

Introduction To Worship

Sunday 6th December 2020 – Advent 2



This week's worship offers many insights as we continue on our advent journey. Our themes are comfort and peace, hope and God's faithfulness to us, overcoming and reflections about what God has been doing in our lives. We also celebrate the promises of the gospel which declares the Spirit will come upon us.

I've begun preparing the Christmas service and have found meaningful YouTubes and we hope to have the Whitehorse Christmas Blessing Video to share.

There will be a recorded service, no matter what happens in the next few weeks as far as the restrictions go, and you will be able to share the joy of Christmas with family, before or after Christmas lunch or dinner, no matter where you are in this country. There will be written materials with lots of links to Christmas carols and shared stories of hope. I'm also preparing a Blue Christmas Service which will be recorded and contemplative, with a focus on living with health issues and pain, and grief, yet finding hope, comfort and solace in our faith. (We hope to know more next Sunday after Dan speaks).

Today's extra materials offer an Advent Booklet II and a copy of the Advent Study with reflections. Pages 14-17

I hope you find today's worship a blessing

Blessings
Rev Tina

FYI Note: Mountview's Hymns are now listed with a 'song title image'. Clicking (with a computer mouse), or touching (with a finger on a touch screen), upon this image should also activate the hymn to play. The weblink remains shown also.



Mountview Uniting Church

Mountview Worship @ Home

Sunday 6th December 2020 – Advent 2



*Wall of Praise – Based upon Norman Rockwell's Golden Rule
Thanks-Giving Square, Dallas, TX*



Hymn: As The Deer Pants – Helen Jackson

(All 3 Verses) [2:45]

<https://youtu.be/sEXSfoeP7iw>

*Music & Lyrics: Martin Nystrom 1956– ; based on Psalm 42: 1-2;
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As The Deer Pants

As the deer pants for the water,
so my soul longs after you.
You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.

Refrain

*You alone are my strength, my shield,
to you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.*

I want you more than gold or silver,
only You can satisfy.
You alone are the real joy giver
and the apple of my eye.

Refrain

You're my friend and you are my brother,
even though you are a king.
I love you more than any other,
so much more than anything.

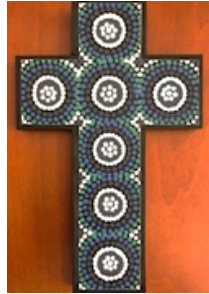
Refrain

Welcome To Our Service

This week our theme is Peace.
May you find the worship a blessing.

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge those who were here before us, the first inhabitants of this place.
We honour them for their custodianship of the land on which we gather today.



Call To Worship

*The call to worship comes from The Soft Petals of Grace, by Thom M Shuman, Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow (Adapted)
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Be patient! God is coming to us!

The one who teaches joyous songs to all creation comes to open our ears to life

Be Strong! God is coming to be with us!

The one who paves a path to Bethlehem will walk with us every step of the way

Do not fear! Here is your God!

We worship the one who comes to save us

Advent Liturgy – Week Two – Peace

Light the first candle of Hope

Person 1 Many committed individuals are working to promote peace, justice, equality and human rights. Interdenominational and interreligious groups meet on the common ground of talking about peace and justice from their perspectives. Surely love and faithfulness meet, justice and peace embrace, and God's voice speaks for peace. The words and actions of those who work for peace, justice, equality and human rights usher in God's "kin-dom" and pace the way for the Prince of Peace.

Person 2 Lord, favour your land once again, and restore our fortunes and, forgive us for what we have done and have failed to do.

All: We hear your voice calling for peace

Person 1 Lord, grant peace for your people and your friends as they turn to you in their hearts

All: We hear your voice of liberation

Person 2 Love and faithfulness have met, justice and peace have embraced

All: We hear your voice calling for fidelity

Person 1 God will give us what is good, and our land will yield its harvest

All: We hear your voice calling for kin-dom to come

Light the second candle of Peace

Person 2 Rejoice always!

