

Sermon: 11 December 2022.

Isaiah 35: 1-10

James 5: 7-10

Matthew 11: 2-11



PRAYER: O Lord, my rock and my redeemer, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you:

at work and at home,
at church and at play,
with friends and family,
in meetings and in solitude,
in every situation, all the time.

To you be all the glory. *Amen.*

From Psalm 19:14

Last week the Candle of Hope was lit, this week we light the candle of Joy and our Sentence is heading The Joy of Expectation

Arland J Hultgren notes *But the Season of Advent intrudes into the history of the world and especially into the lives of Christians. The mood, the hymns, and the prayers of this season seek to open us up to new ways of thinking and acting.*

It is a time of expectation. It is a time of waiting for the coming of the Saviour into the world. And what happens when he comes? He comes among us in his Word and through the Spirit to stir us up to get involved in his ministry among those who are left out, on the margins of society, and who are in need.

How does this fit with a report on Synod.

(how many others here have been to one of our Diocesan Synod's?)

I have been privileged to attend the Diocesan Synod as one of your lay representatives since 2010. This year's Synod hosted by the Parish of Kapiti headlined living hope. Next year Synod will be held in Masterton.

Over these year's - Bishop Justin was elected in 2010 - there have been many changes.

A quote from one of Bishop Justin's newsletters summons up the direction of this change.

In a speech to the Church of England General Synod in 2010, the Queen said, "At the heart of our faith stands not a preoccupation with our own welfare and comfort, but the concepts of service and of sacrifice as shown in the life and teachings of the one who made himself nothing, taking the very form of a servant."

And from an interview on Stuff:

"But doesn't failure shake his faith?"

That, says Duckworth, is one of the reasons people become disillusioned with religion. Because they are under the illusion of a "triumphalistic view" that they can change the world by being "successful". Duckworth argues that Jesus only transformed the world through redemptive suffering.

"So I think that's what I signed up for. What other plan do I have? That's the only one that seems to offer much hope."

From last week's Gospel reading Matthew 3: 11-12

¹¹ “I baptize you with^[b] water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with^[c] the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Contrast this image from John with today’s Matthew 11: 4-5 where Jesus is replying to John’s question “are you the one?” ⁴Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.

Synod makes important decisions for the future of God’s church. And the Bishops charge casts the vision for the forthcoming season (<https://anglicanmovement.nz/blog/gd140xvg7u4qb3f3559m5sce7rpabm?rq=synod>). I recommend you have a look at this online.

There is some paperwork to support the processes and discussions, business of Synod.

What you Always Wanted to Know About Synod (and possibly a few extra things too) is exactly what it says. Not exactly riveting reading, but anyone who looks at it will see the outline of how Synod is conducted.

Each year the Annual Accounts and the Annual Reports are available and discussed at the pre-synod regional meetings – These have superseded the Archdeaconry meetings. These meetings form perhaps the pre-session of Synod removing these clearing the decks of Synod for more discussion.

Synod has a set programme with some formalities that you would all be acquainted with: Powhiri, registrations followed by declaration of a Quorum. This session had 11 Motions including those for a Vote of Thanks and location for Synod 2023. Bishop Justin addressed Synod both with the Bishop’s Charge and an address on the Sunday. A feature of Synod is the Hotspots (quick snippets) this year we had Lambeth Highlights and from Eco Church NZ. This year there were Paper Bag Lunches so that we could take in missional ‘bites’ tastes of missional life on the Kapiti Coast – many were off site, but a number had workshops on site.

This year Bishop Justin’s address served as an introduction to a Mission and Vision exercise – taking feedback from all of the Diocese to form our future direction.

This was followed by an introduction to Murray Edridge the Wellington City Missioner. Followed by an excellent presentation of the Building project Whakamaru. Some of you will have heard of this project, others will have heard of HomeGround, the new building of Auckland City Mission - Te Tāpui Atawhai.

As Murray said crises do not always happen between 9 & 4:30 Monday to Friday.

Those that would like more information please have a look at the Wellington City Mission site : <https://wellingtoncitymission.org.nz/whakamaru/>

Briefly,

Whakamaru will have a 24/7/365 presence in the city allowing accessibility and outreach across the Wellington Region.

Murray described Whakamaru as a community where there is no ‘us and them.’

It is a hub of activity and connection in a multistory building off Adelaide Road in Wellington city.

It includes 35 residential living units, common spaces for City Mission staff and residents, a 120-seat café, a medical centre, art facility, commercial laundry, social supermarket, toilet and shower suites and much more.

Whakamaru opens in August 2024 on the 120th anniversary of Wellington City Mission.

Anglican Movement's support continues through our advent appeal which will raise funds for the Whakamaru chapel.

The beautiful chapel will be open 24/7 and a place for reflection and peace.

\$365,000 is needed to bring the chapel to life.

As Advent draws closer, more information for parishes and News for Our Movement readers will be available on a newly created website.

The Chapel will also be open 24/7 and is called A Light for the City. During the day light will flood in through the cross and at night light from the Cross will shine out.

For inspiration check out the Church of Light, Japan.

I would like to share with you two short video's : First from Bishop Just and then Murray Edridge.

Bishop Justin:

https://vimeo.com/778253606?embedded=true&source=vimeo_logo&owner=120503528

City Missioner Murray Edridge:

<https://youtu.be/zhAzEmQ1Ucs>

And to finish:

Bosco Peters notes:

Advent 3, in contemporary lectionaries, has John the Baptist as a strong thread, the one who was not the light, but came to testify to the light. We cannot of ourselves, darkness cannot of itself, eliminate darkness, but light shining, by the very act of shining, removes darkness.

And a collect to bring us together into prayer:

Let us pray (in silence) [that God's coming casts light into our hearts]

Incline your ear, O Lord, [or Incline your ear, O God,]

to our pleading,

and by the grace of your coming to us

enlighten the darkness of our hearts,

through Jesus Christ, our Saviour,

who is alive with you,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever.

Amen.