**The Fourth Sunday of Advent,**

**The Sixth in Our Advent Exploration**

**At St. Andrews’s, Gisborne**

**10 a.m. 24th. December, 2023.**

**+++ A WARM WELCOME : from Elders, Choir, Readers, and Minister**

**to everyone who join us Today;**

**Families and Friends and any Visitors;**

**You are ‘Welcome’ in this House of the Lord.**

**Please Join in singing the Introit Hymn below …**

**3-30 https://youtu.be/yZDqBt7qqsg**

**“Prepare the Way, O Zion” -- we join with Christians from around the World:**

**This is a Swedish Melody Tune: *BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN*. Swedish Melody;**

**Swenska Psalmboken, Stockholm, 1697 .Words: Frans Mikael Franzen (1772-1847**)

**As we sing together**

**with the choir of First Church, New Plymouth, Nebraska,USA**

**Led by Tom Trenney who plays the Organ of our opening Praise. [Words below.]**

**` Prepare the way, O Zion! Your Christ is drawing near!**

**Let every hill and valley, a level way appear.**

**Greet One who comes in glory, foretold in ancient story**

**O blest is Christ who came, in God’s most Holy Name**

**He brings God’s rule O Zion; he comes from heaven above:**

**His rule is peace and freedom, and justice, truth and Love.**

**Lift high your praise resounding: for Grace and Joy abounding,**

**O blest is Christ who came, in God’s most Holy Name.**

**Fling wide your gates, O Zion! Your Saviour’s rule embrace;**

**The tidings of salvation, proclaim in every place.**

**All lands will be rejoicing, their adoration voicing;**

**O blest is Christ who came, in God’s most Holy Name.**

**\*\*\*Our Call to Worship**; We are led by : Jenny Lawton [Elder.]

*L : As the Watchmen in their Tower, used to await the coming dawn,*

*so we too, await today --expectantly to hear of Your coming.*

*We honour your Word to us by saying together:*

**All : Living Lord; -- You promised Your people one born to be a King;**

**You chose a young woman to be his mother,**

**You filled her with Your grace.**

**Fill us now with that same grace;**

**that we too, may become part of Your will and purpose,**

**and rejoice aloud NOW to one and all as she did.**

**AMEN**

**\*\*\*1-PRAISE : Ch.4 277 Hark the glad sound! …**

**Hark the glad sound ! the Saviour comes;**

**the Saviour promised long.**

**Let every heart exult with joy,**

**and every voice with song!**

**He comes, the prisoners to relieve,**

**In captive bondage held;**

**the gates of brass before him burst,**

**the iron fetters yield.**

**He comes the broken hearts to bind,**

**the damaged souls to cure;**

**and with the treasures of his grace**

**to enrich the humble poor.**

**The sacred year has now revolved,**

**accepted of the Lord,**

**when heaven’s high promise is fulfilled,**

**Our Hope and Faith restored**

**Our glad hosannas Prince of Peace,**

**Your Name we shall proclaim**

**and heaven’s exalted arches ring**

**with thy most honoured name**

**>>1-READING : The BOOK of Psalms, Ch. 126**

**A Song of Ascent for the People Returning Joyfully from Exile. [ NIV ]**

**>>>We READ together:-**

*L : When the LORD restores the fortunes of Zion,*

*it will seem like a dream to us:*

**All : Our mouths will be filled with laughter,**

**our tongues will sing ‘ songs of joy’.**

*L : Then they t will say -- among the nations,*

*“… Look what their Lord has done for them.”*

**All :The LORD has already done great things for us,**

**Already we are filled with joy.**

*L : Restore and renew our good fortune, good Lord,*

*like streams of water in the midst of the desert.*

**All : Those who tend their fields still mourning and weeping,**

**carrying with them their bags of seeds to sow,**

**will soon return happy and singing songs of joy,**

**with sheaves a-plenty filling their arms. AMEN**

**\*\*\*2- PRAISE : SA 10 AA23ii** Come now Lord Jesus.

Come now Lord Jesus, enter our Christmas

be to us no stranger in this new-made manger.

1. Come, small and human, born of a woman,

yet a Son much greater of our own Creator.

1. Come, cold and crying, comfort denying,

no place to receive you, few yet to believe you.

1. Come, poor and simple, our flesh your temple,

in your body feeling hurt as well as healing.

1. Come, gift and token, bread to be broken –

star and sign still point you, myrrh will yet anoint you.

*Shirley Murray*

**\*\*\*Prayer of Adoration, Confession, and Thanksgiving.**

*L : Creator God, Creating God, Loving Father to all Your children,*

*You alone are worthy of all our praise.*

*As we come together to celebrate Your plan and purpose for humankind,*

*we celebrate the birth of Your only Son so long ago;*

*born a child in Bethlehem, and dwelling amongst us.*

*In Him, and through Him, You revealed Your love and mercy*

*towards a dysfunctional world, always ready to go its own way*.

**All : May our present celebrations of His birth on its Anniversary day,**

**provide gladness for young and old alike:**

**may all our joys be to Your greater Glory,**

**and may there be ‘Peace on earth’ to all mankind.**

*L : Holy and compassionate Lord, we are humbled when we remember*

*that You came in weakness, and not in power;*

*in simplicity, not in pomp and privilege;*

*born in a lowly stable to human parents;*

*worshipped by simple shepherds and Great Kings alike*.

