

# Order of Service – 17/12/23, Advent 3

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## Gathering

*Here, we cross a threshold – we move into a sacred space, and a sacred time, a space and time ‘set apart’ for the purpose of communal prayer.*

*During the service the congregation is invited to stand and sit for different parts of the service, however you are welcome to stay seated if you wish.*

*A quiet retreat room is available for those who need it.*

*The worship area is wheelchair accessible.*

*There is a hearing aid loop.*

*There is a children’s corner with books and activities.*

## Opening verse:

Isaiah 61:1 ‘The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me ... he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed...’

## Greeting and Call to Worship

**Kirsty**

*The leader greets the people in God’s name and calls us into a worshipful space and state. The bible is carried in and Christ Candle lit – we usually stand (if we are able and comfortable to do so) while this happens.*

Good morning. Please stand and join me in singing the Advent chant “Maranatha, come Lord Jesus, come” as we welcome the Word and the light.

## **MV019 Maranatha** (Louise Skibsted)

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

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

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SONG: Maranatha is an Aramaic word meaning “Come, Lord.” Words: traditional liturgical text.  
Music: Louise Skibsted. From [More Voices](#), United Church of Canada, Woodlake Publishing Inc.

## Acknowledgement of Country

**Kirsty**

*We acknowledge the people of the land on which we worship*

In this Kangaroo Apple season, the weather is changeable and thundery.  
The days are longer and the nights shorter.

We acknowledge and respect  
the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung 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.

## Song of Praise

Kirsty

*We usually stand during the songs.*

### **TiS 473 Community of Christ** (Shirley Murray)

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1. *Community of Christ, who make the Cross your own,  
live out your creed and risk your life for God alone:  
the God who wears your face, to whom all worlds belong,  
whose children are of every race and every song.*

2. *Community of Christ, look past the Church's door  
and see the refugee, the hungry, and the poor.  
Take hands with the oppressed, the jobless in your street,  
take towel and water, that you wash your neighbour's feet.*

3. *Community of Christ, through whom the word must sound -  
cry out for justice and for peace the whole world round:  
disarm the powers that war and all that can destroy,  
turn bombs into bread, and tears of anguish into joy.*

4. *When menace melts away, so shall God's will be done,  
the climate of the world be peace and Christ its Sun;  
our currency be love and kindness our law,  
our food and faith be shared as one forevermore.*

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SONG: [Community of Christ](#) by Shirley Murray, Hope Publishing Company;  
from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins *Religious* Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502,  
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## Welcome and Introduction

Kirsty

*People are welcomed, those present and those online. The themes of the service are laid out.*

Good morning and welcome to worship. It is great to worship together, here at BUC in Sydney Rd or on line, this morning or if you are joining us later. Welcome.

My name is Kirsty and I will be leading worship this morning with our Minister Cath, musicians led by Natalie, Lyn, Joanne and our AV team. Our preacher today is one of our own, Rev Dr Geoff Thompson. Thank you for preaching today Geoff.

On this third Sunday in Advent, the season when we when we anticipate the coming of Jesus, we will be focusing on joy and protest. We will reflect on the readings from Isaiah and Luke. We will think about what protest can look like, and remember that underlying any protest is a hope for a new way, a vision of a different world.

And we are continuing to build our village, remembering the many people that all have a part to play in the Christmas story. This week we can see a path made of prayers in our village. These were created and offered during the Blue Christmas service on Tuesday.

## Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Kirsty

*We pray in adoration, praising and adoring God for being God; and in confession, bringing before God the incompleteness and brokenness of the world and our lives. In response we hear God's word of healing grace.*

Let's begin our prayers of adoration and confession by singing the beautiful chant written by Elaine 'The Spirit of the Lord is now upon me'.

*The Spirit of the Lord is now upon me  
to heal the broken heart  
and set the captive free,  
to open prison doors  
and make the blind to see.  
The Spirit of the Lord is now on me.*

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SONG: [The Spirit of the Lord](#), Isaiah 61, adapted by Elaine Loukes,  
from [Tune In](#), UC Songbook, Reproduced with permission

Let us pray:

Lord God, who spoke to the prophets and speaks to us today,  
You offer us hope in the face of oppression,  
hope of renewal, hope for the reign of God in our world,  
A time when the good news shall ring out,  
and those who mourn will be comforted,  
A time when captives will be freed,  
and oak trees of righteousness will be planted.

