

Sunday 4 December 2022

St Mungo's Clyde and St Enoch's Alexandra

Mihi – He hōnore, he korōria

Theme Intro: From Generation to Generation

What have our ancestors passed on for us to continue?

What seeds are we planting for the future?

And specifically in relation to the theme for Advent 2:

God meets us in our fear

Advent Candle Liturgy

Worship Leader: The question was asked, "What are you afraid of?" Listen to the reply of voices of different generations.

A teenager says: Not being enough.

An adult: Not making enough of a difference.

A child: Falling down.

An older adult: That we will forget we belong to one another.

Teenager: Climate change.

Adult: My child having to learn gun violence drills at school.

Child: Spiders.

Older Adult: Not having someone to take care of me; not having someone who knows my stories.

Teenager: My mental health slipping.

Adult: Ending up alone.

Child: Nightmares.

Older Adult: Stopping short of following God all the way.

Leader: Today we light the candle of peace, because we so desperately need God's peace in the midst of all we fear.

The candle of hope is relit and the candle of peace lit also.

Leader: May this light be a reminder that Christ is coming. God was with generations before, God is with us today, and God will be with us tomorrow. Even now, God is on the way. Amen.

Carol *Star-child, earth-child* Carol our Christmas 40^{2nd} tune

Story: Bethlehem Town

Symbol of God's Presence

Prayer

Fear has taken centre stage lately. It's always been there, but has it been as bad as just now? Or is that how it often seems.

Anyway, fear can be a good thing. It can help us be attentive. It can alert us to hazards. It can motivate us to do our best.

But fear can be harmful.

Fear of the other, fear of failure, or fear of the unknown. Fear can lead us to make off skew choices in our lives.

We ask for guidance. We acknowledge where we're at, knowing that we do so in the company of friends and an entirely merciful and loving God who says to us, "Do not be afraid."

Let us pray:

**Patient God,
you know just how often**

**we make decisions from a place of fear rather than love.
You know just how often
we allow fear to take the place of logic,
fanning unhealthy fires in our lives.
You know just how often
we tuck your words, “Do not be afraid”
on dusty shelves and in the back of cupboards,
stubbornly holding onto our own point of view.
Forgive us for giving fear the microphone.
Silence the voices of scarcity, shame, and rejection,
which spark and feed so much of our fear,
to recentre us in love.
With hope we pray, amen.**

Family of faith,
even when we forget God’s words,
God does not forget us.
Even when we lose our way,
God does not lose us.
Even when we fall short or make mistakes,
God forgives and holds onto us.
We are known, forgiven, and loved.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Sharing the Peace

Hymn *All over the world* Scripture in Song – SOP 51, 3 verses

Story: [Bethlehem Town](http://lostsheep.com.au), lostsheep.com.au

Reading and Reflection

Isaiah 11:1-9

Wisdom and insight; counsel and might; peace and joy; unity and hospitality; knowledge and reverence; judgment and repentance are the definitive marks of the reign of God.

Kenyatta R. Gilbert, *Sojourners*

These are signs of God-alive – God’s way being lived, already though not yet, in the sense that we only catch glimpses and live it in moments. Obviously, it has yet to become the way of all things, the way of politics, of systems of order and organisation, of hearts and minds. More like a dead stump, a wilderness, this world we’re living in.

But it is happening. New shoots drawing on more than what shows above ground. These qualities, quoted above, are being seen in down-to-earth action, everyday living, right relationships and faithfulness being the goal.

Brimming with knowing God-Alive, a living knowledge of God to the depths and the breadths, no limit. A living knowledge meaning it doesn’t need to use the word that many people around us can’t relate to – God. It’s known through living, through experience, through action, through simply being.

As the text pictures it, the initial reaction is “impossible!” Lions turning vegetarian, snakes losing their venom. A child as leader (wonder what that says to the matter raised by the Supreme Court about the voting age).

Ideals can be a brilliant source of encouragement and purpose, but also dangerous. We can use them to moan about the world, or to escape from the world as it is, or we can put them into a glass case. Nice to look at and leave be.

What is best is to give space to the contradictions in what Isaiah pictures, because this is life. Not simple, that’s for sure. Because here’s a thought I had last time I pondered this text for a Sunday service.

Think not so much actual animals, as human beings who are prey, and those who are predators, in our context. In the world of politics and economics, and socially those who are the upside and those who are the underbelly of our society, left behind by “progress”.

Notice where this is happening already: hospitality replacing hostility and the vulnerable sitting down with the powerful, the poor with the rich together, interacting with mutual respect. It is possible.

For example, there are initiatives that are picking up young people who’ve got totally off track, ram-raiding and the rest, and enabling them to choose life rather than self-destruction and hurting others.

