

Third Sunday in Advent

17 December 2023

Morning Worship at 10:30 a.m.

(*: Congregation stands)



APPROACH

ADVENT LITANY

How does a weary world practice joy?

By dancing, and throwing birthday parties.

By hanging Christmas lights, and holding sleepy babies.

By singing loudly, and looking for good news.

By telling the story of Jesus, and showing up for our community.

There are a million ways to practice joy.

So today we light the candle of joy as a reminder and a charge.

With God's help, may we bring joy into a weary world.

Amen.

PREPARATION SONG "Light of Hope"

– Music: T Chan; Lyrics: M Mathieson

Light of Joy ignite in us,

Flood our life with Your sheer joy.

Changing tears of sorrow into a dance of life.

Light of joy come dwell in us. --||--

*** CALL TO WORSHIP**

Our God can part the sea.

**God can bring water from a rock,
and provide bread in the desert.**

Our God can walk on water.

**He can heal the sick,
and turn water into wine.**

Our God sets the stars in the sky.

**God hears our voice when we cry,
and is closer than our own breath.**

There is nothing our God cannot do.

Let us stand in awe. Let us worship God with wonder.

*** HYMN “Tell Out My Soul”**

– Music: W Greatorex, Words: T Dudley-Smith

Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice
Tender to me the promise of His Word
In God my Savior shall my heart rejoice

Tell out my soul the greatness of His name
Make known His might the deeds His arm has done
His mercy sure from age to age the same
His holy name the Lord the mighty one

Tell out my soul the greatness of His might
Powers and dominions lay their glory by
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight
The hungry fed the humble lifted high

Tell out my soul the glories of His Word
Firm is His promise and His mercy sure
Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord
To children's children and for evermore --||--

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Holy God,

**Somewhere in our childhood, we face pressure to
outgrow awe.**

**We turn into adults who obsess over data and facts.
We praise those who have answers and assume that
wonder is an answerless game.**

Forgive us for closing that door to you.

Remind us that the kingdom of God belongs to children.

**Teach us the ways of awe and wonder so that, like
Zechariah,**

**when we find ourselves speechless, our first words will
be words of praise.**

With hearts open wide, we pray, amen.

ALL RESPOND “Kyrie Eleison”

– Composer: Traditional Orthodox

Kyrie Eleison

Kyrie Eleison

Kyrie Eleison

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ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

THE WORD OF GOD

Lord, open our lips.

And our mouths shall show forth Your praise.

HYMN “10,000 Reasons”

– Composers: M Redman and J Myrin

Bless the Lord O my soul O my soul

Worship God’s holy name

Sing like never before O my soul

I'll worship Your holy name

The sun comes up it's a new day dawning

It's time to sing Your song again

Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me

Let me be singing when the evening comes

Bless the Lord O my soul O my soul
Worship God's holy name
Sing like never before O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name

You're rich in love and You're slow to anger
Your name is great and Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

Bless the Lord O my soul O my soul
Worship God's holy name
Sing like never before O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name

And on that day when my strength is failing
The end draws near and my time has come
Still my soul will sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years and then forevermore

Bless the Lord O my soul O my soul
Worship God's holy name
Sing like never before O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name

Sing like never before O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name
Worship Your holy name
Worship Your holy name
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SCRIPTURE READING

Your Word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet.

A light to our path.

Luke 1: 43 - 55 (N.T.)

43And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?

44For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy.

45And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”

46And Mary said: “My soul magnifies the Lord

47and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

48for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

49for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

50 His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

53 he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.

54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,

55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

Luke 1: 59 - 79 (N.T.)

59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father.

60 But his mother said, “No; he is to be called John.”

61 They said to her, “None of your relatives has this name.” ...

63 [Zechariah] asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” ...

64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. ...

68 “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,

for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.

69He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David,

70as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

71that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

72Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors and has remembered his holy covenant,

73the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us 74that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75in holiness and righteousness in his presence all our days.

76And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;

for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, 77to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins.

78By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us,

79to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Lord, may Your Word live in us.

And bear much fruit for Your glory.

HYMN “I’ve Got That Joy Joy Joy”

– Composer: G W Cooke

I’ve got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart

Down in my heart!

Down in my heart!

I’ve got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart

Down in my heart to stay

And I’m so happy, so very happy

I’ve got the love of Jesus in my heart

Down in my heart.

And I’m so happy, so very happy

I’ve got the love of Jesus in my heart.

I’ve got the peace that passes understanding, down in my heart

Down in my heart!

Down in my heart!

I’ve got the peace that passes understanding, down in my heart

Down in my heart to stay.

