



Kaurihohore Historic Church

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Kaurihohore / Kamo Co-operating Parish

Sunday 1 December 2024 – Advent 1

The service this morning has been prepared by Richard Smith,
one of our Lay Preachers

Welcome to our service this morning.

In working together on our shared mission, we commit to seven core values:

Togetherness, Humility, Curiosity, Love, Inclusiveness, Justice, Sustainability.

Curiosity: we are committed to a life of learning, questioning, and exploring the mystery of God, Jesus, and the Bible.

Welcome

Kia ora e te Whanau, welcome to worship at Kauri this morning faith-family. Happy New Year! Today is the first day of the new church year. It is the first Sunday of the season of Advent, a season in which we prepare for the coming of the Christ, the one anointed by God, who we believe came in Jesus of Nazareth.

This year our gospel readings largely come from the Gospel of Luke. The writer of Luke has a birth story, like Matthew does, to explain how he sees who Jesus is. It is from Luke we get the close link between Jesus and John the Baptist, the story of travelling from Nazareth to Bethlehem and there finding no room in the inn so being born in a stable, then the birth being celebrated by angels and shepherds. Luke traces Jesus' whakapapa, or genealogy back through Abraham, where Matthew stops, to Adam and hence to God. So, in this way Luke is saying Jesus is a brother to every human being ever. Thus, Luke emphasises the total inclusiveness of the message he proclaims in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

So come let us join with the psalmist as we begin this new year of worship.

Mission Statement: Sharing God's love, creating hope, working for justice.

Call to Worship

Psalm 25

(New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised NRSVA)

¹ To you, O Lord, **I lift up my soul.**

² O my God, in you I trust;

do not let me be put to shame;

do not let my enemies exult over me.

³ Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;

let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

⁴ Make me to know your ways, O Lord;

teach me your paths.

⁵ Lead me in your truth, and teach me,

for you are the God of my salvation;

for you I wait all day long.

⁶ Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love,

for they have been from of old.

⁷ Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;

according to your steadfast love remember me,

for your goodness' sake, O Lord!

⁸ Good and upright is the Lord;

therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

⁹ He leads the humble in what is right,

and teaches the humble his way.

¹⁰ **All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness,**

for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

Opening Prayer

(adapted from Responsive Prayers by David Sparks)

Loving God, prepare us for the coming of Jesus.

Guide us as we consider our spiritual life-path.

Enable us to make good choices for the coming of Jesus.

Help us make your priorities our priorities, loving God.

Bring us together as we prepare for the coming of Jesus.

Challenge and enliven us as a faith community.

May compassion be our watchword as we prepare for the coming of Jesus,

that those among us who are isolated, homeless, stressed or depressed will receive the support and encouragement we all need.

Candle Lighting Liturgy

Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world'. As we light this first candle, we remember that God's love surrounds us.

(The first Advent Candle is lit)

Advent 1: Meeting Mrs Mafi

In Advent 1, we meet Mrs Mafi. "No one is left behind," declares Mrs Mafi. Mrs Mafi is a wife, mother, and grandmother. She lives on the eastern coast of Tonga. High tides and rising sea levels are damaging vegetable gardens.

Mrs Mafi has taken action. She and the women in her community have dug new vegetable gardens on higher ground and rotated their crops so there is always food for older adults. The 2024 CWS Christmas appeal introduces us to Mrs Mafi and to the work that communities in Oceania are doing to ensure no one is left behind. There is more information in the 2024 CWS Christmas appeal fliers.

CWS Video

Hymn COC 30: Look Toward Christmas!

1. Look toward Christmas!

Advent is here:
welcome December
changing the year,
Whistle up, shepherds!
Saddle up, kings!
Chorus up, angels,
flexing your wings.

Refrain:

*Sing, sing alleluia! sing, sing
alleluia!
sing, sing out the story
sing about hope and peace!*

2. 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.

Refrain:

*Sing, sing alleluia! sing, sing
alleluia!
sing, sing out the story
sing about hope and peace!*

3. 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,

Refrain:

*Sing, sing alleluia! sing, sing
alleluia!
sing, sing out the story
sing about hope and peace!*

Prayer for Centring and Renewal

Loving Lord God, as we begin this Advent season, a time of preparation and of waiting, help us to see those things we need to leave behind and to put them away from us, and those we should hold onto and to nurture, that we may serve you well in the future you are calling us to.

Please grant us the wisdom to discern the signs of our times.

Enable us to practice gentle patience when it is time to wait and energetic persistence when it is time to prepare.

