



## INTRODUCTIONS

*For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines*

**The First Reading** - Isaiah 2: 1-5

The Bible tells us much about God's past dealings with his people. All our readings in the Advent Season speak of the future in God's ultimate will. Even for Isaiah, in turbulent times, there is expectancy and the hope of peace, when all people shall come together to worship the one who comes to us in holiness.

**The Psalm** - Psalm 122

**The Second Reading** - Romans 13:11-14

Isaiah and all Israel expected a new age of the Messiah. For Paul's readers as for us, the new time has come - not yet in its fullness, but begun in the coming of Jesus Christ. Our behaviour must therefore be suitable to these decisive times, nearer every day to the Christ who will come again.

**The Gospel Reading** - Matthew 24:36-44

In this new church year, the Gospel on most Sundays will be from that of Matthew. Here, Jesus has some warnings for his disciples about the final coming of the son of Man. His

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kingdom will mean a separation between those who are expectant and those left unprepared. God may refuse those who eternally refuse him.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

[http://bible.oremus.org/?show\\_adj=no&passages=Isaiah%202:%201-5%0Acw%20Psalm%20122%0ARomans%2013:11-14%0AMatthew%2024:36-44](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Isaiah%202:%201-5%0Acw%20Psalm%20122%0ARomans%2013:11-14%0AMatthew%2024:36-44)

### LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE

**See also Parish Resource Pack for Advent on CNI for alternate form and additional resources.**

ADULT: Today is the first Sunday of Advent - the time when we prepare once again for the coming of Jesus.

CHILD/YOUTH: We light a candle each week to remind us that Jesus brings light into the dark places of the world.

ADULT: Today, the prophet Isaiah describes a future shaped by peace for all nations as they walk in the light of the Lord. We wait in hope for this prophecy to be fulfilled..

CHILD/YOUTH: We light the candle of hope to proclaim that God's light is coming into the world  
*A purple candle is lit .*

PRAYER: God of all nations - you spoke to Isaiah and you empowered him to speak welcome words of peace and hope to the people of his time. We need to hear your word anew to us today as the darkness of despair is still experienced wherever peace and hope is absent.

Strengthen us with the power of the Holy Spirit so that we may be your prophets in this day and age - teaching your ways and lifting people's darkness through words and work of love and peace and justice. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

### COLLECTS OF THE DAY

#### Collect One

Almighty God,  
Give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness,  
and put upon us the armour of light,  
now in the time of this mortal life,  
in which thy Son Jesus Christ  
came to visit us in great humility;  
that in the last day,  
when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty  
to judge both the quick and the dead,  
we may rise to the life immortal;  
through him who liveth and reigneth with thee  
and the Holy Spirit, now and ever.

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*This collect is said after the Collect of the day until Christmas Eve.*

### Collect Two

Almighty God,  
Give us grace to cast away the works of darkness  
and to put on the armour of light  
now in the time of this mortal life  
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;  
that on the last day  
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty  
to judge the living and the dead,  
we may rise to the life immortal;  
through him who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Please include prayers for people suffering from HIV/AIDS as December 1 is World Aids Day. Pray for those who are researching new treatments; and pray for the millions in Third World countries who cannot afford any treatment. Pray for all families devastated by this disease, especially the children who have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS.

See Christian Aid for prayers -

<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/churches/prayer/hiv-aids.aspx>

<http://www.worldaidsday.org/>

Also...

Psalm 122: v.6 says "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" that (v.7) "peace might be within its walls".

### POST COMMUNION

God our deliverer,  
Awaken our hearts  
to prepare the way for the advent of your Son,  
that, with minds purified by the grace of his coming,  
we may serve you faithfully all our days;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

O Lord our God, make us watchful and keep us faithful as we await the coming of your Son our Lord; that, when he shall appear, he may not find us sleeping in sin but active in his service and joyful in his praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### PRAYERS

God of justice and peace,  
from the heavens you rain down mercy and kindness,  
that all on earth may stand in awe and wonder  
before your marvelous deeds.  
Raise our heads in expectation,  
that we may yearn for the coming day of the Lord

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and stand without blame before your Son, Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

We seek the mighty God  
in the most unlikely places  
as a child in a stable,  
and in an empty tomb.  
May God hear these prayers,  
which come from the unlikely corners of our lives.  
Give us ears to hear, O God,  
and eyes to watch,  
that we may know your presence in our midst  
during this holy season of joy  
as we anticipate the coming of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Unexpected God,  
your advent alarms us.  
Wake us from drowsy worship,  
from the sleep that neglects love,  
and the sedative of misdirected frenzy.  
Awaken us now to your coming,  
and bend our angers into your peace. Amen.

