

# Tear open the heavens

The Congregation of Mark the Evangelist  
December 3 2023  
Advent 1B

## *Preparing for Worship Today*

- Welcome to this service of worship at Mark the Evangelist!
- Congregational responses are printed in ***bold italics***.
- We continue today with our new sung processional, communion elements and doxology – check the order to re-familiarise yourself with them!
- If you get here early enough, **please read through the text of today's readings prior to our hearing them.** The text can be found at the end of the order of service. We will have brief conversation/response time to the readings after hearing them, and before the sermon – all to make our hearing a little sharper!



## A SERVICE OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

**LITBIT:** There is a sense in which Christians are trained by the liturgy to be a people “untimely born,” as Paul says of himself (1 Cor. 15:8). This is not because we are traditionalists who slavishly and nostalgically long for the old ways (Jer. 6:16). However, there is a deep sense in which the church is a people called to resist the presentism embedded in the tyranny of the contemporary. We are called to be a people of memory, who are shaped by a tradition that is millennia older than the last Billboard chart. And we are also called to be a people of expectation, praying for and looking forward to a coming kingdom that will break in upon our present as a thief in the night. We are a stretched people, citizens of a kingdom that is both older and newer than anything offered by “the contemporary.” The practices of Christian worship over the liturgical year form in us something of an “old soul” that is perpetually pointed to a future, longing for a coming kingdom, and seeking to be such a stretched people in the present who are a foretaste of the coming kingdom.

JAMES K A SMITH

**Prelude** J Pachelbel(?), *Fuga in c*

## The Gathering of the People of God

### Sung Processional

*This round can be sung in numerous parts; feel free to join in wherever you like!*

Part 1  
All cre - a - tion un - der hea - ven, lift your heart, lift your voice!

Part 2

Part 3  
God comes bring - ing health and whole - ness; lift your heart, lift your voice!

Part 4  
Listen for repetition of this bar to finish

**All creation under heaven,  
lift your heart, lift your voice!  
God come bringing health and wholeness,  
lift your hear, lift your voice! (repeat...)**

### The Gospel of the Coming God

Mark 13.24-37 *Keep awake*

...I will lead the blind  
by a road they do not know,  
**by the paths they have not known  
I will guide them.**

I will turn the darkness before them into light,  
**the rough places into level ground.**

These are the things I will do  
**and I will not forsake them.**

*Isaiah 42:16*

*The first Advent Candle is lit.*

### Prayer of invocation

**Hymn 445** Jesus, where'er your people meet  
'O rend the heavens, come quickly down...'

## The Word Spoken: Scripture and Preaching

### The Testimony of Scripture

Your word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet  
**and a light to our path.**

**Isaiah 64.1-9** *O that you would tear open the heavens*

**Psalms 80.1-7, 17-19** *Let your face shine, that we may be saved*  
*The REFRAIN is sung before and after the whole psalm.*  
*The psalm text is then sung responsively to the TONE*

REFRAIN Hal H. Hopson

God is our ref - uge; God is our strength.

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TONE

### Refrain

<sup>1</sup>Give ear, O Shep-|-herd of Israel,  
**you who lead Joseph | like a flock!**  
You who are enthroned up-|-on the cherubim,  
**shine forth <sup>2</sup>before Ephraim and Benjamin and | Manasseh.**

Stir | up your might,  
**and | come to save us!**

<sup>4</sup>O LORD God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your | people's prayers?

<sup>5</sup>**You have fed them with the bread of tears,  
and given them tears to drink | in full measure.**

<sup>6</sup>You make us the scorn | of our neighbors;  
**our enemies laugh a-|-mong themselves.**

<sup>7</sup>Restore us, O | God of hosts;

***let your face shine, that we | may be saved.***

...<sup>17</sup>But let your hand be upon the one at | your right hand,  
***the one whom you made strong | for yourself.***

<sup>18</sup>Then we will never turn | back from you;

***give us life, and we will call | on your name.***

<sup>19</sup>Restore us, O LORD | God of hosts;

***let your face shine, that we | may be saved.***

*Refrain*

This is the word of the Lord.

