

*Longing for light, we wait in darkness...
Come, Lord, and do not delay.*



ADVENT REFLECTION

A Service of Music and Readings for Advent
sung by the combined choirs of Hemel Hempstead Deanery

Advent Sunday
Sunday 27 November 2022
6.30pm

Welcome to St John's for this special Advent service.

Whether this is your first time you have joined us for worship at St John's, or you are a regular member of the congregation, you are most welcome.

In tonight's Service we shall ponder the dawning light of Christ as we prepare to celebrate afresh his coming among us as the babe of Bethlehem; in anticipation of his coming as judge at the fulfilment of all things; and in recognition of his coming to us through the Sacraments, the Scriptures, and the lives of those around us.

What is Advent?

Since very early times it has been the Church's custom to prepare for the great festival of Christmas by a period of deep reflection upon the meaning of Christ's coming. This season is called 'Advent', 'the coming', and eventually became fixed at about four weeks. It recalls Christ's first coming among us in Bethlehem of Judea, and points us toward his coming at the end of time. It also speaks to us of his coming day by day: what St Bernard describes as Christ's 'hidden coming' to our hearts, which acts as a road between Christ's first coming at Bethlehem, and his final coming at the culmination of all things.

Advent is not a season of waiting for what we cannot know. It is, rather, a season in which we hope to glimpse our past, our present, and our future through the eyes of God, who was, and is, and is to come: who is at every moment our Maker, our Judge, and our Redeemer. This hope we carry not only for ourselves, but rather for the whole cosmos, that Christ will complete the work he has begun, gathering all things to himself.

The service is sung by the combined choirs of Hemel Hempstead Deanery, under the direction of Keith Beniston, Director of Music, St John's, Boxmoor.

The organ is played by Nicholas King.

Pre-Service Music:

Wachet auf BWV645

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

A welcome is given before the Service. Silence is then kept as the lights are turned off. All remain seated until the first congregational hymn.

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A Liturgy for Advent

The Choir sings into the darkness

The Introit: Matin Responsory

I look from afar: and lo, I see the power of God coming,
and a cloud covering the whole earth.

Go ye out to meet him and say:

“Tell us, art thou he that should come to reign over thy people Israel?”

High and low, rich and poor, one with another.

Go ye out to meet him and say:

“Hear, O thou shepherd of Israel, thou that ledest Joseph like a sheep.”

“Tell us, art thou he that should come?”

Stir up thy strength, O Lord, and come
to reign over thy people Israel.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost.

I look from afar: and lo, I see the power of God coming,
and a cloud covering the whole earth.

Go ye out to meet him and say:

“Tell us, art thou he that should come to reign over thy people Israel?”

*Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c.1514–94)
The first responsory of Advent Sunday Matins*

The first Candle of Advent on the Advent Wreath is lit.

The Vicar and Rural Dean gives

The Bidding

It is time for us to wake out of sleep,
for deliverance is nearer to us now than it was when first we believed.

It is far on in the night; day is near.

Let us therefore cast off the deeds of darkness
and put on our armour as soldiers of the light.

Grace, mercy, and peace be with you.

My brothers and sisters,

today we enter the solemn season of Advent

in which the Church bids us prepare to celebrate the coming of Christ;

a coming that we recall in the Child of Bethlehem;

a coming that we experience in the gift of his Spirit,

in the bread and wine of the Eucharist,

in the joy of human lives that are shared;

a coming we wait for - when God will gather up all things in Christ.

Let us, in this holy season, reflect on the coming of Christ
who brings light to the world.
Let us leave behind the darkness of sin,
walk in the light that shines on our path,
and renew within ourselves the hope of glory to which he beckons us.
And as we turn towards the light,
let us have on our hearts all those who see no light,
for whom all is darkness and despair.
Let us pray that they too may be illumined by Christ who is our light.

The Collect for Advent Sunday

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,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

All remain seated as the Choir process to their stalls, singing

The Office Hymn: Creator of the stars of night

Creator of the stars of night,
thy people's everlasting light,
O Jesu, Saviour of us all,
regard thy servants when they call.

