



12 DECEMBER 2021



Third Sunday in Advent

Welcome to church this morning, it's great to be able to worship together again. Please remember to wear your mask whilst indoors.

A special welcome to Trish Rooney who is leading worship for us today. Trish is a Uniting Church Pastor currently working as a chaplain with Uniting.

Lectionary Readings

This week 12 December, 2021

Zephaniah 3:14-20
Isaiah 12:2-6
Philippians 4:4-7
Luke 3:7-18

Next week 19 December, 2021

Micah 5:2-5a
Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 80:1-7
Hebrews 10:5-10
Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)

Thank You

Thank you to those who were able to donate items for our Christmas Collection for the Aboriginal Children's Service in Redfern. Together with our Child Care Centre, we were able to donate several boxes of presents and food items.

Farewells

After many years as part of our music group and congregation, Emma is moving to Bright to live. We wish her, and her husband Paul, God's blessings on this new stage of their lives, we'll miss you!

Farewell, also, to James who is moving to Baulkham Hills, we'll miss James and his enthusiasm for our music!

Parramatta Mission Donate-a-plate

Parramatta Mission are again hosting Christmas lunch for those in our community who are disadvantaged, homeless and struggling with life at this time. If you would like to support their work, you can donate a plate. \$25 provides Christmas lunch for one person, and assists with gifts and hampers so that everyone can feel included and valued this Christmas. Donations can be made via the form on the back table or online at

<https://www.parramattamission.org.au/donateaplate/>

Church Council Update

Our Congregation Profile has finally been approved by Presbytery and has been sent to the Synod Advisory Committee on Ministerial Placements (ACOMP) for approval at their meeting this Tuesday. Hopefully we will now be able to start talking to prospective ministers in the new year.



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Advent Joy, Luke 3:7-18, Philippians 4:4-7

The Third Sunday of Advent is traditionally known as Gaudete Sunday. "Gaudete," when translated from Latin, means "rejoice". We know that Advent is a season of waiting and today we are called to be joyful as we await the coming of Jesus Christ. St. Paul, strongly urges us to "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice."

We have been experiencing tough times these last few years. With the suffering, loss, uncertainty, and state of our beautiful and broken world, how can we hear these words and rejoice?

In our minds, joy tends to overlap with happiness. Happiness is often connected with what is happening to us and around us. Happiness usually lasts for just a season. When we are discouraged and afraid, rejoicing in the Lord can be a hard sell. But the truth is that joy is not usually inspired by happy circumstances. And joy, unlike happiness, lasts – no matter what the challenges.

Advent is not only a season for waiting. It is also a time of preparation – a time of looking for the coming of the Lord, for the fulfillment of God's promised restoration, for the peace that overcomes all violence, and for that perfect love that casts out fear.

John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for Jesus. He was sent into difficult, complicated times – times like we are experiencing. And his message was simple: repent; turn your lives around; turn back to God. For John, repentance was not about beating ourselves up for things done or left undone; to repent meant total transformation – transformation that bears fruit.

John doesn't ask the people to change the world, but rather to change themselves. He doesn't tell them to leave their lives and stay with him or start a revolution; he tells the crowds who came to him to consider sharing what they have with the cold and hungry. He told the tax collectors to be honest and fair. The soldiers, he cautioned to act with integrity, avoiding abuse of their power. "Go home," John told them. Go home to your families, your neighbours, your vocations, your friends. Go home and live your lives as deeply and as generously as you can right now. Do what the Lord requires of you and do it now. Be generous *now* – Be merciful *now* – Do justice *now*.

We might think that focusing our attention on what we long for but do not yet have might be a cause for discouragement rather than joy. But, perhaps, it is that very act of watching and waiting and looking for the coming of God that inspires great joy. The Gospel writer calls John's exhortation "good news." And it is, especially if we believe that we are not worthy of God's saving grace. Nothing in our lives is beyond redemption. Knowing and accepting this is reason enough for rejoicing.

On this Gaudete Sunday, as we wait and prepare, we are also called to rejoice. The coming of the Messiah and the Gospel of Jesus Christ are the Good News the angel will speak of when appearing to the shepherds, "I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people." This brings us hope even amid our struggles so that when the Christ child arrives at the manger, we can rejoice and sing with gusto, "Joy to the world! The Lord is come."

[Marcea Paul](http://www.episcopalchurch.org) - www.episcopalchurch.org