***Thanks be to God.***

## The Preaching of the Word

*The sermon text will normally be available  
after worship and online*

*A 'sermon of stillness' – a moment for quiet reflection – usually follows the preaching*

## Prayer of Confession

The musical notation is written on three staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first staff is for the Cantor, singing 'Kyr-i - e, Kyr-i - e, Kyr-i - e, el - ei - son. Kyr-i - e, Kyr-i - e, Kyr-i - e, el - ei - son.' The second staff is for the Congregation, singing 'Chris-te, Chris-te, Chris-te el - ei - son. Chris-te, Chris-te, Chris-te el - ei - son.' The third staff is for the Cantor, singing 'Kyr-i - e, Kyr-i - e, Kyr-i - e, el - ei - son. Kyr-i - e Kyr-i - e Kyr-i - e, el - ei - son.' The notation includes treble clefs, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The lyrics are written below the notes.

*Cantor sings first, with congregation repeating:*

***Kyrie, Kyrie, Kyrie eleison;  
Christe, Christe, Christe eleison;  
Kyrie, Kyrie, Kyrie eleison.***

*(= "Lord/Christ have mercy")*

## Declaration of Forgiveness

*(Please stand if you are able)*

...hear, then, Christ's word of grace to us:  
Your sins are forgiven.

**Thanks be to God!**

## Doxology *via TIS 717 Give thanks with a grateful heart*

**Give thanks with a grateful heart,  
give thanks to the Holy One,  
give thanks because he's given  
Jesus Christ His Son.**

**And now let the weak say I am strong,  
let the poor say I am rich  
because of what the Lord has done for us.**

**Give thanks, give thanks, give thanks.**

## The Peace

The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
***And also with you.***

## Affirmation of Faith: We are a pilgrim people

*Adapted from the Basis of Union of the Uniting Church in Australia*

***We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.  
We proclaim Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen One,  
confessing him as Lord  
to the glory of God the Father.  
In the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
we acclaim Jesus as the Lord of the Church,  
the Head over all things,  
the beginning of a new creation.***

***We acknowledge that we live and work  
between the time of Christ's death and resurrection  
and the final consummation of all things  
which he will bring.***

***We are a pilgrim people,  
always on the way towards a promised goal;  
on the way Christ feeds us with word and sacraments,  
and we have the gift of the Spirit  
in order that we may not lose the way.***

***We will live and work within the faith and unity  
of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church,  
bearing witness to that unity  
which is both Christ's gift and his will.***

***We affirm that every member of the Church  
is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified.  
Together with all the people of God,  
we will serve the world for which Christ died.  
And we await with hope the day of the Lord Jesus.***

### **Prayers of the People**

*(Names for inclusion in the prayers may be recorded in the book in the narthex)*

### ***The Visible Word: Eucharist***

#### **Hymn 509 Come now, everlasting Spirit**

*'...let us feel your power, applying  
Christ to every soul, and mine...'*

*(If you are able, please remain standing until after the Lord's Prayer)*

#### **The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving**

The Lord be with you.

***And also with you.***

Lift up your hearts.

***We lift them to the Lord.***

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

***It is right to give our thanks and praise.***

*(The prayer continues...)*



***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory,  
hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest!  
Hosanna in the highest!***

*(The prayer continues...)*

### **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.***

*(The people sit)*

## The Breaking of the Bread

...Let us receive what we are,  
let us become what we receive  
***The body of Christ***

## The Communion

*The Uniting Church recognises this Table as the Lord's and, so, open to all who would normally commune in their home congregations.*

## Offering

*Many members now make their offering by electronic transfer; the plate will be passed for those who prefer to make cash/envelope offerings. The prayer dedicating the offerings 'captures' the full range of gifts.*

## Notices

### ***The Sending Forth of the People of God***

**Hymn** 560(ii) All my hope on God is founded

*'...But God's power, hour by hour,  
is my temple and my tower....'*

## Word of Mission and Blessing

**Postlude** D Buxtehude, *Magnificat Primi Toni*

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We'd love to hear your feedback on the service.

