

A Journey to Hope: Joy – Psalm 126

Sunday 20 December 2020

Before You Begin

Our hope is that this is a resource that will help us to engage meaningfully with God's word and invite us into a sense of worship, despite being unable to meet face-to-face. Use it in a way that feels comfortable and helpful to you.

A table of contents has been added to give you a sense of what will follow and allow you to move more easily through the worship elements.

Prepare

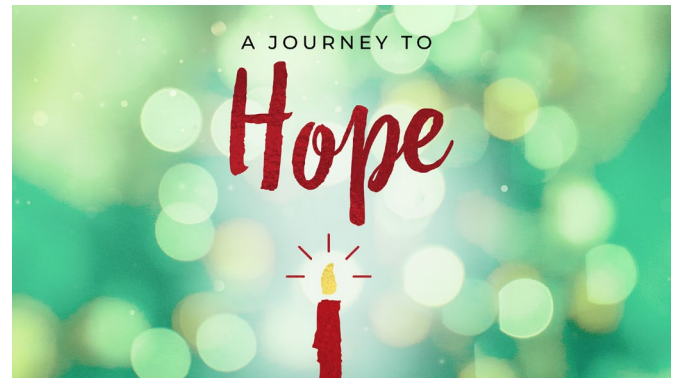
Have your Bible close by and some food and drink prepared for communion. It doesn't have to be bread and grape juice; it could be whatever is available (tea and a biscuit) to use in this symbolic time.

Get into a 'Sacred' Space

Be intentional. Sit somewhere. Have some visual representation of God (perhaps a small cross, your Bible, a symbol or image) or you might play some reflective music. Start with a few moments of silence and deep breathing.

Consider your environment

What will work for you in the space you have? If you have others in your house (housemates/family), consider sharing this time with them, each reading or participating as appropriate. You might simply reflect individually, in your own time and space. Afterwards, you might connect with others through technology to share your reflections, or an encouragement, with them.



What's Inside

On a computer, you can click these links

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Call to Worship

Brendan Petty

Welcome to church this week! If you're able (and it's not yet passed) please join us at 5pm in the Pitt St carpark at the church on Sunday 20 December for Pop-Up Carols – a time of gathering together and singing. Book in at <https://www.trybooking.com/BNMIU> or contact the office on 9870 8169.

Accordingly, this week's paper church is much shorter but we've prepared an advent reflection and communion guidance for your worship this week.

At the bottom of the document is a detailed plan for all the events coming up over Christmas and how we'll be gathering for and resourcing our worship and communion in January.

Advent Reflection

This poem is simply titled 'Nativity', shared by Linda Barry, written by Joy Cowley from a Christian community in New Zealand.

Look now!

It is happening again!

Love like a high spring tide

is swelling to fullness and overflowing

the banks of our small concerns.

And here again is the star,

that white flame of truth

blazing the way for us

through a desert of tired words.

Once more comes the music,

angel song that lifts our hearts

and tunes our ears

to the harmony of the universe,

making us wonder how

we ever could have forgotten.

And now the magi within us

*gathers up gifts of gold and myrrh,
while that other part of ourselves,
the impulsive, reckless shepherd,
runs helter skelter with arms outstretched
to embrace the wonder of it all.
We have no words
to contain our praise.
We ache with awe,
we tremble with miracle,
as once again,
in the small rough stable of our lives,
Christ is born*

Communion

Have some food and drink prepared for this time

If you're able, join us at 11am Sunday through Zoom to share in communion together at rngwd.com/communion or via Facebook live rngwd.com/fbv

If you are unable to join us, then please use the following reflection to take communion in your own way today and after, consider who you can call to have a chat as you would on a Sunday morning after a church service.

Welcome to this time of Communion. Today our Advent theme is Joy.

Marg Goddard

Through this advent time we have explored the themes of Expectancy, Peace, Love and today Joy, as we have waited.

You could say that we have been waiting for most of this year, perhaps more in some periods than others as the year has unfolded and is now nearing its end.

It hasn't been an easy year, any more than Mary's waiting was easy. As she worked through all the ramifications of her acceptance of the task that God gave her, Mary must have had so many different feelings. And as she neared the time for the birth of Jesus, away from home and all her support, reliant on God and Joseph, I wonder about those feelings?

