ST. ANDREWS CHURCH, MOSCOW
FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT
29th November, 2026.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SEASON OF ADVENT

Advent is a 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 the modern reluctance to confront the theme of divine judgement: "Every eye shall now behold him robed in dreadful majesty." (Charles Wesley)

The Four Last Things – Death, Judgement, Heaven and Hell – have been traditional themes for Advent meditation. The characteristic note of Advent is therefore expectation, rather than penitence, although the character of the season is easily coloured by an analogy with Lent. The anticipation of Christmas under commercial pressure has also made it harder to sustain the appropriate sense of alert watchfulness, but the fundamental Advent prayer remains 'Maranatha' – 'Our Lord, come' (1 Corinthians 16:22).

Church decorations are simple and spare, and purple is the traditional liturgical colour. In the Northern hemisphere, the Advent season falls at the darkest time of the year, and the natural symbols of darkness and light are powerfully at work throughout Advent and Christmas. The lighting of candles on an Advent wreath was imported into Britain from Northern Europe in the nineteenth century and is now a common practice.

The Moravian custom of the Christingle has similarly enjoyed great success in Britain since the latter part of the twentieth century, with the encouragement of the Children's Society; Christingle services may take place before or after Christmas. The Third Sunday of Advent was observed in medieval times as a splash of colour in the restrained atmosphere of Advent (Gaudete or 'Rose Sunday'), and the last days of Advent were marked by the sequence of Great 'O' Antiphons, which continue to inspire modern Advent hymns and meditations.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Now is the time to wake out of sleep, for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. *(Romans 13:11)*

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Opening hymn: Jesus where'er thy people meet

Jesus, where'er thy people meet,
there they behold thy mercy-seat;
where'er they seek thee thou art found,
and ev'ry place is hallow'd ground.

For thou, within no walls confined,
inhabitest the humble mind:
such ever bring thee where they come,
and going take thee to their home.

Dear Shepherd of thy chosen few,
thy former mercies here renew;
here, to our waiting hearts proclaim
the sweetness of thy saving name.

Here may we prove the might of prayer,
to strengthen faith and sweeten care;
to teach our faint desires to rise,
and bring all heav'n before our eyes.

Lord, we are few, but thou art near;
nor short thine arm, nor deaf thine ear;
O rend the heav'ns, come quickly down,
and make a thousand hearts thine own.

ADVENT WREATH: CANDLE OF HOPE *lit by a parish member.*

Loving God, as we light the first Advent Candle of Hope, we ask for your presence to fill our hearts and homes. May the Hope of Christ's coming bring light to our darkness and renew our spirits. In Jesus name we pray. **Amen**

PRAYERS OF PENITENCE *(Please sit or kneel)*

INVITATION TO CONFESSION
When the Lord comes, he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness, and will disclose the purposes of the heart.

Therefore, in the light of Christ let us confess our sins.

KYRIE CONFESSION
Turn to us again, O God our saviour, and let your anger cease from us:
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.
Show us your compassion, O Lord, and grant us your salvation:
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Your salvation is near for those that fear you,
that glory may dwell in our land:
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

ABSOLUTION
Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

THE COLLECT
Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD *(Please sit)*

First Reading - Isaiah 64: 1–9
O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence—2 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! 3 When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. 4 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. 5 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. 6 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. 7 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. 8 Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. 9 Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity for ever. Now consider, we are all your people.

This is the word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Psalm 80: 1–8, 18–20
1 Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, you that led Joseph like a flock;
2 Shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim,
before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh.
3 Stir up your mighty strength and come to our salvation.
4 Turn us again, O God;

show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.
5 O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry at your people's prayer?
6 You feed them with the bread of tears;
you give them abundance of tears to drink.
7 You have made us the derision of our neighbours,
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.
8 Turn us again, O God of hosts;
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.
18 Let your hand be upon the man at your right hand,
the son of man you made so strong for yourself.
19 And so will we not go back from you;
give us life, and we shall call upon your name.
20 Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts;
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

Second Reading - 1 Corinthians 1: 3–9

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 4 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, 5for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— 6just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— 7so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. 8He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9God 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.

