



MODERATOR'S ADVENT MESSAGE 2024

Tēnā koutou katoa

Advent...a time of waiting. A time to slow down somewhat and take the time to reflect as we approach the season of Christmas. To reflect on the coming of the Christ. A time for the weekly rhythm of lighting an Advent candle, for singing seasonal hymns and songs, to talk of hope, peace, joy and love. And a time when we are very aware of how this rhythm and focus differs quite dramatically from the rhythm and focus of society, of the world.

How do the themes of hope, peace, joy and love resonate in our world at this time? Are they just sentimental, soft words we throw about, or do they speak to our hearts and have their outworking in action?

The backdrop to this church season feels very discordant to such themes. Last week we had the formal public apology from the government by the Prime Minister to the survivors of abuse in care. I attended a survivor led gathering at the Pipitea marae in Wellington that same day and saw and felt some of the reality of how life is, and has been, for some of those survivors. And last week the contentious Principles of the Treaty Bill had its first reading in the house, eliciting protest, dismay and anger from many. Beyond our shores, across the world, there is continued violence, oppression and prejudice. Do our themes of Advent have anything to say, any power, any impact?

As Christians we believe that they do, and they must. That Jesus, the Prince of Peace, continues to be the way, the truth and the life. Jesus spoke into situations of brokenness, strife and prejudice and showed a different way in which to live. A way that led to life.

Rather than seeing these themes as soft and sentimental, we see them as strong and purposeful.

At weddings I have sometimes used a version of that popular reading from Corinthians which puts it this way... "Love is tough: there is nothing it cannot face. Love never loses hope, never loses heart". There is a sense of resilience, tenaciousness, strength in this that I believe is seen in the life and works of Jesus.



The pictures that accompany this message are of little Christmas tree hangings made by one of our church members. One for each of the weeks of Advent - hope, peace, joy and love. Can we use these themes to motivate us to action in our particular context? For instance, can we ask/challenge ourselves with questions such as, how can I bring a sense of hope to those in need around me – in prayerful and practical ways? How can I work towards peace where there is brokenness? We can be very intentional in seeking to incarnate the Advent themes into our lives... hope, peace, joy, love. We are all part of the Body of Christ. As we all seek to incarnate these themes into our daily living, we strengthen the presence and effectiveness of the Body of Christ here and now. And we do this in the strength of Christ and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Enter this season of Advent with a sense of expectancy, and the knowledge that through Christ all things are possible.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.” [John 1: 1-5]

Advent blessings.

Rose

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Advent resources

- Presbyterian Children and Families Ministry has updated and reformatted their popular Little Book of Advent. It contains a Scripture reading, reflection question, and prayer for each day of Advent. Download [here](#).
- Presbyterian Research Centre has many Advent resources [here](#) on their Hewitson website.
- [This CWM Advent resource](#) from 2020, A Voice Cries Out, came at the close of another turbulent year. Advent is itself a time of turmoil and hope, we use it to prepare for the coming of the Christ-child into our realities