

## 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 Diversity

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### Partners in Faith

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Making Space for Change  
Third Sunday of Advent 2021

## 1. Welcome and opening prayer

Lord Jesus, you are the Daystar  
of our lives:  
dispel darkness, awaken our  
sleeping faith;  
turn our jealousies into love;  
give us hope when we doubt  
that life is a treasure.  
Smile on us through the beauty and  
wonder of all you have made;  
bring justice to those bowed down  
with suffering;  
refresh us with wisdom, understanding,  
new vision,.  
and let us never lose hope in you.  
God of our lives, you are always  
calling us to follow you into the future,  
inviting us to new ventures, new  
challenges, new ways to care  
and new ways to touch hearts.  
When we are fearful of the unknown  
give us courage,  
you ho can bring change and hope  
out of all situations.

## 2. Texts

### Gospel text: Luke 3:7-18

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptised by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming of wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise children up for Abraham. The axe is already at the root of the trees and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

"What should we do then?" the crowd asked.

John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same."

Even tax collectors came to be baptised. "Teacher," they said, "what should we do?" "Don't collect anymore than you are required to," he told them. Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely - be content with your pay."

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. John answered them all, "I baptise you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.

### 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 3:7-18

Zephaniah (3:14) describes God as 'dancing with joy over us'. How does that resonate with you?

What would you like to be 'sifting' and 'sorting' this Advent?

## 5. Prayers

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

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

When people heard about John they began to have hope again. They rushed to be cleansed, touched, like vipers leaving escaping a bush fire. John warns them that it's useless to depend on 'good roots' from the past John can give advice, mend, patch up, repair, warn, recommend but Luke is very careful to present him as the one preparing the way for Jesus. Probably John himself did not have a clear idea of who 'the more powerful one' would be.

Fire in Old Testament imagery often represented the presence of a saving God. John saw Israel as needing a radical cleansing: time to clear out all the rubbish and burn away useless brush.

Luke, writing post resurrection, speaks of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit changing mindsets and opening closed hearts. It is this transformation that leads to a transformed world where justice and peace will reign.