Guide and help us to shape the straw of our lives into a manger ready to welcome you into our lives and into the life of our times.

Hymn HFTC 52: [Come, O Long Expected Jesus](#)

Readings

Jeremiah 33:14-16 New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised

These two short verses contain a reminder of the promise that the time is coming when God will 'raise up a righteous branch' from David's line.

By the time Jeremiah speaks his prophecies, the Northern Kingdom of Israel has fallen to the Assyrians, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah is in danger. While we often read these words as being about Jesus, the prophet Jeremiah was trying to reassure the Judeans that someone was coming to save them from the Babylonians. Spoiler alert – that didn't happen, they didn't heed his message to execute justice and righteousness in the land, so the hope of salvation and safety was not fulfilled.

I wonder how often we take a message that is given for one time or place and apply it to something else but then duck the message of what we are meant to do about it.

I wonder what Jeremiah's message might mean for us today.

The Righteous Branch and the Covenant with David

¹⁴ The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵ In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'

Luke 21:25-36 New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised

The example of the fig tree, which sprouts leaves when summer is near, is used as an analogy for the signs that God's kin-dom is near. The writer urges the reader to be prepared and to watch for the signs of the time.

The theme of time is present in both of today's readings. This is unsurprising because the writers of the biblical texts were often living in difficult circumstances. When we face difficulties, it is very tempting to look towards a time of peace, restoration, and comfort.

The Season of Advent encourages us to look forward – to Christmas and the celebration of Jesus' birth.

When we are busy looking forward, we often look for signs that the thing we hope for is coming. But how often does what happens turn out to be different to what we expected?

The Coming of the Son of Man

²⁵ 'There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. ²⁶ People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in a cloud" with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.'

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

²⁹ Then he told them a parable: 'Look at the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰ as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. ³¹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³² Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.'

Exhortation to Watch

³⁴ 'Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, ³⁵ like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.'

Food For Thought:

The value we are focussing on this week is curiosity. **Curiosity:** we are committed to a life of learning, questioning, and exploring the mystery of God, Jesus, and the Bible.

So, I want you to join me in being a bit curious about our readings and the world. When did you last hear a prophet? Well what counts as a prophecy?

Many people think of a prophet as someone who foretells the future. But it would be more accurate to say a prophet is someone who exhorts people to change by warning what will happen if they don't.

Both of our readings this morning are examples of prophecy. The first is an excerpt from the prophet Jeremiah, the second, is three collected prophetic sayings attributed to Jesus. They are all ways of expressing God's judgement of what is going on in society and what the outcome is likely to be if people continue in behaving as they are. They are examples of what is called 'Apocalyptic' writing, depicting how God might set right the evils of the world as the prophet sees them.

I invite you to think of what you might say if you were called on to highlight the evils of today's society and how God might act to set them right if God was that sort of all powerful interventionist magician so often portrayed in popular imagery like the Cecil B DeMille films of my youth such as "The Ten Commandments".

Anyone like to share? ... What would you focus on as the evils of the world today and what might an almighty God do to set it right?

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I'd like to share two observations from this last week. I've been trying to practice being alert you see.

The first was during the discussion over lunch at our walking group, one of the members said there had been no true prophets since biblical times. That spurred me to thinking, but, being a bear of little brain, as I am, it took me some time to think of a counter example.

The other was that there has been no significant rain for several days but after Brenda watered the front garden earlier in the week, suddenly, our Frangipani burst into vigorous leaf yesterday! So that resonated with the reading, “as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near.” So, I can prophetically declare to you ‘Summer is near’, I saw it in the leaves. In fact, today is the first day of metrological summer.

When I tried to focus on what I might name as the main evil of the world today several issues came to mind but one was the degradation of the earth’s environment, with pollution, loss of biodiversity and climate change.

I tried to think of how I was first alerted to this issue. And that reminded me of a modern-day prophet who first drew attention to that issue. Here’s how that happened for me. It was in the sixties. My mother had heard a review of a new book on the radio and rang our local library to see if she could read a copy. The librarian, who was a neighbour of ours, said she’d never heard of this book, they didn’t have a copy, and it wasn’t in any of her catalogues. Then about eight months later the librarian rang and said the book mum had asked about was in one of the latest catalogues and if enough people requested it, she would put it on the list to buy. Well, of course mum took the hint and talked about this book at the church women’s group and at the University Extension classes she went to and so about six months later we had another call from the librarian saying the book had arrived and mum could be the first borrower.

That book was?

Can anybody guess?