All: The child of Peace is coming!



Prayers Of Adoration, Invocation And Confession

*Our prayers come from 'The Soft Petals of Grace', by Thom M Shuman, Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow (Adapted)
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Prayer

Lord, there is a road where the blind will see the signposts leading home
and where the voiceless will become the soloists in the chorus of hallelujahs
You Lord have built a holy way to our hearts, Advent's creator, we no longer need to wander off your path.
Now the crippled will dance with the stars
Now, your precious crop of justice and reconciliation, planted in oppressions desert, will burst forth in glory.
Now that you have come, advents grace, we no longer need to put hope on hold.
Now, those who refuse to listen to their enemy will hear your sweet whispers of peace for all.
Now, those who mutter about the unfairness of it all, will offer all they have to the poor.
Now that you are incarnate in our hearts, Advents joy, we no longer need to be afraid.
God in community, Holy and One, now we will call ourselves blessed.

Call To Reconciliation

It would be easy to grumble
that COVID-19 has kidnapped this holy season,
emptying it of hope and joy,
but we must admit how often we fail to tell the true story of Christmas by how we live our lives.
Let us confess our reluctance to be storytellers, as well as to live out the story

Prayer Of Confession

Ever-present Peace
You came to save us,
but that is hard for some to remember during this coming Christmas season
We may be impatient for Christmas to arrive
and this may get in the way of hearing children singing
The lights of Christmas may blind us to your quiet presence with us
Stories about COVID-19 and violence may drown out your voice telling us: Do not fear, I am with you.
Gardener of deserts, as you poured your mercy out on all who have gone before us,
shower us with grace and forgiveness.
Open our eyes to your wonders
so, our ears echo with the anthems of angels and our emptiness is filled with the life
gifted to us through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Silence

Assurance

This is the good news!
 God comes to us to bring the healing of hope
 To put the joy of justice into our hearts
We need wait no longer
We may go and tell everyone what we have seen and heard
Thanks be to God. Amen



Hymn: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel – Helen Jackson
 [3:54]

<https://youtu.be/zgjiXBgaiHM>

Music: Plainsong melody (15th cent.). Lyrics: Based on Antiphons from 9th cent. or earlier; Anon., Latin, 18th cent. or earlier; tr. John Mason Neale 1818-66 alt. Song: Public Domain Video: © 2020 the Multimedia team. All Rights Reserved. Posted to YouTube by Mountview Uniting Church

Scripture Readings

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Isaiah 40: 1-11

40:1 Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. 40:2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

40:3 A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 40:4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. 40:5 Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

40:6 A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?"
 All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field.

40:7 The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

40:9 Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"

40:10 See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. 40:11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

We are not out of the woods yet. Almost, but not yet. So, just like the ancient Israelites, we need words of hope, reassurance and comfort. We have something in common with them.

They lived amongst their captors and were vulnerable. Perhaps some of them were afraid and bitter. They mourned the loss of their homeland and temple. We mourn the loss of being able to gather in our church building, freedom and stability. We both face an unknown future and uncertainty. What if there is a third wave of COVID-19? How will we celebrate Christmas? Since lockdown our lives have been restricted and limited. Yet, things are slowly opening up and a vaccine is on the way. There is hope.

When we turn to God, we are reminded that power resides in God. Throughout history people have wandered in the wilderness of redemption, seeking to draw closer to God. Romans speaks of the groaning of creation and Psalm 148 of the unity of creation under God's power. We forget, God is in control. This is the context in which we are offered comfort. Within the big picture of life, where God reigns and is about to act in our lives, as we journey nearer to Christmas. Our faith is not about being defeated. It's about overcoming adversities.

With God's help and comfort, we shall overcome.

