

## Creating Sacred Space

The season of Advent offers a symbolic journey through the darkness of the womb to the light and hope of new life at Christmas. This is embodied using the Advent wreath. If you do not have a wreath, you are encouraged to create one and/or have four candles (preferably all blue, the colour for Advent in the Anglican tradition). Recognising the challenges of COVID times, all are encouraged to reflect upon people who have touched our lives bringing hope, peace, love, and joy and offering prayers for these individuals and ourselves as we light the candles each week.

### ***Worship Outline***

*Advent wreath* (Refer to the Advent wreath reflection and prayer by Sunday)

*Proclamation of the Word* (Refer to the readings and reflection by Sunday)

*Proclamation of Faith*

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first and the great commandment. The second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.

*Prayers of the People: take a moment to reflect on for whom and for what you would like to pray.*

*Gathering prayers into one, pray...* Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Collect of the Day (See collects by Sunday)

***Final prayer:*** May the God of peace enable us to do God's will in every kind of goodness, working in us what pleases God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for every and ever. Amen. (BAS p. 55)

### ***Advent wreath, readings, reflection and collects by Sunday***

#### **Advent 1 – Nov. 28**

*Advent Wreath:* As you light the first candle, consider someone who connects you to creation in ways that bring hope...*Prayer:* God of Creation, you have gifted this world in ways that are wise and sustaining. Thank you for those whose love for creation has helped us see the beauty and possibilities all around us. May the wisdom imbued in the gifts of Creation and those who care for it bring us hope that the cares and concerns of environmental degradation can still be transformed offering new life through love. Amen.

*Readings:* Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 25:1-9; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36

*Reflection:* Righteous branch; signs in the sun, and moon, and stars; look at the fig tree...Lessons from creation are highlighted in this week's readings. These are reminders that we are connected to all that God has created.

To what extent does this connection challenge us, especially considering the realities of the current climate emergency? In what ways does creation offer us hope for new life and new possibilities? How will we carry the lessons of creation into our prayers and actions this week?

*Collect:* God of justice and peace, from the heavens you rain down mercy and kindness. Raise our heads in expectation, so that we may yearn for the coming day of the Lord and stand without blame before your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen. Revised Common Lectionary Prayers (2002) alt.

### **Advent 2 – Dec. 5**

*Advent Wreath:* As you light two candles this week, consider someone who challenges you to step beyond your comfort zone and, in doing so, have helped you find peace...*Prayer:* God of the wilderness, your presence cannot be confined no matter how sacred a building may be. In John the Baptist and Jesus, we are reminded that you can be found in every corner, in every joy, and in every challenge. Bless those who challenge us to go beyond the borders of comfort, complacency, and apathy we create. May these journeys help us to discover the peace that exists in loving You and one another in profound and meaningful ways. Amen.

*Readings:* Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:68-79 (or Canticle 19a p. 88 BAS); Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6

*Reflection:* "See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way..." John the Baptist is an important precursor to Jesus. He is the warmup act, setting the stage for the masterpiece that will be Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. John sets the stage, but not in the temple or any synagogue – the traditional places where the Jewish people encountered God. John proclaims his message from the wilderness. John invites the people to step out and meet God in new and challenging places.

Who do we meet in the wilderness? How does our openness to these encounters create spaces for us to truly love God and our neighbours as ourselves? What more can we do to befriend those on the margins?

*Collect:* God of timeless grace, you fill us with joyful expectation: make us ready for the message that prepares the way, so that with uprightness of heart and holy joy we may eagerly await the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen. Revised Common Lectionary Prayers (2002) alt.

### **Advent 3 – Dec. 12**

*Advent Wreath:* As you light three candles this week, consider who has challenged you in ways that have helped you more authentically love God and love our neighbour as ourselves...*Prayer:* God of Redemption, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus have showed us a path towards transformation that enables us to live more fully as the loving creatures you

have fashioned. Bless those who challenge our call to love for one other. Give us the courage and persistence to continually seek to live more authentically as followers of the One who came to show us the way, Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Readings:* Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6 (Canticle 3 p. 76 BAS); Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18

*Reflection:* “Surely, it is God who saves me;” We know God saves and that can bring us incredible hope, peace, and joy. God’s love is so expansive that God gave us Jesus to redeem us. This does not mean we are free of the consequences of our behaviours. We cannot simply say our participation in worship is enough to excuse all behaviours. God’s love is also an opportunity for transformation. God’s love in Jesus is an example of what it looks like for us as human beings to love God and love one another.

In what ways do we behave like a ‘brood of vipers’? What might a modern day John the Baptist suggest we do in order to demonstrate our desire for redemption, our desire for transformation?

*Collect:* God of power and mercy, you call us once again to celebrate the coming of your Son. Remove those things which hinder love of you, that when he comes, he may find us waiting in awe and wonder for him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (BAS p. 270)

#### **Advent 4 – Dec. 19**

*Advent Wreath:* As you light all four candles this week, consider who has brought you joy...*Prayer:* God of Blessings, as you once brought together Mary and Elizabeth to offer love and support on their journeys, we thank you for those who have entered our lives in ways that continue to provide us with love and support. May we experience the joy of true friendship, and may we give others joy in friendship as we wait in hope for the coming of the One whose love is truly unconditional, lasting, and transforming. Amen.

*Readings:* Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:46b-55 (Canticle 18 p. 86); Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45

*Reflection:* Can we envision that moment when Mary arrives at Elizabeth’s door? There is such joy between the two women. They acknowledge the gift each bears. The encounter becomes one that is about blessing each other.

To what extent have we experienced such profound support for the gifts we bear? How have we been a blessing to others? Whose presence in our lives has invited us to see beyond our expectations and recognise God’s gifts in those who are different? How has this been a blessing too?

*Collect:* O God of Elizabeth and Mary, you visited your servants with news of the world’s redemption in the coming of the Lord. May our hearts leap with joy and our mouths be filled with songs of praise to welcome the Christ in our midst. Amen. Revised Common Lectionary Prayers (2002) alt.