



**ST NINIAN'S UNITING CHURCH**  
**WEDNESDAY WORDS**  
**18 December 2024**  
**Scripture Philippians 4:4-7**



### **Prayer**

Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you. (Isaiah 12:4-6)

### **Thanks & praise prayer points**

- For Jesus being our salvation, our certainty in a world of uncertainty.
- For preparations for Christmas, including lights and decorations, which bring joy to our community.
- For care-workers, nurses, doctors and other health professionals, who seek to bring healing, health and care.
- For the leaders of our church - our minister, Chair of parish council, and other leaders who encourage, support and enable us to meet for worship each week.

### **Forgiveness prayer points**

- That we do not always rejoice in your love and care.
- That we are not reconciled to those who have hurt us, and hold grudges and anger.
- That we resist change that your Holy Spirit brings to our church and community.

### **Words of Grace**

Surely God is our salvation; We will trust and will not be afraid, for the LORD is my strength and my might; he is my salvation. With joy we will draw water from the wells of salvation.  
Amen

(paraphrase Isaiah 12:2-3)

## **Reading: Philippians 4:4-7**

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

## **Reflection**

The bible is full of commands to 'rejoice'. Yet we have to be careful not to see these as a call to simply 'be happy'. The scriptures call to 'rejoice' can take place in the context of difficult times and places.

Indeed the Apostle Paul – the writer of Philippians – is not in a happy situation. He is alone, in prison, awaiting trial and possibly facing a sentence of death, and worried about the well-being and spiritual health of the young church in Philippi. So we can assume he is probably not terribly happy.

Yet his letter to the Philippians (a mere four chapters) contains 14 references to joy or rejoicing. So Paul is joyful despite his circumstances, and able to call on the Philippians to rejoice with him in whatever circumstances they find themselves.

So how can Paul call on people to 'rejoice' in the face of such adversity. How can people suffering from war and conflict, facing hunger, or struggling with physical or mental health issues 'rejoice'. It suggests that the kind of 'joy' to which Paul invites God's adopted children is not based on our circumstances.

Plenty of people reading Philippians today will be very happy. They may be celebrating Christmas with a new family member, or in a new home, or after a new start in life (like a job, going to university, or retirement). Some readers will be in good health, sharing this time with family and friends. Many of us can readily rejoice in the good things in our lives, the blessings we have from God.

But not everyone will. Some individuals circumstances may mean that 'being happy' is really difficult. But despite this, they are also called to 'rejoice'. For Paul's commandment is to 'rejoice in the Lord' because 'the Lord is near'. We are not simply told to 'put up, endure and pretend everything is OK'.

We can rejoice that the Lord is near in two different ways.

Firstly, God who in Christ promised never to leave or abandon us, is close at hand by the Holy Spirit. Even in the most difficult circumstances, nothing can remove us from love and care of our Lord God. Whether we are walking in a deep dark valley, or hiking on top of the mountains, God is with us. The Lord is near in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. The Lord is

near in the prayers and presence of other believers. The Lord is near in the community of saints gathered together as the Church.

And Paul reminds us that, whatever our circumstances, we can pray. We can pray, 'with thanksgiving', presenting our requests to God. Whatever our circumstances, nothing can stop us from praying.

And secondly, we can rejoice because God will come again. The apostle Paul won't need to sit in prison for ever; the Philippians won't need to endure persecution forever; and we won't need to endure suffering and pain forever.

In this advent time, as we recall the birth of Jesus Christ, we can rejoice whatever our circumstances that Jesus Christ will come again. And when Jesus does he will make all things right. This is the great hope of the promise of the coming of Jesus Christ.

### **Intercessory Prayers**

Lord God, Creator of the universe and our world, help us to care for your creation. May all people and governments work to address the impacts of climate change, and protect our precious earth from damage.

Lord God, King of Heaven and Earth, given wisdom and compassion to leaders in our Government. May our political leaders work for the good of all peoples, and not just for power. My those who administer justice ensure justice for the poor and marginalised.

Jesus Christ, empower us to speak boldly in your name, sharing the news of your love and salvation with others. May our church community work tother as one to proclaim your name and be a visible symbol of you in this place. Be with us as we prepare for Christmas, that we may work as one to share the story of your birth to those around us.

Jesus Christ, bless us and keep us, and our families, in heath and wholeness. May families traveling to be together this year travel with safety, engage with joy and fellowship, and depart with happy memories.

Holy Spirit, Comforter of all, bring healing and health to those who are in poor health, in hospital, or in care. Sustain them and given them peace. Bless those who provide care and support for others.

Holy Spirit, Friend of all, be with those who are alone this Christmas, due to geography or conflict. Given them comfort and company. We pray for those who will provide care and support to others on Christmas Day, displaying your love and care to others.

Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier help us to rejoice always, recalling the blessings provided in our life. Help us to look forward with joy and anticipation towards Christmas, and the new creation that you will bring to this earth when you return in glory.

Amen

**Song:** Rejoice the Lord is king

[Rejoice, the Lord is King \(Song Leading Video\) // Emu Music \(youtube.com\)](#)



Rejoice the Lord is King:  
Your Lord and King adore!  
Rejoice, give thanks and sing,  
And triumph evermore.  
Lift up your heart,  
Lift up your voice!  
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice.

Jesus, the Savior, reigns,  
The God of truth and love;  
When He has purged our stains,  
He took his seat above;  
Lift up your heart,  
Lift up your voice!  
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice

His kingdom cannot fail,  
He rules o'er earth and heav'n;  
The keys of death and hell  
Are to our Jesus giv'n:  
Lift up your heart,  
Lift up your voice!  
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Rejoice in glorious hope!  
Our Lord and judge shall come  
And take His servants up  
To their eternal home:  
Lift up your heart,  
Lift up your voice!  
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!