



## 24 DECEMBER 2023



### Fourth Sunday in Advent

Welcome to church this morning, we hope you enjoy being with us.

A special welcome to Ricky Rosa who will be singing for us during the service this morning.

### Lectionary Readings

#### This week 24 December, 2023

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16  
Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26  
Romans 16:25-27  
Luke 1:26-38

#### Next week 31 December, 2023

Isaiah 61:10—62:3  
Psalm 148  
Galatians 4:4-7  
Luke 2:22-40

### Op Shop Christmas Closure

The Shop will close at 12 noon on Saturday 23rd December and re-open on Monday 22nd January, 2024.

Thank you to all the volunteers who keep the shop running and to all who have supported us during the year.

### Christmas Day Service

Our Christmas Day service will be tomorrow morning at 9am.

### Retiring Offering for Christmas Bowl Appeal

As we have done for many years, the offering on Christmas Day will go to the Christmas Bowl Appeal, to provide on-going support for the many millions of refugees around our world. If you would like a tax-deductible receipt for your donation, please place it in the envelope from the back table, fill in your details, and place the envelope in the offering bag. You can also donate on line at <https://christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au>

### Thank You

Thank you to everyone who contributes to the activities of this congregation, whether it is helping with our Hands and Feet food program or at the Op Shop, assisting with the service at Allity Aged Care Facility, or with our Craft Groups, providing leadership on Church Council, Elders and on the child care board, as well as those who provide morning tea, clean and maintain our buildings, welcome people, tell stories with puppets, do Bible readings or assist with the powerpoint and sound, run our Facebook page or care for our kids, your support is greatly appreciated, we can't do it without you!



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## How does a weary world rejoice: We sing stories of hope

Our theme throughout Advent has focused on the question “How does a weary world rejoice?”

“This theme of course alludes to a line in the familiar Christmas hymn, “O Holy Night,” which has an interesting history. The song was originally written by a French poet who was atheist, and the music was supplied by a Jewish composer. The hymn was later translated into English by an American Unitarian minister. In the 1800s, it became a popular hymn for Christian abolitionists due to its justice-focused language in verse 3. Like Mary’s song, the hymn reminds us that justice and joy belong together. Sometimes our joy is an act of resistance. And so, this Advent, we will hold space for our weariness and our joy. We will seek a “thrill of hope” in our hurting world. We will welcome joy—even and especially if, like the prophet Isaiah, we cry out for comfort (Isaiah 40:1). In this weary world, may we find many ways to rejoice.”

At the beginning of Advent we acknowledged our own weariness. Just as God disrupted the lives of Zechariah and Elizabeth we prayed that God would disrupt our weariness so that we too could hear afresh the unexpected, good news, for throughout Advent we too have been waiting for a baby to arrive. The following Sunday we listened to the story of Mary and Elizabeth finding connection and joy through their unexpected pregnancies. We remembered that women in Jesus’ day and women in recent decades, like First Lady Rosalynn Carter, lived faithful and exemplary lives yet have been often unfairly overshadowed by the accomplishments of men. Last week we focused on allowing ourselves to be amazed. We were made for joy yet often carry the weight of the world on our shoulders. We considered that allowing ourselves to be amazed and then experiencing awe can lead to joy and most importantly a closer relationship with God. This week on Christmas Eve, we will rejoice through song. We will listen to *O Holy Night* at the start of our service and then join in this beautiful hymn together at the end of worship.

I hope and pray that you all have a joyous Christmas. May you respond to the good news, the birth of Jesus Christ with as much amazement as Zechariah and his friends when he could once again speak, as much faithful expectation as Mary and Elizabeth, and with as much excitement as the shepherds hurrying off to see where the infant Saviour lay, for there is God in the flesh, come to be one of us so that we can become like Christ.

