



KAURIHOHORE / KAMO CO-OPERATING PARISH

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Sunday 7 December 2025 – Advent 2

Our Service today is led 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.

Inclusiveness: we recognise the full equality of the entire human family to share in ministry, leadership, and worship, regardless of race, age, physical ability, neurodiversity, marital or economic status, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Welcome

Kia ora e te Whanau, your good health Faith-Family, welcome to worship at Kauri this morning. Today is the second Sunday in the Season of Advent. A season in which we prepare ourselves for the One who is coming, and no I am not just referring to Father Christmas despite what the advertising industry might be trying to divert us into focussing on. Our society tempts us to long for more in life—more clothes, more toys, more money, more adventure, more experiences. Today's readings encourage us to consider what we really long for. What are our hopes for our world, our community and our family this Christmas time? As we anticipate the coming of Jesus into our world, how will Christ's presence in our midst change our longings, our desires, and our actions? Our readings from Isaiah and Matthew call us into a bold vision of Spirit-filled leadership and deep transformation. Isaiah imagines a new kind of ruler – wise, just, and grounded in God's Spirit – while John the Baptist urges us to clear the way for what is coming. Together, they speak of hope growing from what looks like loss, and of justice shaped not by power, but by truth and grace. As we gather, may we open our hearts to both the challenge and the promise of God's renewing presence.

The value we focus on today is inclusiveness and the candle we light is the candle of peace. I hope you will feel both included and peace-filled as we join together in worship this morning.

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

Call to Worship

A shoot shall spring from a cut off stump

We gather where endings give way to new life

The Spirit rests on those who seem forgotten

We come with hope for a different kind of power

God's wisdom blooms in hidden places

We gather with hearts tuned to the deeper truth

Righteousness will rise, not with force, but with faith

We come to follow the path of justice and peace

The earth will be full of God's knowing

We come to be reshaped by holy imagination

Predators will lie down beside their prey

We come believing in the possibility of peace

Children will play without fear

We come to nurture joy and courage in each other

The broken world is not the end of the story

We come to worship the God of renewal

Prepare the way of the Lord

We come to make room for Spirit and fire

Lift up your hearts, beloved community

We lift them to the One who makes all things new. Amen.

Candle Liturgy Advent 2

Last Sunday we lit the first candle—the candle of hope. Today we light the second candle, the candle of peace. We light it knowing full well that peace is elusive, and in some parts of the world, it is almost completely absent. Yet in this season of Advent, we trust that God is never absent from us. God is always preparing something new. And even where there is war and discord, whether between countries, within society, within families, or within our own hearts, God is present, gently leading us to new possibilities.

(The second candle is lit)

Hymn HFTC 66: [O Come, O Come Emmanuel](#) (2 verses)

**All: Loving God, in this time of preparation and planning,
We thank you for the hope and peace you unfailingly offer us.
Show us the creative power of hope.
Teach us the peace that comes from justice.
Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you,
That we may walk in the light of Christ.**

Hymn: Advent Begins In The Darkness

(Lyrics: David Bjorlin Music: 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; prayer seems 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.

Prayer for Centring and Renewal

Matthew records Jesus as saying, "When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then this way:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one."

Let us share now in singing this prayer together.

Hymn AA 112: [Our Father In Heaven](#) *(sung reflectively, seated)*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against	us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom the power and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen, amen, amen, amen, amen, amen, amen, amen
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Scripture Readings

In this morning's reading from Isaiah, we hear of the shoot that will rise from the stump of Jesse, the father of king David. There is a hope for a coming leader who will change the way things are and bring peace to the world.

Isaiah 11:1-10 *(New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised)*

The Peaceful Kingdom

11 A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

² The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

³ His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;

⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

⁶ The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.

⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.
⁹ They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

Return of the Remnant of Israel and Judah

¹⁰ On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

Hymn: [Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord](#) (youtube clip - stay seated)

Gospel Reading

In our reading from the Gospel of Matthew, John the baptiser prepares the way for the promised Messiah, who will bring in the year of Jubilee and a different way of being to the people.

Matthew 3:1-12 (*New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised*)

The Proclamation of John the Baptist

3 In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ² 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' ³ This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
"Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."'