Our email address is:

[enquiries@marktheevangelist.unitingchurch.org.au](mailto:enquiries@marktheevangelist.unitingchurch.org.au)

Our website is:

<http://marktheevangelist.unitingchurch.org.au/>

## TODAY'S READINGS

*Read the following texts-for-the-day before the service and be ready for a brief conversation about them before we hear them read!*

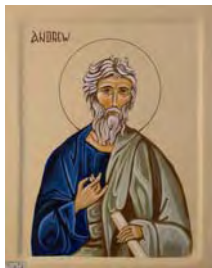
### **Isaiah 64:1-9**

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence—<sup>2</sup>as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! <sup>3</sup>When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. <sup>4</sup>From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. <sup>5</sup>You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed.

<sup>6</sup>We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. <sup>7</sup>There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. <sup>8</sup>Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. <sup>9</sup>Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

## PEOPLE TO COMMEMORATE

### Andrew, apostle



The disciple Andrew was the first called of the twelve apostles. Andrew belonged to Bethsaida of Galilee. He was the brother of Simon Peter and his father's name was John. He appears more often in the Gospel of John than in Matthew, Mark and Luke. His name is Greek, and he is given no Hebraic or Aramaic name.

Andrew's call to be an apostle took place through three different stages. Andrew we are told had been a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee. He then seems to have left Galilee to travel with others to Bethany, near the Jordan, when he heard of John the Baptist.

He became a follower of John. It was at this point that he encountered Jesus and when John said that Jesus was the Lamb of God, Andrew decided to leave John and follow Jesus. He first went to tell his brother, Simon Peter, that he had found the Messiah.

It would seem that Andrew accompanied Jesus when he returned to Galilee, where Andrew and Peter resumed their old vocation as fishermen. Andrew at this time received his second call. This seems to have happened after John the Baptist was cast into prison. Andrew and his brother, along with James and John, also brothers, were now called on to forsake their occupation as "fishers of fish" and become "fishers of men".

The final part of Andrew's call was when he was called to be one of the twelve Apostles. Andrew along with Peter, James and John seemed to form a group closer to Jesus than the others.

Andrew in all the times we meet him is introducing people to Jesus. As already noted he introduces Peter to Jesus; at the feeding of the five thousand by the Sea of Galilee, the attention of Jesus was drawn to the lad with five barley loaves and two fishes by Andrew; he introduces the Greeks to Jesus after Philip speaks to him. Andrew's role was to bring people to Jesus.

After the death of Jesus Andrew is said to have preached in many areas to the north of Palestine. Out of this work, tradition says that the Patriarchate of Constantinople grew.

[contd ...]

## PEOPLE TO COMMEMORATE

### Andrew, apostle [... contd]

Tradition tells us that Andrew was martyred by crucifixion at the city of Patras in Achaia. Although early tradition stated that he was bound, not nailed, to a Latin cross of the kind on which Jesus is said to have been crucified; later tradition said that he had been crucified on a cross of the form called crux decussata. This is the shape of the saltire on the Scottish flag. It is now known as the Saint Andrew's Cross.

The relics of Andrew were discovered in Constantinople in the time of Justinian, and part of his cross is now in St. Peter's, Rome. It is said that his arm was transferred to Scotland by St. Regulus. Many of his body parts are said to be found scattered across Europe.

He became a patron saint of many places including Ukraine, Romania, Russia, Greece and Scotland. His patron day is November 30th.

*written by Rev Peter Welsh*

## **The Ecumenical Prayer Cycle**

[www.oikoumene.org/resources/prayer-cycle](http://www.oikoumene.org/resources/prayer-cycle)

### **Myanmar**

The name of the country was changed in 1989 from Union of Burma to Myanmar. The first Burmese empire was founded in the 11th century. It was invaded by the British in the 19th century. After the Japanese occupation during World War II, the country became sovereign in 1948. From 1962 to 1990 it was ruled by a military dictator, and subsequently a military-controlled government was formed. Mass protests in 1988 were violently repressed, but did result in democratic elections in 1990, which were won by the National League for Democracy (NLD). The military refused to step down and since then have kept tight control of the country. The leader of the NLD, Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, has been under house arrest most of the time. The population of Myanmar is made up of many different ethnic groups. In the north, armed opposition to the central government has been going on for decades. The military were accused of imposing forced labour and committing many other human rights violations. Myanmar's economy is based on agriculture, gems, timber and oil. The majority of the population are poor peasants and workers. Catholic missionaries entered the area in the 16th century and Protestant missions began in the 19th century. The largest church is the Myanmar Baptist Convention. The Assemblies of God and numerous other Pentecostal and Evangelical churches are active and growing. The Myanmar Council of Churches is the ecumenical body. There is an Evangelical Christian Fellowship, affiliated with the WEA.

