



ST JAMES MALDEN

ADVENT REFLECTIONS



LORD JESUS, LIGHT OF LIGHT,
YOU HAVE COME AMONG US.
HELP US WHO LIVE BY YOUR LIGHT
TO SHINE AS LIGHTS IN YOUR WORLD.
GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST.
AMEN.

DECEMBER 1ST - DECEMBER 25TH 2022

ADVENT CAROL SERVICE



'O come, O come, Emmanuel...'

- 6.30 pm Sunday 27 November 2022
- 1st Sunday in Advent
- St James Church, Bodley Road, New Malden

Our Advent Carol Service will follow a traditional pattern of a candle-lit progress from the back of the church with readings and carols that reflect on the coming Saviour and His Kingdom – both His birth at Christmas and His second coming 'on the clouds of the sky'.

- Matin Responsory (Palestrina)
- This is the truth sent from above (Vaughan Williams)
- Gabriel's message (Traditional Basque carol)
- Magnificat (Plainsong)
- The holly and the ivy (Traditional English carol)

'And our eyes at last shall see Him, through His own redeeming love, for that child so dear and gentle is our Lord in Heaven above.'



WELCOME

As one of the most important seasons in the Christian calendar, Advent is a time for us to gather our thoughts and wait in anticipation of the coming of Christ. Advent is the start of the Church's Liturgical Year, and this 'New Year' starts not entirely with a party but with a season of 'thoughtfulness and waiting, expectation and quiet.

Our 2nd edition of the Advent reflections allows us to share our thoughts and experiences of a rich tradition and heritage within the Christian faith. The collection of meditations, prayers and poems may help us celebrate Advent in a meaningful and refreshing way. Hopefully, It won't feel like one more thing in this busy season- just a simple way to stay connected as a community of faith and celebrate the coming of Christ!

The Church of England introduces Advent;

"It is a season of expectation and preparation as the Church prepares to celebrate the coming of Christ. Church decorations are simple and sparse, and purple is the traditional colour used. Advent falls at the darkest time of the year, and the natural symbols of darkness and light are powerfully at work throughout Advent and Christmas. The readings and liturgies not only direct us towards Christ's birth, but they also challenge the modern reluctance to confront the theme of divine judgement.

Much of our time for this Advent can be seen through the prism of planning, yet it is in our collective spirit that we can embrace the joyful expectation through the invitation of worship and Christmas events that we offer at St James, Malden.

May these reflections serve us well in anticipation of Christ's coming and may the God of hope, fill you with all joy and peace.

MOTHER SHAVAUN

EDITOR



**St James Church
Malden
Join us for our
Christmas Services**

Saturday 3rd December – Advent Quiet Day – 2.30-5pm

Sunday 4th – 6.30pm Blue Christmas a reflective start to the season

Sunday 11th – 4pm - Christingle – candlelit family service

Sunday 18th – 6.30pm Christmas Carol Service with mulled wine and mince pies

Saturday 24th – 4pm – Nativity the Panto
11pm Midnight Mass

Sunday 25th – 8am Said Communion
9.30am Christmas Day Family Communion Service

Sunday 1st January – New Year's Day 9.30am service only

stjamesmalden.org

1ST DECEMBER 2022

Advent begins – and I think many of us like to put up the lights, bring out the chocolate calendars and start Advent as the beginning of a journey of joy towards Christmas. And in many ways, there is nothing wrong with that – in fact it displays a theology of hope which I’m firmly in favour of.

But it is worth noting that traditional Advent strikes a very different key. It starts with despair – with people at the end of their tether and utterly fed up. Perhaps a more honest note for 2022 which has proved so hard for us all?

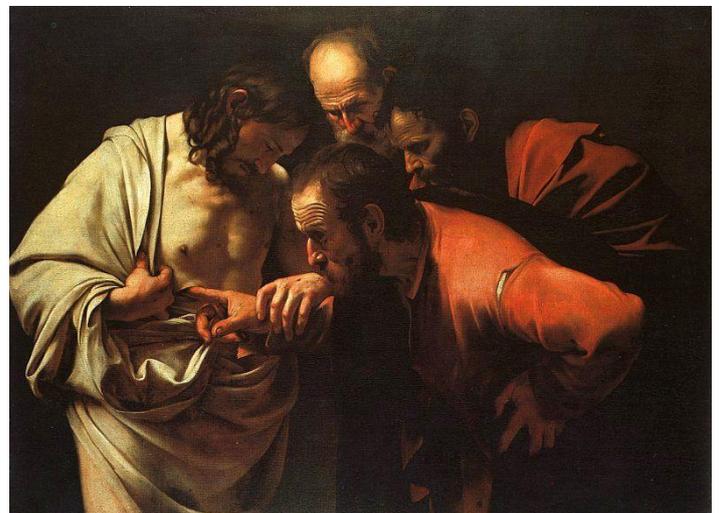
It is a season that doesn’t dress up the darkness with light – but faces the darkness head-on and finds in it a gift – the gift of the presence of God himself.

The ancient Persians had a saying that only when is it dark enough do we get to see the stars. The darkness has much to offer if we will dare to look.

