



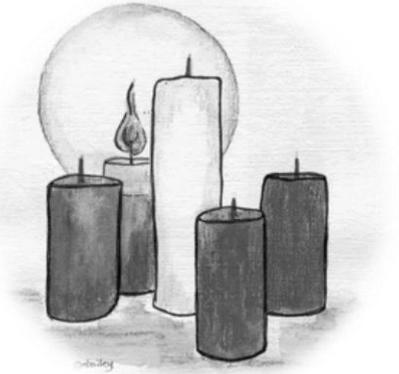
Worshipping & Praying Together as a community dispersed

during the week beginning
Sunday, 29th November 2020
The First Sunday of Advent

The Parish of Christ Church Cathedral, Newcastle.

The worshipping communities of the Cathedral and St Peter's Hamilton.

Happy New Church Year! It is the first Sunday of Advent and we have moved into Year B in our lectionary cycle. Advent is the season of expectation and preparation, as the Church prepares to celebrate the coming (adventus) of Christ in his incarnation, and also looks ahead to his final advent as judge at the end of time. The readings and liturgies not only direct us towards Christ's birth, they also challenge our natural reluctance to confront the theme of divine judgement. Our readings this week do not indulge that reluctance and we are reminded to stay awake! We are reminded to stay alert for the coming of the Christ!



On the first Sunday of Advent, we traditionally light the first candle on the advent wreath. Our Anglican tradition is generally to have three purple candles, reflecting the liturgical colour for Advent, with a pink candle for the third Sunday (also known as Gaudete Sunday), when rose-pink vestments may be worn. What each candle means can vary from church to church and the candles are often used to symbolise the Christian concepts such as faith, hope, peace, joy, and love. In the Anglican tradition the lighting of the advent candles reminds us of those who prepared for the coming of Christ: The Patriarchs, The Prophets, John the Baptist, who proclaimed the Saviour, and Mary, Mother of our Lord, who bore the Saviour in her womb. At the Christmas Vigil we light the fifth, white candle, the Christ candle, to symbolise the arrival of the Christ child, our Saviour, the light of the world!

People of God, awake! The day is coming soon when you shall see God face to face. Remember the ways and the works of God. God calls you out of darkness to walk in the light of his coming. Amen.

Families@Five will be on Saturday, 5th December 2020 at 5.00pm at the Cathedral.

**Eucharists are offered at Christ Church Cathedral on Sundays at 8.00am and 11.00am,
and Monday to Friday at 8.30am (following Morning Prayer).**

**Eucharists are also offered at St Peter's Hamilton
at 11.00am on Tuesdays and Thursdays.**

**Morning and Evening Prayer and Holy Communion (Wednesdays and Sundays)
are streamed each day:**

You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXyas2uhJUNOnDetOpPdUOg>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/christchurchcathedralnewcastle/>

The First Sunday of Advent



ADVENT

Isaiah 64: 1-9

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence—as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil — to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

Psalms 80: 1-7, 7-19

1 Hear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you that led Joseph like a flock:
you that are enthroned upon the cherubim,
shine out in glory;
2 Before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh:
stir up your power, and come to save us.
3 Restore us again, O Lord of hosts:
show us the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.
4 O Lord God of hosts:
how long will you be angry at your people's prayer?
5 You have fed them with the bread of tears:
and given them tears to drink in good measure.
6 You have made us the victim of our neighbours:
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.

7 Restore us again, O Lord of hosts:
show us the light of your countenance,
and we shall be saved.

17 Let your power rest on the man at your right hand:
on that son of man
whom you made so strong for yourself.

18 And so we shall not turn back from you:
give us life, and we will call upon your name.

19 Restore us again, O Lord of hosts:
show us the light of your countenance,
and we shall be saved.

1 Corinthians 1: 1-9

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: 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.

Mark 13: 24-37

“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.”

Reflection on a page by *The Reverend Angela Peverell*

*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.*

I shed a tear, actually several tears, as I prepared to write a reflection on the readings for this First Sunday in Advent. The first reading is from the Prophet Isaiah and is a portion of a larger psalm of communal lament (Isaiah 63:7-64:12) written in the context of the post-exilic period following the return to Jerusalem by the exiles around 539BCE and their subsequent efforts at restoration.

When the exiles had returned to Jerusalem divisions, land battles and power struggles erupted between the Israelite returnees, those who had remained, and those who had settled there from other places after Jerusalem was conquered in 587 BCE. The restoration of Jerusalem to past glory, that the exiles had envisioned, was clearly not going to happen, and a collective voice of lament emerged. This new community is pondering in lament form how God should respond to human guilt?

All is well and good for the righteous but how should God deal with the guilty? The lamenters describe how sin has covered them as a community, contaminated their deeds, taken their energy and become their driving force: **“There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity”** (v7). The failure to seek God is attributed to God’s hiding; seeking is futile because God has left the guilty to the consequences of their own trespasses.

The lamenters appeal to “our Father” and “our potter.” They confess that they are all filthy and faded (v6) and they claim that they are all offspring and product of God’s creative activity (v8). The lamenters make one more request: that God’s anger and memory of their guilt not last forever (v9). Their appeal is for God’s intervention to heal the alienation and to arrest the damage of their sins.

If we go back to the beginning of this lament in Isaiah 63, we see that it commences with a praise-filled account of God’s mighty acts of deliverance throughout Israel’s history: **“I will recount the gracious deeds of the Lord, the praiseworthy acts of the Lord, because of all that the Lord has done for us, and the great favor to the house of Israel that he has shown them according to his mercy, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.”** (63:7) Even in their lamenting the Jewish people kept their collective memory of God’s unflinching mercy.

In the Scriptures, laments are poetic protests against pain and appeals for intervention by God. I am lamenting, and I shed tears, and I know I am not alone, because this Advent and Christmas will not be anything like we have known in our lifetimes. I am lamenting because of the pain of the world in so much crisis and particularly the ravages of the COVID pandemic, and because of the pain of the church, somewhat silenced by the restrictions imposed in the midst of the COVID pandemic, and in my personal circumstances where the pain of death and change means some things will never be the same again. BUT like the Jewish people in Isaiah 63-64, I have not given up any of my hope in the mercy of God on all his people. I have not given up my hope in the second advent of the Christ.

O come, O come, Emmanuel!

If you are reading this as an online attachment please just click on the link to listen to the Choir of King's College, Cambridge sing "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel":

<https://youtu.be/qcIIzpnZPgo>

Readings for next week – The Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40: 1-11

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

2 Pet. 3:8-15a

Mark 1: 1-8



Prayers for use during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Ever present God,
be with us in our isolation,
be close to us in our distancing,
be healing in our sickness,
be joy in our sadness,
be light in our darkness,
be wisdom in our confusion,
be all that is familiar when all is
unfamiliar,
that when the doors reopen
we may with the zeal of Pentecost
inhabit our communities
and speak of your goodness
to an emerging world.
For Jesus' sake. **Amen.**

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and
distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and
fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us
from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

Please do not hesitate to contact Dean Katherine or Reverend Angela if you have any concerns at this time and if you would like for us to visit you at home.

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