Jesus, Son of Mary  
Unexpected and surprising,  
You come to scatter the proud  
and lift up the lowly.  
You come to an unwed mother  
who rejoices, and holds her head up high  
as she praises God her Saviour.

Spirit of the Lord,  
Through you we are given a vision for a different world,  
one where ruined cities will be repaired  
and justice and joy will prevail.  
You call on us to join with you and protest the status quo,  
in the way we live our lives,  
in our public and private actions.

Forgive us when we do not live in hope,  
    When we do not live in the joy of the good news.  
Forgive us when we are not open to being surprised,  
    When we find it hard to accept what you ask of us.  
Forgive us when we cannot see your vision  
    When we are held back by what is, and cannot grasp what could be.  
Forgive us when we do not live in your presence,  
    When we do not hear your call.

Amen.

## **Word of Grace**

Siblings in Christ,  
The Spirit of the Lord is upon us,  
Let us live in the joy of this promise,  
Knowing that our missteps are forgiven  
In Christ, through Christ and because of Christ.

## Thanks be to God.

Let us remain seated as we sing again of God's presence and call.

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*The Spirit of the Lord is now upon me  
to heal the broken heart  
and set the captive free,  
to open prison doors  
and make the blind to see.  
The Spirit of the Lord is now on me.*

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## HEARING AND RESPONDING

*We hear the story of Jesus, Wisdom Incarnate (in the gospels); the story of God's dealings with Israel (in the Old/First Testament); and the story of God's people through history (in Acts and the New Testament letters). As we hear this story, we are reshaped and formed by an alternative perspective on life – the perspective of the gospel, the good news. The story is told through proclamation, which may include reading the Scriptures, reflection on Scripture, symbolic action, art, music, multimedia resources and silence.*

*Hearing the story requires a response. We respond by making an offering (of ourselves, our gifts, our money, and our prayers for others).*

### Hebrew Scriptures – Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Lyn

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me  
because the Lord has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and release to the prisoners,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor  
and the day of vengeance of our God,  
to comfort all who mourn,  
to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.  
They shall build up the ancient ruins;  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.

For I, the Lord, love justice,  
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;  
I will faithfully give them their recompense,  
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.  
Their descendants shall be known among the nations  
and their offspring among the peoples;  
all who see them shall acknowledge  
that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord;  
my whole being shall exult in my God,  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;  
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.  
For as the earth brings forth its shoots  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise  
to spring up before all the nations.

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word  
**Thanks be to God**

## Early Word – Lighting the Advent Candle (Joy / Protest)

Cath

At our Blue Christmas service people were invited to explore our Advent themes of darkness and hope, peace and justice, joy and protest on three different pieces of paper with charcoal and chalk. Today these images form a collective path through our village. We know that we cannot have true joy unless all of us are reconciled.

Today up the back we will be making more of our Advent village for anyone who would like to join in some cardboard craft.

As we light our third Advent Candle,  
**we celebrate the Joy of having You in our lives.**

We light the Advent Candle and remind ourselves  
**that joy can be found in ordinary and extraordinary ways  
in prayer and in protest, in working together.**

We open ourselves up to the possibility of joy  
**and seek to share this joy with others in your name.**

## Song

**Online Resource** Advent begins in the darkness of night (music in DropBox)

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*Advent begins in the darkness of night,  
waiting and watching for signs of a light,  
walking in faith that a path will appear,  
daring to follow in spite of our fear.*

*Advent begins in oppression's domain,  
marked by the cries of confusion and pain.  
Yet hope is kindled where justice is done,  
mercy is nurtured and peace is begun.*

*Advent begins with our dreams yet deferred.  
Love sounds ridiculous; prayer seems absurd.  
But in the midst of life's centreless maze,  
we lift together our protest of praise.*

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SONG: [Advent begins](#), Text: David Bjorlin, b.1984; © 2017 GIA Publications, Inc.  
Music: RESCOV; Benjamin Brody, b.1975; © 2017 GIA Publications, Inc.