Caravaggio – a complex and brilliant artist – dared to look into the darkness and to use the darkness to see things more clearly. His treatment of darkness and light in his work was revolutionary in his time. He had an almost unique ability to make us stare at the harder stuff – the reality of life rather than just the airbrushed perfection which was fashionable and desirable at the time and remains so popular over our world and social media today.

In one of Caravaggio’s most well-known paintings, Jesus invites Thomas to put his fingers into his still-open wounds – depicting a scene from John 20. The Incredulity of Saint Thomas (Caravaggio) -

Darkness frames the whole scene. There is no halo for this risen Christ – his white funeral clothes hold the dust of the grave – the disciples stand dressed in the colour of blood and earth with their clothes ripped –



perhaps through poverty and perhaps through pain as was the custom in biblical times?

The darkness points us to the central point of light – the hand of Thomas, held by Jesus and guided by him, as it touches the open wound and goes right under the skin – in an image most of us would normally flinch from looking at. Yet, such is the gift of Caravaggio that we like the disciples look on with intense curiosity.

Like Caravaggio's painting, Advent calls us first to darkness and only then to the light of Christ - and the light shines not on places of glory – but places of pain and woundedness.

If we are to stay awake this Advent, that is where our focus must rest too – on the wounds of the world – which remain the wounds of God. For these are the places that cry out for Emmanuel – God with us – O come O come Emmanuel.

Amen.

**BY MOTHER KATIE,
VICAR OF ST JAMES**

2ND DECEMBER 2022

'To all who received him, to those who believed in his name'

I always get a tingle of excitement as we turn again to the message that 'To you, in David's town this day, is born of David's line a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord'. Whether it is childhood Christmas memories or the embarking once more on the church's annual pilgrimage of examining the story of Jesus' birth, ministry, death and resurrection from Advent to Easter and beyond, I hope you share that sense of excitement and optimism.

As a choirmaster and organist, perhaps I begin that journey a little earlier than many: planning usually begins in early October. But I still have such joy in preparing the Christmas Carol Services. Of course, I love the music: 'the playing of the merry organ, sweet singing in the choir. And I love the chance for time together with the family in the darkest days of winter.

THE PLAYING OF THE

MERRIE ORGAN



SWEET SINGING

IN THE QUIRE

But the real excitement is because of the biggest earth-changing events in the whole of history:

'Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.'

John 1.12

Wow!!

May God excite us again this year as we look once more at the history of Jesus' birth, and may we come to faith that we may receive him, believe in his name and become children of God.

**BY DAVID PIMM,
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC**



3RD DECEMBER 2022

Advent is a short 4 weeks before Christmas, acting as a beacon guiding us to the celebration of Jesus' birth on 25th December. Still, it's also an opportunity to reflect on the Advent of the divine judgement of our own lives on earth. The church services and my life at this time of year seem to reflect both aspects.

I've learnt through trial and error, or perhaps it's a bitter experience, and I'm in denial, that being prepared for Christmas before the start of Advent is a really good idea! Actually, scrub "good idea" it's essential. Being judged on your abilities to choose good and appropriate presents and prepare a Christmas meal in the eyes of the family is inevitable, perfectly reflecting both sides of the Advent season!

The lighting of the advent wreath is a stark reminder of how many days there are remaining to finish the preparations for Christmas with family at home, presents to buy, cards to send, and sleeps to have!

The panic of the wreath appearing in church, the alarming cherubic glee of a small child being given a lighted taper by a frankly irresponsible adult to set abase the first of the 4 candles.

Once the first child is alight, oh sorry, I mean the candle is alight, my thoughts quickly turn to:

- what should I have done by now to be ready?
- what music don't I yet know that we are going to sing at one of the big services coming up?
- who is expecting which present, and where am I going to get it from? What am I going to get online, and what am I going to need to find in a shop?
- what's the last posting date for Europe and the UK?
- How am I going to cook Christmas lunch for (insert number between 6-10) of traditional fowl, roast veg, boiled veg, gravy, cauliflower cheese, stuffing and sauces and steam a Christmas pudding, make a custard, lemon sauce and have brandy butter, with one oven and 4 rings?

When the second candle is lit, things are normally under more control, with plans in place to get turkeys bought and stuffed and working out who is getting what.

The child lighting the second candle seems to be less excited than the first, and the child that lit the candle last week is totally disinterested in the whole event now as they know they won't be picked again!

Having panicked and planned, the second week is for action. Undertaking those tasks that were meticulously planned last week. The challenge here is not to get ill, and there is a lot of colds/flu/headache/toothache about at this time of year. It's also critical not to get derailed when the perfect present is "sold out" for Christmas. These days it seems that the best Christmas presents are sold out before the summer holidays have finished, which is slightly frustrating.

As the third candle is being lit by a token reluctant child being (frog) marched up to the Advent wreath by its mother, who is excitedly clutching her iPhone and determined to direct the action of the child lighting the 3rd candle with the authority of Stephen Spielberg and appropriate musical score from John Williams.... Two other children look on from a distance with the smug, condescending expression of "you were the Vicars 3rd choice".