God is faithful and will never fail us. God's love for us is steadfast. God's commitment to us is forever. During advent we return to God, that is what repentance means. During lockdown we have been able to take time out to reaffirm our relationship with God and get back to basics. We have come to know what's important in our life, which is our relationship with God and our loved ones. We have experienced repentance, a turning around of our lives to face God, where a deeper bond has formed between us and God.

In many ways we have been through a wilderness experience where we have had the space, isolation, solitude, and quietness to take stock. Perhaps we are at a turning point where God has opened up a new way of being and it's come at a time when Mountview is discerning a way forward.

Advent is a time of waiting on God for renewal of our hearts and hopes. This year the miracle of lockdown is that God has come into our homes and our hearts. God has been powerfully present to us and with us. Now in the coming weeks we will prepare a place for Jesus in our hearts. Our hearts will be the manger for Jesus this year. Humble, frail and honest hearts will hold Jesus, as he holds us. We will celebrate the birth of Jesus with joy. This advent will be a time of restoration in our lives, a time when we will come to know the story of the Lord in our lives. That is our hope and comfort.

The words "all flesh is like grass" spoken by Isaiah was written before Jesus came to offer us the gift of eternal life. A vulnerable baby was born into the inconsistency and frailty of our world, God with us, willing to be like us. Things were changed by God. The order of life changed. It's true, we are fragile and fad like flowers in this life, but not in the next life, where we dwell with Jesus in his many mansions. We live on, so, fear not! Hope in your God. The shepherd who protects every one of his lambs, who comes in might, and who gathers his lambs in his arms and comforts them. When we are afraid, we hear the words of comfort, *'Here is your God.'*



Mark speaks of Isaiah prophesying about John preparing the way for Jesus and begins with all the people of Judea and Jesus being drawn out into the wilderness. This is where Jesus ministry begins, it is where he is baptised, he is tempted. It is where the Holy Spirit comes upon him and after he overcomes being tempted, draws him to Galilee.



We understand the gospel in terms of a second Exodus, through the wilderness where John was the herald of the Lord who comes into the wilderness and where the wilderness shapes God's people, in the same way we were called into the wilderness of our hearts during lockdown. It has been a call to get back to basics and it's been challenging, and at times lonely and downright painful. But we have come to an understanding that God is central to our lives and the church has returned to its origins over two thousand years ago, into our homes.

A miracle to praise God for and give thanks for and sing Halleluiah for to our God. We have renewed our relationship with God and have deepened our relationship with God and one another in our care for each other during this time. Our bonds as the body of Christ have been strengthened. The Holy Spirit has prepared the way for Christ to come into our hearts this Christmas and whichever way we celebrate Christmas, whether it's at home with our loved ones or together in church buildings (subject to restrictions), we will rejoice and celebrate the birth of Jesus, joyfully.

Rev Tina



Hymn – Comfort, Comfort, All My People – Helen Jackson [2:42]

<https://youtu.be/P1x7V9N583Q>

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Music for Pondering and Prayer:

Hymn: We Shall Overcome – Joan Baez [3:50]

<https://youtu.be/nM39QUiAsoM>

*African-American Spiritual; Public Domain. Recorded at BBC Television Theatre, London on 5th June 1965.
Posted to YouTube by John1948SevenB*

Hymn: (As I Went) Down To The River To Pray – Alison Krauss [3:03]

<https://youtu.be/zSif77IVQdY>

African-American Spiritual; Public Domain. Posted to YouTube by David Webb

Song: Hallelujah – Rhema Marvanne (when 8 years old; 2011) [3:26]

<https://youtu.be/VoBW57t1Mvs>

Written by Leonard Cohen. © SONY Music. Posted to YouTube by Rhema Marvanne

Offering Prayer

about offering up ourselves and giving thanks to God for all we have

**Lord and giver of every good thing
we bring to you our lives and gifts for your kingdom
all for transformation through your grace and love
made known in Jesus Christ our Saviour, amen**

Prayers Of The People And The Lord's Prayer

Tim Joyce has prepared the Prayers of the people for you today

Almighty God

Dwell among us and grant us your peace.

