**Order of service for First Sunday of Advent**

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This short act of worship has been produced by Deacon Jacqueline Esama-John for you to use at home and beyond and if you are unable to worship in a church building.

**Introduction**

Today is the beginning of the church’s new liturgical year and the first Sunday of the great season of Advent. Advent is a time of prayerful waiting and preparation. It spans over the four weeks leading up to Christmas.

It is also our tradition to light an Advent candle each Sunday during this time. The first Sunday of Advent gives us the opportunity to centre our thoughts on hope and so today we are reminded of the hope God offers us in the midst of uncertainty.

**Liturgy for the first Sunday of Advent- Today we light the candle of Hope.**

Jesus said, “Keep awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming”

**Amen. Come soon Lord Jesus!**

*The first candle is lit, and this response is used.*

Jesus is the light of the world.

**A light no darkness can ever put out**

(We sing/read/pray/proclaim the words)

Advent candles tell their story as we watch and pray,

Longing for the Day of Glory, ‘Come, Lord, soon’, we say

Pain and sorrow, tears, and sadness, changed for gladness

on that Day

**Advent Liturgy & Hymn STF 165 © Mark Earey**

**Let us pray:**

O God our true life, to know you is life, to serve you is freedom, to enjoy you is a kingdom, to praise you is the joy and happiness of the soul. We praise and bless and adore you, we worship, we glorify you. We give thanks to you for your great glory. We pray that hope will rise in our spirits in a tangible and life-giving way. We humbly begyou to live with us, to reign in us to make these hearts of ours a holy temple, a fit habitation for your divine majesty. In Jesus name**. Amen**

 **St Augustine (354-430)**

**Hymn 1: Come Thou Long Expected Jesus (Singing the Faith 169)**

(Sing/Read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here.) <https://youtu.be/JEEd0uWnDGs>

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 forever,
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.

By Thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all sufficient merit,
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

 Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

**Prayer of confession**

Let us confess our sins.

Silence

**Loving God, we have sinned against you In what we have thought, said, and done. We have not loved you with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves**

**We are truly sorry and turn away from what is wrong. Forgive us for the sake of your son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

Silence

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

This is his gracious word.

Your sins are forgiven.

**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

 (The Methodist Worship Book p. 29)

# 1st Reading: Jeremiah 33: 14-16 -New International Version

# 14“‘The days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when I will fulfil the good promise I made to the people of Israel and Judah.

**15**“‘In those days and at that time
    I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line;

 he will do what is just and right in the land.
**16**In those days Judah will be saved
    and Jerusalem will live in safety.
This is the name by which it[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2033%3A14-16&version=NIV#fen-NIV-19792a)] will be called:
    The Lord Our Righteous Saviour.’

**2nd Reading: Luke 21:25-36 New International Version**

**25**“There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. **26**People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be

shaken. **27**At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. **28**When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

**29**He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. **30**When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. **31**Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

**32**“Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. **33**Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

**34**“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. **35**For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. **36**Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.

**Reflection**

It’s the time of year- Winter- when our thoughts begin to turn to Christmas. And this year, I notice that Christmas has really come early. The humongous Christmas trees are up in cities and town centre squares, all nicely decorated, bathed in lights. The Christmas streetlights are there with all the best shimmers and sparkles. The shops are all stocked up. We could expect that every aisle will be filled with some Christmas cheer. We can look at the drink’s aisle and my goodness! The excitement of getting together and eating and drinking and maybe making up for the loss of celebrations over the last eighteen months or so? Consumerism also seems to be at its’s best, telling us to buy more and more. And we really can’t wait. Can we?

Of course, there is a lot going on in the world and Advent in a pandemic is both challenging and affirming. We are haunted by issues with Covid-19, Climate change, Brexit, economic and political uncertainties etc. So many people are living in desperate situations yet within the chaos of natural and human made disasters and tragedy, there are signs of God’s radical intervention and redemption.

The prophet Jeremiah seems to have the gift of a good advertiser. Jeremiah in our Old Testament reading today is writing at a time after the destruction of Jerusalem, the people are in exile and some scholars believe that he himself might have been in prison. Nevertheless, he proclaims this message

 of Joy and hope that the days are coming when all the promises of God will be fulfilled. He is hopeful that “Judah will be saved” “Jerusalem will live in safety” and concludes that “This is the name by which it will be called - The Lord our Righteous Saviour”

Our gospel passage also gives us an assurance of victory even in a world in turmoil. Jesus foretells the terrible suffering that

 will accompany the destruction of the temple as well as the kingdom that will replace it. Just as the “sprouting of the fig tree is a sign that summer is on its way” so the conflicts and suffering of the world are a sign of the imminence of God’s kingdom.

