

The Vines Uniting Church

Woodcroft, South Australia

Advent 2020 – Reflections and Prayers

1st SUNDAY – 29th November: Candle 1 “Longing for the Saviour”

In consideration of all that has happened around the world this year, in our ‘longing,’ we look to the Saviour who is present, always, regardless of the circumstances of our lives.

The Book of Revelation records a heavenly chorus:

*“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come.”*

Today, as we begin again the journey toward Bethlehem, as we reflect on the day when he will return, we direct our ‘longing’ to Jesus’ presence in our lives, in this moment and every moment of every day.

The first candle reminds us that Jesus is present to us every day, the Light of the world, the One we choose to follow daily.

Our prayer:

Lord Jesus, the One who was, and is, and is to come, help us to see the gift of You in the longings of our hearts, to know the reality of You with us, to experience the Presence of You in our lives every day. Amen.

2nd SUNDAY – 6th December: Candle 2 “Change is coming”

Advent season leads us to Christmas Day. A time of excitement, a time of joy, but most of all a time of change:

Unexpected change ... Exciting change ... Scary and surprising change. ... Change that came in the size of a baby. ... Change that ushered in a new era of Love and acceptance for humanity. ... Change that today we continue to open our lives to ... so that we may experience “Abundant life.”

Today, we step closer to Bethlehem and all the changes that God brought into our world through Jesus.

The second candle reminds us that Jesus is the promised change of new life for all.

Our prayer:

Lord Jesus, as we open our lives to your love, help us to accept the changes that happen beyond our control so that we may give your abundant love a chance to fill us with hope. Amen.

3rd SUNDAY – 13th December: Candle 3 “Rejoicing while waiting”

Advent season leads us to Christmas Day. We are so close, it is almost unbearable; we are almost there and yet still we have to wait!

“Are we there yet?” The people in the desert cried as they left Egypt. “Are we there yet?” Waiting and searching for the Promised Land.

We also cry out ... “Are we there yet?” How long before the COVID desert ends? “Are we there yet?” When will we return to life as we knew it?

We add our voices to those throughout history who have cried out in pain and frustration. Longing for what they are going through to change ... to be different.

We forget we have reasons to rejoice. We live in the promises of a God who is with us, living, supporting, sustaining us ... if only we would take the time to soak in God’s love.

The third candle reminds us that in our waiting we can rejoice because God’s choice of us remains forever.

Our prayer:

Lord Jesus, we struggle with this COVID time. It is so frustrating to have our freedoms limited. And yet we know in the midst of this pandemic, Your presence does not diminish. Help us to find ways and reasons to Rejoice because you remain Faithful to us all. Amen.



4th SUNDAY – 20th December: Candle 4
“God alive in the mess of life”

Our theme for the Fourth Sunday of Advent is **“God alive in the mess of life”**.

In five more Days Christmas Day will arrive. Dressed differently, weary from a long year, battered but not broken. Christmas 2020 is not as it would normally be, more disjointed and distant, carols, songs and colours muted by a pandemic still in full swing throughout our world.

“WHAT A MESS!” we exclaim.

And yet, mess is no stranger to God.

Mary was given a message of Hope to the world, a message conceived and born in Jesus, a life to live and share with hope and grace for all. A life that immersed grace into our messy human existence offering abundant life for all.

2020 adds its own mess to the Christmas story.

Q. How do we give voice to our Faith this Christmas?
Q. What have we learnt about Faith in the mess of our COVID life?

The fourth candle reminds us that the love of Jesus comes alive in the mess of life: we will not fear.

Our prayer:

Lord Jesus, we strain to rejoice amidst the muted tones of Christmas, how can we fully celebrate when so many things are different?

And yet, in the midst of the changes and struggles, Your choice of us has not changed. Your presence is not diminished. Fill us this Christmas with the meaning and Joy of your love, renew hope and love within us we pray. Amen

CHRISTMAS –
24-25 December: Candle 5
The Christ Candle

“The Shepherds: Surprised by Love”.

The shepherds were terrified by the visitation of “the angel of the Lord.” But they were told not to be afraid because the angel was bringing “good news of great joy ... for all the people.” News of “a Savior ... Christ the Lord.”

Were the shepherds being given an invitation to go to Bethlehem to see? “Today in the town of David ... You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

And so they went ... and visited Mary and Joseph and the baby ... and they left ... and they spread the word ... and they returned to their flocks, “glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen ...” The shepherds moved from fear to rejoicing! They had been surprised by love!

What was the catalyst? The Christ whose birth, life and Presence we embrace today.

In the midst of life’s challenges, we celebrate and rejoice in all that is ours in and through the ever-Present Christ. Immanuel! God with us!

The fifth candle, the Christ Candle, reminds us of the ever present, abundant life that is forever ours in Jesus, his love alive in us in the mess of life.

Our prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, the One who was, and is, and is to come, help us to see and know and experience ...

**... the Presence of You in our lives every day ...
... Your abundant love filling us with hope ...
... Your Faithfulness to us all.**

Help us to find ways and reasons to Rejoice in You with thankfulness, even in the midst of change and struggle.

Surprise us by Your Love! Renew our hope and fill us this day with the meaning and Joy of Your Love within us, the meaning and joy of Christmas! Amen.