**All : Remind us always that his birth was the reverse of many things**

**that we always want these and cling to them avidly;**

**position, reputation; wealth and possessions.**

**Forgive us for the importance we give to these symbols**

**to which this society seeks with such passion.**

**Forgive us when we are hard hearted to the poor and unemployed;**

**or those imprisoned by their own low self-esteem.**

**Forgive us when we as your Church, lose sight of truth and justice**

**Substituting our prejudices for Your Light and love.**

**Lord, have mercy upon us all,**

**Christ, have mercy upon us all.**

***[ -- SILENCE -- ]***

*L : Almighty God. You constantly pardon us; You confirm and strengthen us.*

*You teach us to know that we are forgiven and affirmed,*

*and that we are to forgive others and to affirm them.*

*This is the message brought from God to all mankind by His Angels;*

*“Peace on Earth, and goodwill towards all men*.

**All : Lord Jesus Christ: born amongst us, and living like one of us;**

**friend to saints and to sinners alike.**

**May we choose this special day**

**to be ‘re-born again’ in our hearts through faith. AMEN.**

**>>2 -READING : Gospel according to MATTHEW : Ch. 1 :18-24 [ NKJV ]** The details concerning the birth of Jesus

**>>3-READING : Gospel according to MARK, Ch 1 : vs. 2ff.**

Introduces our **THEME** of Waiting and Anticipatory Expectancy

**\*\*\*3-PRAISE : SA30 AA98 COC31 ‘Te Harinui’.**

**Not on a snowy night,**

**by star or candle light,**

**nor by an angel band**

**there came to our dear land**

***Te harinui, te harinui, te harinui,***

***glad tidings of great joy!***

**But on a summer day**

**within a quiet bay**

**the Māori people heard**

**the great and glorious word.**

**The people gathered round**

**upon the grassy ground**

**and heard the preacher say,**

**“I bring to you this day….”**

**Now in this blessed land**

**united heart and hand,**

**we praise the glorious birth,**

**and sing to all the earth.**

**++Our REFLECTION on TODAY’S SCRIPTURE**

**led by the Emeritus Minister Revd Dr Clive Yates**

**Theme “… WE ARE WAITING, but EXPECTING WHAT ?? …”**

**\*\*\*4- PRAISE : SA41 Silent Night, Holy Night, …**

**Silent night, Holy night,**

**all is calm, all is bright,**

**round the virgin mother and child,**

**holy infant, so tender and mild,**

**sleep in heavenly peace;**

**sleep in heavenly peace.**

**Silent night, Holy night,**

**shepherds quake at the sight;**

**glories stream from heaven afar,**

**heavenly hosts sing " Al-le-lu-ia;**

**Christ the Saviour is born,**

**Christ the Saviour is born.**

**Silent night, Holy night,**

**wondrous star, lend your light;**

**with the angels, let us sing;**

**Al-le-lu-ia to our king:**

**Christ our Saviour is born;**

**Christ our Saviour is born.**

**\*\*\*Our OFFERTORY; DOXOLOGY, and ADVENT RE-DEDICATION :**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow:**

**Praise God all creatures here below;**

**Praise Him above, ye heavenly host:**

**Praise Father; Son, and Holy Ghost.**

*L : As we bring forward our offerings and gifts;*

*Including all our donations of time and prayer,*

*We ask you humbly to look into our hearts this Advent-time.*

**All : Try us; search us: re-direct us; guide us:**

**Help us to learn again to speak Your Words and Wisdom**

**to the ears of others who search for meaning**

**in the midst of endless confusions and change.**

**In Jesus Name, with the Spirit and God’s sure authority …AMEN**

**>>>Our Responsive Prayers of Intercession for Others:**

*Our Response today is:*

*L : My Soul still magnifies and sings praises to the Lord***-**

**All : We Rejoice in the Lord always; and again, ‘We say, “Rejoice” ’.**

**\*\*\*5-PRAISE : CH4 477** Tune: Helmsley] Locke Hospital Collection. (1768.)

Words: ***Charles Wesley,*** (1788.)

**Lo, he comes with clouds descending,   
once for favoured sinners slain;   
thousand, thousand saints attending   
swell the triumph of his train.   
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!   
God appears on earth to reign.**

**Every eye shall now behold him,   
robed in dreadful majesty;   
those who set at naught and sold him,   
pierced and nailed him to the tree,   
deeply wailing, deeply wailing, deeply wailing,   
shall the true Messiah see.   
  
Yea, Amen! Let all adore thee,   
high on thy eternal throne;   
Savior, take the power and glory,   
claim the kingdom for thine own.   
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!   
Everlasting God, come down!**

**\*\*\*OUR ADVENT-TIME BLESSING**

**( derived from 1 Thess 5 : 24.)**

*L : We continue our journeying on together*

*May the God of peace sanctify us completely;*

**All : May my whole spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless,**

**until the actual coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**We remember! He calls us to be faithful,**

**and He will Bless us always.**

***(sung.). AMEN AMEN AMEN***

**ORGAN RECITAL Paul P..**