Thou, grieving at the bitter cry
of all creation doomed to die,
didst come to save a ruined race
with healing gifts of heavenly grace.

Thou camest, Bridegroom of the bride,
as drew the world to evening-tide,
proceeding from a virgin shrine,
the Son of Man, yet Lord divine.

At thy great name, exalted now,
all knees must bend, all hearts must bow,
and things in heaven and earth shall own
that thou art Lord and King alone.

To thee, O holy One, we pray,
our judge in that tremendous day,
preserve us, while we dwell below,
from every onslaught of the foe.

All praise, eternal Son, to thee,
whose advent sets thy people free,
whom with the Father we adore,
and Spirit blest, for evermore. Amen.

Plainsong 1 NEH

The Reading: Isaiah 9: 2,3,6,7

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.
You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness
from this time onwards and for evermore.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

All stand to sing

The Hymn: Longing for Light

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.

Refrain:

*Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.*

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice.

Refrain:

Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.

Refrain:

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.

Refrain:

Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.

Refrain:

Christ be our light 42 AM

All sit for

The Reading: Into the Darkest Hour

It was a time like this,
War & tumult of war,
a horror in the air.
Hungry yawned the abyss—
and yet there came the star
and the child most wonderfully there.

It was time like this
of fear & lust for power,
license & greed and blight—
and yet the Prince of bliss
came into the darkest hour
in quiet & silent light.

And in a time like this
how celebrate his birth
when all things fall apart?
Ah! wonderful it is
with no room on the earth
the stable is our heart.

Madeleine L'Engle, (1918-2007)

All stand to sing

The Hymn: O come, O come Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here,
until the Son of God appear:
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Lower voices:

O come, thou Rod of Jesse, free
thine own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell thy people save,
and give them victory o'er the grave:

O come, thou Key of David, come,
and open wide our heavenly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery:

Upper voices:

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight:

All:

O come, O come, thou Lord of Might,
who to thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
in ancient times didst give the law
in cloud and majesty and awe:

All sit for

The Reading: St John 3: 16–21

'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him may not perish
but may have eternal life.

Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world,
but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Those who believe in him are not condemned;

but those who do not believe are condemned already,

because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world,
and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light,
so that their deeds may not be exposed.

But those who do what is true come to the light,

so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.'

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

The choir sings

The Anthem: Christ is the morning star

Christ is the morning star,

The light of God that shines from afar;

The Son of God in human form revealed,

The wound of Adam's sin for ever healed.

For God, who formed mankind of clay

Will bring forth our salvation that day

When he, who made all things since time began,

Will send his Son, to live on earth as man.

And when he comes, a child on earth,

The sun and stars will shine at his birth,

To light a world that long in darkness lay:

The light of God, the gift of Christmas Day.

Christ is the morning star.

And when he comes again as King,

Then heav'n and all creation shall sing;

With saints in glory seated round his throne

We'll see his face, and know as we are known.

Christ is the morning star.

John Rutter (b.1945)

Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5: 1–11, 23, 24

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

All stand to sing

The Hymn: Come thou long expected Jesus

Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us;
let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver;
born a child and yet a king;
born to reign in us for ever;
now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal Spirit,
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thy all-sufficient merit,
raise us to thy glorious throne.

Halton Holgate 3 NEH

All sit or kneel for

The Prayers & The Lord's Prayer

Watchful at all times, let us pray for strength
to stand with confidence before our Maker and Redeemer.

That God may bring in his kingdom with justice and mercy,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That God may establish among the nations his sceptre of righteousness,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That we may seek God in the scriptures
and recognise him in the breaking of the bread, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That God may bind up the broken-hearted, restore the sick,
and raise up all who have fallen, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That in these days of pandemic, uncertainty, darkness, and terrorism,
God's reassuring presence may bring comfort to the anxious and fearful,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That the light of God's coming may dawn on all who live in darkness
and in the shadow of death, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

That with all the saints in light, we may shine forth as lights of the world,
let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, have mercy.