Liberate us from our fears, that we may live boldly as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries.

Almighty God we pray for your church

We pray that your church wherever it may be, and whatever form it may take

will be ready and open to confront and respond faithfully and purposefully to the many challenges before it

We pray for our congregation here at Mountview as we endeavour to minister to our community in challenging times

We pray that we will be united, even though we are disparate

That we will build each other up and remain connected and outward-looking

We pray for other churches in our region. We pray...

For St Marks Anglican Church in Forest Hill; and

For the Uniting Church congregation in Surrey Hills

that they too may serve you and your people with faith, compassion and courage.

That they too will find ways to connect, engage and serve in difficult times

And we pray for the work of the RAAF Chaplaincy – for their service to those who serve in Australia and overseas.

Merciful God – we pray for your world

Generous Creator, you feed the birds of the air and clothe the grass of the field.

Give to our community such confidence that we will participate in your work to heal and nurture the earth.

We bring before you those whose lives are without the dignity and peace. We pray...

For the hungry – that they might be fed

For those who are struggling with mental illness – that they might find inner peace

For the homeless – that they might find shelter

For those who feel disconnected and disengaged – that they will find meaning.

For victims of war – that they might have peace

For victims of oppression, exploitation and cruelty – that they might have justice

For refugees and asylum seekers – that they will be welcomed and embraced

For the marginalised – that they will be acknowledged

We pray that all people will be treated with the respect due to them as human beings

We pray for communities, leaders and governments as they struggle to negotiate the competing demands and priorities associated with dealing with the effects of the pandemic.

We pray for compassion, good sense and justice.

Lord we pray this morning for Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam

We pray for:

- those who continue to bear physical and emotional scars from years of conflict
- victims of monsoons and other disasters in the region
- economic development to improve life for all people and the environment
- political stability amid competing powers.

We remember, O Lord,
 those who suffer from any kind of discrimination,
 your children, and our brothers and sisters,
 who are humiliated and oppressed.
 We pray for those who are denied fundamental human rights,
 for those who are imprisoned,
 and especially those who are tortured.
 Our thoughts rest a few moments with them...
 and we pray that your love and compassion may sustain them always.

(Vietnam, Week of Prayer for World Peace. WAGP p.203.)

Merciful Lord – we pray for those known to us who are in special need at this time

For the sick
 the lonely
 the grieving

We entrust these people to your care
 We pray that you will provide comfort and support

Risen Christ

Stand with us

Grant us peace – that we might serve you in the world
 through Jesus Christ – our risen and crucified Lord
 who taught us to pray...

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven
 Give us today our daily bread
 And 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 for ever
 AMEN

Dismissal

Go out into the world in the power of the spirit and in all things at all times remember Christ is with you.
 Make your life your worship to the praise and glory of God. Amen

Sending Out Into The World

The God who makes everything whole
 sends us forth to bring healing

To listen to the broken-hearted and to comfort the grieving

The Christ who comes to be with us
 sends us forth to stand with the oppressed

To release those imprisoned by guilt, to speak hope to the lonely

The Spirit which calls us to faithfulness
 sends us forth to proclaim the good news

That today is God's time – the day when all people will be blessed. Amen



Hymn: Shalom To You Now – Helen Jackson [1:01]

<https://youtu.be/2oqiFenWxY>

Music: Traditional Spanish melody; Public Domain. Lyricist: Elise Shoemaker Eslinger; © E. S. Eslinger / United Methodist Publishing; Streamed by permission. CCLI Licence No. 122303 [MUC] Video: © 2020 the Multimedia team. All Rights Reserved. Posted to YouTube by Mountview Uniting Church.