And I’m so happy, so very happy

I’ve got the love of Jesus in my heart

Down in my heart.

And I'm so happy, so very happy
I've got the love of Jesus in my heart.

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SERMON "Reasons for Rejoicing"

*** AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**We believe in a God who knows our names,
who counts the hairs on our heads,
and carries the dreams in our hearts.**

**We believe that God's fingerprints are all over creation,
and that God is forever speaking to us in a million
different ways.**

**We believe that awe and wonder,
goosebumps and laughter,
telling stories and paying attention,
are all ways that we can say thank you
to our creating, sustaining, and loving God.**

**Therefore we commit ourselves to moving through this
world**

**with eyes wide open,
with porous hearts,
and grateful spirits.**

**We commit ourselves to living lives of awe, wonder, and
gratitude,**

trusting that these things will forever draw us deeper into God's loving arms.

We believe.

We stand in awe.

Thanks be to God!

THE OFFERTORY

CONCERNS OF THE CHURCH

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in
heaven. Give us today 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 for ever. Amen.**

ALL RESPOND "Wait for The Lord"

– Composer: Taizé Community

**Wait For The Lord,
Whose Day Is Near.**

**Wait For The Lord,
Keep Watch, Take Heart! --||--**

OFFERTORY

THE PEACE

* **HYMN** “O Bless the God of Israel”

– Music: S S Wesley; Lyrics: H H Hopson

O bless the God of Israel,
who comes to set us free,
who visits and redeems us
and grants us liberty.

The prophets spoke of mercy,
of rescue and release;

God shall fulfil the promise
to bring our people peace.

Now from the house of David
a child of grace is given;

A Saviour comes among us
to raise us up to heaven.

Before him goes the herald
forerunner in the way,
the prophet of salvation,
the messenger of Day.

Where once were fear and darkness
the sun begins to rise

the dawning of forgiveness
upon the sinner's eyes,
to guide the feet of pilgrims
along the paths of peace:
O bless our God and Saviour,
with songs that never cease!

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*** COMMISSION and BLESSING**

The God who makes everything whole,
**sends us forth to bring healing to the broken-hearted
and to comfort the mourners in our midst.**

The Christ who comes to be with us,
**sends us forth to stand with the oppressed,
to release those held captive,
to invite the lonely into our lives.**

The Spirit who calls us to faithfulness,
**sends us forth to proclaim the gospel
that today is God's moment,
the day when all people will be blessed.**

Concerns of the Church

God does nothing except in response to believing prayer.

– John Wesley

- Tomorrow is International Migrants Day. The world observes it to shed light on the profound impact of forced migration caused by conflict, insecurity, climate change, and war, which affects close to 300 million worldwide. These individuals, irrespective of their reasons for moving, often find themselves among the most vulnerable and marginalised in society, facing abuse, exploitation, limited access to essential services, and xenophobic attacks fueled by misinformation. Many migrant workers endure temporary, informal, or unprotected jobs, exposing them to insecurity, layoffs, and poor working conditions. Despite these challenges,

migrants contribute significantly to prosperity, innovation, and sustainable development in countries of origin, transit, and destination. As we observe this International Migrants Day, let us pray for the well-being, safety, and resilience of migrants worldwide, and may collective efforts, guided by initiatives like the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), create a more humane and inclusive world for those on the move.

- Our hearts are heavy with concern for the people of Honduras as they grapple with the challenging aftermath of measures taken by President Xiomara Castro. Initially elected with promises of addressing corruption, human rights issues, and crime rates, her declaration of a state of exception in response to rising insecurity has raised alarms. The suspension of constitutional rights, including freedom of movement and protection against arbitrary detentions, has led to documented human rights violations and abuses. We pray for the people of Honduras, especially those facing injustice and hardship during these challenging times. May the spirit of Christmas inspire leaders to pursue strategies that prioritize human rights, justice, and sustainable solutions, bringing hope and peace to the troubled regions.
- We are deeply concerned about the situation in West and Central Africa, where, according to the UN, a record 49.5 million people are expected to go hungry next year due to a combination of conflict, climate change and high food prices. The region also faces multiple disease outbreaks, including measles, cholera, malaria, hepatitis, meningitis and dengue. Lord, we lift up the people of Africa to you. We pray for your mercy and grace to reach them in their time of need. We pray for an end to the hunger, conflict, disease and oppression that they face. We pray for your healing, protection and provision for them.
- Tensions escalate in the South China Sea as the Philippines considers expelling China's ambassador following confrontations last weekend. Chinese ships reportedly used water cannons against Filipino vessels attempting to deliver supplies to fishermen at Scarborough Shoal and resupply sailors on the grounded Sierra Madre on Second Thomas Shoal. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr vowed to defend the nation's sovereignty, and the incidents drew criticism from the US and Europe. As the situation intensifies, we pray for calm and diplomacy in the region, asking for wisdom to resolve disputes peacefully. May the leaders find common ground to foster stability and promote cooperation for the greater good.
- Hong Kong witnessed a historically low turnout in the local district election last Sunday despite a massive and expensive promotion campaign, signalling widespread disappointment with new electoral rules to curb dissent and diverse viewpoints. The diminished engagement reflects concerns about democratic values. In these challenging times, we offer a prayer for the Hong Kong government to heed the alarm call from its citizens, urging them to uphold principles that foster inclusivity, diversity, and the freedom of expression. May wisdom guide decision-making, and may a spirit of understanding and cooperation prevail for the well-being of all.

