**Advent 3C 13th December 2015**

**This Changes Everything**



**Call to Worship**

In this moment and in this place we gather around to worship our God, to uphold one another in prayer and be bound to each other in friendship and concern.

We come as a community bound by the spirit who calls us to be vital, vibrant people, living out our redemption, forward looking, alert and ready to bring healing and wholeness to the world.

**God of life, gather us in and hold us in love.**

We come for we have heard the call to live compassion’s way, to welcome the stranger and break down barriers of exclusion, to reconcile our difference and set aside wrongs, to embrace our diversity and know the blessing and harmony that is found when we open our hearts and minds to all.

**God of justice, gather us in and encircle us with grace.**

We come to sing hope’s song, to ring in the light when darkness abounds, to be a beacon of joy in desperate places, to respond to God’s love as it beckons us into a still more excellent way.

**God who makes all things new, gather us close as we walk a resurrection path.**

We are God’s people, the community of Christ, living compassion and hope.

**Let there be joy in our coming together this morning.**

**Let there be truth heard in the words we speak and the songs we sing.
Let there be help and healing for our disharmony and despair.**

**Let there be silence for the voice within us and beyond us.**

**Let there be joy in our coming together.**

**Let us be nurtured in the presence of God**

**Amen!**

**Song:** Songs for Pilgrims #11**: “For the music of creation”**

**Welcome**

**Acknowledgement of Land**

**Introduction to the Reading**

The third week of Advent continues the journey with John the Baptist, and the call to justice that he proclaimed. He confronts the people about their corruption and injustice, and challenges them to change their lives. When they ask what they must do, he calls them to generosity, justice and compassion. If Advent is a time to review our expectations, then John is the perfect spokesman. He’s loud, direct, and very specific. There’s great specificity to this passage. What should we do? Consider the coats in your cupboard. Consider the chairs at the table. Consider the money in the bank. Consider the people you pass on the street. Consider your own actions. Consider the climate and the created order. That’s a good Advent call. Asking the question “what then should we do?” is letting our specific context become the location of the good news, asking God to birth newness through us.

**Reading**: Luke 3:7-18

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.

**Thanks for the Prophets**

God who calls to us,
we give thanks for prophets;
those who call us to your truth, Word, will and way;
those who speak from the margins;
who stand in the freedom of the wilderness, able to question culture, society and tradition;
who make us uncomfortable because they call us on our failure to live rightly;
who break with the norms and conventions of the status quo;
whose radical message call us back to the essentials of justice and righteousness;
who serve up judgement on our selfish and shallow ways;
who seek to open us up to God that we might be changed and transformed.

May we not baulk at their message, but consider it and reflect upon it.

Forbid it, that we not write them off as crazy or extreme.

May we listen for you and your call to us.

May we turn and return to following your way.

May we act and move and work harder for the common good.

May we join with you to better ourselves that we might better the world.

God who calls to us,
Christ, Word of God,
we give thanks for prophets.

May we join with them that we may better be your disciples.

May the prophetic ever be so.

Amen.

(c) Jon Humphries

**~~Reflection~~**

~~The third week of Advent continues the journey with John the Baptist, and the call to justice that he proclaimed. He confronts the people about their corruption and injustice, and challenges them to change their lives. When they ask what they must do, he calls them to generosity, justice and compassion. If Advent is a time to review our expectations, then John is the perfect spokesman. He’s loud, direct, and very specific. There’s great specificity to this passage. What should we do? Consider the coats in your cupboard. Consider the chairs at the table. Consider the money in the bank. Consider the people you pass on the street. Consider your own actions. Consider the climate and the created order. That’s a good Advent call. Asking the question “what then should we do?” is letting our specific context become the location of the good news, asking God to birth newness through us.~~

**Response**

When God’s reign is fully revealed in our world

it will be an uncomfortable vision for us,

**one of simplicity that challenges our excess;**

**one of equality that undermines our privilege;**

**one of meekness that disarms our aggression;**

**one of temperance that subjugates our appetites.**

Yet, in truth, as uncomfortable as it is,

we know that it is only in your justice that life can be found.

**So, prepare our hearts,**

**help us to make straight paths,**

**and lead us in songs of praise,**

**as we celebrate this uncomfortable vision. Amen.**

*(John van de Laar, adapted)*

**Introduction to Theme**

**Prayer: For the Sake of the Planet**

Creator God,

breath and source of life,

in love you called the world into being

and in grace you made us and call us your children.

We stand in awe of the wonder of your creation:

 its beauty and wildness;

 complexity and power;

 resilience and fragility.

God of life,

you call us to be participants in the web and wellspring of life:

 to be nurtured by the planet;

 to be nurturing of the planet;

 to cherish the world and all that lives.