⁴ Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, ⁶ and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁷ But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Bear fruit worthy of repentance. ⁹ Do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰ Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹ ‘I baptise you in water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptise you in the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing-fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing-floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.’

Reflection

Isaiah 11:1-10 The Peaceful Kingdom

Matthew 3:1-12 The Proclamation of John the Baptist

Last Sunday was the beginning of the church year. This year, those churches which use the lectionary to guide our choice of scriptures to focus on, will be primarily reading our gospel readings from the Gospel of Matthew. As best scholars can work out, Matthew’s Gospel was developed in the region around Antioch in modern-day Turkey in the last decade or two of the first century. It is based on and includes nearly all of the earlier Gospel of Mark. Matthew also includes a collection of sayings of Jesus, often called “Q”, which it shares with the Gospel of Luke. Plus, Matthew adds in some of his own material which no other Gospel includes.

As best we can work out these Gospels began as collections of stories about Jesus, which were told in the synagogues where there were significant groups of people who followed the ‘Way of Jesus’. Over time these story collections became used as a set of third readings after the reading of the Torah for the day and the reading from the writings of the prophets which were seen as a commentary on that day’s Torah reading. All of these readings were selected according to the season of the year, very much like we select our lectionary readings by season of the year.

Matthew appears to be writing for congregations composed primarily of Jews and so-called ‘God Fearers’, living in communities around the Mediterranean, who were reasonably familiar with Jewish beliefs and practices because he leaves out some of Mark’s explanations of Jewish practices and belief, but adds in some explanations about the geography of Palestine. He structures his Gospel into five sections of stories and teachings mirroring the five books of Moses in the Torah. In this structuring, as in his content, he is clearly writing to convince his hearers and readers that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, long awaited and longed for throughout Jewish history, like a new Moses, declaring a new covenant relationship with God.

One of the contentious debates in Jewish theological thinking, as it is in Christian thought, was, “If God is powerful and just and caring, how can he allow some innocent people to be sick, to suffer, be disabled, be killed, become imprisoned in debt and slavery and to lose their land, their independence and freedom?”

Surely these calamities can't be the will of a loving God? Have you ever found yourself struggling with questions like that? One of the responses was, "God is testing our faith. If we prove faithful, he will make it all right in the end. Just be patient and work at being faithful". Practises, such as leaving land to lie fallow and uncultivated every seventh or sabbath year to restore its fertility, were built into a tradition in which after seven fallows everything was restored. This sabbath of sabbaths was called Jubilee. A horn was sounded to declare the year of Jubilee and in that year all land was restored to its original owners, all debts were forgiven, all slaves freed. The whole society and economy were reset to equal sharing between families as it had been when they first settled the land God had given them. To be fair this tradition appears to have been more celebrated in ideals than in historical practice. But this model became the focus of thinking of how God would eventually sort out this unjust world and get it back on track.

So grew the tradition, eventually God would send a special messenger who would announce the real coming of His Jubilee, when the whole earth would be sorted out, everything be restored to how God intended it to be from the beginning, all injustices righted, all sicknesses healed, all disabilities repaired, all slaves freed, all debts forgiven. This is the picture we have in our reading from the prophet Isaiah this morning. This is what peace with justice looks like. This is what we pray for each time we recite the Lord's prayer, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." And the special messenger, the shoot from the stock of Jesse, on whom the spirit of the Lord would rest, was God's Messiah.

When we begin reading Matthew's Gospel, the first half of the first chapter gives a genealogy or whakapapa with verse six listing Jesse the father of King David. Matthew is nailing it clearly, here is the one the prophet was talking about. Then comes the story of the birth of Jesus using the Greco-Roman image of virgin birth as a way of announcing his special relationship with God and introducing the character of Joseph, the name of Jacob/ Israel's specially favoured son, who dreams of a visit from an angel, reminding his hearers of the story of the origins of the chosen people of God, then the Wise men from the East, the flight to and return from Egypt so he can bring in the link with Moses who likewise was called out of Egypt. One after the other, Matthew piles up these reminders as assertions of who he believes this Jesus is. And then to today's story. The declaration of John the Baptist calling for repentance and proclaiming, "One who is greater than I is coming after me." If you haven't got the message yet by chapter three you can't have any drop of Jewishness in you.

