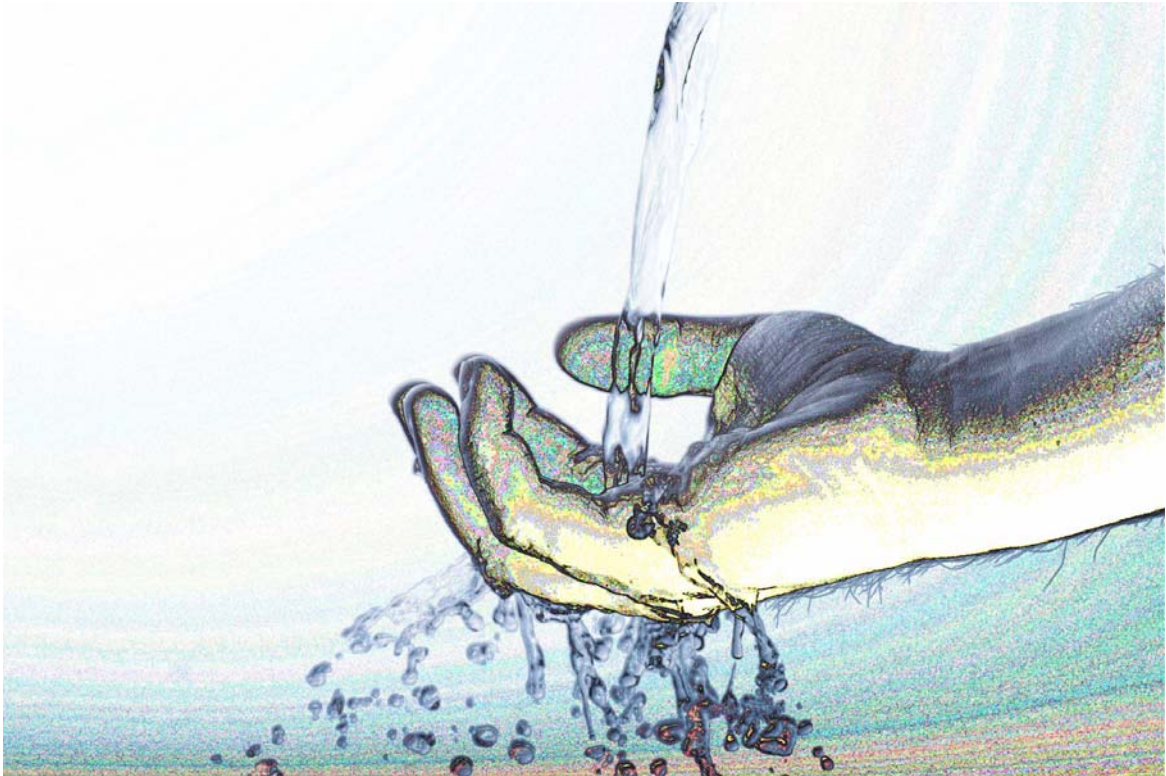


Watery Advent Wreath



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Watery Advent Wreath

An explanation

If you look at most litanies for Advent candle ceremonies, it might strike you that they are very 'Northern Hemisphere'. The coming of light in the darkness is very appropriate when you are going into midwinter, and the days are getting shorter. But here in this part of Australia, it might be good for a change to think of Advent in terms of what we long and hope for most at this time of year - water! From a cool drink to a drenching summer storm, to protection from bushfires, water, as a symbol, reminds us of what we most need at this time of year.

In our land, we have a strange relationship with water.

Most of us, or our forebears, came across the sea to live here. Whether sent by the powers that be, or setting out with hope for a better future, or fleeing in desperation to escape tyranny, water has been a boundary to cross to get to the promised land or to separate us forever from 'home'.

Most of us cling to the edges of our vast continent, our settlement dictated by where water could be found, for a long time defining ourselves as beach-loving bronzed ANZACS, or gritty denizens of The Bush, eking out a living at the mercy of droughts and flooding rains.

Sometimes, there is too much of the stuff. The Wet brings drenching rains to the north - creeks and rivers, calm and tame for much of the time, become wild and treacherous. Even in Melbourne, flash floods occasionally sweep away our carefully built notions that we are masters of our destiny.

But here in this part of the world at this time, we desperately need water. We quiver on the brink of the bushfire season, knowing that much of our state is tinder-dry. We see the images of cracked, dusty farmlands, of almost empty reservoirs, of country towns shipping water in. And we wait, and wait, and wait.....for rain.



Litany week 1: Hope

L: As we pour the water for our Advent wreath we remember our deep thirst for God's hope.

Response: We long for your hope, O God

L: Hope which revives us like that first icy cold drink of water gulped down from the fridge when you've trudged home from school on a 36 degree day.

We long for your hope, O God

L: Hope which transforms us, like drought-breaking rain on parched land.

