

Call to Worship

Welcome to this first Sunday in Advent,
today we give thanks for the hope, grace and peace
that comes from God, our creator.

We give our thanks always.

As we listen and learn, may we be enriched and strengthened in our faith.

Let us gather as one family and worship our Lord.

Prayer

God of mystery and majesty,
we give you all thanks and praise,
for all that you have done and all that you will do.
You created the earth and all its inhabitants.
You gave us the creatures of the earth to look after and to meet our needs.
Through your prophets, you have given us lessons to learn,
and visions of our approaching salvation.
We gather in this place to remember and celebrate
these special days that lead to the birth of your Son, Jesus,
through whom you have called all people to yourself.

God, you have given us the freedom to make decisions
and with every action we must accept the outcome.
We stumble, we fall, we criticise and we are so quick to judge.
Yet through it all we know we can trust in you
and hope we can learn from history, both our own and others.

Lord, we are sorry that we cause so much hardship and misery
by both our action and inaction.
May we realise when we have made poor decisions

and seek your forgiveness and reconciliation with anyone affected.
May we see each other as you see us.
Each and every person,
regardless of age, race or gender is made in your image,
each one is loved and cherished by you,
created to be a part of this world
and with a part to play in your greater story.
As we wait in these Advent days,
preparing to celebrate the coming of Christ,
may we cherish the acceptance and love you have for us
and find ways to help others feel accepted, loved and cherished by you in turn.
Lord, in your mercy, hear us as we pray together: Our Father...

All Age Idea

If your church has an Advent candle ask for help to light it and explain its purpose: the Advent wreath is large and circular in shape. The circle has no beginning or end, reminding us of God's unending love for us. The wreath is visible enough so all can see it. It is made of fresh evergreens, which are a sign of life in an otherwise lifeless winter. They point to new life and the hope of eternal life that we find in Christ. They also remind us to pray for the restoration of all of God's creation. The five candles contrast darkness and light. They are lit in succession, one more each week as we count the Sundays in Advent, waiting for Christ's birth. The candles each signify the light shining into the darkness of this world, representing the **hope** brought to God's people, the **peace** promised through Christ, God's **love** which is ours eternally and the **joy** with which. Until finally on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, depending on the year, we light the fifth candle—to show that the Christ child is born. This signifies that Jesus is the light of the world, and the darkness has not put it out. The full blaze stands for the fulfilment of God's promise in the scripture.

or

Talk about Christmas presents and what people want. Use it to highlight the difference between the worldly hope of getting what we want, and the Biblical Hope for the birth of Jesus that was a gift to the whole world.

Readings

Isaiah 64:1-9 | St Mark 13:24-37

Sermon Notes

Isaiah 64:1-9 *God will come with power and compassion*

In these verses Isaiah is continuing his prayer from the previous chapter. He is praying for God's dramatic intervention by remembering how God has interceded spectacularly for God's people in the past. He confesses how low the people have fallen and how far from God they feel and submits to God's mercy. The OT writers had an understanding of God as the ultimate sovereign. All powerful and in full control of their destiny, the potter can do whatever they wish to the clay, but ultimately Isaiah is asking for God's forgiveness.

St Mark 13:24-37 *The coming of the Son of Man*

Earlier in the chapter, after a disciple had been admiring the beauty and size of the temple. Jesus had talked about the destruction of the buildings and was asked when it would happen. There then follows the terrifying descriptions of the world plunging into chaos and darkness prior to Christ's return. The emphasis being on the fact that no one knows when that will be. While it may seem a bit depressing at first reading, the hope from these passages can be found in different ways. The fact that the God we worship is timeless, people have been praying about their woes and the state of the world now for thousands of years. That despite our shortcomings we know we can call on God our creator. Despite how bad things seem to be, we know that everything will work out in the end and that our hope as Christians comes from Christ telling us that he *will* come again. Think about what we understand to be true in our confessions of faith.

Intercessions

Let us pray.

God, maker and sustainer of all things.

We bring our prayers before you

from a world that seems to be in a constant state of distress.

There are signs and portents all around us,

fires, earthquakes, droughts and flash floods,

not to mention wars and plagues and pestilence.

We do not need to look for meaning,

many of these things are a consequence of the actions

of the last few generations plundering this world for profit.

So, we ask for a shaking up of all we have and do.

The systems have been designed to give the few as much as possible
at the expense of the many;

leaders and businesses who are corrupt, or foolish,
or just as helpless as we all feel in the face of forces we cannot control.
And yet in this Advent we dare to believe that it is your world.
We go on asserting that you care,
not just because to do otherwise is unthinkable.
God of whatever came before
and whatever may come after our all too brief and troubled lives,
we commit to you our lives and our loved ones...

Silence

We commit to you our world
and our personal worries of how to fix and look after this planet...

Silence

We long for you to come and save us
from the greed and the selfishness and the pride we see all around us.
May we be ready and willing when you do.
Through Christ, the child, the teacher, and the Saviour we pray. Amen.

Benediction

Go with your heart and soul in eager expectation, awaiting the coming of Good News.
Let us go in the sure and certain Hope that only God can offer.
Let us be a living witness of that hope, sharing the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Spirit in word and action.
We go to love and serve the Lord
Amen.

Hymn Suggestions

	RS	CH4	StF	MP
<i>Isaiah</i>				
Jesus lover of my soul	322	490	355	372
Lord of Creation to you be all praise	532	500	449	440
As a Fire is meant for burning		252		
<i>Mark</i>				
Lo He Comes With Clouds Descending	656	477	177	424
Come Thou Long Expected Jesus	138	472	169	102
Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory of the Coming of the Lord		476		
O Lord My God When I In Awesome Wonder	117	154	82	506
<i>General</i>				
Be Still and know that I am God		755	18	48
I heard the voice of Jesus say	349	540	248	275
Take my life, Lord, let it be	371	502	566	624
O come, O come, Emmanuel	126	273	180	493
The Apostles' Creed (Listened to or said together)	759	679	764	
Soon and Very Soon		749		605

RS – *Rejoice & Sing* | CH4 – *Church Hymnary 4* | StF – *Singing the Faith* | MP – *Mission Praise*