So we commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,
to the mercy and protection of our heavenly Father
as we pray in the words that Jesus gave us:

**Our Father, which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

Give us this day our daily bread.

**And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.**

Amen.

In a continued spirit of prayer, we sing

The Chant: There is a longing in our hearts

There is a longing in our hearts, O Lord, for you to reveal yourself to us.

There is a longing in our hearts for love we only find in you, our God

The choir sings each verse:

For justice, for freedom, for mercy:
hear our prayer
In sorrow, in grief:
be near, hear our prayer, O God.

For wisdom, for courage, for comfort:
hear our prayer.
In weakness, in fear:
be near, hear our prayer, O God.

For healing, for wholeness, for new life:
hear our prayer.
In sickness, in death:
be near, hear our prayer, O God.

Lord, save us, take pity,
light in our darkness.
We call you, we wait:
be near, hear our prayer, O God.

There is a longing 409 AM

All sit for

The Reading: Advent Calendar

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.

Rowan Williams (b.1950)

The choir sings

The Anthem: O thou the Central Orb of righteous love

O thou the central orb of righteous love,
pure beam of the most high, eternal light
of this our wintry world, thy radiance bright
awakes new joy in faith, hope soars above.

Come, quickly come, and let thy glory shine,
gilding our darksome heaven with rays divine;
thy saints with holy lustre round thee move,
as stars about thy throne, set in the height
of God's ordaining counsel, as thy sight
gives measured grace to each, thy power to prove.

Let thy bright beams disperse the gloom of sin,
our nature all shall feel eternal day,
in fellowship with thee, transforming clay
to souls erewhile unclean, now pure within. Amen.

Charles Wood (1866–1926)

The Blessing

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you,
scatter the darkness from before your path,
and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory;
and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always.

Amen

All stand to sing

The Hymn: Lo! He comes with clouds descending

Lo! He comes with clouds descending,
once for favoured sinners slain;
thousand thousand saints attending
swell the triumph of his train:

Alleluia!

Christ appears on earth to reign.

Every eye shall now behold him
robed in dreadful majesty;
those who set at naught and sold him,
pierced and nailed him to the Tree,
deeply wailing,
shall the true Messiah see.

Those dear tokens of his passion
still his dazzling body bears,
cause of endless exultation
to his ransomed worshippers:
with what rapture
gaze we on those glorious scars!

Yea, Amen, let all adore thee,
high on thine eternal throne;
Saviour, take the power and glory,
claim the kingdom for thine own:
Alleluia!
thou shalt reign, and thou alone.

Helmsley 28 AMNS

CHRISTMAS SERVICES AND EVENTS 2022

FRIDAY 16 DECEMBER – TUESDAY 20 DECEMBER

Christmas Tree Festival - *Open for Worship only on Sunday*

SATURDAY 17 DECEMBER

2.00pm **Outdoor Community Carols around the Trees** *St John's*
as part of the Christmas Tree Festival

SUNDAY 18 DECEMBER

6.30pm **Traditional Festival of Lessons and Carols †** *St John's*
sung by the Parish Choir, with by the St John's Ensemble.
Admission by Free Ticket.

TUESDAY 20 DECEMBER

6.00pm **CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT** *St Francis'*
in aid of The Hospice of St Francis.

CHRISTMAS EVE

2.30pm **Christingle Service †** *St John's*
& 4.30pm *Admission by Free Ticket*
6.30pm **A Service of Carols at the Crib †** *St John's*
Admission by Free Ticket.
11.30pm **Midnight Mass †** *St John's*
Admission by Free Ticket.

CHRISTMAS DAY

10.00am **Parish Christmas Eucharist †** *St John's*
Admission by Free Ticket.
10.00am **Mass of Christmas Day †** *St Francis'*

ST STEPHEN'S DAY - Sunday 26 December

10.30am **St Stephen's Day Holy Communion with Carols** *St Stephen's*

Ticketing information

Free Tickets can be booked via our website

www.stjohnsboxmoor.org.uk

Services marked † will be streamed on our website.