

*The church is fitted with a hearing loop which covers the body of the church. To receive most benefit, hearing aid wearers are advised to switch their hearing aid to T-setting.*



# Pilgrim Uniting Church

## 12 Flinders Street, Adelaide



### 9.30 COMMUNITY WORSHIP

**Advent 4**

**18 December 2016**

**Compassion**

*Images of Advent spaces are shared.*

*The candles are lit. A time for silence and reflection.*

Mary, betrothed, pregnant  
grist for the gossip grannies:  
to be shunned and shamed.  
Yet life formed and silently grew with hope.  
Joseph, dreaming, faithful, at risk of ridicule,  
accepted his role as husband - and father to the boy Jesus.  
Emmanuel. God-with-us.  
Hope. Expectation. Uncertainty. Dawn's image of birth.  
Light in our darkness but not as we expected.  
Light that we are called to bring to birth.

*(Jeff Shrowder, 2013)*

#### **Call to Worship**

In this time of waiting, you come to us, O God,  
speaking into our souls in whispers of truth.

**The wonder of God's activity among us  
may lie ahead of our understandings,  
but it calls us on towards the day of celebration  
and the welcoming of the Christ.**

Let the world hold its breath, for good is coming in all its vulnerable  
newness.

Deep within our life, a wonder is conceived. Look for it, for it is near.

**We watch, we wait, we hope.**

Believe in it. Be ready to nurture its life among us, for it is precious  
and true.

**Open our hearts and lives today to the presence of the divine.**

**Song SfP 7**      Come and find the quiet centre

**Welcome**

**Acknowledgement of land**

**Christmas message DVD:** UCA President, Stuart McMillan

**Lighting of the Advent candles**

1. We light a candle for Peace,  
**for Reconciling Love that was, and is, and is to come**  
*(candle is lit)*

2. We light a candle for Mindfulness,  
**for the Understanding Spirit that will ignite insights and wise discernment.**  
*(candle is lit)*

3. We light a candle for Hope,  
**for the mystery of Grace that will fulfil God's promises.**  
*(candle is lit)*

4. We light a candle for compassion  
**for the Divine spark that resides within us and our neighbours.**  
*(candle is lit)*

*(4th leaf is removed from the Advent banner)*

In this season of waiting and hoping, life stirs within us.

Let us look for small signs that have been given to us.

*Silence for reflection*

We may attempt to hold it back, to deny its coming:  
too challenging, asking too much, unsettling routine.

**Let us be gentle with ourselves, allowing what will be.**

Sometimes it is hard for us to cradle hope *A silence is kept*

Life-giving Spirit, blow through our lives today,  
and be revealed afresh in this community.

Show us where we have dug in our heels and refused to grow. Teach us that we have nothing to fear from change – that Christ's only power is love, and that this love, without any weapons, is stronger than death itself. **Amen**

*(Jack Lohr, adapted)*

**Song:** O come O come Emmanuel (*words: Sue Wickham, 2010*)

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.

### **Introduction to the reading**

In her months of waiting, a dream for the world grew within Mary.  
A world where justice rules the day  
And all are treated fairly  
A world filled with sharing  
Where everyone has all that they need to thrive  
A world where those who think much of themselves are brought down to earth;  
And those who seem small and insignificant are lifted up by the love of God.  
A world of harmony and balance  
A world where all can live and breathe!  
Spirit of Christ, fill us with your dreams that we may take up the melody of Mary's song.  
Give us bold hearts to join the spirited revolution and empower our eager hands to bring your heaven to earth.

**Readings:** Luke 1: 46b-55

Our hearts rejoice as Mary's song becomes our hymn of praise:  
**For Christ has come, Emmanuel, to claim our years and days.  
Both present now and coming still, accomplished fact and dream,**

We join the song that Mary sings, an earthly, heavenly theme.

**Mary's Song**

*(words from Asia, anonymous)*

What have you done to me? What have you made of me?  
I cannot find myself in the woman you want me to be....  
Haloed, alone...marble and stone: Safe, Gentle, Holy Mary.

My sisters, look at me! Don't turn in pain from me.  
Your lives and mine are one in rage and agony...  
Silenced, denied, or sanctified...Safe, Gentle, Holy Mary.

Revolution is my song! Magnificat proclaims it!  
The promise that it makes to us, we dare now to reclaim it!  
In our weakness, we are strong: wise through pain and grief and wrong...  
Giving, loving, angry women.

All generations will acclaim me only if you can acclaim me...  
Live with joy the truth you find - woman - this is what you name me:  
Suffering, proud, prophetic, unbowed....  
Whole, laughing, daughter...Mary:  
Real, warm living woman...Mary:  
Then I will be Wholly Mary!

