



“... and the life was the light of all people”
John 1:4b

Facing the Climate Challenge with Love

Today is the fourth Sunday of Advent, as we follow the path towards the light of Christmas. As we walk, let us watch out for each other, sharing our love with our neighbours near and far.

Today we read the Christmas story from Joseph's perspective.

Imagine his confusion but it is his love that shines through the story and the promise that 'God is with us'. Through our prayers, actions and gifts, we can stand with people on the frontline of climate change and let hope flow this Christmas.

Call to Worship

E te whanau a te Karaiti,

We gather with hope in the presence of God. We seek justice and long for new life.

Let us worship God.

Lighting the Advent Candle of Love



On this fourth Sunday of Advent we remember the love we find in God, and the gifts of love we offer to others.

Read the Partner Story

In September Luqman was marooned by the flood waters that covered one third of Pakistan. When the water rose too high, he sought safety with his mother in his great grandmother's house which was only partially flooded. The weather was hot and the water polluted. They could not cook their food properly. There was no school, no friends to play with and nowhere to go. Luqman's grandmother carefully rationed the fresh drinking water her brother delivered to the household.

In this climate crisis, we can support partners like Community World Service Asia with our gifts and prayers so they can help families recover. Together we share love with families facing the long term effects of flooding.

Light the candle

Together:

God of love and surprises;
May we love one another, embracing your generous spirit and ways of justice.
Give us perseverance to bring love to the world in word and in action.
We pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Lectionary Thoughts

Our readings place today's themes of love and relational justice into contexts of division, war and doubt. What does relational justice look like in a city under threat of war, or for a people whose God has left them to weep, or for a person who believes another has betrayed them? What does love look like under such tough conditions?

Isaiah 7:10-16

Jerusalem was in extreme danger. A siege seemed imminent, and the king was panicking. It might be expected that he would seek God's guidance on how to act, but even when God reminded him that God was listening, he ignored the offer. With a deep sigh, God gives him a sign anyway: a sign which was simultaneously a natural happening and a divine promise. It was the birth of a child called Immanuel and the promise of salvation. Centuries later, Jesus' followers recognised that at Jesus' birth, Immanuel became more than

a sign. It became a reality: God with us, bringing salvation.

Psalm 80

This psalm is a plea for the relationship between God and God's people to be restored. The Hebrew people knew that when that relationship was out of kilter, relationships with each other soon followed suit. The Psalmist pleads with the Shepherd of Israel to renew God's love, enact God's justice, and restore the relationship between them. While the Psalms do not make a chronological story, it may be significant that Psalm 81 begins, "Sing out with joy to God our strength." God hears the cry of God's people.

Romans 1:1-7

These few brief verses pack a lot of theology into them. Paul writes of how God's desire for a right relationship with humanity was woven through Israel's history and prophets, and has burst out with transforming and reconciling power in the Incarnation. Through this divine act of love we are reconciled to God, and called to reach out in reconciliation and grace across boundaries of culture and difference, taking the Good News to all.

Matthew 1:18-25

Our first two readings embrace the suffering and predicaments of nations and peoples. In this story our focus shrinks down to one relationship, between a man and the woman he is betrothed to: a woman who shows clear evidence of having betrayed him. Anger, hurt, the desire to hit out in retaliation for the shame she was bringing on him – all

these options were open to Joseph. Instead, he initially chooses the best way of protecting Mary from her own shame. Then, when he is told the impossible in a dream from God, he knows God well enough to trust. Love and just relationships in action.

Intercessions

- For the leaders of nations in their responsibility to ensure justice in the world
- For relationships that are fraught
- For those experiencing violence and abuse.
- For places at war
- For an end to corruption
- For those who are unfairly judged and condemned
- For healthy relationships
- For places of healing
- For all who nurture our planet
- For the Church to be a community of love and of justice

Blessing

May the Love of God bring justice.
May the Love of God source kindness.
May the Love of God bless our earth.
May the Love of God provide abundant life.
Amen.

Music

AA Alleluia Aotearoa
CAHON Complete Anglican Hymns Old and New
CH4 Church Hymnary 4th edition
CoC Carol our Christmas

- For Mary mother of the Lord (J. Peacey) CAHON 182
- Wait for the Lord (Taize) CAHON 949/CH4 276
- Hail Mary full of grace (Marnie Barrell) AA 58
- Come thou Redeemer of the earth, Common Praise 49

Activity

- Read the [partner story](#) or talk dealing with disaster. Bring your household disaster kit as an example. Make a plan of action for your church in case of disaster.
- Paint more banners with messages of love for our world, especially for people facing danger and disaster to take home or add to the decorations at church.

For Discussion

- When do you feel close to God and to others in this time of Advent and Christmas?
- How might you share love with people on the frontline of the climate crisis this Christmas?
- How might you share God's love and care for the planet in your community?

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