

## 7. Closing Prayer

Lord God,  
In Jesus, you came in the body;  
flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone,  
one with us in searing pain and delirious  
laughter.

By your love  
change our ideas,  
especially our religious ideas  
into living signs of your worth and dreams.

We believe that your power to heal  
is still present.

We call on your help,  
remembering  
those whose minds are menaced by thoughts  
which worry or wound them,  
those whose hearts are broken  
because love has gone,  
those whose feet walk in circles  
stopping only when they are tired  
resting only to walk in circles again,  
those who feel discarded or disposable.

O Jesus, put your hands where our prayers  
beckon.

### Protea

A genus of South African flowering plants,  
also called sugarbushes. Found also in the  
Golan Heights and Mediterranean countries.  
(Afrikaans:suikerbos)



Protea  
Symbol of Courage

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### Partners in Faith

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Making Space for Change  
Second Sunday of Advent 2021

## 1. Welcome and opening prayer

Wake us up Lord!  
Wake us up Lord!  
The night is nearly over.  
Let us begin our Advent journey.  
Move us from our lives  
of greed and selfishness,  
from our globalised world  
of inequality and exploitation  
to your kingdom  
of righteousness and mercy.  
To a transformed world,  
where peace is built on understanding  
not weapons  
where struggling people can  
fulfill their dreams,  
where businesses are built on need not greed  
and your Creation is nurtured not abused.  
Wake us up, Lord.  
Let us live as people of light.

Sue Cooper

## 2. Texts

### Gospel text: Luke 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar - when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip Tetrarch of Iturea and Tracōnitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene - during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,  
Make straight paths for him.

Every valley shall be filled in,  
every mountain and hill made low.  
The crooked roads shall be made straight,  
the rough ways smooth.  
And all people will see God’s salvation.”

## 3. Quiet time...

*People can read over the gospel text again and pick out a word or short phrase that strikes them and say it out loud. When everyone has had a chance to speak, people can silently listen to what God is saying to them in their hearts linking it with themselves, their community, society or the world. Then some sharing.*

**NB** This is not time for argument.

## 4. Reflection Questions for Luke 3:1-6

Think of a significant change you have made.  
What inspired you?

Baruch speaks of ‘God’s cloak of integrity’ shielding and the ‘forests and fragrant trees’ lending shade (Baruch 5: 1 and 8):  
How /when have you experienced God’s protection?

## 5. Prayers

*Mentioning the people and situations we want to pray for.*

## 6. Background notes for Luke 3:1-6

Luke places John the Baptist on a wide political stage of imperial Rome, top Jewish rulers and the Jewish high priestly families. His coming out of the wilderness is in total contrast to their panoply of power. He parted company with the temple and its system of ritual purification and forgiveness. The temple was corrupt, no longer a holy place. He chooses to go to land east of the Jordan, outside the boundaries of Israel.

A form of baptism had been used with gentiles converting to the Jewish faith. And Jews also used water in tanks and wells for purifying themselves. But John’s baptism is different :he plunges the people in water that is flowing fast and furious. To be baptized by him meant a readiness for a wholehearted transformation, opening themselves to a radical change of values and life-style.

The vivid images from Isaiah 40:3-5: uprooting the dying tree, filling holes, levelling, straightening, sifting and sorting out, pruning and weeding emphasize how radical is the change needed. It’s about letting God hold sway again in their hearts and trusting God’s gracious power lead them forward.