Almighty God, as your kingdom dawns, turn us from the darkness of sin to the light of holiness, that we may be ready to meet you in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.  
*Common Worship Shorter Collect*

Lord our God, keep us your servants alert and watchful as we await the return of Christ your Son, so that when he comes and knocks at the door he may find us vigilant in prayer, with songs of praise on our lips. *Methodist Worship*

Lord our God, keep us your servants alert and watchful as we await the return of Christ your Son, so that when he comes and knocks at the door he may find us vigilant in prayer, with songs of praise on our lips. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

God of all hope and joy, open our hearts in welcome that your Son Jesus Christ at his coming may find in us a dwelling prepared for himself; Amen. *(New Zealand Prayer book)*

Come Lord Jesus, come as King. Rule in our hearts, come as love. Rule in our minds, come as peace. Rule our actions, come as power. Rule in our days, come as joy. Rule in our darkness, come as light. Rule in our bodies, come as health. Rule in our labours, come as hope. Thy Kingdom come among us. *(David Adam)*

Our heavenly Father, as we once again prepare for Christmas, help us to find time in our busy lives for quiet and thought and prayer, that we may reflect upon the wonder of your love. Allow the story of the Saviour's birth to deepen our joy, make our worship more real and our lives more worthy of all you have done for us through the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. *(Frank Colquhoun)*

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Lord, may we love all your creation, all the earth and every grain of sand in it. May we love every leaf, every ray of your light. For we acknowledge to you that all is like an ocean, all is flowing and blending, and that to withhold any measure of love from anything in your universe is to withhold that same measure of love from you. *Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-81)*

My heart is cold today, O God, I feel no burning desire no zeal to pray or to be with you. My heart is frozen by the chill of emptiness— sluggish and stalled. send forth your Spirit to revive my heart. Spark it with a relish for service, with a longing to pray. And may my desire to be your flame of warmth and love spark other stalled souls to come alive, aflame in you. *Edward Hays*

O God, animate us to cheerfulness. may we have a joyful sense of our blessings, learn to look on the bright circumstances of our lot, and maintain a perpetual contentedness under thy allotments. Fortify our minds against disappointments and calamity. Preserve us from despondency, from yielding to dejection. Teach us that no evil is intolerable but a guilty conscience, and that nothing can hurt us, if with true loyalty of affection, we keep thy commandments and take refuge in thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *William Ellery Channing 1780-1842*

### OFFERTORY PRAYER

Gracious and loving God, these gifts we offer are our response to the light which came into the world that first Christmas. Help us in this Advent season to allow that light to shine through us, so that the dark areas of people's lives can be pierced by Christ's love. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen

### BENEDICTION

Go into this week,  
filled with the peace of God,  
nourished by the life of Jesus Christ  
stimulated by the insight of the Holy Spirit

## LECTIONARY NOTES 1

The season of Advent came into being toward the middle of the sixth century. At first, the Advent Season was determined as the six Sundays leading up to Christmas. This was then reduced to four Sundays by Pope St. Gregory the Great (591-604). So now Advent is the season four weeks before Christmas in which we prepare for the coming of Christ and it begins on Sunday nearest to 30th November. Advent is the period of preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus and its name comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means "coming".

The season also celebrates Christ's anticipated coming again in the fullness of time to rule triumphantly over life in heaven and earth, so it is so much more than just a time to get ready for Christmas. The colour of Advent, seen in the candles used in the wreath is purple. Purple is used in the church at Lent, because it is the colour of saying sorry, it is also the colour used for funerals to show mourning. Purple is used at Advent not in a mournful way, or to say sorry, rather it is to demonstrate that something serious is taking place, Advent purple encourages us to engage in a time of reflective watchfulness. At Advent the Church is put on guard, to watch, be vigilant and prepared, but this is a time of

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reassurance, because it reminds us that the question is not whether Jesus will return to judge the earth, but when.

God's first intervention within our history came not in the form of some instant or earth shattering event, but instead God chose to come into the world as we all do, to be born as a baby in the midst of a chaotic world. By our own impatient standards this seems such a slow way to bring salvation to the world. But God may not always choose the easy answer or the quick fix. But by His earthly incarnation He demonstrates a total commitment to the very core of humanity. A commitment, to its day by day routines and challenges, a commitment to humanity from the cradle to the grave and beyond. And in that same incarnational way, God comes to us day by day, through the working of the Spirit, through His Word and Sacrament, making the ordinary extraordinary; making the broken whole; and redeeming and restoring the past, present and future, whatever they hold.

We should not spend our time worrying about the timing of God's arrival or about the distraction of what might happen in the meantime. God's reign has already broken into our world through the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ. His Kingdom is near and it is coming, even as it is already arrived but not fully realized. We are to remain watchful, and aware, and to be prepared for the final coming, which might arrive at any time.

