

Advent Candle Lighting Resources – 2009

These resources have been created by members of the Uniting Church Port Phillip West Presbytery Communal Justice Task Group, in collaboration with Cheryl Lawrie from the Commission for Mission.

The intention of these resources is to join our prayers in Advent to the longings of Jesus and the prophets: to imagine a world where the imprisoned are released and the oppressed are set free.

If you would like more information on the Communal Justice Task Group, or about ministry in prison contexts, please contact Cheryl Lawrie on 03 9251 5275.

Week 1

Person 1: We light this candle
We long for Christ's coming:

Response: Our God, let there be light.

Person 2:

In Advent the prophets call us to face up to the darkness in our world: the situations that are too awful for us to fathom and too complicated for us to untangle. There are some situations that only God's love can bring light to.

There are currently 4 500 people sitting within the darkness of the 14 prisons across Victoria. Every one of these prisoners has a story to be heard and understood, and for every one of these prisoners, there are countless others who have been affected by their actions: family, friends, victims, survivors - indeed, the whole community. We acknowledge that do not understand, and we cannot comprehend... yet that our faith somehow calls us to be agents of God's restoration, *especially* in the places that are beyond the reach of human grace. After all, we wait in this time of Advent, for the coming of the One who was born to set free all who are imprisoned.

Person 1:

God of the Advent,

Illuminate the world around us
so that we will see the cracks and stains
that mark the foundations of our community.

We pray for courage to look for your coming,
even though we know it will mean
that we will never see the world
with the same eyes
again.

Come, Lord, come

Response: Let light fill Your world.

Week 2

Person 1: We light this candle
We pray for your coming:

Response: Our God, let there be justice.

Person 2:

There are nearly 700 people who are on remand in Victorian prisons at present, waiting their day in court. Our justice system is based on a premise that people are innocent until proven guilty, yet those in remand fight to stay human while their lives disintegrate around them with rumour, innuendo, fear-mongering, countless delays and terrifying and hostile processes.

This advent, we are reminded of our challenge to be people of justice: to expect a just system where everyone is treated as the human they are; where it is recognised that justice begins with restoration, not retribution, and where wholeness and peace may be possible.

Person 1:

God of the Advent

We pray with those who have waited too long.

We pray for a glimmer of hope this advent
enough to light the way
for us to clear the path
for you to come

And may acts of justice be our prayer,
that one day the world will be known
by righteousness
love and mercy.

Come Lord, Come

Response: Let justice fill your world.

Week 3

Person 1: We light this candle
We pray for your coming:

Response: Our God, let there be hope.

Person 2:

There are currently eight Uniting Church chaplains visiting the men and women who reside in the 14 prisons across Victoria. The chaplains proclaim, in word and deed, the hope of God that is the foundation of our faith. Their prayer is that all prisoners will be treated with respect and dignity; that they will be recognised as fellow humans who are created in the image of God.

In Advent, when we remember how hope turns the world upside down, we pray for the chaplains, and we pray for those who need hope to survive another day.

Person 1:

God of the Advent,
it is too easy for us to make the promise
that light will come in the darkness
and hope will come in fear -

Our promises are empty
without the faith that lives to make it real.

We pray for the faith of the prophets
that overturns the power of darkness;
transforming it with justice and mercy
into light.

We pray for the discontent that will not let us rest
while darkness holds power in our world

Come, Lord, come

Response: Let hope fill your world

Week 4

Person 1: We light this candle
We pray for your coming:

Response: Our God, let there be love.

Person 2:

There is nothing simple about the love we speak of at Advent. Christ's love permeates the most complicated situations, taking no sides, but working in each person and situation to create life where there has been fear; a future where there has only been desperation.

Today we focus on those who are affected by the actions of people in prison: for victims of crime who struggle to recover and understand; for family and friends whose lives are ripped apart; for our community which becomes motivated and shrouded by fear. We acknowledge that our human response is to search for simple reasons and responses; we pray for the love that speaks into complexity. This Advent, we join our longing and prayers to God's ongoing story of restoration.

Person 1:

God of the Advent,
We pray that the audacious love
which once turned the world inside out at Christmas
will continue to do so;
that it will upturn all that oppresses
and bring life to that which has been crushed.

We pray for the love that will not let us rest
until the humbled are given voice
and the hungry have food to eat -
until the realm of the Christ comes.

Come, Lord, come,

Response: Let love fill your world.