Did she really know what the birth of this child would bring? She no doubt had a few ideas based on what the angel had told her and what she knew of scripture and the coming Messiah but did she really understand? And I guess on another front did she need to? Her task was to carry this child and to nurture and care for him as he grew, a task which I'm sure brought her as much joy as it may have later brought sorrow.

And us, as we come to the end of advent and the birth of the Christ Child, what do we know? We have the benefit of 2000 years of hindsight to reflect on the expectancy, peace and love and joy that Jesus brings to us.

We join in community today to share communion together with the elements we have each prepared. We celebrate that expectancy, peace and love and joy that was God's costly gift to us as we continue to journey to hope.

Prayer

Lord God, as we wait, and have waited during these past months with expectancy, surrounded by your peace and love, we thank you for the joy that you have given us in the gift of your son, Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us.

As we share these emblems we thank you again for the great love that you show to us.

In Jesus' Name we pray,

Amen

As we take our bread and cup, let's reflect on the song 'Mary Did You Know' and God's great gift to us and all the world. The words to this song are below:

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water? Mary, did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?

Did you know that your baby boy Has come to make you new?

This Child that you delivered, will soon deliver you. Mary, did you know that your baby boy would give sight to a blind man? Mary, did you know that your baby boy would calm the storm with his hand?

Did you know that your baby boy Has walked where angels trod? When you kiss your little baby you've kiss the face of God. Mary, did you know? Mary, did you know?

The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live again, the lame will leap, the dumb will speak the praises of the Lamb.

Mary, did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation? Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day rule the nations? Did you know that your baby boy is heaven's perfect Lamb?

And the sleeping Child you're holding is the great, I Am. Mary, did you know?

We invite you to eat and drink in remembrance of Him

Christmas/January Update

Brendan Petty

Sunday 20 December

The weather is looking fairly pleasant for our Pop-Up Carols at 5pm in the Pitt St carpark. We've got enough space for hundreds of people so do come along – and feel free to invite friends, family, neighbours too! You just do need to book your attendance at <https://www.trybooking.com/BNMIU> (now or just on the afternoon). It will be great to see everyone in person and enjoy some carol singing together.

There won't be a pre-recorded worship video this weekend, nor will the chapel be open but communion will be on Zoom and Facebook at 11am.

Thursday 24 December – Kids Production

Weeks of planning, fun, rehearsal and recording have gone into this event which will be played online from 5:30pm on Christmas Eve. Those involved will be watching at the church (contact the office if you'd like to join them) but for the rest of us, tune in at home and join in the live interaction too. Contact the office for details of how to watch if you're not a Facebook user or not familiar with the live videos.

Christmas Day

After you've awoken to open some presents, we'll be sending out a short video message and Christmas blessing for you to watch at home – and also to share around far and wide!

Sunday 27 December

We'll be emailing a pre-recorded worship resource and a communion reflection for you this weekend. No Zoom or chapel open.

January – the first four weekends

Acknowledging that we're as geographically scattered as ever before this summer, we will be providing a broad range of ways to connect in with worship and communion, which will inevitably each be smaller gatherings. We won't be continuing with a centralised Zoom communion. We'll be producing pre-recorded worship videos, paper church, communion reflections (pre-recorded and on Facebook) and also opening the chapel for the worship video, communion, tea & coffee and the

chance to chat with others. We will be serving communion again, in sealed single-serve cups to minimise handling as we re-engage with this practise together.

Some options for you to consider are:

- Watch the worship video and communion reflection at home and invite some friends over. Share a meal together as your communion. Enjoy the togetherness
- Choose a Sunday to come to the chapel to engage the video and communion alongside others and give yourself some time and space to simply 'be'. Let someone else know what date(s) you're coming and invite them along too
- Arrange with others in your GCC to gather on a Sunday (or another time) for communion together, using the reflections in paper church
- Arrange to Zoom or phone with others on a Sunday morning from whatever part of Australia you've travelled to that weekend
- Use the resources in your regular life group gathering, perhaps doing so online if some members are travelling

Then, depending on the timeline of restrictions easing, we're hoping that the final weekend of January will see a switch from primarily online worship resources to primarily in-person gathering but with options for those who struggle to access it or are not yet comfortable. We'll keep you updated on these plans through January.

Connect cards online

Click this link or enter it into your web browser rngwd.com/connect.

We love to know that you have been able to connect through worship today. Please click on the link (or enter it into your web browser) to our online connect cards letting us know which ways you have been able to worship, and if you want to let us know how we can praying with you. Thank you!