



## Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2022 Advent Week 4 - Love

### Introit Praise God from whom all Blessings Flow (with Lyrics) md 1801 2012

Thomas Ken 1637-1711 *alt.*

<https://youtu.be/RBz7vuJ2b1A>

#### Welcome

May the worship be a blessing for you

#### Acknowledgement

We acknowledge those who were here before us, the first inhabitants of this place  
We honour them for their custodianship of the land on which we gather today.

#### Call to Worship

The people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light  
**Those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined**

**This great light is the light of the world, and he is named Emmanuel**

This means God is with us and will never fail us

**Through him we have become God's beloved Children  
He has called us to love others as He loves us**

#### Prayer of Adoration

Loving God you fill our hearts with your love  
Jesus our Lord, you teach us how to love  
Holy Spirit, you pour God's love into our hearts so we may love as Jesus loves us

#### We love and praise you Lord

#### Prayer of Invocation

Holy Spirit, Come upon us and bless us  
Fill our hearts with the fire of God's Spirit and give us hope and courage for the journey  
Come Holy Spirit. Come upon us and bless us

#### Prayer of Confession

Lord, we come before you in this moment of silence with all that's on our hearts.  
We seek your forgiveness and healing. Transform our hearts, Lord. Forgive us.

*Silence*

Hear then Christ's words of grace to us

*"Your sins are forgiven"*

**Thanks be to God**

#### Advent Wreath Week 4 – Love

Family: On this first Fourth Sunday of Advent, we light the candles of hope, peace, and joy again.

*The three purple candles are lit again.*

**Congregation: We remember our longing for God to be with us and we prepare our hearts for our celebration of the birth of Jesus**

Family: Today we light the fourth candle  
and we name it love.

*Lights the Fourth pink candle*

**Congregation: This candle reminds us of Mary, Jesus' mother. She was a person who had a lot of courage. This candle reminds us of a mother's love for her child, Jesus, who is God's son. It is a symbol of God's love that was born in baby Jesus on Christmas Day. It is a symbol of God's love that is alive to us and in us.**

**All: O God, Come, travel with us through Advent. Give us courage to spread love in the world.**

### **Hymn – 699 A New Commandment**

Chet Valley Churches 2021

[https://youtu.be/2X8m9tVR0\\_Y](https://youtu.be/2X8m9tVR0_Y)

### **Reading – Matthew 1:18-25**

<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah<sup>[a]</sup> took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly.

<sup>20</sup> But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.'

<sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

<sup>23</sup> 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.'

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, <sup>25</sup> but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son;<sup>[b]</sup> and he named him Jesus.

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### **Young at Heart**

Ponder about love and how important it is for families, especially our church family

### **Hymn – 229 Jesus Loves me**

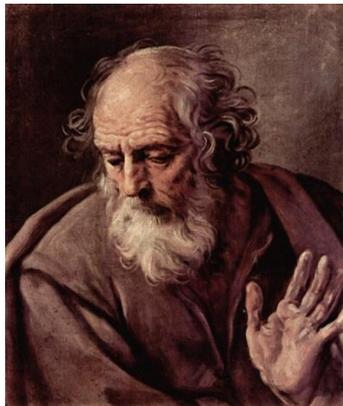
**John 3:16 Church Hymn Animated faith 2015**

Julie Gaulke Music .com

<https://youtu.be/LONkzLLNPmA>

### **Sermon – Beloved – Rev Tina**

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen*



*Joseph - RCL*

Try to imagine what it was like for Joseph.

In his time people took dreams seriously, especially if they involved angels and his response to God's message of hope is so human.

Joseph is a Jewish man of deep faith who thinks he is doing the right thing by quietly dismissing Mary when he finds out she is pregnant. He loves her yet he must send her away and do it, so no one condemns or shames her.

When he resolves to do this, he has a dream, and the angel calls him son of David. This is to remind us Jesus must be from the family of David. The angel instructs Joseph what to do and Joseph acts on it. He obeys God. He publicly names Jesus in the synagogue as his own first-born son. He calls him Jesus as God commanded.