In the birth of Jesus God's love is shared with uncommon grace in a world so desperately in need of that love. It is through us, and through the very imperfect Church that bears his name that his love and grace continue to come and be spread.

There is much about Advent to enjoy, the Advent wreaths found in our churches where they have four candles to be lit each Sunday and one for Christmas Day. But in the midst of our church we know that just as we prepare for Christmas, so we have to make ready to welcome Jesus in our lives. As Christians there is a real sense that we live all year round in Advent time. We are living in the present but trying very hard to bring to the present the realities of the future. Our lives should be characterised by the lifestyle of heaven, even though we are currently inhabitants of planet earth. It is difficult to know how to interpret the standards of Jesus for our society. How do we 'turn the other cheek' in a society in which people are brutally murdered on our streets. Yet Advent tells us that we Christians are to do just that, bring God's reign in our own lives in such a way that we are salt in this sorry society and bring about change which makes a real difference. We must not become fatigued, we prepare inwardly and spiritually, but if that means anything it is demonstrated visibly in our changed lives. Somebody said "Nothing is more powerful than an individual acting out of conscience, thus helping to bring the collective conscience to life." This Advent we are challenged not to blame others, but instead to recognise that the change must come from us as we live the new lives of the Kingdom. Are you ready for the coming of Jesus?

*Charles Royden*

### LECTIONARY NOTES 2

#### **A new Kingdom**

Isaiah 2:1 – 5; Psalm 122; Romans 13:11 – 14; Matthew 24: 36 – 44

The New Testament writers held the beliefs that God was king and that his kingdom would one day be established on Earth. Neither of these beliefs was new or particularly startling. What they were really excited about was the conviction that this new kingdom had already begun to dawn, and that God was now entering into human history. Not surprisingly, they believed that this would make a radical difference to the way that things were. The whole



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point of what they were saying was not the reality of God's kingly rule, but the immediacy of it.

The Old Testament prophets had prepared the ground for such convictions. The Old Testament passage from Isaiah asserts the belief of what God will do 'in days to come', after the nation of Israel had been able to return to her own lands after the exile in Babylon. But the role of prophecy is complex: we easily use the term to predict the future but it is also important to remember that the prophet speaks God's words: it is not so much fore-telling, as forth-telling. What is also important is that the prophecies are recorded in texts so that they have an effect upon the life and faith of contemporary readers, and do not simply record what took place in the past.

Psalm 122 ties in with this same idea, and was a psalm sung by pilgrims as they approached Jerusalem. Apparently, for those who have visited and looked at Jerusalem, with this psalm in mind, it is very hard not to become moved at the beauty of the place which seems to be at the theological centre of the world. Anyone who thinks such thoughts today is definitely at the end of a long line of predecessors who 'pray for the peace of Jerusalem'.

From the believing in the coming of God, and feelings of wonder at the sight of the 'holy City'; we next consider Paul's passage in Romans which focuses his expectation of seeing Jesus. This is the famous passage which is reputed to have brought about the conversion of St Augustine of Hippo, 'not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ.' This is the summons to a life lived in the context of the eternal future offered to all people and known now by those who respond in faith to the Jesus Christ.

Matthew 24 provides us with one of the basic texts for this complex of beliefs. Here is Jesus, towards the end of his life, warning his disciples that the end is to come imminently, and that the events which accompany its coming will be spectacular. The imagery is stark, deriving, as it does from the apocalyptic tradition which provided the context for the preaching of Jesus. In a world where the actual beginning and end of history are matters of scientific exploration rather than theological dogma, we need to read through the words of Jesus to penetrate their essentials. Stripped down to these, the message is that at any moment might reveal the glorious presence of the God who is Father of Jesus Christ.

What hope is there for the world? Can we look forward to anything, or are we condemned either to seeing things getting steadily worse or to an endless circularity of improvement and decline? The answer from the Christian tradition has always been that hope can only truly be fixed in God. The proper response to God is one of goodness, kindness, and compassion to our neighbour, such as God shows us. These qualities can reveal the Christ who is gloriously present in our neighbour.

*Peter Littleford*

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### SERMON OUTLINE

#### **Matt 24:36-44 about that day and hour...**

Picture the setting - Jesus was *sitting on the Mount of Olives* - questioned by the disciples about *the sign of his coming & the end of the age* (Mt 24.3) >> *about that day & hour* (36)

**1. A Day of Surprise:** *no one knows - only the Father* - not even *the Son!* Jesus urges watchfulness - *keep awake* (42) *for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.* It will be unexpected - like *a thief in the night*. He then refers them to *the days of Noah* (37) - times of evil, immorality & sin...

