

Advent 3A

15th December 2019

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

THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

ORGAN PRELUDE

The people stand for the entrance of the Bible.

CALL TO WORSHIP

It may seem naive, in a world of grief, to choose to live in joy;

It may seem foolish, in a world where solemnity is power,

to sing and dance to a different tune;

It may seem cruel, in a world of suffering and injustice,

to speak of light and celebration;

But you have come, Jesus:

to bring joy into our grief, light into our darkness, singing into our mourning;

and it is an act of healing and proclamation

to believe and embrace the joy you offer.

Let us worship the One who is the source of our faith and hope.

In God, we live and move, and have our being.

HYMN

GREETING and WELCOME

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of God's Holy Spirit, be with you. **And also with you.** (*A sign of peace may be exchanged*)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious God, we gather this morning in this house of worship. Be present with us in this time together. We come to add our human voices to the chorus of praise raised by your creation! We come as we are - distracted and weary, hopeful and open - knowing that you accept us and are ever mindful of our cares and joys. Still in us now the many voices that clamour for attention, that we might centre ourselves upon you. Let your Spirit mould us, shape us and remake us this morning and every day until we conform to the shape that you call us to take; the shape of love known and shown in Jesus the Christ. Speak to us this day in word and melody and quiet, that we may be renewed in our faith and strengthened for your service. Amen.

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

(preceded by the epistle reading from James)

The word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

God, help us to be patient, when we feel disappointed or frustrated about our lives. You call us beloved, and remind us to wait as farmers wait for crops to grow. Strengthen our hearts, through the presence of Your Spirit, and help us to wait and to hold on. Save us from grumbling about each other's faults and failings, and help us to be compassionate. May we who read the letter of James, find its words full of encouragement.

Here we have opportune time to re-ground ourselves. We can have confidence to be honest with our lives in God's company. It may be to seek forgiveness or reconciliation, to renew strength to do rightly, to quest for a greater knowledge of the spirit. *A silence is kept.*

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

God has covered us with grace; under God's hope we will find shelter.

Thanks be to God. Amen

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

ANTHEM

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Gracious and loving God, grant us ears to hear, eyes to see and faith to respond to your love and calling. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

In this is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Please stand and sing the concluding Gloria.

Glory be to the Father, and / to the / Son:

and / to the / Holy Spirit;

**As it was in the beginning, is now and / ever /shall be
world without / end. / A / men**

Please stand for the gospel.

A reading from the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ
according to Matthew.

Glory to you, Lord

GOSPEL READING

The gospel of the Lord

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

HYMN

SERMON

THE RESPONSE TO GOD IN WORD AND ACTION

HYMN

During the singing of this hymn our offering will be received.

Please remain standing for the dedication prayer.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

May our gifts and our lives bring your justice and love, your mercy and peace, to
life in the world. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

*Ko ngā raorao katoa ka whakarewaina ake, ko ngā maunga katoa me ngā
pukepuke, ka whakapāpakutia iho: ko ngā wāhi kōpikopiko ka meinga kia tika, ko
ngā wāhi taratara kia papatairite (PT Ihaia 40:4). / Every valley shall be exalted,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made
straight, and the rough places plain. (Isaiah 40:4)*

Prayer for Whakaari/White Island (New Zealand)

God, we are all tourists, going somewhere new, hoping to learn from other people, other landscapes. And so we pray for those who travelled to the Land of the Long White Cloud, to listen to tangata whenua, to honor haka, to hike, to scan sky and land for birds, and to walk the amazing volcanos, who died in this eruption.

Tenderly hold those who grieve, those who worry about loved ones who are still missing, and rescue workers, still waiting for an opportunity to return.

God of the mountains and of the depths, rest your cloak on your children.

A silence is kept

Our ecumenical prayers this week focus on China, Taiwan and Macau. This prayer is from the Christian Conference of Asia. As they face this day, O God, find those who are lost, separated from those they love, crossing unknown borders, without a country or home, not knowing where to turn:

**Find them, God, who always seek for the lost,
and cover them safely as a hen covers her chickens.**

As they face this day, O God, stand among the ones in refugee camps around the world, in the hunger and despair, in the crowds and the emptiness, in the wet and the thirstiness:

**Be their hope and their strength
in the crying out for justice
and open the ears of the world to hear their cries.**

As they face this day, O God, may those who live with us, uprooted from their homelands, find a new home where their history is respected, their gifts and graces celebrated and their fear departed from them.

**May we be their home,
may we be the ones who open our hearts in welcome.**

As we face this day, O God, sing to us your song of encouragement, paint for us your bright pictures of a new world where people need not flee from wars and oppression, where no one lacks a country or a home, and where we are all part of your new creation.

For we long to be your people, in spirit and in truth.

We pray in the name of Jesus the Christ,

who knew the life of a refugee. *A time of silence to pray for others.*

We pray for ourselves and those we love. A silence is kept

We offer our prayers, silent and spoken, in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray: THE LORD'S PRAYER (printed inside cover of hymn book)

THE SENDING FORTH OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

HYMN

WORDS OF MISSION AND BENEDICTION

Go now in peace, **for Christ has called us to live in peace.**

Go now in courage, **for Christ has called us to be partners in healing.**

Go now in joy and thanksgiving, **for Christ is our light!**

Go now as one body, to love and serve God as you love and serve the world!

Amen!

You are invited to be seated for the playing of the postlude, or to leave at this point without disturbing those who wish to listen.

POSTLUDE

Please stand as the Bible is taken from the church.

Presiding Minister

Sandy Boyce

Scripture Reader

Organist & Choir Director

Peter Kelsall

The Choir of Pilgrim Church

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Acknowledgements

Prayer for White Island by Maren C. Tirabassi, Gifts in Open Hands

Prayers for others by Christian Conference of Asia, Hong Kong
SAR, China. WIC pp.219-20

Prayer of confession by Ann Siddall, Spirituality Centre

***Please join us for tea or coffee and fellowship
in the Lounge after the service.***