

Welcome to worship



**The fourth Sunday in Advent
Raumati Uniting Church
10.00 a.m. 22nd December, 2024**

We are welcomed and hear about coming activities in the parish in which we could be involved

We are called to worship

Good morning Church! The fourth Sunday in Advent. Closer to Christmas.

Christmas comes closer to us in the birth of Jesus, in the birth of the stories of the way life is to be lived. Christmas comes closer when we recognise, appreciate and live out the vulnerability and gentleness, hospitality and gift-giving in the stories.

Christmas is a time for thanksgiving, for opening ourselves to the awe and beauty and wonder in the stories; and the wonder and beauty in those precious times when we are given the gift of caring.

Love in the stable so long ago in Bethlehem, is inspiring. Love at any birth anywhere, in family, in nature, opens our hearts to joy, and in spirit we hear the angels sing.

Then let us worship God as we experience the wonder and joy of being together today and the wonder and joy we find in God's gift to us in Jesus, born to show us the way to live.

We sing:

Look toward Christmas! Advent is here:
welcome December, changing the year.

Whistle up, shepherds! Saddle up, kings!
Chorus up, angels, flexing your wings.

Sing, sing, sing alleluia!

Sing, sing alleluia!

*Sing, sing, sing out the story,
sing about hope and peace.*

Set the world singing, make the world glad;
now is good reason not to feel sad!

Hear John the Baptist shout to prepare:
Good News is coming, earth be aware.

Sing, sing, sing alleluia!

Mary and Joseph, soon is the day:
ready the donkey, start on your way.

You are the chosen, willing to trust,
joyful your burden, carrying Christ.

Sing, sing, sing alleluia!

Shirley Murray

We light the Advent Candles

*The first candle: **tumanako Hope** is lit.*

Advent is a time to hope, to look forward, to prepare for, and to expect God's coming again to us, as he came in the birth of Jesus, in littleness, in vulnerability when the world was busy. He came in the quiet of a Bethlehem stable, while all nature looked on. The days ahead for Mary and Joseph and Jesus would carry hope for a future where the love present in that moment would fill the world.

*The second candle: **Rangimarie Peace** is lit.*

Advent is a time of expectation. Something new can be born in us. On this Sunday we remember Mary pregnant with God given possibility — singing her glorious song of praise. 'With all my heart I praise the Lord for he cares for me. He is holy and will bring about good things in his world, gentleness and humility, care and compassion. The powerful and the rich will have no place and peace will come'.

*The third candle: **Harikoa Joy** is lit.*

Advent is the response of the heart to love: seen and known, experienced and lived. Joy comes when the ordinary things in life, like: finding a place to live, giving birth to children, receiving the gifts love brings even from places unexpected; are experienced. Joy is a gift from God that can change our world and light up our lives.

*The fourth candle: **Arohanui Love** is lit.*

Advent is a time for love; a time to see how it is given birth. The world can be a threatening place, requiring much of us. It can be a scary place, expecting too much of us. It can be a demanding place, placing heavy burdens on us. Love can change that when it supports, calms, assures and affirms us.

In Advent we give thanks for the hope, peace, joy and love we have found in family and community, in creativity and beauty, within us and in the world around us. Amen!

We pray:

Holy One, we are here and waiting. It's almost Christmas and we are all waiting, waiting to see what Christmas will bring.

For some, the waiting will bring pain: moments of loss and grief because love has died, loved ones have died. For some the waiting time will be an anxious time with loved ones in hospital or in dangerous places.

But now as we wait we place ourselves in your loving care.

You keep us waiting Lord. You, the God of all time, want us to wait for the right time in which to discover the extent and power of your love for us; the extent and power in our love for others. Open our eyes to see what we can do through this waiting time.

You keep us looking. You, the God of all space and time, want us to look for signs of hope in a world full of disappointments.

We look and see places where hope is shattered by bombs and the anger of war; where hope is lost in poverty and homelessness; where hope seems so hard to recover: from broken relationships; from anxiety about health; from worry for loved ones.

So let your Spirit lift us, giving us a vision of a better world where love makes change possible; for then we will be able to find hope making the changes that you want for the whole of your creation. Thank you for the looking time.

You keep us loving. You, the God whose name is love, want us to be like you.

You want us to love the loveless, the unlovely and the unlovable; to love without jealousy or design or threat; and, most difficult of all, to love ourselves.

That is the challenge! But bound up in your love, we will have the strength to own the gifts in us.

And in all this, you hold us and help us, through hard questions with no easy answers, through failures and feelings of inadequacy, through loneliness and guilt.

You do that through the patience and the dreams and the love of others and through the Spirit of Jesus, born so long ago, the one we recognise as your Son because he has all the characteristics of your love. Amen.

The Christmas story began thousands of years before Jesus birth.

It really began when an old, childless man listened to the voice of God promising to make him the Father of many nations. And Sarah laughed. The story says that God made a commitment to the family and in doing so, expected all future generations to commit themselves to the relationship with God.