Once the lighting of candle 3 is done – either plans are moving forward, or it's a chance to book an unexpected holiday to see an obscure relative in outer Mongolia or, more likely, buckle up and enjoy the inevitable disappointed sobbing child with the wrong sold out present on Christmas morning, and watching the in-laws select increasingly less veiled "compliments" of the M&S / Waitrose / Sainsbury / Tesco / Aldi / Lidl / Iceland / petrol station forecourt dressed Christmas turkey that's coming out of the oven at about 1.00 pm on our Lords birthday. "I'm SURE it will be delicious, its Christmas, after all"

The fourth candle is back to an enthusiastic gaggle of over-excited, over-indulged, tired children all wanting Christmas to come I M M E D I A T E L Y. One of the smarter children usually tries to light the middle candle to finish the job off with a victorious smirk. This usually gets a mild rebuke from the vicar "no, NO, that one we reserve for Christmas day". The shoulders of the child visibly drop.

So, for me, Advent acts as a countdown and helpful reminder of all the preparations for Christmas, along with the coming judgment day for us all.

**BY NIGEL RANSOM
CHURCHWARDEN**



4TH DECEMBER 2022



Christmas comes too early these days. Confronted by the hype of premature festive cheer, it doesn't take long before I'm in full 'bah humbug' mode. Shops festooned with Christmas decorations in October, Turkey and Tinsel coach trips in November and carol concerts too early in December.

It doesn't sit well with the customary Advent sermon recommending a quiet, reflective waiting period. Frazzled with cards, shopping, food and the inevitable pressure of family politics, it can seem impossible to find time to pause, step back and think about the real meaning behind it all.

But then, suddenly, at some point, it gets me. And I'm always surprised. That Christmassy tingle down your back. The sharp recall of childhood excitement and the wonder of that glorious song of "old". And do you know what? It never comes in a shop or at a party or when you get that first sight of the winking Christmas tree lights or the sudden smell of the spices as the Christmas cake bakes. It's always in Church. Always.

And miraculously, out of nowhere, my Scrooge grouchiness dissolves. Truth or fable, it doesn't matter. A baby born in difficult circumstances - and the hope for a new beginning. An inspirational way of living to fill your whole life. Here's to some pockets of time in Advent to ponder on manger magic.

'O rest beside the weary road and hear the angels sing.'

**BY WENDY MORRIS,
PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICER**

5TH DECEMBER 2022

Christmas Fruitcake Recipe

1 Cup Water
1 Cup Sugar
4 Large Eggs
3 Cups Dried Fruit
1 tsp. Baking Soda
1 tsp. Salt
1 Cup Brown Sugar
Lemon Juice, Nuts
1 FULL bottle of your favourite whisky

Sample the whisky to check for quality.
Take out a large bowl.
Check the whisky again to be sure that it is of the highest quality.
Pour 1 level cup and drink. Repeat.
Turn on the electric mixer; beat 1 cup of butter in a large fluffy bowl.
Add 1 tsp. Sugar and beat again.
Make sure the whisky is still OK.
Cry another tup. Turn off the mixer.
Break two eggs and add to the bowl, and chuck in the cups of dried fruit.
Mix on the burner.
If the fried fruit gets stuck in the beaters,
Pry it loose with a screwdriver.
Sample the whisky to check for toxisisticity.
Next, sift 2 cups of salt.
Or something. Who cares? Check the whisky.
Now sift the lemon juice and strain the nuts.
Add one tablespoon of sugar or something...whatever you can find.
Grease the oven. Turn on the cake tin to 350 degrees.
Don't forget to beat off the turner. Throw the bowl out of the window.
Check the whisky again and go to bed.
Who likes fruit cake anyway???

**BY JOHN TAYLOR,
TREASURER**



6TH DECEMBER 2022

What better time
and what better season,
What greater occasion
or more wonderful reason
To kneel down in prayer and lift
our hands high
To the God of creation who made
earth and sky
Who sent us his Son
to live here among men
And the message He brought
Is as true *Now* as *Then* –
So at this glad season
when there's joy everywhere
Let us meet our Redeemer.
At The Altar of Prayer
Asking Him humbly to bless all our days
And grant us forgiveness for our erring ways –
And though we're unworthy,
dear Father above,
Accept us today and let us dwell
in Thy love

So may we grow stronger,
upheld by Thy grace,
And with Thy assistance
be able to face
All the temptations
that fill every day,
And hold onto our hands
when we stumble and stray –
And thank you dear God,
for the year that now ends
And for the great blessing
of loved ones and friends.

Let us go forth in Faith this Advent and prepare to celebrate the birth of our Lord.

**VAL GIBBENS,
PCC SECRETARY**

BY HELEN STEINER RICE

7TH DECEMBER 2022



"For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me in. I needed clothes, and you clothed me. I was in prison, and you visited me."

Matthew 25:35-36.

In Advent, we remember and prepare for the coming of one who was, and is, a testament to God's love for us and this world.

In prayer and in remembering and helping each other, we are given time to reflect on the reality of Christ in the world.

