

Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

First Sunday of Advent: 29th November 2020

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.**

Psalm 80.1-7,17-19

1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth

2 before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us!

3 Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

4 O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?

5 You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure.

6 You make us the scorn of our neighbours; our enemies laugh among themselves.



7 Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

17 But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself.

18 Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name.

19 Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

A reading from the first letter to the Corinthians (1.3-9)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.**

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark (13.24-end)

“But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.” **This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, o Christ.**

Reflection:

Today we begin a new year as far as the church calendar is concerned. Today is the first Sunday of Advent. 4 weeks until Christmas. It's been a difficult year thus far - but as I write this, we have great hopes of being able to share some time at Christmas with family or close friends.

- Are you excited? Have you begun to prepare? Started cooking?
- Thought of gifts for people you may not have expected to see.
- Maybe looking forward to seeing loved ones.

I wonder if I can lay an idea before you. Imagine entering a room and finding a beautifully wrapped present on a table; attached to the present is a label that 'this present is for you - but don't open it now...wait!' We live in an instant world - the 'have it now' culture. None of us like waiting for anything! As a grandparent, I notice the difference between my grandchildren's life now - and my life years back when waiting was part of the anticipation of birthdays and especially Christmas. Any gifts that came remained untouched until Christmas day.

Advent loosely translated means 'Coming' - it's a time of waiting and expectation: In ancient Rome the Latin word 'Adventus' told us about the glorious entry of an emperor into the capital city. So Advent is a most fitting word to describe the period leading up to Christmas. For what we celebrate is the coming of a king, an emperor, one who was both fully man and fully God.

In our scriptures today - we have a wellspring of words to enjoy and muse upon. Paul encouraged the Corinthians, whether they were rich or poor, male or female to acknowledge the need for both unity and Christ like character. Always being ready for Christ's return. And the gospel of Mark - in which Jesus speaks of his return to the earth with great power and glory...Jesus advises them to keep watch , to be alert, and be prepared for that time.

Usually at this time of year, we start to think of decoration and celebration both in the church and at home. Oh how good it would be to prepare God's house for that celebration as we usually do - but perhaps this year we can concentrate on preparing our own house and our hearts? Some of our hearts have been broken and we need healing.

Today - Advent Sunday - is when we begin once again our personal and familiar journey towards the birth of God incarnate - Jesus. He who existed before the creation of the world, who knew us before we were born. He who has been fully part of Salvation history to date: How good it is to hear and tell the story again and again.

So how do we prepare for his miraculous birth - and remembering all that happened at that time? Most certainly, to Watch and Wait is God's direction for this time of year. Jesus wants his disciples to stay awake to keep their eyes on the road, to be on their toes waiting for their and our God to return.

So - Advent is a time for watching and waiting - a time of expectation, and excitement - for the story of the birth of God in a most unlikely place - a stable - is one of wonder and almost disbelief. If we are able, during Advent, to relearn the skill of waiting and watching, then it will have value not only for Advent and Christmas but for the whole of our lives. Advent offers us a gift that is life transforming - a way of being. And we are invited into a deeper, truer encounter with ourselves, with the world and with God himself. If we keep telling and retelling the wonder of the story of the incarnation of God made man we will notice more and more God at work among his people. He is the kind of God who is with us at every moment and through the power of His Holy Spirit our friends and families will notice his presence among us.

So we wait actively and recognise and embrace God's presence in the world. Advent summons us to the present moment - a life lived with God Almighty - with peace in our hearts - committed to the God who brought salvation through his sacrifice for us, so that we may have eternal life.

That is worth waiting for. Praise be to Him.

Amen.

- Rev Jackie Sears

God is love. Those who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

This week's hymn:

Hark! a herald voice is calling:
'Christ is nigh,' it seems to say;
'Cast away the dreams of darkness,
O ye children of the day!'

Startled at the solemn warning,
Let the earth-bound soul arise;
Christ, her Sun, all sloth dispelling,
Shines upon the morning skies.

Lo! the Lamb, so long expected,
Comes with pardon down from heaven;
Let us haste, with tears of sorrow,
One and all to be forgiven;

So when next he comes with glory,
Wrapping all the earth in fear,
May he then as our defender
Of the clouds of heaven appear.

Honour, glory, virtue, merit,
To the Father and the Son,
With the co-eternal Spirit,
While unending ages run. Amen.

For Our Prayers:

The Bishops are calling on every parish to join them using this prayer at home and at every act of worship for our church, that we grow in trust in God's providence and deepen our own generosity giving of ourselves and of our gifts.