But what about us in twenty-first century New Zealand who may have no knowledge of Jewish history or culture and for whom all these references and links mean absolutely nothing? Does Jesus and his teaching have any relevance for us?

Look around you. Do you see hope and peace flowering in this community and society, this world? Does everyone have equal access to wealth and power? Does everyone have an assurance of a warm dry safe place to sleep each night, sufficient healthy food, appropriate clothing, education and training, fulfilling work so they can contribute to society and feel valued within it, health care and security in old age, hope and peace? Do you know everyone feels valued, cared about, included? Because if there is just one person, one of God's chosen children, who is not well-fed, clothed, housed, educated, and cared for; included; then we have not yet achieved the kingdom of God in this place and this story applies as much to us as it did to those Jewish communities Matthew wrote for all those years ago, living in isolated groups around the Mediterranean sea in the first century. And John the Baptist's call is as much for us as it was for those on the banks of the Jordan. "Repent, for the kingdom of God is waiting"; transform your life, devote your life to sharing in God's realm of justice built on hope and peace. Pray with every moment of your day," Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Amen.

Community Thanks, Notices & Concerns

Prayers of the People

(based on Psalm 72 paraphrased by Leslie Brandt)

Let us give thanks for all that is good, and hold before God those for whom we wish to pray.

(We take a few moments of silence to share in prayer.)

O God of love,

grant to your children the grace to represent you effectively in our discordant world.

Give us the Courage

to put our lives on the line in communicating life and truth to all your creatures wherever they may be found.

Where there is injustice,

may we discern its cause and work for its cure.

Where there is bigotry,

teach us how to love and how to encourage others to love.

Where there is poverty,

help us to share the wealth that has come from your hand.

Where there is war and violence,

may we be peacemakers that lead people to your eternal peace.

Help us, O God,

to become what you have destined and empowered us to become.

Where there is darkness,

may we become the rays of your sun that banish the gloom of lonely lives.

Where there is drought,

let us be like fresh showers that turn barren deserts into green meadows.

Where there is ugliness and distortion,

enable us to portray the beauty and order of your will and purposes.

Great God, you are in our world,

your majesty is reflected in your creation around us.

Forbid, O God, that we be deaf to the cries of the poor

and indifferent to those whose needs cry out for justice.

May we identify with those who are oppressed,

and help to bear the burdens of those who suffer about us.

May we hear your voice of concern and feel your loving touch.

The glory is yours, O God, and we shall praise your name and celebrate your cause together.

Amen.

Hymn AA 149: [We Wait For You](#)

(Lyrics: Shirley Murray Tune: Colin Gibson)

1. We wait for you,
we long for you to come
Lord Jesus Christ,
bring Christmas to our home!

We covet peace,
the curing of the earth,
but not the pain
that carries you to birth.

2. We wait for you,
we long to see you come
released from Pilate's hall
to upper room:

We covet truth,
the triumph of the good,
but not the nails,
the torture and the blood.

3. We wait for you
beside the Easter tomb,
Lord Jesus Christ
we long for you to come
 We covet life
 relieved of hurt and loss,
 but not the weight
 of carrying a cross.

4. You wait for us,
you long for us to be
a birthing place for peace,
a justice tree,
 an energy for life,
 a flag! a sign!
 a fragrance in the air –
 fresh bread, new wine

Offering Prayer

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 S 19: [Make Me A Channel Of Your Peace](#)

Benediction/Commission and Blessing

Go now people of God,
bearing his spirit of hope and peace into this world he loves,
take your encouragement from Christ,
that your joy may be complete.

We will share in the Spirit;
We will find consolation in love.

Practice a ministry of humility and compassion
For God is at work in you, empowering you

We will welcome Christ into our hearts.
We will live lives worthy of the Gospel.
We will go forth in hope and in peace.

Go people of God, with his blessing, to prepare the way of the Lord and to make his
paths straight.

Amen. (Sung threefold)

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