For the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle

We lift up in prayer the churches and people of all faiths in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and Mainland China.

We are **thankful** for:

- the long and complex history of China, with its many artefacts, cultures and traditions that have developed over millennia
- those who established missions and churches in the past, and the determination of Chinese Christians to contextualize the church here and now
- those who boldly live out their faith, challenging injustices even when they fear persecution
- the economic growth and development that has lifted many out of poverty
- the steps China is taking to counter huge environmental challenges.

We pray for:

- those left behind and further marginalized by rising economic growth, especially women and peasants in rural areas
- the political and social tensions between the mainland of China and Hong Kong and the rest of the world
- a growth in prophetic witness of the Chinese church in society
- for greater understanding and cooperation between Taiwan and the Mainland of China
- spiritual meaning and freedom from captivity to economic growth and consumerism.

For the Congregation

- Pray for those facing health challenges that require body strength restoration: Edna Lai, Paul Wong, Kevin Ng, Revd Bud, Jeanette Lee, Hend, Ng Kam Lee, Raymond Lau, Joy Babasa and Julianne Long. We continue to remember our senior members and friends: Mrs Samuel and the mother of Alex Melwani. May God heal the sick and give strength to those caring for loved ones at home and in care facilities.
- We pray for three friends who have left Hong Kong for resettlement in Canada. Please pray for Poules, Aline and Oxana as they start this new chapter in their lives.
- We remember all in our community travelling at this time. May the Lord bless them and refresh and renew relationships with family and friends.

Announcements

Today - A warm welcome to all who join our worship this morning. Please stay and join the tea & coffee fellowship after the service.

Thank you to Dr Hope Antone for your message today!

Christmas Worship Services In KUC

24/12 Sunday Worship at 10:30am; Christmas Eve Service at 7:30 pm

25/12 Christmas Day Service with Holy Communion at 11 am, followed by pot-luck lunch. If you are joining us on Christmas Day, please add your name to the signup sheet on the notice board and add the dish you will bring.

"Recruitment of Part-time Caretaker"

Kowloon Union Church is recruiting a part-time caretaker working 32 hours during weekdays. Please refer to the poster on the notice board or through KUC's Facebook page. Please contact Pastor Phyllis or Maggie if you are interested or you have someone to refer.

Dates For Your Diaries:

English Service for Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

This year, the worship materials for the Unity gathering have been shared by the people and churches of Burkina Faso.

Date: 23 January 2024 (Tue) Time: 8:00 pm

Venue: St. Mary's Church (5 Dyer Ave, Hung Hom)

Speaker: Revd Eden Fletcher (The Methodist Church, Hong Kong)

Theme: "You shall love the Lord your God...and your neighbour as yourself" (Luke 10:27)

Starting in February 2024

As part of the KUC centenary celebrations, the Christian Education Committee will launch a new study series entitled 'Discipleship Then and Now'.

Every first Sunday after worship in the Upper Fellowship Hall.

Please scan the QR code for more details of the schedule.

	TODAY 17 December
Liturgist:	Maggie Mathieson
Preacher:	Hope Antone
Pianist:	Joshua Pang
Lector:	Paul Lucas
Intercessory Prayers:	Emmanuel Adesina
Family Talk:	Lydia Catedral
Greeter:	Kevin Ng Edith San Juan
Offering Rota:	Anjenette Bolanos Rachel Wangari
Counting Rota	Rey Asis Judy Chan
Sunday School Leaders:	Jailyn Tomitis, Mary Adesina, Gabi Baumgartner
I.T. Team:	Jen Pang Bervinder Kaur

Freewill offering last week: HK\$5,924-
Promissory offering last week: HK\$7,000-