**Witness**

**Song** SfP 37 Sing a different song

*(the offering will be collected during the singing of this song)*

**Prayer of dedication**

We give thanks for all we have received, O God: gifts of love and time, money and abilities. Into these bowls and into this place, we return a portion of these gifts. Bless those who receive them, just as we are blessed in the act of sharing them. **Amen.**

## Prayers of the People

God is on the side of the poor, the oppressed, the persecuted. When this faith is proclaimed and lived in a situation of political conflict between the rich and the poor, and when the rich and the powerful reject this faith and condemn it as heresy, we can read the signs and discern something more than a crisis. We are faced with a *kairos*, a moment of truth, a time for decision, a time of grace, a God-given opportunity for conversion and hope. (from 'The Road to Damascus')

Let us open ourselves to the grace of God, to the brokenness of our world,

and to the call to be agents of healing and recreation. Where human greed has stripped the world of beauty and life, and robbed people of dignity and subsistence,

**we pray for a new vision of abundance,  
and a new commitment to nurture the world that feeds us  
and share with those who do not have.**

*Silence*

Where human hatred has severed relationships, and broken the connection that unites creation,

**we pray for love to be renewed,  
and compassion to draw us back into union.**

*Silence*

Where human loneliness, weakness, sickness and grief, and the suffering of our planet and its inhabitants hide the signs of your life,

**we pray for healing, comfort and strength  
and for the courage to keep hoping in the renewed creation to come. Amen.**

## Advent song (a round)

1. Through darkest night, the hour grows late
2. We yearn for break of Christmas morn
3. 'Til midnight hour we watch and wait
4. for hope's renewal, love reborn.

### Advent Round

With an appreciative nod to William Billings

Rick Asher

1. 2. 3.

Through dark - est night... the hour grows late, We yearn for break- of Christ-mas morn; 'Til

9 mid - night hour... we watch and wait For hope's re - new - al, love re - born.

## COMMUNION

### The invitation

#### Thanksgiving

Source and Sustainer of life we name as God,  
present and active from the beginning of time...

**it is right that we give our thanks and praise.**

So we join together in offering thanks and praise:

**Song**      You are holy

*(parts 1 and 2 are sung together, beginning with unison for part 1)*

1      You are holy, you are whole  
You are always ever more  
than we ever understand  
You are always at hand.  
Blessed are you coming near  
Blessed are you coming here  
to your church in wine and bread  
raised from soil, raised from dead.

2      You are holy, you are wholeness  
you are present, let the cosmos praise you Lord!  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!  
Hallelujah, our Lord.

*(repeat twice, concluding with unison in last section)*

From seeds sown into the earth, you have given us the gift of bread to feed and nourish us. And at Jesus' last meal with his friends, before facing the cross,

he took bread, blessed it and broke it. Then he passed it among them saying:

This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat, and do this to remember me.

*The bread is broken.*

From grapes which grow ripe and sweet on the vine, you have given us the gift of wine to refresh and heal us. And at Jesus' last meal with his friends before facing the cross, he took the cup of wine and blessed it. Then he passed it among them saying:

This is my life poured out for you. Take and drink, and do this to remember me.

*The cup of wine is held up.*

And now we come to this table, mindful of how Jesus laid his life down, so that we and creation could be born anew; mindful of how Jesus took up his life again, so that we and creation could be filled with the life abundant; mindful that it is his grace which beckons us, and his grace which ensures that all creation may be one and whole.

**We give thanks for women and men in many different cultures and times and places who have spoken about our connectedness with each other, and with all of creation.**

May your Spirit work in these fruits of earth,  
so that they may become for us a sharing in Christ's life.

May your Spirit work in us, children of earth,  
so that we may be transformed into Christ's body,  
carrying his life, his care, and his compassion to all creation. **Amen.**

The bread - **broken that we might know wholeness.**

The cup - **poured out, that we might know fullness of life.**

These are the gifts of God, **given to us as signs of hope.**

**Song SfP 4** Bread of peace

*(servers will come to the front during the singing)*

*Communion is shared*

May this community of faith  
be comforted and challenged during this Advent season.

**May people see in us the courage and the generosity  
that characterised Jesus' life.**

God of unfailing compassion and constant companionship  
walk beside us and transform us into agents of love.

**Raise up, from within the depths of our lives,  
love that will never let our neighbours go.**

Cover us with healing grace  
and conceive in the centre of despair  
surprising freshness and energies for creative change.

Surround us with ideas that spring up  
like green shoots in concrete,  
defying dryness and challenging deathliness.

**May peace be born in us,  
and mindfulness be born in us  
and hope be born in us  
and compassion be born in us always.**

Use us – all that we have and all that we are  
to touch the world with the Christmas message:

God is love. God is with us. God will never leave us.

God's peace be with you. **And also with you.**

*The sign of peace is exchanged*

Christmas presents. Gifts bestowed and received. Maybe a surprise or two. You, the Gift surpassing all other gifts, bring us more than we might expect. Presents that did not make our list, something to wear on the inside of us such as truth, generosity, patience, reconciliation, and respect for one another. Each Christmas, another gift of growth. What will you gift us with this year?

*Joyce Rupp, Fragments of Your Ancient Name*

Please collect a *green candle (compassion)* for the Advent space as you leave.

*This service was planned by Rose Milton-Head, Ros Wilson and Sandy Boyce. Thank you to all those who have helped prepare this service, and for those who offered leadership through spoken word, music, singing, audio-visual, and serving communion. Grateful thanks to the musicians and singers for all they have contributed to our Advent services this year, and to Rose who prepared the Advent banner. Special thanks to Allan Forbes who has given his time so generously and so often to prepare the A-V, and to Peter Russell, Reg Brown and David Davis who provide A-V support.*

*Please join us for morning tea in the hall after the service concludes.*