## Gospel Reading Luke 1:46b-55

“My soul magnifies the Lord,  
 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
 for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.  
 Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,  
 for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
 and holy is his name;  
 indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him  
 from generation to generation.  
 He has shown strength with his arm;  
 he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.  
 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones  
 and lifted up the lowly;  
 he has filled the hungry with good things  
 and sent the rich away empty.  
 He has come to the aid of his child Israel,  
 in remembrance of his mercy,  
 according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
 to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”  
 For these words of witness and for Christ the Word

**Thanks be to God**

## Reflection

Geoff

## Offering with Song

*We usually remain seated for the singing of the offering song, standing together when the offering is carried forward.*

**Online Resource** [God make us agents](#)

As we sing this song of joyful rebellion, we will make our offering...an offering of ourselves, and of resources: our time, our energy, our gifts and our money. Please remain seated as we sing and stand when the offering is brought forward.

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*God, make us agents of joyful rebellion  
 called to resist sullen empires of fear,  
 fueled not by hatred but love for all people,  
 we stand united, assured you are here.*

*Some will be Marys who sing down injustice  
 Others like Moses will speak truth to power.  
 Few, like brave midwives,  
 will shield life from evil.*

*All must be prophets awake for this hour.  
 Laughing in answer to snarling derision,  
 we dance to counter oppression and pain.  
 Feasting together despite our divisions,  
 we pledge ourselves to Christ's upside-down reign.*

*God, make us agents of joyful rebellion  
 called to sing out till our faith is made sight.*

*Fueled by the stories of saintly subversives,  
we stand united, your justice our light.*

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Text: David Bjorlin, b.1984; © 2020 GIA Publications, Inc.

## Offering Prayer

Kirsty

God of hope,  
Jesus of new life,  
We bring these gifts  
As we strive to be agents of joyful rebellion,  
Living out the good news and your vision for the world,  
A world that offers justice to everyone.  
Amen.

## Christmas Bowl

Kirsty

During Advent we hear of people and situations that are helped by the Christmas Bowl. Today we hear of the work of Act for Peace's partner in Jordan, the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees.

Twelve long years have passed since Rima\*, her husband Kateb\*, and their five children fled their beloved home in Syria as the devastating civil war unfolded. Their once-happy life, built around a flourishing farm cultivating pistachios, olives and potatoes, was abruptly shattered by the conflict. Act for Peace's partner in Jordan, the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees continue to provide vital food packages, hygiene kits, and the long term support that refugees need to rebuild their lives.

Through the Christmas Bowl, we can help Syrian refugees like Rima receive the support they desperately need and show them they're not forgotten. Please give to the Christmas Bowl.

## Prayers of the People

Joanne

*We offer prayers for the world, for Christ's people in the world, and for those in need. After the prayer the Christ Candle is taken to the chapel space where people are invited to light a taper for their own prayers at the end of the service.*

*We'll be entering now into a time of communal prayer. Afterwards, the Christ Candle will be moved to the Chapel space at the back of the church, and you're invited to light a taper for your own prayers at the end of the service.*

*Let's begin by taking a moment to quieten our minds, be attentive to our hearts, and as we listen to the music, allow ourselves to become more aware of God's presence.*

{Instrumental music " O LORD HEAR MY PRAYER "}

Loving God, we acknowledge the diverse situations and feelings of our community at this time of year.

Some of us are looking forward to spending time with loved ones, and are excited to have a much deserved end of year break.  
Some of us are grieving the loss of family or friends.  
Some are finding the separation from loved ones very hard.  
Some are hurting from fractured family relationships and find the very prospect of Christmas challenging.  
Some of us are feeling exhausted from the hectic pace of social gatherings, present shopping, and menu planning, and can't wait for Christmas to be over already.



