

HOPE



St Aidan's Uniting Church
1st Sunday in Advent
3rd December 2023

Call to Worship*

Here we meet.

**Here we encounter;
here we worship God.**

Here we will encounter Christ,
hope of all of creation.

Here we will celebrate what it means,
to be the people of God in this place.

**Here we will give thanks for the Word made Flesh.
Here we will encounter the Hope for the world.
Here we will worship God.**

Prayers

Christ, our hope,
when we confuse hope with fatalism
and use this as an excuse
not to take practical steps
to give hope to the world around us:

**Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive the sins of others.**

When we confuse hope with optimism
and so busy ourselves
with meeting the needs of the world
but fail to listen to the movement of your Spirit;

**Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive the sins of others.**

When we impose our hopes on others
and so our faith becomes abusive;

**Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive the sins of others.**

Invite us once again into relationship
and help us to respond in new ways;
help us to work with you to show your hope to our world.
Amen.

Words of Assurance

God's grace is for all –
an undeserved gift of hope.
Know that you are loved and forgiven –

Thanks be to God.

Christmas Bowl Story*

In 2021, Afghanistan fell to the Taliban, leaving countless families devastated and forced to flee their homeland.

Among them was Jehan*, a brave mother of five.

Jehan explained, *“My children were attending a local school. My husband and I have always encouraged our children to gain education for a better future. But we did not imagine the chaos we were about to face.”*

Jehan realised that whether she was in her village or in Kabul, she and her children were no longer safe in Afghanistan. After her husband was killed, she made the courageous decision to flee on foot to Pakistan with little more than the clothes she and her children were wearing.

Act for Peace's local partner, Community World Service Asia (CWSA), responded to the crisis immediately with lifesaving humanitarian aid. While newspaper headlines have moved on, CWSA remains on the ground, providing ongoing support to Afghan refugees.

Act for Peace was able to quickly coordinate with CWSA, helping provide refugees like Jehan's family with winterisation kits, healthcare support and cash payments for food.

As emergencies fade from the headlines, like the earthquakes we saw in Syria and Türkiye, or the ongoing crisis in Afghanistan, the long-term support of our local partners is vital.

Your gifts through the Christmas Bowl will help Act for Peace coordinate with local partners, like CWSA, so they can respond immediately to humanitarian emergencies, giving families like Jehan's immediate help and making sure they are not forgotten over the long-term.

Prayer of Intercession*

Loving and Creative God,
We pray for Jehan* and those
who have fled their homes.
We pray for her family and friends
left behind in Afghanistan
and those fleeing over the border.

Loving God,
we look out over our world
and wonder where is the Hope we long for.

Creative God,
remind us of the stories of the people
who took Jehan and countless others in.

Remind us of the stories of Hope
we see in the lives of those
who have fled and reached safety.

We are thankful for the kindness Jehan experienced.
We pray that our communities
will be places of safety for those fleeing
war, terror and climate disasters.
May we be a people of Hope
Amen

Benediction & Blessing*

Go from this place
filled with the Hope
of what God is doing in our world.
Go now, as people of God.

**We go assured that God is love,
and God is our Hope.
We go to love our neighbour
as ourselves.**

Go now, held in the loving hands
of God Most High
Go now, to follow Christ in all things Go now, in the love and fellowship of the Holy
Spirit.
Amen.

* Prayers from the Christmas Bowl 2023 resources