

## Advent 1 - Sunday 29th November

### Candle 1 Purple Hope

“Eternal God, as we await the coming of our saviour, give us the courage to hope. Give us grace to see your plans of redemption for our lives, for this community, and for the world. Through Jesus Christ, the source of our redemption and hope. Amen.”

### Opening Antiphon

**Holy Spirit, we welcome you.  
Holy Spirit, we welcome you.  
Move amongst us with holy fire,  
As we lay aside all earthly desires,  
Hands reach out and hearts aspire.  
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, we welcome you.**

**Holy Spirit, we welcome you.  
Holy Spirit, we welcome you.  
Please accomplish in me today  
Some new work of loving grace I pray  
Unreservedly have your way  
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, we welcome you.**

*Chris Bowater CCLI SONG # 215942*

### Call to worship:

Let us praise the name of the Lord;  
**ascribe greatness to our God.**

Lord, open our lips  
**and we shall praise your name.**

Faithful God, whose word is life:  
come with saving power to free our praise,  
inspire our prayer and shape our lives  
for the kingdom of your Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.     **Amen.**

## **Penitential Rite**

When the Lord comes,  
he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness,  
and will disclose the purposes of the heart.  
Therefore in the light of Christ let us confess our sins.

Lord Jesus, you came to gather the nations  
into the peace of your kingdom:  
Lord, have mercy.     **Lord, have mercy.**

You come in word and sacrament  
to strengthen us in holiness:  
Christ, have mercy.     **Christ, have mercy.**

You will come in glory  
with salvation for your people:  
Lord, have mercy.     **Lord, have mercy.**

The almighty and merciful Lord  
grant *you* forgiveness of all *your* sins,  
time for amendment of life,  
and the grace and strength of the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen..**

Response to God's mercy and forgiveness:  
**Amazing grace, how sweet the sound**

that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
and grace my fears relieved;  
how precious did that grace appear  
the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares  
I have already come:  
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,  
his word my hope secures;  
he will my shield and portion be  
as long as life endures.

*John Newton*

## Collect

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**

## 1st Reading: Isaiah 64:1-9 (NIV)

**64** Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down,  
that the mountains would tremble before you!

**2** As when fire sets twigs ablaze  
and causes water to boil,  
come down to make your name known to your enemies  
and cause the nations to quake before you!

- 3 For when you did awesome things that we did not expect,  
you came down, and the mountains trembled before you.
- 4 Since ancient times no one has heard,  
no ear has perceived,  
no eye has seen any God besides you,  
who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.
- 5 You come to the help of those who gladly do right,  
who remember your ways.  
But when we continued to sin against them,  
you were angry.  
How then can we be saved?
- 6 All of us have become like one who is unclean,  
and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;  
we all shrivel up like a leaf,  
and like the wind our sins sweep us away.
- 7 No one calls on your name  
or strives to lay hold of you;  
for you have hidden your face from us  
and have given us over to our sins.
- 8 Yet you, Lord, are our Father.  
We are the clay, you are the potter;  
we are all the work of your hand.
- 9 Do not be angry beyond measure, Lord;  
do not remember our sins forever.  
Oh, look on us, we pray,  
for we are all your people.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**Response:**

**Abba Father, Let Me Be  
Yours And Yours Alone.**

**May My Will For Ever Be  
Evermore Your Own.  
Never Let My Heart Grow Cold,  
Never Let Me Go.  
Abba Father, Let Me Be  
Yours And Yours Alone.**

**Never Let My Heart Grow Cold,  
Never Let Me Go.  
Abba Father, Let Me Be  
Yours And Yours Alone**

*Dave Bilbrough. Ccli # 38686.*

## **Gospel Acclamation**

**Alleluia, alleluia.**

**Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,  
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.**

*cf Isaiah 40.3–5*

**Alleluia.**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.  
**Glory to you, O Lord.**

### **Mark 13:24-37 New International Version (NIV)**

**24** “But in those days, following that distress,

“the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light;

**25** the stars will fall from the sky,

and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’

**26** “At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. **27** And he will send his

angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

**28** “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. **29** Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. **30** Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. **31** Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

The Day and Hour Unknown

**32** “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. **33** Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.

**34** It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

**35** “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. **36** If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. **37** What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## Sermon

Advent takes us back to the beginning of things - to the time long ago when men and women of faith yearned for the first coming of the Saviour.