*Prayerfully read the words
Imagine your family in Christ and send them heartfelt blessings from the Lord*

Shalom To You Now

Shalom to you now,
shalom, my friends.
May God's full mercies
bless you, my friends.
In all your living and through your loving,
Christ be your shalom,
Christ be your shalom.

I have provided extra resources to accompany you on the journey. Rev Tina

Extra Worship Resources

Most of today's extra worship resources will be found in the Advent Booklet Part II and advent studies.

Being Human

This is our latest sign. Many thanks to Lorianne Grant and Barney. Perhaps, at a time when some people may be hoping for the worst, they will see our sign when they drive or walk past it and think again.

The sign is surrounded by symbols of Christian symbols of hope, in the cross and church building. Pray for all those without hope at this time. Perhaps one person will see our sign and find hope and turn to Jesus for comfort. Christmas is coming, a time when we look to our living hope, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

A Blessing For Everyone

Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious unto you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace.

Aaronic Blessing; Public Domain



A Series of 2020 Blessings' Videos From Around The World:

The Irish Blessing 2020 – [over 300 Irish churches from every county] [6:50]

<https://youtu.be/TascswZPj8U>

(Rhonda Goodall's recommendation) Over 300 churches of Ireland sing a blessing ('Be Thou My Vision', and others) over Ireland and beyond Posted to YouTube by The Irish Blessing 2020

The Hawaii Blessing – [25 churches from all 6 major islands] [6:27]

<https://youtu.be/BxQ0RnKjrzY>

A gift from the Churches of Hawai'i, The Hawai'i Blessing was recorded during the first week of May 2020. During this time of sheltering-in-place, isolation and uncertainty about the future, we could all use a blessing and a sense of togetherness. In Hawai'i, we call that 'ohana - family. Posted to YouTube by Hawaiian Island Ministries

The Blessing Japan ブレッシング公式日本語訳: 教会/ミニストリー編
 – [75 churches from across Japan] [7:18]

https://youtu.be/b74EymT_OGA

Churches and ministries representing the Body of Christ in Japan have come together with united hearts to declare God's blessing over Japan and all nations. Standing together as one, we pray this song will encourage and fill everyone with everlasting hope. Posted to YouTube by The Blessing Japan

The Blessing Australia – [over 300 churches from across Australia] [7:27]

<https://youtu.be/OOt7baaVSbE>

During this time of uncertainty and physical isolation, over 300 churches united together in Australia to sing a blessing over our nation. This is the first time this has happened. Our desire is to shine the light of Jesus in a time of darkness. We hope that this song will fill you with peace and encouragement. We pray it blesses you, your children and your children's children. Posted to YouTube by The Blessing Australia

The Blessing Aotearoa – [The church of Aotearoa/ New Zealand] []

<https://youtu.be/eZQPifs2kjo>

Inspired by the many other "The Blessing" virtual choir videos that have gone before us, we have added our voices to the "voice" of the global Church to sing God's words of His blessing over our nation and all people everywhere. Posted to YouTube by More Than Music Mentor

The Blessing Lebanon – [over 20 churches from across Lebanon] [7:42]

<https://youtu.be/tQ818qHiHLO>

At this very difficult time, both with COVID-19 and the economic situation putting huge pressure on people and families, some followers of the Great King have come together to sing a song of blessing over this country and the people of this nation. We are nothing special, He is! Some of the voices are spectacular, some are normal but all sing the love and longing that the Master has for us: He is for you! Our buildings may be closed but the church is very much alive! Posted to YouTube by LES Loueizeh

The Blessing Whitehorse – [over 40 churches from across Whitehorse] [8:00]

https://youtu.be/EA5ThQcX_p8

Churches across the City of Whitehorse formed a new network to enable new shared outreach ministries to our community. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing isolation of people due to restrictions, the churches prepared this video. Posted to YouTube by Mountview Uniting Church

These are just a few of 'The Blessing' videos on YouTube. Churches in every nation have got together to make Blessing Videos in response to COVID-19. Isn't that an amazing witness to our faith!