The food bank we support here at St. James has never been so needed. Locally based at the Baptist Church and organised by the Trussell Trust, they provide emergency food and support to people locked in poverty while campaigning for change to end the need for food banks.

Reasons for needing to use a food bank are varied. It may be some form of income crisis caused by loss of earnings from employment, change in family circumstances, sudden homelessness, or benefit problems and sanctions. Donations are arranged into emergency food parcels. Care professionals such as health visitors, school staff and social workers identify people in crisis and issue them with a food bank voucher. This means people can receive a food bank parcel of three days of nutritionally balanced non-perishable food from their local food bank. The food bank network provides additional support to help people resolve the crises they're facing so that they, hopefully, will not need to use a food bank in the future. This could include debt advice, mental health support or benefits guidance.

What could be more faithful to the Advent spirit of giving than to help the Food Banks that rely on the support of their local committees to help people in crisis?

**BY DIANA SCHULDT,
FOOD BANK VOLUNTEER**



8TH DECEMBER 2022

Advent, I know what it means to me, but how about others? In this much-commercialised world, has the meaning of ADVENT gotten lost? Well, yes and no, but also maybe. For me, it is a time of rejoicing at the prospect of celebrating the coming of Christ and, in other words, looking forward to Christ's Birthday. Ahead is how we should live our lives, and part of me at Advent and Christmastide is being where and with or by whom I am loved.

Advent is a great time to enjoy rejoicing in what is to come. You see, I have two homes, Physical & Spiritual. My physical home here in New Malden will be a place we decorate in the coming weeks. We'll get a giant tree and make it shine. We'll have lights and tinsel and all matter of glittery things. At some point along the way, we will buy our friends, neighbours and those we love gifts to be opened on Christmas day, the culmination of Christmas.

But that is only one part of it all. Advent is a time to awaken our spiritual lives and look to the coming of Christ. I love this period of Advent. The songs and hymns we sing, the joy of being with our 'church friends' and tea or coffee after each service and perhaps, if we get lucky, a mince pie. If you have yet to experience Advent at Church, you may consider going.

In this season, I recall and reflect on Mary and Joseph on their treacherous walk from Nazareth to Bethlehem, a journey they did not undertake lightly. Travelling along a dangerous road and when arriving abruptly only to find there was nowhere to stay! We should all remember that walk; it was theirs and is also for us in our Advent.

My spiritual home is not solely the church building, much as I love it, but I know it is where I can be with Jesus, a home dedicated to his honour. I rejoice there in many ways. And it is mainly through singing that I love being in service, where I humbly stand with others dedicating myself and my life to Christ the Almighty. It is also a place I can be in solitude and reflect more deeply.

In this season especially, I remember the wee babe born in a very dirty and smelly barn, with only the chosen few around and many different animals to welcome him into this earthly world. His arrival was wonderful, and the path that at this time we travel, on the way to his birthday, is the Advent I love most.

**BY PETER BRUNNEN,
MEMBER OF THE PCC**



9TH DECEMBER 2022

Zimbabwe is a country that holds profound memories and experiences; for me, as we encounter the season of Advent, I hope we consider our sister's and brother's struggles and the pleas to help renew and create change.

We have two pictures in our lounge that depict the plant life of Zimbabwe, which we bought to help a friend about 20 years ago who told us that she had just burnt the hairs on her arms trying to determine if the temperature in her clay oven was suitable for making bread. She built the oven herself because there was no electricity.

Inflation then was such that if you queued for goods by the time you went to the check-out an hour later, you couldn't afford much. Sadly, the situation seems worse now, with rampant starvation, a complete absence of law and order, and reports of death atrocities.

And yet, for some reason, Zimbabwe is rarely, if ever, in the news. In the UK, we are overloaded daily with information about poverty putting families under considerable stress. But compared to Africa, poverty in this country is different. I have never forgotten my time teaching in Nigeria sixty years ago, seeing an old lady sitting by the side of the road with six empty tin cans stacked neatly in front of her - probably all she had to sell. Here, action is taken by public and private authorities to prevent starvation. Instead, despite Zimbabwe's rich mineral resources that should make it one of the leading African countries, it is in dire straits and only those in power benefit.

Meanwhile, a charity that works only in Zimbabwe has had to stop work because of the fall in the pound value compared to the dollar so that more people will go without food. St Paul's words about evil forces and powers are very much to the point. While we can give money, we should put greater emphasis on praying that these regimes like that in Zimbabwe responsible for so much suffering should soon somehow come to an end - that justice and mercy will prevail.

As a Diocese, we are linked with Zimbabwe and our area of Kingston is linked with Matabeleland Diocese.

Let us pray for Zimbabwe.

<https://www.zane-zimbabweanationalemergency.com/>

**BY GEOFF BUTCHER,
MEMBER OF ST JAMES**

10TH DECEMBER 2022

As a precursor to the frenetic and commercial lead-up to Christmas itself, Advent is a wonderfully peaceful opportunity to prepare for the real meaning of Christmas, which is to celebrate the birth of Christ in humble surroundings. We all know how easy it is to overlook this at times, and as the start of the church year, Advent gives us the calm to set the following twelve days of Christmas into context. The more contemplative atmosphere of the St James' Advent Carol Service is the perfect way to start this important season of the church, and for us, it always marks the proper start of the Christmas celebrations.