### **Thailand**

Known as Siam until 1939, Thailand is the only country in southern Asia that was never under colonial rule. It dates its history as a national kingdom to 1238. The constitutional monarchy was established in 1932. During World War II, Thailand was loosely allied with Japan. The latter half of the 20th century was marked by a number of military coups. In 1995, a new democratic government was elected. Thailand is a Buddhist country. The king is the protector of Thai Buddhism and a symbol of national identity and unity. The population is majority Thai, with smaller groups of Lao, Chinese, tribal people, and Malays, who are Muslim. Tensions with some Islamic groups in the south erupted in 2004 and 2005. Thailand has built a modern and performing economy, based on the production and export of rice, rubber, jewelry, textile, electronic and other manufactured goods, and tourism. In the rural areas subsistence farming is still the main source of livelihood. Thailand was one of the countries hit by the tsunami of December 2004. Catholic missionaries began working in Siam in the 17th and Protestants in the 19th century. Many other churches and groups came after World War II. In spite of these efforts, Christians remain a tiny minority. The Church of Christ in Thailand and the Karen Baptist Convention are the largest Protestant churches. The Church of Christ and the Catholic Church have a joint committee. The Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand regroups a large number of Pentecostal and other churches and groups, and is affiliated with the WEA.



## NOTICES

### AKBAR OUR NEIGHBOUR

Akbar, the Iranian asylum seeker supported by this congregation since his release from (illegal) detention in 2013, continues to live in Australia with no visa, no work rights and no legal status. Thanks to his generously/privately funded North Melbourne gardening 'work', and the regular financial contributions of some of our congregation members he enjoys some financial independence. He has recently overcome an accommodation 'crisis' with practical assistance from these sources. Akbar is included in our prayers of intercession on the first Sunday in each month.

*Rosalie Hudson*

### SUMMER EDITION OF MARK THE WORD

Vicki and Rosemary are seeking contributions for the 2023 Summer edition of Mark the Word. We are again not proposing a theme for this edition and are open to any topic.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could send these via email to us (vicki.radcliffe@gmail.com or rosemarywearing@gmail.com) **no later than Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2023.**

### MOZART: DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE – FROM DECEMBER 6-9

**Union Theatre, Level 2, Arts and Cultural Building (Parkville campus),  
December 6,7,8,9**

Finally, after three years, we're producing the Magic Flute, in my arrangement for chamber orchestra. There are still a few tickets left!  
<https://events.unimelb.edu.au/finearts-music/event/34856-die-zauberflote-the-magic-flute>



**First Sunday of Advent**

**Hope for families forced to flee**

Jehan\*, a brave mother of five, made the courageous decision to escape on foot to Pakistan with her family when Afghanistan fell to the Taliban in 2021. Your gifts through the Christmas Bowl can help Act for Peace coordinate rapid emergency responses with local partners, like Church World Services Asia, so that they can immediately act, giving families like Jehan's safety in exile – and hope for the future – when they need it most. **Please give today.**

\*Name changed for safety reasons

**CALL: 1800 025 101 VISIT: [christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au](http://christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au)**

The Christmas appeal of Act for Peace, the international humanitarian agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia. ABN 86 619 970 188



**Christmas Bowl**

### People to commemorate this week

Andrew, apostle

### Ecumenical Prayer Cycle

Myanmar, Thailand

### LECTIONARY READINGS 10 DECEMBER 2023

Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

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As a Parish Mission of the Uniting Church in Australia,

The Congregation of Mark the Evangelist is responsible for Hotham Mission.

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