

ST PAUL'S CHURCH



Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight...'

Mark 1:3

6 December 2020

Welcome

We warmly welcome you to the Confirmation service this morning! Confirmation is a special service in the Anglican Church, presided by the Bishop, where a baptised believer who is at least 14 years of age:

Declares publicly the faith into which he/she has been baptised.

Is affirmed as a believer and received into full communion of the saints.

Is blessed and strengthened through the laying-on of hands by the Bishop.

Is commissioned into active service in the Church of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.



CONFIRMATION CANDIDATES

English Congregation

Ho Jing Yang	Kyra Nycole Lim (Jie Min)
Letitia Khoo Phui Yan	Isabella Peace Ong
Lai Chee Keong	Silas Kirsh Philip
Betty Anizah Lee	Isaac Tan
Lee Jie, Nicklaus	Ng Hee Boon Alan
Elliot Josh Lim	Liu Danhua

Chinese Congregation

Cua Gek Boi Doris
Priscilla Ng Noi Hoon
Ng Seok Hong Shanna
Tan Siam Guek Jenny
Teo Pit Hong
Yang Dan

Tamil Congregation

Anthony Francis Dora Christy
Chhma d/o Chandriga Tiwari
Peter Marsalin Caspas
Ramesh Gladlin Smitha
Sam Joseph s/o Saravanan
Kurusamy s/o Sanasi

Bishop John Chew will be confirming the 24 candidates today. Do uphold them in your prayers. Join us as we celebrate together with them!



Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: help us so to hear them, to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word, we may embrace and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Epistle Reading: 2 Peter 3:8-18

Gospel Reading: Mark 1:1-18

Today's Sermon

What sort of people ought we to be
by Bishop John Chew

Bishop Revd Canon Dr Titus Chung **Vicar** Rev Jeremy Ponniah
Clergy Rev Chang Lubin, Rev Ezra Sivakumar

The Disruptive Peace of Advent

By Peter White,
www.thesabbathlife.com

In the weeks of Advent that prepare our hearts and minds for Christmas—the story of the infinite God compressed in time and space, flesh and bone in order to save the world—we light candles reminding us of God's hope, God's faith, God's joy, and God's peace. Amidst the wistful sentimentality, vapid commercialism, and shallow nostalgia that the world around us wallows in, God's people anchor themselves in these four pillars. These four themes are the foundation of our Christian counter-story. In the fourth week of Advent, we light a candle for God's peace that puts the world back together again.

At Christmas, God comes to us in the piercing cry of a newborn to disrupt our status quo. There's a popular internet meme of a cartoon dog sitting at a table drinking coffee while the house burns, and he's saying, "This is fine." Everything in our world is clearly not fine. But absent any alternative stories, we're left to our own cynical, passive complacency: "This is fine." We believe this is the best we could have so we might as well make the most of it. This is precisely why we need God's disruptive story of peace.

Our status quo of loneliness, of divorce, of racism, of violence, of fearful anxiety, of sickness, of poverty, of never being enough, of never having enough desperately needs to be disrupted. In Advent, the Christian family doesn't sit in the darkness, the house on fire, and say, "This is fine." No! We see the darkness around us, and we cry out for God's disruptive peace to make everything right.

The disruptive peace at Creation

The opposite of peace isn't necessarily conflict or violence. More often than not, its opposite is chaos and anarchy. Its opposite is disorder. The Old Testament word for peace is shalom. While this word doesn't appear in the story in Genesis 1, it is the over-arching theme of the creation story: God puts everything in its right place. Everything in creation belongs. You are enough. You have enough. God is enough.

When the story begins, we're told, "The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters." This is a situation in need of good, holy disruption. And then comes the next line, "And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters." At the conclusion, we're told, "God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation." This is the beginning and the end—from everything that is not peace to peace, from un-shalom to shalom.

What we then find in the consequence of the fall in the next story, "All your life you [humanity, 'adam] will struggle to scratch a living from [the ground]... By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat." In other words, we now believe that we are not enough. We believe we do not have enough. We believe that God is not enough.

The disruptive peace in exile

When we hear the word shalom, we should picture enough—images like "Yahweh is my shepherd. I have all that I need." And when think of the unraveling of God's shalom, we should imagine lack. The domain of broken humanity—Adam's world—is one of never enough. One place we see this in God's story is in Israel's exile.

Few voices in the story of Israel know the disruptive nature of God's peace like Jeremiah: "[Prophets and priests] give assurances of peace [shalom] when there is no peace [shalom]." Jeremiah knows that the status quo is a cancer to God's good and beautiful creation. Jeremiah lives during a time of extraordinary political social upheaval. Babylon has pillaged Jerusalem and taken Israel's best and brightest, like Daniel and Ezekiel. But not Jeremiah.