But we have failed and creation groans under our weight. *(Bell to mark pause)*

**Song**: ‘**God Weeps’** v1  *(remain seated)*

God weeps

 at land despoiled,

at lakes defiled,

at air polluted and unclean.

And till we change the way we live,

 God weeps. *(repeat)*

**Prayer -** *continued*

God of grace,

forgive us in our brokenness:

 when we have taken too much from the earth;

 when we have not spoken out against greed and destruction;

 when we have allowed our most vulnerable neighbours to be harmed.

We seek courage and forgiveness to be made whole. *(Bell)*

**Song**: ‘**God Weeps’** v2

God bleeds

 at wealth abused,

 at trust betrayed,

 at gentle people dispossessed.

And till we change the way we share,

 God bleeds. *(repeat)*

**Prayer *-*** *continued*

God of love,

we pray for those people, communities and nations

already suffering the devastating effects of climate change;

and we pray for the diversity of life on earth,

so much of it already threatened by our actions. *(Bell)*

**Song**: **‘God weeps’** v3

God cries

 at hungry mouths

 at stunted growth

 at creatures dying without cause.

And till we change the way we care

 God cries. *(repeat)*

**Prayer -** *continued*

God of hope,

we pray for the world’s leaders who have gathered in Paris.

Bless them with wisdom and creativity,

and a shared vision of hope for all creation.

May they find the determination

to take strong action against climate change,

and the political will to act together for the common good.

Creator God,

we pray for us all,

that we might restore our relationships with each other

and work together to heal the earth.

Renew us in your grace

for the sake of your creation. Amen. *(Bell)*

*©* *2015 Uniting Church in Australia Assembly*

**Song**: ‘**God weeps** ‘ v 4

God waits

 for earth to thrive,

 for peace to seed,

 for life to flourish without need.

And till we understand the Christ

 God waits. *(repeat)*

*Jeff Telfer, based on SfP 16 words by Shirley E. Murray*

**Dialogue**: Jeff and Raelene discuss climate change and our response to it.

**Video**: extract from ‘**This Changes Everything’** (Naomi Klein)

**Response**: *Please move to one of the following stations*:

1. Write a letter to politician/PM *~~(template available)~~*
2. ‘Think globally, act locally’ ~~(~~*~~Rosemary)~~*
3. Dealing with flying *~~(Raelene)~~*
4. Growing your own, supporting farmers markets, etc *~~(Sandy)~~*
5. Pacific islands *~~(information available)~~*
6. ‘This changes everything’ conversation *~~(Jeff)~~*

*The bell will sound three times at the end of this activity. We ask you to share together the Jesus prayer at your stations.*

**Prayer** ~~(at stations)~~

**Most compassionate Life-giver,**

**may we honour and praise you:**

**may we work with you to establish your new order**

**of justice, peace and love.**

**Give us what we need for growth,**

**and help us, through forgiving others,**

**to accept forgiveness.**

**Strengthen us in the time of testing,**

**that we may resist all evil.**

**For all the tenderness,**

**strength and love are yours,**

**now and forever. Amen**

*Bill Wallace*

**Offering**

*Please place your offering in the bowl on the Communion Table and form a circle around the worship centre or sit in a front pew.*

**Song**: ‘**O come, O come, Emmanuel’**

O come, O come, Emmanuel,

and fill our lives, all dark and fear dispel,

as once an exiled Israel you found,

redeemed, restored and set on holy ground.

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to us and in our hearts will dwell.

O come, O light of Christ, so bright and clear

and lift our spirits by your advent here.

In all who gather, show us your face,

that we may know the warmth of your embrace.

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to us and in our hearts will dwell.

O come, O Wisdom, mind and heart divine,

help us restore a world we’ve let decline.

Enlighten us; your way we would know

and show us where new seeds of hope to sow.

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to us and in our hearts will dwell.

O Advent God of hope, joy, love and peace,

in you we pray our sad divisions cease.

Bind us as one, a people of grace,

for at your table each one has a place.

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to us and in our hearts will dwell.

*(c) 2010 Susan Wickham*

**Commission and** **Benediction** *(based on Philippians 4)*

Go now and rejoice in the Lord always.

Do not be afraid or worried about anything,

but in everything trust God and pray.

Bear fruits worthy of repentance,

sharing what you have and being gentle with all.

And may God rejoice over you with gladness;

May Christ Jesus renew you in his love;

and may the Holy Spirit give you peace beyond understanding

to guard your hearts and minds in Christ.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,

***In the name of Christ. Amen.***

©2000 Nathan Nettleton [www.laughingbird.net](http://www.laughingbird.net)

**Passing the peace**