We long for your hope, O God

L: Hope which carries us forward in its mystery, as the endless waves which connect us to the rest of the world.

We long for your hope, O God

L: You may name people and places which are in particular need of God's hope at this time (some examples follow, but you may have more):

People dealing with long-term illness The people of Darfur
People facing the loss of their homes Long-term unemployed people
People battling addictions Asylum seekers and refugees Australia's
indigenous people The people of Bangladesh
Friends and relatives of missing persons
Parents of children in hospital
People dealing with the effects of drought in Australia and other places

L: Advent God, we worship you with hope.

We long for your hope, O God. *Amen*



Litany week 2: Peace

L: As we pour the water for our Advent wreath we remember our deep thirst for peace:

Response: We long for your peace, O God.

L: The peace of a long soak in a hot tub after a hard day's work.

We long for your peace, O God.

L: The peace of steam rising around a home saved by the sweat and sacrifice of a community of firefighters and their supporters.

We long for your peace, O God.

L: Peace as deep and mysterious and teeming with life as the vast oceans.

We long for your peace, O God.

L: You may name people and places which are in particular need of God's peace at this time (some examples follow, but you may have more):

Between neighbours who disagree

With families involved with the Family Court

In Afghanistan In Iraq In Darfur...and elsewhere

People who have been victims of crime

People living with grief People facing medical procedures

L: Advent God, we worship you with peace.

We long for your peace, O God. *Amen*



Litany week 3: Joy

L: As we pour the water for our Advent wreath we remember our deep thirst for God's joy.

Response: We long for your joy, O God

L: Joy which soaks into us and makes our world stand still, like a sudden summer downpour.

We long for your joy, O God

L: Joy which makes our soul dance like kids under a sprinkler on the lawn.

We long for your joy, O God

L: Joy which becomes the centre of our life with others like the water boiling in the kettle for a cuppa with friends.

We long for your joy, O God

L: You may name people and places which are in particular need of God's joy at this time (some examples follow, but you may have more):

People spending Christmas far away from loved ones

People feeling pressure to buy expensive presents

People living with mental health problems, especially depression

People around the world suffering the effects of disasters

People facing the possibility of losing their homes or farmland

People living in isolation

People living with the loss of their abilities and independence

People struggling to be faithful in difficult circumstances

L: Advent God, we worship you with joy.

We long for your joy, O God. *Amen*



Litany week 4: Love

L: As we pour the water for our Advent wreath we remember our deep thirst for God's love.

Response: We long for your love, O God

L: A tsunami wave of love, overpowering, all-enveloping, overwhelming, sweeping all up before it and changing the landscape forever.

We long for your love, O God

L: Love which has the patience to seep into us, one drop at a time over aeons, forming stalagmites of beauty in the darkest places.

We long for your love, O God

L: Love which holds us with the silent ethereal mystery of mist on a mountain top

We long for your love, O God

L: You may name people and places which are in particular need of God's love at this time (some examples follow, but you may have more):

People who feel unloved

Children who are wards of the state

Those in nursing homes far away from loved ones

People who have lost loved ones this year

People living with broken relationships with their family

Child soldiers throughout the world
Victims of violence

L: Advent God, we worship you with love.

We long for your love, O God. *Amen*



Wreath litany for Christmas Day

L: As we pour the water to complete our wreath, we celebrate the coming of Jesus.

L: We remember the one who came by water and blood, the one who cried for his dead friend, the one who was thirsty and asked a woman for a drink.

Response: We thank you for coming as one of us

L: We remember the one who walked on water, the one who calmed the waves, the one who turned water into wine.

We thank you for coming as one unlike anyone else

L: We remember the one who is living water for us here and now.

We thank you because our thirst for God is quenched in you. *Amen.*



Alternative Christmas Day litany

This litany was written for the Urban Seed Christmas celebration, which was held at Birrarung Marr on the banks of the Yarra in Melbourne. I looked for some of the Dreaming stories of the Yarra/Birrarung and included parts of them in the litany. If there is a significant body of water close to where you worship, perhaps you could try something similar.

Litany Christmas Day

L: As we complete our watery Advent wreath this Christmas day, we are reminded of the Yarra, the river which determined the foundation of our city of Melbourne, and we remember Jesus, the living water who is the foundation of our faith, and whose birth we celebrate today.

L: The Dreaming of the Yarra tells us that it comes from an endless source – an overflowing jar of water.

Response: We worship you, overflowing, endless God

L: The original custodians called it ‘Birrarung’ – river of mists and shadows

We worship you, God who knows our real name, our mists and shadows

L: It teemed with life, supplying food and water for the people who belonged to it

We worship you, life-giving, thirst-quenching God

L: It was, and still is a place to gather, a place to celebrate, a sacred place

We worship you, God who creates sacred spaces in all our gatherings and celebrations

