

## Closing Prayer

Let the heavens open  
And the skies rain down the just one;  
let the earth bring forth Christ  
who is the wisdom and power of God.

Let us put aside our fear and  
Look forward to the future with courage  
Lord, you make all things new,  
Let us never lose trust in you

We praise and thank you,  
The hope and joy of all of us  
In every age  
We thank you for all that we have.  
Move us to give of our plenty  
To those who have little.

Lord of liberty and life  
Give us the wisdom to see  
Where life is being weakened or destroyed  
And to act courageously with you  
To restore it.



### Meaning of the Advent Wreath:

- The 1st **purple** candle is lit on the 1st Sunday in Advent, Nov 25th, and is the candle of HOPE.
- The 2nd **purple** candle is lit on the 2nd Sunday in Advent, Dec 2nd, and is the candle of PEACE.
- The 3rd **pink** candle is lit on the 3rd Sunday in Advent, Dec 9th, also known as Gaudete Sunday, and is the candle of JOY.
- The 4th **purple** candle is lit on the 4th Sunday in Advent, Dec 16th, and is the candle of LOVE.
- The central white candle is lit on Christmas Day as the light of Christ enters the world when Jesus is born.
- The wreath is **evergreen** symbolising everlasting life, and in the shape of a circle because a circle has no beginning and no end. It goes on forever, just like God's love for us.



### Partners in Faith

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## Making Space for Tenderness Third Sunday of Advent 2017



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## 1. Welcome and opening Prayer

Lord, source of our life  
We come from you, we go back  
to you.  
Help us to trust your power, love  
and energy working in and through us  
so that people may have hope  
may overcome barriers  
and have the courage to keep struggling.

Let us find along the way  
tender signs of your sweet presence  
keeping us going.

May your energy move us  
to create circles of friendship, love  
peace, wisdom, justice and peace.  
wherever we are.

*S. ni Ch*

## 2. Gospel text: John 1:6-8; 19-28

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through Him all might believe. He himself was not the Light; he came only as a witness to the light.

Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah." They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not."  
"Are you the prophet?"  
He answered, " No."

Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'make straight the way of the Lord.'"

Now the Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, "Why then do you baptise if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" "I baptise with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

## 3. Quiet Moment

*People can take time to read over the text for themselves again and pick out words or short phrases that strike them and say them out loud. When everyone has had a chance to say their word/phrase, they can briefly say why such a word/phrase struck them, in relation to themselves or their community or the world. (NB this not a time for argument or discussion).*

## 4. Reflection Questions

1. 'Aspire not to have more but to be more'.  
Comment.
2. Name some people you know who are like 'oaks of righteousness' (Isaiah 61:3) standing up for people's rights.

3. John was on fire with his message:  
what passion burns in you?

## 5. Prayers

*Mention situations and people we want to pray for....*

## 6. Background Notes for John 1:6-8; 19-28

The Jewish authorities are disturbed by all the people streaming out to John, leaving Jerusalem and the Temple. John has caused enough of an upheaval to make them send down Priests, Levites and Pharisees. These come armed with a string of loaded questions based on their sacred history. They confront John, with them, fearing he might be Elijah returned or Moses or even – were it possible – the long-awaited Messiah. John's answers are based in the same sacred history. The outcome is no weakening or lessening of his message; if anything hope and belief are strengthened. The words that precede verses 6-8 are: 'a light that shines in the dark.' 'a light that darkness could not overcome.' This light will shine on the people who can open their hearts to live truthfully, thankfully, blossoming, becoming themselves sources of energy, light and goodness wherever they are. Knowing, as we ourselves know, that this way of living is possible because God does not let us down.