Advent hopes to capture their spirit of hope - in the midst of their hopelessness - of yearning for God to come and save

them... Feelings which we probably immediately identify with in our current circumstances.

But more than that - in Advent we recognise that we ourselves are in the in-between times - God has come to save us and give us his Spirit - but still even though we live knowing that it has been accomplished - we live in a time still when we wait for Christ to come back in glory to rule over all God's creation...

Today's readings are all about being vigilant - and not missing out on the coming of God into our lives.

In the Gospel reading Jesus is urging his followers to prepare for an uncertain future - the only thing that is really certain is that one day the world will come to an end - We do not know when - and Jesus says we must be ready to meet with God at any moment.

And although Jesus says "But about that day or hour **no one knows**, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" people still continue to calculate - to prophesy - the end of the world.... we have seen the movies haven't we Armageddon, 2012, End of Days, Independence Day, to name but a few - and to try to predict the exact time when Jesus will return.

Of course - we may or may not see the end of the world in our own lifetime - even so we surely will come to a time when our life comes to an end - and either way we do not know when that will be. We need to be prepared - ready to meet our God at any moment.

I am told that the Jews prayed seven times a day that the Messiah would come among them. However when he did come as brother and friend and rabbi and teacher and Master and Lord many of them failed to recognise him. They asked him to come, prayed for him to come, but in their minds they “prescribed”, they determined, they decided what he should be like and what he should do when he got here. Because the Messiah did not come as a powerful warrior, but slipped into humanity simply and humbly with “ordinariness stamped on his humanity and his ‘God-ness’ veiled - he simply didn’t fit the person specification or the role description they had prepared for the Messiah.

Jesus did not come in great power and great majesty then, he came as a helpless baby the truth recognised but by a privileged few.

Today he lives amongst us still - and we can glimpse him and meet him in a myriad of unexpected places. But we too, need to learn to look again to see the world full of signs of God’s mighty power and approaching presence.

Of course I hope, we might expect to meet him in Church, in the Bible readings, in the community of believers, enthroned on the praises of his people, and in the sacrament sign he left us as a parting gift.

We might feel ourselves inspired to see the hand of the creator in His handiwork “O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!” says the psalmist; in the beauty of his creation - the Sunrise and the sunset, the snow frosting on mountain peaks, waterfalls tumbling down vast rocky

inclines, the dancing ribbons and shimmering showers of the Northern lights for example.

We might find him in our relationships with others... as we count ten tiny fingers and ten tiny toes on a newborn, in the unconscious tummy laughter of children, in the passion of youth to change the world, and in the crinkly smiles of age with its wisdom and experience... in shared joy, shared pain, in loving commitment, in forgiveness and reconciliation....

He has chosen too, to make his home with the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry and the oppressed, those who mourn, the lonely and unloved... all those who are vulnerable or in need, and all who are sick in body, mind or spirit.

And he touches our world through the healing touch of nurses, the availability and courage of ambulance crews and firefighters, the caring of carers...

The truth is that he is with us always even to the end of the age - and if we look and listen and seek him we will find him in us, with us and amongst us even as he has promised.

Sometimes he reaches into our lives directly and unexpectedly.

God may use a friend, a teacher, a parent, or a preacher to convey His message to us. Their words may come as a warning, a blessing, or as a prophetic truth about our lives. Whether we choose to hear it or ignore it, depends on us

Or sometimes God's Spirit speaks to us directly through our conscience - helping us to make the right decision - His Spirit nudging us to do the right thing.

Sometimes we simply hear his still small voice -

Today let us continue to look and listen for the one who has come among us.

As we become used to meeting with him day by day - so too we will find ourselves prepared to meet him face to face - whenever that time comes.

How can we fear the one who has lived in us, with us and amongst us... and whose greatest desire is that we will live with him for all time and for ever.