From the leftovers in Jerusalem, in the years just before its destruction, Jeremiah sends a letter to the exiles in Babylon, who are hoping to come home any day now. But his letter disrupts their shallow hopes. Notice how frequently shalom shows up in this letter, and the multiple ways the English translators communicate it. The prophet says,

"Build homes, and plan to stay. Plant gardens, and eat the food they produce. Marry and have children. Then find spouses for them so that you may have many grandchildren. Multiply! Do not dwindle away! And work for the peace and prosperity [shalom] of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, for its welfare [shalom] will determine your welfare [shalom]."

...

For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good [shalom] and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. (Jeremiah 29:5-7, 11)

God's desire for the people of Babylon, as well as the people of Israel, is shalom—a restoration of relationships, a fundamental reordering of what a good and beautiful world looks like. It's not just for the people to return to the land of Judah. It's for all of God's creation to return to the shalom of Eden.

The disruptive peace of Jesus

In Israel's story, we see God's shalom as a direct alternative to the order of Pharaoh in the Exodus stories and to the progress of Babylon in the exile stories. As we enter the Jesus stories in the gospels, we see God's shalom as a direct alternative to the order of Rome. The Pax Romana was an oxymoron of Orwellian proportions. So when we hear the word "peace" in the New Testament, we should see the big vision of God's good and beautiful world that is fiercely subversive to the human political systems. When Jesus uses the word

"peace," it's not because he's kind or conflict-avoidant. It's because he's the rightful king and he's asserting his authority and reign in enemy territory.

The writer of Luke particularly likes the word "peace." When Jesus sends the 72, the sermon he tells them to give is "May God's peace be on this house!" Jesus laments the Palm Sunday parade with the words, "How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace." When the risen Jesus first reveals himself to all the disciples, he says, "Peace be with you!"

The word peace features most prominently in Luke at the beginning of the events of Holy Week, after the resurrection, and at the very beginning of the story: the stories involving Jesus' birth. Zechariah concludes his song of praise with, "to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace." And then, when the angels disrupt the quiet night of the shepherds, they gloriously proclaim, "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." That is indeed extraordinary good news.

God is coming with a peace that will finally make everything right. Where there are pain and suffering, God's peace is coming. Where there are desperate cries for freedom from oppression, God's peace is coming. Where there are loneliness and sadness, God's peace is coming.

And so during Advent, we boldly recognize all of the places that our world is not peaceful. We light a flame to remember, that along with God's hope, God's faith, and God's joy, God's peace is on the way to disrupt all of the un-shalom we see around us.

It's almost here. Are you ready?

1

Our Vision **To be Ambassadors for Christ in the Community**

2 Corinthians 5:20

Therefore, we are Ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

2

First Pillar **Being Spirit-Filled**

Galatians 5:16

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

3

Second Pillar **Imitating Christ**

Luke 9:23

And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

4

Third Pillar **Persevering Prayer**

Colossians 4:2

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

5

Fourth Pillar **Serving All**

Mark 10:45

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

6

Fifth Pillar **Living Witness**

Matthew 5:16

let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.



Christmas

AT ST PAUL'S CHURCH

CHRISTMAS EVE
SERVICE **24.12.2020**
 THURSDAY, 10.30PM TO 12AM

CHRISTMAS
SERVICE **25.12.2020**
 FRIDAY, 9AM TO 10.30AM

NEW YEAR'S DAY
SERVICE **1.1.2021**
 FRIDAY, 9AM TO 10.30AM



6 o' clock in the
evening, Saturday,
December 19



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO BE A PART OF THIS CELEBRATION:

Mark down Sat 19 December on your schedule; plan for a small gathering at your place and invite 5 or 8 other persons depending on the MOH guidelines at that time. Gather at about 5pm, tune in together for the streaming of the programme at 6pm, have some eats after the programme. If possible, have a small birthday cake at your gathering, take a photograph with the whole group and send it to us so we can post it. **Do let Pastor Leon know if you'd like to open your home.**

If you cannot host a gathering, attend one of the gatherings.

Spread the news about the streaming of the programme “Birthday of the King”, so that many more people will tune in even if they are not at your party;

Spread the news to even the St Paul’s diaspora beyond Singapore, so they too can tune in.

WELCOME TO THE BIRTHDAY OF THE KING!





Pastoral Care

For those who require prayer or pastoral care, do drop us an email at contact@stpaulschurch.org.sg or contact the respective pastoral staff directly.

Rev Jeremy: 9477 5476

Pastor Leon: 9199 3815

Pastor Leroy: 9710 2900

ST PAUL'S CHURCH

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Please indicate "S2" under Reference No. The code "S2" refers to the English Congregation. Other information like specific giving (e.g. mission, building, etc.) as needed. Names are optional.



GIVE BY CHEQUE

Made payable to "St Paul's Church" and mailed to our Church address - 843 Upper Serangoon Road Singapore 534683. Kindly indicate English Congregation at the back of the cheque.