**a) Waywardness** - *eating, drinking, marrying, self-centredness* - no thought of God or eternity - heaven or hell..

**b) Wickedness** - **Gen 6.11** *the earth was corrupt in God's sight & full of violence* - resulting in the flood/purging of evil

**2. A Day of Separation:** - cf parables of the sheep/goats - net full of fish - *2 will be in the field* (40) *1 will be taken & 1 will be left; 2 women will be grinding meal together* - taken to blessing or judgement – cf v13 *he who stands firm to the end will be saved* - may we all be given strength to stand firm through a deep & living faith in X!!

**3. A Day of Sorrow:** for those who are not ready - caught unawares/unprepared - like *the owner of the house* - burgled during the *night* - & great was his loss! Exclusion from heaven will bring *weeping & gnashing of teeth* - a dire & dreadful penalty! *Therefore you also must be ready for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour* - no one knows when - readiness for that coming is the only remedy!!

This is one of the keynote messages of Advent - may we all live a life of readiness for that Coming which we proclaim in our historic Creeds - the heart of our Faith!

Norman Porteous

### A WORD FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Prop - a torch.

Invite everyone to look at the candle - note how our eyes are drawn to the light.

Just one tiny flame can make the atmosphere brighter round about it. It's similar when we switch a torch on - ask the children/young people if they like playing with torches - the answer most likely to be in the affirmative - why do they like it? Are they interested in what colour or shape the torch is? No, it is the light that fascinates - and it's fun to direct the torch's beam on all sorts of areas we might not be able to see clearly otherwise. (Direct the torch beam on the ceiling or other spots in the church)

A torch is handy when you have to see in a difficult- to- get- into- space- like under beds, under cars, behind refrigerators etc etc. It can be a bit like that in life as well - when people are unhappy for whatever reason - maybe sickness, or no work, or too much work, or there's quarrelling among your friends at school or arguments at home, we might feel that, on our own, we can't penetrate the unhappiness.

In the reading from the New Testament (Romans 13: 11-14) which



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we just heard, the writer, Paul, says that we are to put on "the armour of light". Armour made people strong enough to withstand attacks by the enemy. Our 'enemy' sometimes is the temptation to do wrong things, or the temptation to do nothing when someone needs our help. When we put on "the armour of light" we are switching on Jesus' power within us so that we can bring that smile or hug, that helping act which brightens a person's life just when they needed it. So, its very necessary to keep our lives connected to Jesus so that he can use us to brighten someone's day.

### ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

*Please note that during Advent our US and Canadian friends follow a different set of readings however, there are useful ideas here - See also the CNI Parish Support Pack for Advent.*

"Advent," sermon discussion from Frederick Buechner, Frederick Buechner Blog.  
<http://frederickbuechner.com/content/weekly-sermon-illustration-advent>

"Why Advent Is the Hardest of Times for Faithful Christians," Catherine A. Caimano, Duke Divinity School's *Faith & Leadership*, 2010.  
<http://www.faithandleadership.com/sermons/why-advent-the-hardest-times-for-faithful-christians>

"Closer Than You Think," the Rev. Dr. Stephen Montgomery, *Day 1*, 2010.  
[http://day1.org/2384-closer\\_than\\_you\\_think](http://day1.org/2384-closer_than_you_think)

"Waiting," Dr. P.C. Enniss, *Day 1*, 2007.  
[http://day1.org/368-the\\_rev\\_dr\\_pc\\_enniss](http://day1.org/368-the_rev_dr_pc_enniss)

"The Waiting Place," the Rev. Dr. William L. Self, *Day 1*, 2004.  
[http://day1.org/619-the\\_waiting\\_place](http://day1.org/619-the_waiting_place)

### CHILDREN

Worshiping with Children, Advent 1A, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown, 2013. [2010.](http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2013/08/year-first-sunday-of-advent-also-sunday.html)  
<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2013/08/year-first-sunday-of-advent-also-sunday.html>

"Birthday Candles," video, John Stevens, *Dollar Store Children's Sermons*, 2013.  
<http://dskidsermons.wordpress.com/2013/11/07/birthdaycandles/>

"Be Ready for Messages," Advent 1A, Lesson Plans that Work, *Episcopal Digital Network*, 2013.  
<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/lessons/2013/07/08/be-ready-for-messages/>

Hope as a Promise, Anna Shirey, *Anna's Hosannas*, Children's Lesson for Advent 1A, 2010.  
<http://annashosannas.net/Advent-1A.php>

Proclaiming Faith, discussion, prayer, activities for primary grades, activities, 2013.  
[www.churchnewsireland.org](http://www.churchnewsireland.org)

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[http://www.cyberfaith.com/proclaiming\\_faith.cfm?id=139](http://www.cyberfaith.com/proclaiming_faith.cfm?id=139)