It fills me with hope. Try Googling for more, or enter 'The Blessing' in the YouTube Search box.



From Contemplative Monk

Music To Inspire from 'The Piano Guys':

Carol Of The Bells / God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen (for 12 cellos) – The Piano Guys [3:19]

https://youtu.be/e9GtPX6c_kg

Posted to YouTube by ThePianoGuys

Nearer My God To Thee (for 9 cellos) – The Piano Guys [2:58]

<https://youtu.be/gosY-UrpHcA>

Posted to YouTube by ThePianoGuys

The Mission / How Great Thou Art – The Piano Guys [3:37]

<https://youtu.be/CHV6BjuQOZQ>

At Iguazu Falls, on the border of Argentina and Brazil: Wonder of The World 2 of 7. Posted to YouTube by ThePianoGuys



Advent Booklet – Part II

Memories from 2020 – Finding Our way forward

This week we remember images and blessings from 2020. Consider what has been the highlight of the year for you, that you would like to give thanks to the Lord for and that you will look back on as a blessing.



An image that speaks of 2020

We had the bushfires over summer, and they were followed by outbreaks of Covid-19. This image speaks to us about smoke and the danger of contracting Covid-19. It speaks of fear, asthma, death, loss and grief. Yet, we are not defeated. Our responses were of courage, faith, hope, compassion, caring, and love for our neighbour.



An image from the bushfires

Give thanks to Health Services

John and Margaret Williams shared this hymn with us at the Advent Study. Margaret said: 'Imagine being in an aircraft that flew into a rainbow'. The rainbow has been an important image during lockdown, often brought to us by children drawing them onto footpaths.

Christ Be Our Light – [not stated] [3:54]

<https://youtu.be/caA4sIXkD44>

Written by Bernadette Farrell © B. Farrell. Posted to YouTube by anggosworship



During advent we go on a journey towards Christmas, the time our faith in Christ is renewed. Advent is a time when we take little pauses during our day to think of Christ and to give thanks for our blessings during 2020. It may sound strange to some to give thanks for blessings during 2020, but our journey is one where we look for the light and listen for the voice of hope.

When we pray God fills us with peace, beyond all understanding. This Advent we are invited to share our stories of hope with others and give thanks to God for bringing our loved ones and ourselves through a difficult year. If a loved one has passed away pray for comfort and God will provide. Stay close to your loved ones and allow them to care for you as you grieve and grieve well. Take care of yourself.



Leunig. Used by permission

And if you have health issues or are caring for a loved one with health issues, take heart, the Lord is with you every step of the way, he may even be carrying you like in the poem footsteps, reach out to the Lord in prayer and ask for courage and help to bear the pain and strength to keep on going on. Reach out to others for comfort and support, it is not good to be alone on a difficult journey.

The miracle of this year is lockdown has changed the landscape of our faith and brought God back into people's homes. It's like we have returned to where the church began, in house churches two thousand years ago. Once again, our homes have become Holy places, where we worship God, have communion, pray and sing our faith. By the time we are free to gather, sing and feast, our faith will be changed. It will be deeper and so will our joy. We will have much to share with one another. Until that time, we continue to worship God and pray, offer hospitality in our homes and sing. We look forward with hope and at the same time know God is present with us on this journey of faith with Jesus.

Another miracle is that people have come to appreciate family



God help us to live slowly
 To move simply
 To look softly
 To allow emptiness
 To let the heart create for us. Amen.

Leunig. Used by permission.

Advent Study – Week Two



Sharing Stories

Isaiah 40:3 A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

Who prepared the way for the Lord in your heart? Was it an individual or more about belonging to a church or both? Why and how did they prepare the way for the Lord in your heart?

Isaiah 40:6 *A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. 40:7* *The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. 40:8* *The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.*

In life everything is passing. How does scripture like Isaiah's 'the Word of the Lord shall stand forever' in the midst of words such as we are like grass and flowers that fade and wither, give you hope?