To do this he had to go against his faith, family, and culture. There are times in our life when we are called to respond to God's call and sometimes it may mean going against our beliefs about family, our cultural expectations and our entrenched beliefs and perspectives.

We may do this to embrace and welcome new ways or a new birth of something into our life that is lifegiving for us and others. This may mean giving new names to our experiences and accepting with an open heart what God is bringing into our lives. It may also mean letting go of some things to make way for new things.

There are times in our lives where we may, like Joseph did, face a choice to love or not to love. This choice may take us beyond ourselves and what we have always known. We may choose to act out of love for God or another or both.

Jesus showed us how to love and this Christmas is a time we make a choice in how we choose to follow Jesus.

We often get in touch with our feelings through poetry or music or a painting. Jan Richardson wrote a poem called *Beloved*. Two men wrote a hymn and its music, and it is called *Silent Night*. Often, we look at a painting and notice the gaze of a man or woman is directed at something holy or beloved of God and it may make us wonder where our gaze is directed.

Music, art, and poetry often speak of love and often speak into our hearts and awaken what has lain dormant for a long time. We can be reminded we are a child of God and are God's beloved. We may even be able to let go of whatever holds us back from growing into all God calls us to be.

This Christmas listen deeply to your heart and allow yourself time to just be, allow space to be with God. Allow God to touch your heart. Listen to where you feel called by God and to what and choose to act upon this call.

This is a time of change for our church. It was the same for Mary and Joseph. Jesus came into their lives and changed them forever. This Christmas allow Jesus to come into your life and change it forever.

This Christmas the landscape of our lives is being changed by us becoming one church in Christ. Our coming together has changed our lives. Believe we will bless one another as we journey together. God has a plan for us and will lead us into the future, a future God has already planned for us.

**Hymn – 398 Come Down O Love Divine**

**Bianco de Siena (d 1434)**

**Music for Faith and Worship 2017**

<https://youtu.be/zXO4rqBQOAU>

**Offering Prayer**

Lord and giver of every good thing we bring to you our lives and gifts for your kingdom all for transformation through your grace and love made known in Jesus Christ our Saviour, amen

**Prayers of the People – Michael Plumridge**

Lord, God of love and compassion please hear us as we pray.

This morning we pray for the countries of China, Hong Kong and Macau. God of all nations we give you thanks for the great and ancient land of China and all its people. We thank you for its long and proud history and for the contribution that it has made and continues to make on the world scene. We thank you that Australia's relationship with China continues to improve under current leadership. We pray for an easing of tensions between China and the US, and we pray for resolution in the claims of sovereignty over territories in the South China Sea. Lord, we bring before you the human rights violations within China and we ask for an end to arbitrary mass detention, torture and forced cultural assimilation. Loving God, we give you thanks for Christians in China. Lord, grant them strength as they boldly live out their faith, challenging injustices even when they fear persecution. We pray also for those tackling the huge environmental challenges that China faces. Grant them strength we pray. God of Justice we pray too for those who are marginalised by rising economic growth.

Lord, we also pray this morning for Hong Kong and Macau, both known as Special Administrative Regions of the People's Republic of China. We ask for an easing of political and social tensions between the Mainland China and Hong Kong and we pray for the many in Hong Kong who are afraid for their future. Grant them your peace and wisdom, we pray. Lord also this morning bring before you the people of the Island of Macau, situated on the southern coast of mainland China. Macau is economically dependent on tourists from Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland, with gambling being the main attraction.

Lord, we ask also for an end to the Russian attacks on Ukraine. We pray too for all people affected by extreme weather events, and we ask for strength for those directly engaged in efforts to address climate change. We pray for the friends, families and colleagues of the two police officers killed in the shooting in Queensland; and also for the family of the civilian who was killed. We thank you for all who choose the difficult and dangerous careers in emergency services. We pray too for all victims of violence.