For many, Advent is also an opportunity to remember, help and pray for those who, for whatever reason, are unable to celebrate their own Christmas or their version of that. Even in New Malden, many cannot celebrate the peace of Christmas with loved ones for a variety of sad reasons.

In the much wider world, there are those living in places where Christmas is very challenging to celebrate because of the cultures in which they find themselves or because of war, as is the case in Ukraine. Some are oppressed, whether politically or domestically, and those who cannot afford to celebrate. The peace of Advent brings these into context and provides the space to pray for them.

We pray for a peaceful preparation for Advent, the coming of Christ, and that every person across the globe who wants to or can celebrate the true joy of Christmas with loved ones in a place of safety and comfort.

We wish a peaceful Advent and a joyous Christmas to you all.



**BY EMMA AND MIKE GREEN,
MEMBERS OF THE PCC**



1 1TH DECEMBER 2022

Today I look into my own heart
and all around me, and I sing the song of Mary.

My life praises the Lord my God,
who is setting me free.

He has remembered me, in my humiliation and distress!

From now on those, who rejected and ignored me
will see me and call me happy,
because of the great things he is doing
in my humble life.

His name is completely different from the other names in this
world:

from one generation to another

he was on the side of the oppressed.

As on the day of the Exodus, he is stretching out
his mighty arm to scatter the oppressors
with all their evil plans.

He has bought down mighty kings
from their thrones

and he has lifted up the despised;

and so he will do today.

He has filled the exploited with good things,

And sent the exploiters away with empty hands;
and so he will do today.
His promise to our mothers and fathers remains new and fresh
to this day.
Therefore the hope for liberation
which is burning in me
will not be extinguished.
He will remember me, here now and beyond the grave.

BY ZEPHANIA KAMEETA
'MARY'S SONG OF PRAISE' LUKE 1.46-53



12TH DECEMBER 2022

God of the poor,
we long to meet you;
yet almost miss you
we strive to help you
yet only discover our need.
Interrupt our comfort
with your nakedness,
touch our possessiveness
with your poverty,
and surprise our guilt
with the grace of your welcome
in Jesus Christ, **Amen.**

BY JANET MORLEY
GOD WITH US - CHRISTIAN AID



13TH DECEMBER 2022

As we all journey to Advent, I frame it through the lens of a season of great human experience, of expecting faith between what God has begun and what is yet to be complete. We wait between two divine actions, a promise and a fulfilment. Therefore, what can we do to prioritise the God who abides in us if we abide in him? How can we observe, listen, and attend to what God asks of us?

In Advent, much like a Lenten period where disciplines involved fasting and levels of sacrifice, the early Church urged Christians to dedicate this time to ready themselves for Christ. Their practices may remind us that we are also called to be attentive to the message of repentance and the end times. This may seem unexpected, considering the varying ways we celebrate as Christmas approaches.

But each and every year, Advent, we are waiting in great hope, preparing for the coming of Christ. We begin our praying and planning, planning and praying to take our position and then we enter perhaps into the unknown. And it is the unknown that strikes, the mystery of God that is not predictable but divinely human and incarnate among us, not set apart from us but with us in the darkness of the season. In Advent, we wait in the darkness. But we do not, I am convinced, wait hopelessly.

In the prophecy of Isaiah, the scripture describes the “people walking in darkness,” waiting for a “great light” to shine. And how many of us found ourselves walking through great darkness in recent years? Yet we may have remained as best as we can in the spirit of waiting, watching for signs of change, for God's presence among us in our lives and throughout the world.

During this Advent time, I pray that we give ourselves time and space to contemplate what it means for us to wait and long for the coming of Christ. Knowing that this is this season, our longings will lead us to the Christ Child, in whom the hopes and fears of all the years are known and responded to with generous love

**BY MOTHER SHAVAUN
ASSISTANT CURATE**



14TH DECEMBER 2022

Silent thoughts
quiet time too
brings to mind
so many things.
Things left undone
or even forgotten.
Lord, hear me now
when I call to thee
to seek that which is nearer than we realise.
This, Lord, is your love,
your unending love,
where time has no meaning
only between you and me.
No matter what time,
no matter what day.
you are there to call upon
whenever we pray.

**SUE BETTS
MOTHERS UNION FELLOWSHIP**

**IN LOVING MEMORY: BY MAUREEN SMITH MU
BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD**



15TH DECEMBER 2022

When I'm down and helpless
When lies are reigning
When fear and indifference are growing
May your Kingdom come.

When joy is missing
When love is missing
And unbelief is growing
May your Kingdom come.

To the sick and lonely
To the imprisoned and tortured
May your Kingdom come.

Into the churches
Into our praying into our singing
May your Kingdom come.

Into our hearts
Into our hands, into our eyes
May your Kingdom come. Soon!