What is permanent in your life?



Isaiah 40:9 *Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"*

We are invited to climb a high place like a mountain and with a loud voice say: All is well, do not fear, here is your God! We need to hear words of hope from others. We need reassuring words such as: Do not fear! We need comfort. Going up mountains and to high places can help us rise above our daily patterns of life. Have you had any experiences of going up mountains or high places and finding God and feeling reassured?

What other things reassure you?

Hymns That Offer Comfort: Comfort, Comfort, All My People

Music & Lyrics: Robin Mann; inspired by Isaiah 40;

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This hymn comes from this week's reading from Isaiah. You're invited to join in going around the group, where we take turns reading three lines each. Then share your response. How are you reassured by God's care for you? And others care for you?

Refrain

*Comfort, comfort all my people
with the comfort of my Word.
Speak it tender to my people:
all your sins are taken away.*

Though your tears be rivers running,
though your tears be an ocean full,
though you cry with the hurt of living:
comfort, comfort.

Every valley shall be lifted,
every mountain shall be low,
every rough place will be smoother:
comfort, comfort.

Refrain

Though your eyes see only darkness,
though your eyes can see no light,
though your eyes see pain and sorrow:
comfort, comfort.

Every night will have its morning,
every pain will have an end,
every burden will be lightened:
comfort, comfort.

Refrain

Reflections from Week Two of our Advent Studies

We shared about how most of us had grown up in Christian families and been influenced by our church or school and role models such as family, peers, Sunday school teachers, schoolteachers or mentors and attended Sunday school or youth groups.

Others have been thrown in the deep end and told to lead and grown into leadership in the church. During these changing times we found we need God. When everything is passing and fading, our faith keeps us going. The presence of God offers us stability and helps us stay hopeful. God is central in our lives when things are changing. Even love changes, where we find out how important it is to express our love to our children.

To tell them we love them.

Lockdown has helped us take stock. It's been a break. And home worship gives us time to ponder on the different aspects of the worship. We shared about mountaintop experiences and found not everyone has a mountaintop experience. For many it's a beautiful view. For others a profound experience, where they have felt the power of God that's been overwhelming, with a sense of awe and of being able to step away from the group they are with to experience God. Others prefer the lowlands and are plains dwellers who seek quietness and find God in simplicity. Others love to listen to music such as Messiah and find God in music and singing.

Others wrestle with the contrasts of life, good and bad, withering and life, difficulties and overcoming.

Others ponder about how the CSIRO have mapped nine million galaxies and ancient times and ancestors, of aboriginals living way back beyond 30,000 years. At times we may feel like the psalmist in psalm 8 where God has shaped the universe with his fingers and may feel small and ask: Who are we that you God are mindful of us? Yet it is God who holds it all together. We walk in faith and trust and adapt to changing times and seek connectiveness with God and others. We measure time in steps while God's time is eternal and not measurable. We know when we feel awe at God's presence and cannot name what we are experiencing, that God is nearby, and this is a true experience of God when we cannot put words to what we are experiencing.

Others reflected on how we often chase dreams and illusions, where Advent is an invitation to look within ourselves and step back from the dreams and illusions so we can become the person God intends us to be and find peace. We finished with a discussion of the hymn: Comfort, comfort, all my people, which reminds us God reaches out to us in our suffering helping us to endure and accept, offering us solace and reminding us we are loved. We with gentle whispers call out to God and receive comfort.

Prayer – Help us Lord find our happiness in our acceptance of what is your purpose for us, in friendly eyes, in work well done, in quietness born of trust, and most of all, in the awareness of Your presence in our spirit.

Amen

Rev Tina, for Mountview Uniting Church

The following link is to the 'Worship' page on our website, from where other resources may be accessed:

<https://www.mountviewuca.org/worship.html>

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