“Silent Spring” and the prophet was Rachel Carson. She warned the world about the loss of bird life in and around Chesapeake Bay in the eastern USA and linked this loss to the use of pesticides, and pollution of waterways.

Since then, we have all heard lots about various aspects of the impact human behaviour on the environment of the world. This morning’s CWS appeal draws attention to global warming and sea level rise and the effect on low lying countries, especially in the Pacific like Kiribati and Tonga. Imaging living in a country where each storm breaks through sea walls and inundates more and more of your country’s very limited land area leaving it salty and so unusable for growing food.

In the Solomon Islands each church has become a climate monitoring station. I thought we could do the same here. Who has a rain gauge at home?

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You can make one out of a PET soft drink bottle and a strip of paper stuck on the side to measure the height of the water each morning. Then we could compare readings in different areas.

The readings will indicate what action we may need to take, do we need to build drains to carry excess water away or do we need to water our gardens to keep them alive. At least we have that choice. This last week we ran out of water in the tank we normally water our garden from, and had to begin using the council supply. If we lived on Kiribati or much of the Pacific that would not be a choice because there is no such supply available.

In the light of the “roaring of the seas and the waves”, our readings exhort us to not become, “faint from fear and foreboding,” but to, “stand up and raise your heads,” to, “look” at what is happening in the natural world around us, and to “Be alert at all times” and to pray.

I hope our standing up, raising our heads, looking out, being alert and praying will help bring us and our families to readiness for Christmas. Both our appeal for contributions for Open Arms and our CWS appeal are ways our prayers can take physical shape but there will be many more in our homes and community as well, I’m sure. In this week’s service sheet, there are the words for a pair of model prayers for you to experiment with as a spiritual practice to build up your faith supply for a rainy, or drought-stricken day. I wish you well. Amen.

Community Time: Notices, Celebrations, & Concerns

Prayers of the People

Holy and loving Lord, we give you thanks for leaves and for all signs of new life. For the prospect of fruit on our trees and fruitfulness in our lives. For our hopes for the Christmas season, the New Year, and the Summer ahead.

We give thanks too for hopes for peace. We especially hold before you this morning the hopes we all hold for the pause in fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, that this may be an end to the slaughter and destruction there and a new beginning for moves toward peace throughout the Middle East.

(We celebrate)

We pray for all whose lives are being impacted by war and violence, by abuse and exploitation, by loss of jobs and land.

We pray for all those who are seeking peace and reconciliation, healing and justice, restoration and hope.

(We pray for)

Help us not to turn away, to ignore the dreadful things that are happening, or to become overwhelmed by worrying, but to watch and pray, to partner with you in building a better world where your kingdom of love becomes truly present, where your Christ is truly born into this world. Amen.

Hymn HFTC 66: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Offering and Prayer of Dedication

Holy Lord God, you have nurtured us as the children of your womb, giving us your creation to support us, to amaze us and to teach us your ways. We come to offer ourselves, our time, our talents and the possessions you have granted us. Bless these offerings we pray and guide us in using them to bring healing, peace and hope to your world through Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Hymn COC 14: Come Now, Lord Jesus

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

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

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

4. Come, poor and simple,
our flesh your temple,
in your body feeling
hurt as well as healing.

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

Commissioning and Blessing

“Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life”. Be alert, look at the trees, summer is near, so also is the kingdom of God. Go from this time of worship to live God’s life into this world he loves.

We go to live abundantly, and to love generously our neighbour as ourselves, so help us God. Amen

Prayers for the week ahead

These words will not become prayers
until the Holy Spirit breathes them,
Until the body of Christ speaks and hears them,
until the people of God live them in acts of service and love. (David Gambrell)
A prayer is not the words on the page, but what you do in your life as a result
of engaging with the words in your mind, your will and your character.

Hope

Morning Prayer of Petition

(Adapted from the Methodist Book of Daily Prayer)

Loving God, as I begin a new day thank you for life and for loving me. Help me to see the gap between the way the world is and the way you want it to be, including that same gap in me. Show me your hopes for what I might do in my life, in my relationships and friendships, my church, my neighbourhood and community, my country and world, today. Enlist me to work alongside you through the day ahead to play my role in the work you are already doing to make this world into your kingdom of love. Amen.

Evening Prayer of Gratitude

Loving God thank you for all the loving I saw and heard of today, the forgiveness and generosity that might have passed unnoticed if you had not prompted me to pay attention. Train me to keep looking and noticing and to take the opportunities you present me with each day to be part of your action of creating your kingdom of love in this world. As I sleep, renew in me the sense of compassion and hope, to bring to tomorrow, in your name. Amen.