**Loving God,
you are always with us,
and give us all we need to be your church
in Suffolk.**

**Help us, we pray, to give as we have received:
abundantly, generously, and joyfully,
that our worship and our service
may bear witness to your Kingdom of
unfailing love.**

**In the name of your Son
who gave himself for us,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Please pray for:

Those with chronic or long-term illness: Eric Dickerson, Rosemary, Jenny, Andrew Barfield, Kathy Steele, Frank D., Andrew, Peggy, Natacha, Christine, Stephen, Samantha, Rex & Jill, Margaret Christian

Those undergoing treatment or currently ill: Emily, Gloria Elmer, Helen Harlow, Jean Dominy, Leslie Bloomfield, Katie (cancer), Alice (Joan's grandson's wife), Vincent Lightbody, Trish, Roger Dickerson, Vicky & Matt, Maureen Dobson, Dagmar (Andrea's mum)

All who are affected by the Coronavirus in the UK and around the world: *For all who have lost their jobs due to Covid19; all who are despairing. For all who have lost their lives & livelihoods, the injured, the bereaved. For hospital and health care workers*

For our government & MPs', and local councillors: for honesty in politics, for wisdom and justice for all. For refuges across the world & diplomates and peace makers, working to end conflicts

Those who have recently died, and their families mourning their loss: Eric Gilson, Diane Bloomfield, Peter Wardley, Leslie Symonds. RIP.

Call this number —> for free.

It's a lovely way to worship from home!



Notices:

Hymn-athon & Carol-athon: Sunday 6th Dec, 11am. Simon will perform a **2 hour** marathon of hymns and carols, which will be livestreamed on our facebook page. Please sponsor him, and **spread the word** to get your friends and family to sponsor Simon on the Just Giving page!

Bible Basics: Advent Edition! Our two Zoom bible studies during Advent (3rd & 17th Dec) are focusing on Advent and Christmas. All are welcome to join - please speak to Rev Cat if you would like to come.

Christmas Mail-Order Mini-Market: a HUGE Thank You to everyone who made items to sell - it was highly successful! *Last remaining items are some of Carole's beautiful cushions* - get your order in asap to not miss out! And a special Thank You to Alison for taking and organising all the orders!

Videos in Advent: during Advent, instead of making our own videos, we will be sending links to watch the Church of England Advent worship videos at <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/church-online/weekly-online-services>

Advent & Christmas: We are planning various special services (to be booked into as we do for Sundays), including:

- Carol service - 13th Dec 6pm
- Zoom Carols - 20th 6pm
- Christingle Service - 24th 4pm
- Midnight Mass - 24th 11.30pm
- Christmas Day - 25th 10am

Alpha: We are starting a Zoom Alpha course on 7th January. It will run on Thursday evenings 7-9pm. We know from experience the best way to get people to come is for us to invite them personally! So please, *invite your friends, family, and neighbours*, and why not give it a go yourself!

Christmas Cards: rather than sending individual cards to each other this year, some folk are making a donation to church. Would you consider doing the same?

This Week:

Sunday, 29th November

10am: ZOOM Church & Video—do let us know if you would like to join ZOOM Church on the phone

Tuesday 1st December

6 pm Meditation Group livestream on [Facebook/StThomasPilgrimCommunity](https://www.facebook.com/StThomasPilgrimCommunity)

Wednesday 2nd December

10am Eucharist livestream on [Facebook/StThomasIpswich](https://www.facebook.com/StThomasIpswich)

Thursday 3rd December

4pm Bible Basics: Advent! On Zoom. Email Rev Cat to join.

Church website:

<http://stthomasipswich.org.uk/>

Sunday Worship & other Worship resources on the Church Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/stthomasipswich/>

Pray for members of the St Thomas Congregation

Emma, Steve, Bradley & Esmae; Jill Last; Zoe, Conrad, Kurt & Rebecca, James Matthews; Stephen Marginson; Andrea & family; Nigel, Karen, Hayden & Harrison; Sma & Michael Ndlovu



Birthdays this week:

2nd Dec: Peggy, **3rd:** Jill Last
4th: William Elwis

Contacts:

Priest in charge: Revd Canon Jutta Brueck m:07958 360564
Email: jutta.brueck@cofesuffolk.org

Jutta's days off are: Fridays & Saturdays

Assistant Curate: Revd Cat Connolly m: 07530 412988

Email: revcatconnolly@gmail.com

Cat's day off: Mondays

Lay Evangelist: Malcolm Gibbs m:07906 665530

Director of Music: Simon Clark BA (Hons) FLCM ARCO
m: 07961 859344 Email: sussexsi@aol.com

Church wardens: Roger Elmer m:07810 274586

Stephen Marginson 01473 258791

If you would like to chat, you could also ring:

Mary Bullass 625135 Gloria Elmer 745590

Rev Jackie 07962 172639 Revd Pat 464748