CZECH LITANY
WITH ALL GODS PEOPLE



16TH DECEMBER 2022

It's not Christmas without Christ, Christmas is a time of promise.

We look forward to the big day anticipating presents, food, family and fun.

It is the promise of celebration and new beginnings.

It is when God intervenes in human history in the most unexpected way.

His plan to save humanity is to be born as a humble vulnerable child.

In Jesus, God fulfilled his promises and offered new life for everyone.

For many Christmas can be a challenging time.

The cost can be eye watering!

The list of things to buy can dent the wallet.

Yet, despite it all, Christmas has a deep-rooted joy that cannot be shaken.

Through Jesus, God has invited us into his new kingdom of hope, peace and joy.

This divine baby is born as a gift to humanity, has the power to restore human life to its full and richest potential.

So, this Christmas, hold onto the good news.

Don't allow the pressures to distract your attention from God's promise.

As we celebrate his birth drink in his intoxicating love and celebrate with all your strength.

**BY CHRISTINE MENHENNETT
MOTHERS UNION & GARDENING VOLUNTEER**

17TH DECEMBER 2022

He will come like last leaf's fall.
One night when the November wind
has flayed the trees to the bone, and earth
wakes choking on the mould,
the soft shroud's folding.

He will come like frost.
One morning when the shrinking earth
opens on mist, to find itself
arrested in the net
of alien, sword-set beauty.

He will come like dark.
One evening when the bursting red
December sun draws up the sheet
and penny-masks its eye to yield
the star-snowed fields of sky.

He will come, will come,
will come like crying in the night,
like blood, like breaking,
as the earth writhes to toss him free.
He will come like child.



**SANDRA FELTHAM
PARISH ASSISTANT**

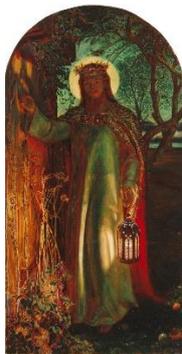
BY ROWAN WILLIAMS

18TH DECEMBER 2022

"Here's your nightlight ", my Grandmother would say as she tucked me in. She always provided a light to chase away night fears. On one wall, my Grandparents had a picture of Jesus. The picture was dark, but there was light around Jesus' head and from the lantern he carried as he knocked on the door of a hut. "The hut stands for the soul," My Grandmother told me. "There is no handle on the outside of the door, so the soul can choose to open or not. The weeds are the evil which can choke the soul."

It must be hard for Jesus to keep knocking, waiting for us to open up. It can be hard for us to keep the door open. Shining a light in a dusty shed may show up cobwebs and things we don't want to face. Jesus is a loving but challenging guest. But that way, salvation lies.

"By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace."
(Luke 1, Zechariah's Prophecy)



THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

**ALISON BRENNAN
MEMBER OF THE PCC**

19TH DECEMBER 2022



What does Advent mean to me? Well, yes, it is a time for reflection and preparation for the birth of Christ on Christmas day. The best part of Advent for me is the lighting of the Advent candles on our wreath positioned near the pulpit.

I suppose my love of candlelight goes back to my early childhood and going to bed at my grandparents with a candle. In the late 1950's they didn't have electricity connected to their cottage in the country – or even running water for that matter.

Ever since, a Christmas ritual for me has been the 'count down' Advent candle. Not strictly correct as a Christian Advent candle, as it counts down the twenty-four days in December to Christmas Eve. Although, in my case it's usually less days, as inevitably, I forget to blow it out at the right time on at least once or twice! The candles on our Advent wreath in Church are lit on the four Sundays before Christmas. Advent always starts on the Sunday between 27 November and 3 December.

I'm sure most of you remember that of the four candles, three are purple, and one is pink (or rose). But to remind you and me of what each candle represents, I looked them up and have listed them below:

- The first candle, which is purple, symbolizes hope. It is sometimes called the 'Prophecy Candle' in remembrance of the prophets, especially Isaiah, who foretold the birth of Christ. It represents the expectation felt in anticipation of the coming Messiah.
- The second candle, also purple, represents faith. It is called the 'Bethlehem Candle' as a reminder of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem.

- The third candle is pink and symbolizes joy. It is called the 'Shepard's Candle' and is pink because rose is a liturgical colour for joy. The third Sunday of Advent is Gaudete Sunday and is meant to remind us of the joy that the world experienced at the birth of Jesus, as well as the joy that the faithful have reached the midpoint of Advent.
- On the fourth week of Advent, we light the final purple candle to mark the final week of prayer and penance as we wait for the birth of our Saviour. This final candle, the 'Angel's Candle', symbolizes peace. It reminds us of the message of the angels: 'Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men.'

At St James, we will also light a fifth candle on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day to represent the birth of Jesus; this candle, when added to the Advent wreath, is typically white and larger than the other candles and is placed in the centre of the wreath.

