



# KAURIHOHORE / KAMO CO-OPERATING PARISH

[kaurichurch.methodist.org.nz](http://kaurichurch.methodist.org.nz)

[kaurichurch@gmail.com](mailto:kaurichurch@gmail.com)

(09) 946 0813

59 Apotu Road, Kaurihohore



## Sunday 21 December 2025 – Advent 4

Our service today has been prepared by  
Rosalie Gwilliam, 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.***

**Sustainability:** we care for and strive to restore the integrity of the Earth and all of creation.

### **Focus**

On this last Sunday of waiting, we are comforted by Isaiah's sign and Matthew's promise of Immanuel – God with us – and become more aware of God's presence with us.

### **Call To Worship**

God of our waiting, God of our anticipation, God of love, we await the coming of the Christ.

Help us to be aware of your presence – surrounding, embracing, and inspiring – in our time of worship here together. Amen.

### **Candle Lighting**

We have lit three candles – for hope, for peace, and for joy. Today we light the fourth candle – the candle of love. With this flame, we signify the love of God that surrounds and fills us at all times, but that we recognise in a special way in the Christmas story. There is no greater power than love. It is stronger than the rulers and empires, stronger than grief or despair, stronger than even death. We love, because God loves us.

---

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

## Prayer

Loving God, we open ourselves to you this Christmas season.  
As these candles are lit, light our lives with your imagination.  
Show us the creative power of hope.  
Teach us the peace that comes from justice.  
Fill us with the kind of joy that cannot be contained but must be shared.  
Magnify your love within us.  
Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you, that we may walk in the light  
of Christ. Amen <https://processandfaith.org/advent.candle.liturgy/>

## Hymn HFTC 66: O Come, O Come Emmanuel – *(first 4 verses)*

### Prayer of Brokenness

God of grace, for the times when we limit your compassion and grace to the  
limits of our imagination,  
Lord have mercy,

**Lord have mercy.**

For the times when we feel your life and hope are impossibly distant and  
unreachable,  
Christ have mercy,

**Christ have mercy.**

For the times when we forget the breadth and depth of your love and judge  
others with human eyes and hearts  
Lord have mercy.

**Lord have mercy.**

God is with us, Immanuel.  
God's love and grace are before us, behind us, within us and around us.  
We are forgiven.

**Thanks be to God.**

## Hymn: Advent Begins in the Darkness of Night (Protest of Praise;

*Tune: Rescov)*

1. Advent begins in the darkness  
of night,  
waiting and watching for signs  
of a light,  
walking in faith that a path  
will appear,  
daring to follow in spite of  
our fear.
2. Advent begins with our dreams yet  
deferred.  
Love sounds ridiculous;  
prayers seem absurd.  
But in the midst of life's centreless  
maze,  
we lift together our  
protest of praise.
3. Advent begins in oppression's  
domain,  
marked by the cries of  
confusion and pain.  
Yet hope is kindled where  
justice is done,  
mercy is nurtured and  
peace is begun.
4. Advent goes on till the  
promised dawn breaks,  
tyrants are toppled, and  
God's dream awakes.  
Hope is perfected and  
faith is made sight.  
Love is our centre and  
Christ is our light.

### Scripture Readings:

Isaiah 7: 10-16 (page 1071)  
Matthew 1: 18-25 (page 1501)

### Comment

Some things in life seem almost impossible. When we look at wars happening in our world, conflicts that have been continuing for hundreds of years, and communities living in poverty, we can lose all hope and wonder if there is any way that things will ever change. God coming into our world in the person of Jesus gives us hope. Immanuel, God with us, assures us that when things seem impossible, we are never alone.

There is a story book that illustrates this beautifully, titled *Hugo and the Impossible Thing*. This picture book, written by Chris Gabriel and Renee Felice Smith, tells the story of a brave little dog named Hugo who is curious about the impossible Thing to see what is on the other side. They all tell him they have never tried and he should not either. But Hugo is determined, and when he decides to tackle the impossible, his friends come along beside him, and together they get through it.

The incarnation – God becoming human – is not only something that happened two thousand years ago; it is also something that continues to happen today. God continues to come into this world in each of us.

Just like Hugo's friends, together we bring our gifts and skills to work together and be God's hands and feet in this world.

So, how does our church community work together to do the impossible thing? Sometimes it takes someone like Hugo to be curious and wonder whether something is possible.

And, what might be possible for our community to show God's love in the world?

