!
Let your gentleness be known to everyone. Our God is near.
Do not worry about anything,
but in everything by prayer and supplication
with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen

Closing verse

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 4:7

Thank yous

Liturgist:
Amelia Ware

Acknowledgement of
Country:
Clementine
Ella

Bible readers:
Lyn Anderson
Matlida McClintock

Children's time:
Dave Hall
(Pastor: Children, Youth
and Young Adults)
Ian Ferguson

Reflection:
Ian Ferguson
(Minister of the Word)

Prayers of the People:
Geoff Thompson

Musicians:
Alistair Hunter
(co-ordinator)
Daniel Broadstock
Brad, Sam and Hudson
Coath
Clare Keogh
Catherine Leslie
Joanne van Ravenswaaij

Editing / Production:
Ray Cameron
Saide Cameron
Alistair Hunter
Dave Miller
Jason Minator
Kenna Morrison

Images:
Artwork by David Kerr from
the Emergence Exhibition
Photos by Ian Ferguson

Prelude:
Gathered Here In The
Mystery Of This Hour
(acapella)
SONG: [Gathered here](#), By Phil
Porter ©1990 , from [New
Century Hymnal](#), Pilgrim Press.
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Musicians: Shawn
Whelan, Daniel Whelan,
Natalie Sims, Saide
Cameron

Postlude:
The Trees of the Field (You
Shall Go Out With Joy)
SONG: [The trees of the field](#), by
Steffie Rubin, from [Together in
Song](#), Harper Collins;
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Musicians: Elaine Potter,
Bronte Potter