Locally we pray this morning for the Independent Churches in Whitehorse. We ask that you bless them and all worshippers. We pray also for the Uniting Church in Yarra Ranges: for Healesville, Yarra Glen and Wandin/Seville. Lord, bless them as they work and worship in your name. We pray too for the Carnsworth Community; part of Uniting AgeWell. We ask your blessing on staff and residents and their families. We pray for our newly formed Whitehorse Uniting Church. We ask for your guidance and blessing as we take the first steps as a unified entity. Bless our ministers Tina and Peter and their families.

Lord, in our daily lives stir up compassion in us. Grant us patience as we wait for you. Lift up our hearts when our courage fails. Be with those who are sick, lonely or experiencing loss. We pray this and all our prayers in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray

**The Lord's Prayer**

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 forever. Amen.

## Litany

**Litany to mark the transition of merging to form a new congregation  
– a thanksgiving for the past and a looking forward to a new beginning and future**  
(adapted from "A Litany for a Church Anniversary", *Uniting in Worship II*, © UCA, used by permission)

We rejoice that the Holy Spirit inspired our forebears to form congregations such as ours for God's praise and to build this community for God's glory. This is our final meeting as the congregations of Forest Hill, Blackburn North Nunawading and Mountview congregations. It is a time for us to give thanks to God and a time to pray, so let us pray:

### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Eternal and loving God, today we give thanks to you for your grace and goodness through all the years of worship and witness we have experienced together in this place. We celebrate your grace in calling us to be your people and how your love has been revealed to us through Christ your Son. We give thanks for your gift of the Spirit and the joy of salvation.

**We give you our thanks, O God.**

Loving God we give thanks for those who established the church here and brought us all together from many backgrounds and churches to this place. We give thanks for all those who have gone before us, for their faith and vision, for their gifts and abilities:

**We give you our thanks, O God.**

We remember all who were and are members of this church who have given freely of their time and money and for those whose wisdom has guided our congregation:

**We give you our thanks, O God.**

We remember and give thanks for all who have preached and taught here; for all who have confessed here that Jesus is Lord; for all who today lead in worship, witness, and service:

**We give you our thanks, O God. Amen.**

**O God, you bound us together for a time to work for the advancement of your kingdom in this place. We give you thanks for the ministry which we have shared. We thank you for your never-failing presence with us through these years and for the love and deeper knowledge of you and of each other which we have received.**

### Our Commitment to the Future of our church

And now let us reaffirm our loyalty to Christ and pledge our faithfulness to the Church as we move forward together towards a new future where God will move our hearts through the Holy Spirit, to love one another and work together for the sake of Christ's church.

**We pledge our allegiance to Christ and his Church.**

We pray that through our commitment to serve Christ, our families and friendships may be enriched, our daily lives and work may be consecrated, and our faith and love may be nurtured.

**We pledge our allegiance to Christ and his Church.**

We will do our best to support and minister with those who teach and guide the young; encourage and equip those who serve and work towards the strengthening of the faith and love of those who seek God's way and for the care and comforting of those who mourn.

**We pledge our allegiance to Christ and his Church.**

We as Christ's Church commit to the witnessing to the good news of our Saviour; the reconciliation of people and nations; the promotion of righteousness and peace; and the extension of the reign of God through new horizons, a new vision and new opportunities and commitments to mission.

**We pledge our allegiance to Christ and his Church.**

We remember those who have run the race with perseverance and have been united with Christ in heaven and with gratitude give thanks for all of us who are here today who make up the body of Christ in this place

**We pledge our allegiance to Christ and his Church. Amen.**

## **HOLY COMMUNION**

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 right to give our thanks and praise.**

In Jesus of Nazareth, in compassion for the outcast, forgiveness for the fallen, hope for the poor and hungry; in his life poured out for others and broken in rejection and disdain you have made yourself known.

We proclaim your power in goodness and your might in compassion, as we say:

**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.**

We greet the one who comes in your name, your true light, your true love,  
the bread of compassion, the wine of renewal.

As he broke bread before the brokenness of his death, **(Break Bread)**  
as he poured out wine before his blood was poured out on the cross, **(Hold up Cup)**  
as he gave his life in acts of goodness, as he invited all to the feast of new hope,  
so come to us, God of Jesus, in your love.