In Advent, these weeks before Christmas, we’re revisiting the anticipation and hope of this future: the poor get equal access to having their issues resolved, those who are harmed and those who do harm find peace and good purpose, and the voiceless and ignored benefit from the resources of the earth just as much as those in the centre of things. We’re re-committing to being part of this transformation. We’re preparing for Jesus’ coming, coming again and again every place where his turning things upside down is needed. This is the way for a world of conflict to become the peaceable realm.

For now, our antidote to fear is to slow down from our racing after whatever we are told we need to race after. Take time to notice the signs of God-Alive. Notice the wilderness in people’s lives, and in our own lives. And believe in the apparently impossible.

Prayers

Holy God,
we take a deep breath and know that you are here.

Like a protective mother hen,
you carry us with you.

So today, we ask that once more you lean in
close as we lay out our prayers.

Send your life-giving Spirit like a budding branch from the roots, bringing wisdom and understanding,
giving direction and building strength, instilling knowledge and reverence.

For like a lamb with a wolf, a child with a snake, we have much to fear.

We fear the resurgence of COVID and the spectre of long Covid.

We fear the increasing violence and divisions driven by poverty and inequality.

We fear climate change. Will future children have a future?

We look at our own lives and are afraid that we’re not making much of a difference, that we might be forgotten at the end of the day.

We fear rejection, we fear grief, we fear not being enough.

We also feel the pain of suffering, many kinds, experienced by people we know, people we don’t know,
and ourselves....

We come to you today, because you are a God who said, “Do not fear” 365 times in scripture—once for every day.

We rest in that.

We empty our pockets of our fears and give them to you, trusting that you will hold them tenderly,

just as you hold us.

So in confidence we pray as Jesus taught: *Our Father*

Offering

Invitation to Communion

Ka haere mai ngā tangata i ngā koko katoa o te ao, ka noho i te tēpu o te Rangatiratanga o te Atua.

They will come from east and west, and from north and south and sit at the table in the Kingdom of God.

Communion Hymn *Come now, Lord Jesus* WOV645

Communion Prayer

The Lord be with you

AND ALSO WITH YOU

Source of our being,
and goal of all our longing,
we come to this table thankful that you give
enough food and forgiveness to go around.
We come, thankful that you show us
in the stories of Jesus
the way of compassion and hope.
We come thankful that your Spirit
is alive in our gathering, our eating, and our drinking.

**We need to be at this table, God,
because there are wounds
in this Body of Christ which need healing.
There are members in this body who hurt.**

**We eat from one loaf and drink from one cup in hope
that we become more like one community in you.**

To do that we go back to that gathering the night before Jesus died.

Among friends around a table,
Jesus took bread, broke it and said,
'This is my body, it is broken for you.'
And later he took the cup of wine and said,
'This is the new relationship with God,
made possible because of my death.
Take this – all of you – to remember me.'

Iona Community A Wee Worship Book

(as the loaf is broken)

People of God, what is the truth of this breaking? It's this:
in brokenness we are healed,
in struggle we know freedom,
in gift of self we are released to serve.

(as the cup is lifted)

People of God, what is the truth of this pouring? It's this:
in outpouring we are renewed,
in sacrifice we know God-Alive,
in forgiveness we can live.

Holy Host of this sacred table,
as we eat and drink, give us eyes to see
those who are not with us at this table,
so we may consider community with them.
As we share silence, give us the ears to hear
those who may be silenced among us.
As we pray, give us the hearts and minds
to receive new words of truth
that have been too hard to receive.
As we go out from this table,
give us the paths to walk toward your way of love.

Seasons of the Spirit 2008

Ko te tinana o Ihu Karaiti i hoatutia nei mōu
The body of Christ given for you
Ko ngā toto o Ihu Karaiti i whakahekea nei mōu
The blood of Christ shed for you

Ngā taonga o te Atua mō ōna pononga
The gifts of God for the people of God

Distribution

Prayer after Communion

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have put your life into our hands;
now we put our lives into yours.

May we go knowing that
from generation to generation,
God has been by our side.
The God of yesterday and the God of tomorrow
knows us by name, loves us, and beckons us,
saying, "Go be the person you are called to be,
love wildly, do justice, and come back soon."
May it be so. Amen.

Hymn *Song of the Wilderness* Hope is our Song 150

Blessing

Kia tau ki a tātou katoa
Te atawhai o tō tātou Ariki a Ihu Karaiti
Me te aroha o te Atua
Me te whiwhi ngātahitanga ki te Wairua Tapu
Āke, āke, āke, Āmine.
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
The love of God
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all.
Now and forever, Amen.

Robyn McPhail
04.12.2022
02102476280