

Joy



St Aidan's Uniting Church
Third Sunday in Advent
17th December 2023

Call to Worship*

Here we meet.

Here we encounter.

Here we worship God.

Here we will encounter Christ,
the Joy of all 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 love with Joy.

Here we will worship God.

Candle*

As we light our third Advent Candle,
we celebrate the Joy of having You in our lives.

We light the Advent Candle
and remind ourselves of the ways
You bring Joy into our world,
and we live in the Hope
that You will use us to bring about Joy
in our world this Advent Season.

Prayers

Loving God,
you have given us so many gifts –
the gifts we have named in this space
and many more gifts that we remember in silence.

We confess the times we focus on what is hard,
or difficult, or lacking in our lives,
instead of recognising what we do have
and responding to those things with joy.

We confess the times we confuse happiness with joy
and so seek short term solutions,
or try to fill our lives with stuff,
rather than cultivating true joy
that carries us through times of difficulty.

We confess that we sometimes abuse people
by making them paper over their problems
and put on a happy face
because it makes us feel uncomfortable
or challenges us to respond more deeply.

Cultivate in us an attitude of true joy
at the future you offer with hope
and the comfort you offer now.
Amen.

Words of Assurance

Is the same way John the Baptist accompanied people
through the ritual washing represented in baptism,
so too are you accompanied by Jesus the Christ
as you seek to walk a new way in relationship
with other people and with God.

Know then, you are God's beloved –
and you are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

Christmas Bowl Story*

Twelve long years have passed since Rima*, her husband Kateb*, and their
five children fled their beloved home in Syria as the devastating civil war
unfolded. Their once-happy life, built around a flourishing farm cultivating
pistachios, olives, and potatoes, was abruptly shattered by the conflict.

Forced to leave everything behind, they sought refuge in Jordan, carrying
with them only the essentials. With global attention now moved on to other
crises, families like Rima's worry that the world has forgotten their plight.

Thankfully, Act for Peace's partner in Jordan, the Department of Service to
Palestinian Refugees (DSPR), has been supporting Syrian refugees since the
war began, providing vital food packages and hygiene kits, as well as the
long-term support they need to rebuild their lives. Through this ongoing
support, as well as small business training, Rima is now able to bring in an
income for her family by selling Syrian food.

Through the Christmas Bowl, you'll help Syrian refugees like Rima receive the
support they desperately need and show them they're not forgotten.

Prayer of Intercession*

Creator God,

We thank you for pistachios, olives, and sweet pineapples. We thank you for
Rima* and Kateb* and the joy they experienced on their farm. We pray for all
people leaving their family farms and moving across borders seeking safety.
We pray especially for the families fleeing Syria.

We thank you for the work of the Near-East Council of Churches and their
provision of lifesaving food. We pray for the Syrians who have fled war, often
more than once.

We pray that your Joy will reign and that Rima and Kateb, and people in their
situation may return to their family farm. Amen.

Benediction & Blessing*

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

**We go assured that God is love,
and God is the Joy of our world.
We go to love our neighbour as ourselves.**

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

* Liturgy from Act for Peace Christmas Bowl resources: [Third Sunday in Advent](#).