**CHRIS FELTHAM
CHURCHWARDEN**



20TH DECEMBER 2022

Christmas lights are going up, and we are all getting ready for Christmas; it seems that the four weeks of Advent that we are preparing for the celebration of the Birth of Christ are redundant. Thanks to the whirl of December carol services, it has been noted that there are two parallel times in this season. Outwardly there is a time in which the church engages in mission and proclamation, welcoming those who would celebrate alongside their Christmas shopping something to do with the birth of the Christ child. This proclamation opens to them something of the depths of Christmas, even at the cost of anticipation of the Feast. But inwardly, there is a time in which the church makes her Advent preparation. What are we doing in this hidden time? What is this preparation?

Advent looks back in order to look forward. Celebration of the first coming of Christ in the stable at Bethlehem has meaning and a purpose because of the hope and expectation of his second coming on his clouds of glory. Christmas is not a sterile memorial of a thing past and gone but effectual preparation for what is to come.

Have you sent your cards and done your shopping? If even our Christmas cheer cannot adequately express our love for our relatives, friends and neighbours, how much can our devotion adequately express our love for God? So, Advent begins in penitence: its colour is purple, the symbol for Christians of preparation and forgiveness. We reflect our lives and realise our inadequacies, for Advent calls us to look joyfully to God, who is coming to complete his salvation.

Advent hymns and readings are thus full of happy expectation of His imminent second coming: "He is nearer now than when we first believed" and "Hills of the North rejoice!" Yet it is important to remember that we do not know the day nor the hour. Advent candles and Advent calendars count down towards Christmas day, but the Advent season enjoins not to put preparation off to tomorrow and to be ready now.

So we turn again to God's grace, for we are never ready. Called again to prayer and worship, to a recognition of our independence upon him, and the sacraments. Especially we are called to the Eucharist in which we are fed as children, looking back with a memory which makes that which is commemorated present; Advent explained and expressed.

Advent causes us to change our attitudes to our lives, which are set in a proper perspective, seen from their end. We are no longer preparing for promotion or success or achievement as ends themselves but humbly waiting on the Lord, seeking success or promotion or achievement only so far as these things promote his Kingdom and his will in the world as all things move towards their consummation in him.

**SERENA JOCELYN
READER**

21ST DECEMBER 2022

Psalm 66

Praise for God's Goodness to Israel

To the leader. A Song. A Psalm.

- ¹ Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth;
² sing the glory of his name;
give to him glorious praise.
³ Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!
Because of your great power, your enemies cringe before you.
⁴ All the earth worships you;
they sing praises to you,
sing praises to your name." *Selah*
⁵ Come and see what God has done:
he is awesome in his deeds among mortals.
⁶ He turned the sea into dry land;
they passed through the river on foot.
There we rejoiced in him,
⁷ who rules by his might forever,
whose eyes keep watch on the nations—
let the rebellious not exalt themselves. *Selah*
⁸ Bless our God, O peoples;
let the sound of his praise be heard,
⁹ who has kept us among the living
and has not let our feet slip.
¹⁰ For you, O God, have tested us;
you have tried us as silver is tried.
¹¹ You brought us into the net;
you laid burdens on our backs;
¹² you let people ride over our heads;
we went through fire and through water;
yet you have brought us out to a spacious place
¹³ I will come into your house with burnt offerings;
I will pay you my vows,
¹⁴ those that my lips uttered

and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.
¹⁵ I will offer to you burnt offerings of fatted calves,
with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;
I will make an offering of bulls and goats. *Selah*
¹⁶ Come and hear, all you who fear God,
and I will tell what he has done for me.
¹⁷ I cried aloud to him,
and he was extolled with my tongue.
¹⁸ If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened.
¹⁹ But truly God has listened;
he has heard the words of my prayer.
²⁰ Blessed be God,
who has not rejected my prayer
or removed his steadfast love from me.

PSALM 66

PRAISE FOR GOD'S GOODNESS TO ISRAEL



22ND DECEMBER 2022

O heavenly Father, who has filled the world with beauty;
open our eyes to behold thy gracious hand in all thy works;
that rejoicing in they whole creation, we
may learn to serve thee with gladness; for the sake of him
Through whom all things were made, thy Son Jesus
Christ our Lord. Amen

THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER



23RD DECEMBER 2022

**Pour down, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness.**

Turn your fierce anger from us, O Lord,
and remember not our sins for ever.
Your holy cities have become a desert,
Zion a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation;
our holy and beautiful house,
where our ancestors praised you.

**Pour down, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness.**

We have sinned and become like one who is unclean;
we have all withered like a leaf,
and our iniquities like the wind have swept us away.
You have hidden your face from us,
and abandoned us to our iniquities.

**Pour down, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness.**

You are my witnesses, says the Lord,
and my servant whom I have chosen,
that you may know me and believe me.
I myself am the Lord, and none but I can deliver;
what my hand holds, none can snatch away.

**Pour down, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness.**

Comfort my people, comfort them;
my salvation shall not be delayed.
I have swept your offences away like a cloud;
fear not, for I will save you.
I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,
your redeemer.
**Pour down, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness.**

THE ADVENT PROSE



24TH DECEMBER 2022

ADVENT EXAMEN

THE IGNATIAN EXAMEN, OR THE DAILY EXAMEN, IS A CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER LED BY MEMORY. DURING AN EXAMEN, ONE REFLECTS ON THE CURRENT DAY, FOCUSING ON MEMORIES FROM THE EVENTS OF THE DAY AS A WAY OF RECOGNIZING GOD'S DIVINE PRESENCE

Begin by taking in a deep breath taking in God's love, the light of Christ, and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Exhale all your worries, your challenges, and your fears. During this time of Advent, let us reflect on what we can do to prepare for the Lord.