**Carol HFTC 88: [O Little Town of Bethlehem](#)**

### **Word For The Day**

It is important to understand the context of the passage we read from Isaiah this morning.

Being in the early part of Isaiah, this passage was written in a time of turmoil in the Middle East (some things never change). The conflict referred to in Isaiah 7 is the Syro-Ephramite War of 734 BCE. Israel (or Ephraim) had united forces against Judah. King Ahaz of Judah was considering appealing to Assyria, the power force of the day, for help against Israel and Syria. In response, God assures them that they will not overcome Judah. And how will they know? In response God will give them a sign. A young woman will conceive and give birth to a son, whom she will call Immanuel.

Before we assume this refers to Jesus, we need to read ahead a little to Isaiah 8, where Isaiah and the prophetess conceive and bear a child. His name is not Immanuel, but Meher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. A few verses later, however, the land in which they live is named Immanuel. All this happens before the child can utter the words 'This is my mother and this is my father'.

This is a story about how to deal with fear, distress, and disappointment in life. Our natural instinct, when faced with fear is to fight back. King Ahaz took it upon himself to join forces with Assyria and fight against their oppressors. At the time of Jesus birth things were not too different. Under Roman occupation, the people were living in fear and distress. What was the answer? To live as oppressed people or fight back?

Matthew knew that his listeners would be familiar with the stories from the war days, and so he uses the same pattern to speak to them in the first century. Judah was living in a time of fear, and so are we. God told Judah to be patient and wait for a child to be born. Matthew tells his listeners to be patient and wait for the birth of a child. This child, Immanuel, whether born in 734 BCE or 2000 years ago, is a sign of hope and peace.

We don't know much about what became of Isaiah's son, but we certainly know about Jesus. He lived and breathed love, peace, and compassion. How did he react in the face of fear? With love. How did he respond when he was threatened? With compassion. How did he reach out to those who were different to him? With peace.

When we hear of people in need and reach out in compassion, Immanuel is born. When we feel threatened by people who are different and open our arms wide in welcome, Immanuel is born into the world. When we learn to live with what we need and share our excess with those in need, Immanuel is born into the world. When anger burns within us and we choose to react with peace, Immanuel is born into the world

Where will Immanuel appear in the lives of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? In us?

If it is difficult to fathom, let us remember what the word Immanuel means. Within us is God. We do not share this love, joy and peace out of our own strength. It is God with us that gives us the words and the actions. It is God who acts within us. Does this change how we are Immanuel in the world?

## **Community Time - Celebrations, Notices, Prayer Concerns**

### **Prayer of Intercession**

For the peoples of the world – in lands of violence, beauty, exile and rebirth, may Immanuel dwell among them in peace.

#### **Christ, be born in every land.**

For our country and leaders – in times of uncertainty, visioning, and responsibility, may wisdom rise like dawn and compassion like rain.

#### **Christ be born in every situation.**

For our church and its leaders – when we forget the scandal of incarnation, or the strength of tenderness, call us back to the way of love.

#### **Christ, be born in every gathering.**

For our communities – in the joy of summer, in the ache of loneliness, let neighbours become kin and strangers become beloved.

#### **Christ, is born in every gathering.**

For the sick and the grieving, the weary and the afraid – may the Christ who came through pain and promise bring healing and hope.

#### **Christ, be born in every body and breath**

For those who have gone before us – and for the stories we carry and the lives we honour, may we walk their path of courage and grace.

#### **Christ, be born in us again. Amen**

## Offering

Loving God, we thank you for all the gifts you have given us in life.  
We ask that you take these gifts we have given, and our lives, and use  
them to bring about your reign of love, joy and peace in this world. Amen.

Hymn HFTC 417: [Lord Jesus Christ](#) (*omit verse 2*)

## Blessing

As we leave this place to continue our waiting for the light; longing for more of God's  
peace; rediscovering the joy God brings; and birthing the love of God in the world;  
May the blessing of God, Creator, Redeemer and Spirit, be with us all evermore.

## Sung Amen

### **Source:**

*Liturgy, Learning and Life. Copyright ©2025 Uniting Church of Australia. Synod of  
South Australia*

*Worship at Hand. Advent 4. Year A. Philip Garside.*

### **Further Acknowledgements:**

Copyright notice: The candle liturgy was written by Rev. Jeanyne Slettom and is  
made available through Process & Faith, a program of the Center for Process  
Studies. Used by permission.

*Hymns reproduced with permission under  
CCLI Music Reproduction Licence 221450)*