

**SUNDAY 28th NOVEMBER –
THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT**



WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

Jeremiah 33: 14-16

HYMN

126

O come O come Emmanuel
(vv 1,3,4,5,6)

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE

One: Arise and be bold, good news of hope is here!

All: **The warm glow of the Divine lightens our hearts**

One: Here we are together, not alone. We join with the cloud witnesses here, there, elsewhere, and everywhere. On this first Sunday in Advent, we will dream and imagine a different future, a life flourishing one. We are witnesses to hope. *[the 1st candle is lighted]*

All: **Our habit of hope and hoping finds sustenance and meaning in God's promise of fullness of life.**

We pray:

God-of-righteous-dreaming, lighten our hearts with an enlarged imagination to dream new possibilities, to imagine a world where transformation will happen, where creation is mended and restored, and where exiles and strangers can find a home. Become in our lives the way to what we need, to what we can become, and what we can do.

PRAYERS

Eternal God, hope of the world,
we cannot grasp the immensity of your being,
and yet all around us we catch glimpses of your power.
You speak to us in nature's blessings.
You speak to us through science and creativity.

You reveal yourself in the love and the care
and the support of those around us.
You show yourself when we most need to see you.
When we least expect it, we see your hand at work.
We read your Word, time and time again,
and suddenly, we are amazed by seeing something new.
Eternal God, we adore you.
Amen.

A prayer of confession

We wait, but don't always find it easy to wait,
and for that we are sorry.
We confess our impatience and our lack of attention
to the journey and its signposts.
Teach us that preparation is part of the journey
and that the journey is part of the gift.
You offer us a way to follow, a path to tread,
a journey that leads to hope, to joy, to trust and to love,
and we confess we do not always follow.
Now, may we step into this Advent as faithful people,
seeking forgiveness and trying to follow your path,
and believing you will be walking with us every step of the way.
Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

God promises to all who follow,
that he will take away our sins
and set us on the path to life eternal.
Hear God's word, know God's forgiveness,
and feel God's peace.
Amen.

ANTHEM

READING

Luke 21: 25-36
1 Thessalonians 3: 9-13

REFLECTION

I'm sure the image here is familiar to us all. It seems however hard we try, however often we weed there are always signs of probably unwanted growth in our paths. The plants seem to be able to find that smallest



of cracks in the surface and will make their way through and if left unchecked will very quickly take over. The garden next to ours is a daily reminder of this, the elderly owner is now in a home and no-one is taking care of things and the whole garden is over run with growth! New growth will always find a way through.

Jeremiah talks of new growth, a new branch. However difficult things were at the time Jeremiah stayed hopeful. Disaster was all around. Everywhere was laid waste, desolate and desperate. But Jeremiah points to a new shoot that will grow – a branch- a sign that God is at work in the middle of the chaos. This righteous branch will be the Messiah, the chosen one. That of course is Christ, God coming alongside us in the person of Jesus.

We are part of the body of Christ, part of that righteous branch. We are God's branch here in this community, growing and blossoming for all around us. Just like the local branch of any local service, just like Sainsbury's we are here to serve the locality, bringing hope into the community, demonstrating goodness and holiness in an ordinary everyday way that is attractive to friends and neighbours.

We hear Paul writing to the new Christians in Thessalonica where he praises them for how faithful they have been during their persecution. He tells them that it gives him great joy to hear their story and he prays that their numbers will increase and he urges them to love one another and everyone they meet. In that way they can be confident of meeting Christ when he comes again. God's branches grow and flourish when they care about one another, look out for each other and celebrate each other's gifts and look outwards to encourage those who are not yet members of the branch.



In the Gospel reading Jesus encourages us to stand up, raise our heads and look for the signs of God's kingdom amidst all the chaos of our world today. As Christians, we are not to faint with fear at the things going on around

us. We are to stand tall as symbols of hope for our community. Like the fig tree we are to be filled with new life to show that good times – God's times- are both now and still to come. If we get bowed down by the struggles and confusions and worries of our world we will not be able to shine with the light of Christ – for others. We are to be alert and watchful for the signs of God at work in our world and then stand and tell everyone about them.

Advent is a time for watching and waiting. Waiting for the birth of Jesus at Christmas, waiting for Jesus to come again – to call the world to himself Watch for the signs of God's kingdom, listen and be open for what God calls you to do as a member of his local branch. How can we show God's love to one another and to everyone in the community. Those who God loves without a beginning or an end. Let us pray that we are ready with love and warmth, care and compassion to be signs of hope and symbols of God's love which will be there come what may. We must not fear what's happening in the world, we must stand tall and God's righteous branches where we are and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Amen

HYMN

Earth was waiting

1 Earth was waiting, spent and restless,
with a mingled hope and fear,
faithful men and women praying,
'Surely, Lord, the day is near:
the Desire of all the nations —
it is time he should appear!'

2 Then the Spirit of the Highest
to a virgin meek came down,
and he burdened her with blessing,
and he pained her with renown;
for she bore the Lord's anointed
for his cross and for his crown.

3. Earth has groaned and laboured for him
Since the ages first began,
For in him was hid the secret
Which through all the ages ran –
Son of Mary, Son of David,
Son of God and Son of Man.
Smith

Walter C

(Tune: Picardy R+S 454)

PRAYERS

We pray for those people and places who need to know God's
steadfast love today

Give us expectant hearts as we listen for your voice.
Wait for the Lord, his day is near.
Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart.

LORD'S PRAYER

OFFERING PRAYER

HYMN
slow

128

The Lord will come and not be

BLESSING

As we stand tall as God's branches in our community we bless each
other with the words of the Grace.