Jesus is urging us not to be complacent but rather to be vigilant. We must learn to put ourselves on God’s timetable. We are to take time each day to rediscover the art of prayer, to seek to be drawn into deeper communion with our Lord and prepare ourselves for that special moment when he will come not only on Christmas day but more importantly when he will come again in glory.

To hear this call and to believe it, we need to be patient, we need to ponder, we need to listen, and we need to wait. We are called to prepare our hearts and make the way ready, expressing our faith with a sense of being present to one another and focus on God’s loving concern for the sinner and the outcast.

The first Sunday of Advent gives us the opportunity to centre

our thoughts on hope and look forward to the second coming of Jesus. As a Christian community, we believe that Jesus is already with us, and this is in fact some of the ambiguity of Advent- There is a sense of ‘already and not yet’. It is the fact that Jesus is with his people now that gives Christians reassurance and confidence for the future. We are reminded to live with an obedience of faith and hope as a people who

can step out into the future knowing that God is in charge.

Advent is indeed a time of watching and waiting, but this does not mean standing around with our hands in our pockets and doing nothing. God calls us and seeks to draw us into being a part of ushering in the reign of God right here and now. We called to bear Christ into the world today- you, me, all of us are asked to be light and to point to the one in whom there is no darkness.

Jesus uses apocalyptic language to encourage the faithful to be participants with God in his purposes, even in the most difficult of times. In verse 34 of Luke 21 Jesus tells us to **34**“*Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap”* It is an invitation not to lose the focus of our faith but to be fully attentive so that we might not miss any opportunity for participation in God’s ongoing work of creative transformation.

This is the work to which Advent and the new church year calls us to. Let us use this time of Advent prepare well. **Amen**

**Prayers of Intercession**

**Silence**

Loving God, as the new day dawns on this Advent Sunday, we give thanks for the glimmers of light which remind us of the coming of your son Jesus Christ. We ask you to journey with us throughout this season and kindle in us the fire of your love.

**Silence**

Lord have mercy

**Christ have mercy**

We bring before you our hopes and aspirations for our trouble world: We pray for an end to the Coronavirus pandemic, an end to war and terrorism, a positive outcome for climate change negotiations, and for the flourishing of all your creation. We believe that your light has the power to overcome all our darkness and pray that throughout the season of Advent, we may share in the mystery of your coming into the world.

**Silence**

Lord have mercy

**Christ have mercy**

We call to mind all those who are struggling and at crossroads. Those who are unwell. We pray for clarity, for healing and wholeness. We pray that they may feel your presence and find hope in the reality of your love. Help us to build faithful and loving communities, to be good neighbours and to bring joy into people’s lives.

**Silence**

Lord have mercy

**Christ have mercy**

We remember those who have died and pray for the repose of their souls. We pray for peace and comfort for the bereaved. May the light of Christ which eternally shines, bring hope to their dark places.

**Silence**

Lord have mercy

**Christ have mercy**

Merciful father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer**

**Our Father, who 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 those who 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.**

**Hymn 2: STF 167 Colours of Day dawn into the mind**

Sing/Read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here)

<https://youtu.be/mw-7CJhlbp0>

Colours of day dawn into the mind,
The sun has come up, the night is behind.
Go down in the city, into the street,
And let's give the message to the people we meet.

*So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
Open the door, let Jesus return.
Take seeds of His Spirit, let the fruit grow,
Tell the people of Jesus, let His love show.*

Go through the park, on into the town;
The sun still shines on, it never goes down.
The light of the world is risen again;
The people of darkness are needing a friend.

*So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
Open the door, let Jesus return.
Take seeds of His Spirit, let the fruit grow,
Tell the people of Jesus, let His love show.*

Open your eyes, look into the sky,
The darkness has come, the Son came to die.
The evening draws on, the sun disappears,
But Jesus is living, His Spirit is near.

*So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
Open the door, let Jesus return.
Take seeds of His Spirit, let the fruit grow,
Tell the people of Jesus, let His love show.*

SueMcClellan (b.1951, John Paculabo (b. 1946) & Keith Ryecroft (b.1949)

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**Benediction**

As we continue to journey into this season of Advent, may we walk in the light of our Lord Jesus. May we heed to Christ’s saying to “stay alert” and watch and pray for peace for all God’s people.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

 **In the name of Christ. Amen**

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