Come to us, Spirit of our Lord of love, and let the bread and wine before us bear your life to our life,  
nourish us with his vision of hope, and unite us in one body of peace.

Nurture us with your brokenness, renew us with your poured out life,  
empower us with your powerlessness, that we may take root in your risen life and bear fruit in your world.

**You are our life;  
you are our hope;  
you are our peace;  
and we praise you. Amen.**

The bread of life is offered to us.

**We feed on the bread of life with gratitude**

The cup of the newness of life is offered to us.

**We drink of the cup with gratitude.**

The gifts of God for the people of God.

**May we who share these gifts  
be found in Christ  
and Christ in us.**

In eating of the bread and drinking from the cup we symbolise our desire to share in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It is food for the journey into fullness of life.  
The banquet is prepared. Come, eat and drink to your heart's content.

The bread of life **Keep us in eternal life**  
The blood of Christ **Keep us in eternal life**

### **Prayer after communion**

**God of truth and love who calls us and leads us into the future, make us a blessing for others  
Help us to see creation as being in the future and to love it into being.**

May we hold on to the hope You have planted in us,  
believing the unbelievable, reaching for the unattainable,  
trusting the things beyond seeing and the things beyond hearing,  
loving and living with compassion, offering hospitality and hope,  
until the people who walk in darkness see the great light and are glad and free.

### **O Come O Come Emmanuel**

Piano/Cello The Piano Guys 2013  
<https://youtu.be/iO7ySn-Swwc>

### **Blessing**

We go in Peace in the love of God in the Power of the Spirit.  
May the Lord Bless and Guard us. May the Lord make His face shine upon us and be gracious unto us  
as we bring Christ's love and peace to the world. Amen

### **Hymn 779 May the Feet of God**

Robin and Dorothy Mann 2015  
<https://youtu.be/WfOFIWxGaP8>

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## **Pastoral Care tips for Advent – Rev Tina**



As you prepare your hearts for Christmas, hug your loved ones and give thanks for your blessings.  
Expand your heart with music and singing. Here is a lovely song where two sisters sing to each other.

### **A Christmas Hallelujah**

Cassandra Star and her sister Callahan 2021 Cassandra & Callahan  
<https://youtu.be/XUJRZRydm1>

**Over a thousand people came together to break a record – Angels from the Realms of Glory**  
The Piano Guys 2014  
<https://youtu.be/PrLoWt2tfqg>

The following was part of the devotional for the new Church Council's first planning meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022 - Scripture about the importance of Praying



**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

*<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

**Jeremiah 29:11**

*<sup>11</sup> For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.*

**Romans 8:26**

*<sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes<sup>[a]</sup> with sighs too deep for words.*

**Ephesians 6:18**

*<sup>18</sup> Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.*

**Luke 6:12**

**Follow Jesus' Example**

**He prayed before making decisions and ministering to others**

*<sup>12</sup> Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God.*

Pray for our Church Councils and Regional Council who have completed their ministry and for our new Church Council as it begins its new ministry on behalf of Christ's congregations.

Pray for one another and for God's Holy Spirit to move our hearts and guide us as we journey into a new future as a church

Pray for our congregations who have joined together as one body of Christ united together in Christ to be known as Whitehorse Congregation

**For those who are grieving – From the Blue Christmas Service**

**Prayer**

God of love and understanding

We gather here today to sit with our pain during the world's celebrations.

Help us to experience the mystery of your presence with us in all our ups and downs of this season.

Fill us with hope, joy, peace, and love that you promised to all at the birth of Jesus.



### Isaiah 9: 2, 6-7

<sup>[a]</sup> The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined. <sup>6</sup>For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

<sup>7</sup>His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

**All: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.**

**The deeper the darkness the brighter the light shines. For love refuses to be extinguished by despair. Resilience and hope cannot be quenched while the light of love burns steadily fuelled by courage and compassion. We look for the light and there we will find love.**

**The King of Love my Shepherd is  
Music for Faith and Worship 2017**

[https://youtu.be/YcCwUF0s\\_-Y](https://youtu.be/YcCwUF0s_-Y)