## **Response**

**My hope is built on nothing less  
than Jesus' blood and righteousness;  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.  
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;  
all other ground is sinking sand.**

**When darkness veils His lovely face,  
I rest on His unchanging grace;  
in ev'ry high and stormy gale,  
my anchor holds within the veil.  
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;  
all other ground is sinking sand.**

**His oath, His covenant, His blood  
support me in the whelming flood;  
when all around my soul gives way,  
He then is all my hope and stay.  
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;  
all other ground is sinking sand.**

**When He shall come with trumpet sound,  
O may I then in Him be found,  
dressed in His righteousness alone,  
faultless to stand before the throne  
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;  
all other ground is sinking sand.**

*Edward Mote Ccli #2836463*

### **Our Declaration of Faith**

Let us affirm our faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

**We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.  
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit**

and the Virgin Mary and was made man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the  
living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son  
is worshipped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism  
for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen

**Intercessions: Prepared and led for us by Pat Goulding from  
St Michael's Shefford**

The response today is  
**'Your will be done'**

Your Kingdom come - **Your will be done**

Let us pray.

We pray for Your church here on earth. In these 'different'  
times give strength and inspiration to all church leaders to find

new ways to minister the Advent message as we watch and wait for Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Saviour.

Your Kingdom come - **Your will be done**

We pray for the Queen, our government and leaders, locally, nationally and internationally, give them wisdom to heal divided nations, to bring peace and tolerance in areas of conflict. Give them the courage to put forward ideas to share the good news, and supplies, of the Covid vaccine in a way that will be equitable to the whole world not just those nations that can afford to pay.

We hold before you particularly, those people enduring the effects of war, persecution, exclusion and exploitation. May they see an end to their suffering.

Your Kingdom come - **Your will be done**

We pray for those who are sick, in body mind or spirit. These are particularly challenging times for both the sick and their friends and families. For many Christmas is a difficult time and this year it is compounded by the pandemic. May they find the healing and support they need and feel the assurance of Your loving care.

*(Pause)*

Your Kingdom come - **Your will be done**

We remember those we have loved and lost. We give You thanks and praise for the happy memories and the influence

they had in our lives, and for the sure hope of eternal life bought for us by the blood of Your precious Son.  
(Pause)

Your Kingdom come - **Your will be done**

We pray for ourselves, come Lord Jesus, help us to use this season of Advent to review our lives, to give ourselves afresh to You, allowing You to mold us in Your ways.

**Merciful Father: Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

Let's pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us.

**Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins**

**as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen.**

**Notices and Birthdays**

**The BLESSING and SENDING**

May God the Father,  
who loved the world so much that he sent his only Son,

give you grace to prepare for life eternal.

**Amen.**

May God the Son,  
who comes to us as redeemer and judge,  
reveal to you the path from darkness to light.

**Amen.**

May God the Holy Spirit,  
by whose working the Virgin Mary conceived the Christ,  
help you bear the fruits of holiness.

**Amen.**

And the blessing ...

## **Final Hymn**

**O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder  
Consider all the works Thy hand hath made,  
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,  
Thy power throughout the universe displayed;  
*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee,  
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!*  
*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee,  
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!***

**When through the woods and forest glades I wander  
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;  
when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,  
and hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze;**

***Chorus***

**And when I think that God His Son not sparing,  
Sent Him to die - I scarce can take it in,  
That on the cross my burden gladly bearing,  
He bled and died to take away my sin:**

***Chorus***

**When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation  
And take me home- what joy shall fill my heart!  
Then I shall bow in humble adoration  
And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!**

**Heading out prayer**

**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. Amen**

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# Ready for His Return

"Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come." Mark 13:33 (NIV)

Based on Mark 13:32-37 (NIV)



What time  
is it?

X S Y U H H R S L E E P I N G  
J I E C E U N C F P R N C A F  
B N T R T E D V W U C Z R P L  
T A P R V R C E O X Y R O Q U  
W T E A A A Y H O S Z K O Y K  
T L E U Z V N G B T S F S W J  
A H G J L M M T L C W J T U S  
M I D N I G H T S O Z G E H N  
F M L Q O E I N N S K S R O N  
A T W R V V X K O N L N Y U X  
T V H E V E D A Y E W E C S K  
H J L Z Z N G E G A W J E E C  
E D T X W I I N D D O O R S N  
R K D D R N A T U M B Q K O C  
A T I M E G P D D I K Q S F O

GUARD

HEAVEN

MIDNIGHT

DAY

DOOR

SON

FATHER

TIME

HOUR

WATCH

DAWN

SLEEPING

ALERT

ANGELS

ROOSTER

SERVANTS

HOUSE

CROWS

EVENING

KNOW



Advent Wreath