1. Invite the Holy Spirit to help you see the day as the newborn baby Jesus sees it. What joy have you found today? Where have you felt God's love? What have you done today to prepare the way for Jesus to be born into this world for you?

2. Now, think about your day as if looking at it through the eyes of a child; what do you see?

Did something surprise you? Was it something someone said to you or something you are grateful for?

What did you recognise as gifts (thinking about the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh brought to Jesus)? Thank God for the gifts he has given to you today. Which of those gifts have you brought to Jesus in gratitude?

3. Take a moment to reflect on the times today when God was specially present to you. Recognise your feelings in those moments.

How did you prepare your heart for God's presence in the coming of Jesus?

Where did you feel God's loving arms wrapped around you the way Jesus felt Mary's arms?

How did you prepare to experience God's love, forgiveness, and hope?

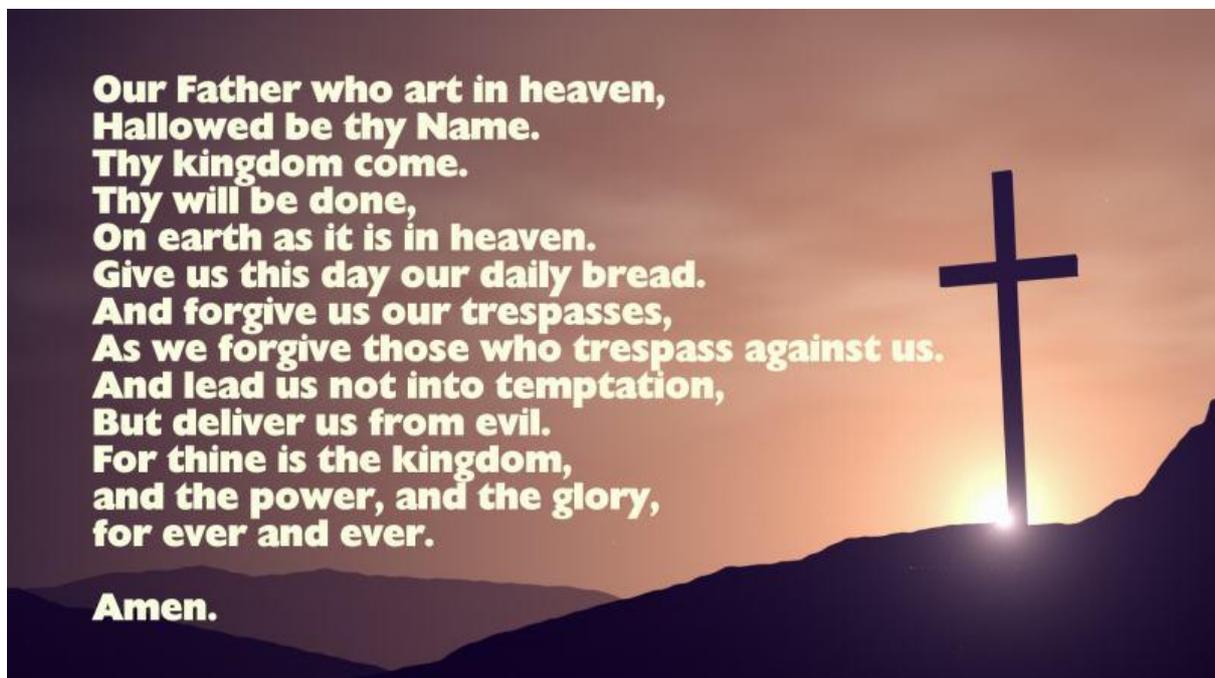
4. Now, take a moment to think about the times when God seemed to be hidden.

Where did you struggle to see the Messiah in your life—the way some fail to recognise the Messiah's birth when Jesus was born? When might you have seen the need for love and didn't respond (maybe like the innkeeper), or the opportunity for

forgiveness, and walked away? How was your heart prepared? Ask God to forgive you for anything that moved your heart away from God's love and recognise the birth of Jesus in you. And ask God to help you open your heart and become the person God created you to be.

5. Finally, prepare for the hope of Jesus Christ in your life. Think about what you are hopeful for and what you are looking forward to during Advent and Christmas. Is your hope like that of a child on Christmas morning? What gifts will you share to be hope for someone else? Ask God to bless all in your life as you prepare the way of the Lord, and ask God to be with you today and every day.

Pray the Our Father



ADVENT EXAMEN

25TH DECEMBER 2022

A Christmas prayer

Holy Jesus,
by being born one of us,
and lying humbly in a manger,
you show us how much God
loves the world.

Let the light of your love
always shine in our hearts,
until we reach our home in
heaven,
and see you on your throne of
glory.
Amen.