Dear God, thank you for journeying with us in all our different experiences.  
Remind us to lean on your strength and grace.  
Gift us your peace to renew, restore and heal us.  
Lord, hear us

Lord, thank you for loving us as we are.  
We have good intentions but our ego can get in the way.  
Sometimes we're quick to anger and slow to forgive,  
We're prone to judging and criticising others.  
So we ask for your grace to become better at loving and forgiving each other and ourselves  
Lord, hear us

Lord, we pray for people who have serious health issues,  
For sufferers of chronic and acute pain.  
For those who struggle with their mental health  
Bless them, their loved ones and their care-givers.  
Grant us your peace that goes beyond our human understanding and limitations  
Lord, hear us

Lord, we lift up to you all those suffering from persecution and conflict,  
Particularly those in war-zones around the world.  
We are overwhelmed by the suffering in the Middle East and Ukraine.  
We pray for the residents of Gaza, for the Israeli hostages and for all who've lost loved ones  
Be with the courageous doctors, medical staff and peace workers  
We pray for the Israeli government and the Hamas leaders,  
For our Government and leaders around the world  
To put love at the heart of their decisions and do everything possible  
to bring about long-lasting peace in the region.  
Lord, hear us

Lord, help us do what we can in standing up for the vulnerable and needy,  
Inspire us all to see beyond the boundaries of our immediate group,  
And to see that we are all part of one community, one village.  
Thank you for the many joys and blessings in our life  
Give us the courage to be transformed by your unconditional love  
So that we can *become* the change we want to see in this world.

We offer to you all our prayers spoken and whispered in our hearts,  
In the name of Jesus, Lord, hear our prayers.  
Amen.

## BEING SENT

*Having heard the word and shared the meal together, we are sent forth on God's mission of love. We are again on a threshold, encouraged to go into the world to continue the worship of God in our daily living.*

### Notices

**Kirsty**

*We share the life and work of our community with each other as we prepare to be sent out.*



**MV120** My soul cries out with a joyful shout (Canticle of the Turning) (Rory Cooney)

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*1. My soul cries out with a joyful shout  
that the God of my heart is great,  
And my spirit sings of the wondrous things  
that you bring to the ones who wait.  
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight,  
and my weakness you did not spurn,  
So from east to west shall my name be blest.  
Could the world be about to turn?*

*My heart shall sing of the day you bring.  
Let the fires of your justice burn.  
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,  
and the world is about to turn!*

*2. Though I am small, my God, my all,  
you work great things in me,  
And your mercy will last from the depths of the past  
to the end of the age to be.  
Your very name puts the proud to shame,  
and to those who would for you yearn,  
You will show your might, put the strong to flight,  
for the world is about to turn.*

*3. From the halls of power to the fortress tower,  
not a stone will be left on stone.  
Let the king beware for your justice tears  
ev'ry tyrant from his throne.  
The hungry poor shall weep no more,  
for the food they can never earn;  
There are tables spread, ev'ry mouth be fed,  
for the world is about to turn.*

*4. Though the nations rage from age to age,  
we remember who holds us fast:  
God's mercy must deliver us  
from the conqueror's crushing grasp.  
This saving word that our forebears heard  
is the promise which holds us bound,  
'Til the spear and rod can be crushed by God,  
who is turning the world around*

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SONG: Canticle of the turning, from More Voices, United Church of Canada, Woodlake Publishing Inc.  
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## Blessing and Sending

*The leader gives a blessing to the people for the next stage of the journey.*

Friends go from here and be people of joyful protest.  
Remembering to hold fast to that which is good  
to render to no-one evil for evil,  
to support the weak, to help the afflicted,  
rejoicing always in the Holy Spirit.  
Amen

## Thank you's

Thank you for joining us, and thank you to...

Liturgist:

Kirsty Bennett

Bible readers:

Lyn Anderson

Early Word:

Cath James

Reflection:

Geoff Thompson

Prayers of the People:

Joanne van Ravenswaaij

Musicians:

Natalie Sims

Brad Coath

Hudson Coath

Andrew Dickinson

Joel Hallinan

Alistair Hunter

Postlude Song: The Spirit  
of the Lord, Isaiah 61,

adapted by Elaine Loukes,  
from Tune In, UC

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Musicians: Alistair Hunter,

James Balsillie,

Courtney Rohde

Images:

Saide Cameron

Editing / Production:

Jane Allardice

Ray Cameron

Saide Cameron

Alistair Hunter

Fiona MacDowall

Shawn Whelan

## Closing verse:

Luke 1:46b-47 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior'.