We listen to the first reading Genesis 12: 1 – 5, 17: 1 - 8

The promise of God to Abraham, that he would be the father of the people of many nations was kept. Today, Jews Christians and Moslems are all part of Abraham's family and find their unity in being people who recognise the stories of Abraham as the origin and pattern for their faith.

We remain seated and sing The God of Abraham praise

The God of Abraham praise,
Who reigns enthroned above,
Ancient of everlasting days,
And God of love.
Jehovah! Great I AM!

By earth and heaven confessed;
I bow and bless the sacred name
For ever blessed.

The God who reigns on high
The great archangels sing;
And 'Holy, holy, holy,' cry,
'Almighty King:
Who was and is the same,
And evermore shall be;
Jehovah, Father, great I AM,
We worship thee.

Thomas Oliuers (1725-99)

At the heart of the faith of the followers of Abraham is a covenant, an agreement between God and us that calls us to live trusting in the promises of God. Listen and hear what that means.

We listen to the second reading Isaiah 9: 2, 3, 6 & 7

We remain seated and sing

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

John Mason Neale

We listen to the third reading Psalm 40: 1 – 5a

Standing then firm on the rock of the promises of God, God's people have always looked to the future, to what God has done and what God will yet do.

We stand and sing

Come now, Lord Jesus,
enter our Christmas,
be to us no stranger
in this new-made manger.

Come, small and human,
born of a woman,
yet a Son much greater
of our own Creator.

Come, cold and crying,
comfort denying,
no place to receive you,
few yet to believe you.

Come poor and simple,
our flesh your temple,

in your body feeling
hurt as well as healing.

Come gift and token,
bread to be broken –
star and sign still point you,
myrrh will yet anoint you.

Shirley Murray

We listen to the fourth reading Micah 5: 2 – 5

We remain seated and sing

O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight

For Christ is born of Mary
And gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love

O morning stars together
Proclaim thy holy birth
And praises sing to God the King
And peace to all on earth

Phillips Brooks

We listen to the fifth reading Luke 1: 5 – 10, 18 - 25

We remain seated and sing

The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
his wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;
'All hail,' said he 'thou lonely maiden Mary,
'most highly favored Lady.'

Gloria!

'For known a blessed Mother thou shalt be,
All generations laud and honour thee,
Thy son shall be Emanuel, be seers foretold;
most highly favored Lady.'

Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,
'To me be as it pleases God,' she said.
My soul shall laud and magnify his holy name.'
Most highly favored maiden,
Gloria!

S. Baring Gould

We listen to the sixth reading Luke 1: 26 – 38

We stand and sing

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of
gold:

"Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heaven's all-gracious
King."

The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.

And ye, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending
low,
who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow,
look now! For glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing.

O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing!

For lo! the days are hastening on, by prophet seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold
when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,
and the whole world send back the song which now the angels
sing.

Edmund Sears

We listen to the seventh reading Luke 1 46 – 55

We make our offering

Mary's song of praise is one of the loveliest affirmations of faith in the whole of scripture. She knows that God, in giving her a special role, giving birth to the man we know as Jesus, blessed her. Her experience is that God puts humble people in places of power, and gives the hungry good things to eat. That work of God continues through Abraham and his family to this day and will do so forever. Mary, the young faithful woman also knows that those who only have money and power will find their life empty. But the promise of God, God the all merciful, will bring life, love and peace to his people.

As we make this offering, we affirm our faith in the God who has blessed us with a life full of love, with responsibilities to love and a community in which we experience love. Thanks be to God. Amen

The passing of the peace

The peace of God present in the birth of Jesus, present in the love of this community be with you all

And also with you Roger

Greet one another in peace.

We pray for others (The prayer is led by Susan Copping)

We listen to the eighth reading Luke 2: 1 - 7

We remain seated and sing

See him lying in a bed of straw:
a draughty stable with an open door;
Mary cradling the baby she bore
The prince of glory is his name.

*O now carry me to Bethlehem,
to see the Lord appear to men
Just as poor as was the stable
then the prince of glory when he came*

Angels sing again the song you sang,
Bring God's glory to the heart of man;
Sing that Bethl'em's little baby can
Be salvation to the soul.

O now carry me to Bethlehem...

Michael Perry

We listen to the ninth reading Luke 2: 8 - 21

We stand to sing

Not on a snowy night
by star or candle light,
nor by an angel band
there came to our dear land

*Te harinui, te harinui, te harinui,
glad tidings of great joy!*

But on a summer day
within a quiet bay

the Maori people heard
the great and glorious word.

Te harinui,...

The people gathered round
upon the grassy ground
and heard the preacher say,
I bring to you this day

Te harinui, ...

Now in this blessed land
united heart and hand,
we praise the glorious birth,
and sing to all the earth

Te harinui,...

Willow McKay

We go out blessed by all we have heard, all we have sung and all we have experienced by being together, listening to the stories that have shaped our faith, bringing us closer to one another and closer to Christmas.

Yes, go out in peace, knowing that the spirit of love, the spirit of Jesus is with you to guide you and bless you.

Amen

The Service was conducted by The Rev. Roger Wiig

Music was led by: Elizabeth Kerr

The Readers were: Diane Ammundsen, Margaret Craig, and Louise Faulke