Gradual Hymn: Come, thou long expected Jesus

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 for ever;
now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal Spirit,
rule in all our hearts alone:
by thy all-sufficient merit,
raise us to thy glorious throne.

Gospel Reading - Mark 13: 24–37

ACCLAMATION
Alleluia, alleluia.
Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. *(Isaiah 40: 3–5)*
Alleluia

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.
Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said: 24 'But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, 25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. 26Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds" with great power and glory. 27Then 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.

28 '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. 29So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 30Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. 31Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

32 'But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when

the time will come. 34It 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. 35Therefore, 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, 36or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. 37And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.'

This is the word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

SERMON

THE CREED *(Please stand)*
We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION
This response is used:
Come, Lord Jesus: **come, our Saviour and our God.**

THE LITURGY OF THE RESERVED SACRAMENT

THE PEACE *(Please stand).*
In the tender mercy of our God, the dayspring from on high shall break upon us, to give light to those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death and to guide our feet into the way of peace. *(Luke 1:78-79)*

The peace of the Lord be always with you
and also with you.

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

Offertory Hymn: Hark! a herald voice is calling

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 by 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 heav'n;
let us haste, with tears of sorrow,
one and all to be forgiv'n.

So that when next he comes with glory,
wrapping all the earth in fear,
may he then, as our defender,
on the clouds of heav'n appear.

Honour, glory, virtue, merit,
to the Father and the Son,

with the co-eternal Spirit,
while unending ages run.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Advent God of our future, whose compassion is unlimited, all that we have is yours and to you we shall render account for all you have given us. As we offer you these gifts we enjoy from your bounty, grant that we may live well, love generously, and seek first your kingdom, on earth as in heaven, through Jesus Christ our most kind Judge and Saviour. **Amen**

PRAYERS AT THE PREPARATION OF THE TABLE

As this bread was scattered and then gathered and made one, so may your Church be gathered into your kingdom.
Glory to you, O God, for ever.

THANKSGIVING PRAYER

It is right and good to give you thanks and praise,
almighty God and everlasting Father,
through Jesus Christ your Son.
For when he humbled himself to come among us in human flesh,
he fulfilled the plan you formed before the foundation of the world
to open for us the way of salvation.
Confident that your promise will be fulfilled,
we now watch for the day
when Christ our Lord will come again in glory.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us.
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.

PRAYER OF HUMBLE ACCESS

Most merciful Lord, your love compels us to come in.
Our hands were unclean, our hearts were unprepared;
we were not fit even to eat the crumbs from under your table.
But you, Lord, are the God of our salvation,
and share your bread with sinners.
So cleanse and feed us
with the precious body and blood of your Son,
that he may live in us and we in him;
and that we, with the whole company of Christ,
may sit and eat in your kingdom. Amen.

DISTRIBUTION OF RESERVED SACRAMENT

Hymn during Communion: Take me Lord

Take me, Lord, use my life in the way you wish to do.
Fill me, Lord, touch my heart till it always thinks of you.
Take me now, as I am, this is all I can offer.
Here today, I the clay, will be moulded by my Lord.

Lord, I pray that each day I will listen to your will.
Many times I have failed but I know you love me still.
Teach me now, guide me, Lord, keep me close to you always.
Here today, I the clay, will be moulded by my Lord.

I am weak, fill me now with your strength and set me free.
Make me whole, fashion me so that you will live in me.
Hold me now in your hands, form me now with your Spirit.
Here today, I the clay, will be moulded by me Lord.

Silence is kept.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Jesus, no words can express our gratitude and amazement that you should die for us. How amazing it is that each of our lives is so valuable to you that you would lay yours down to reach us. May the presence of you through this reserved sacrament remain with us as we seek to take your message of love and grace into the world. Amen.

NOTICES

Closing hymn: Lo, he comes with clouds descending

Lo, he comes with clouds descending,
once for mortal sinners slain;
thousand thousand saints attending
swell the triumph of his train:
Alleluia!
Christ appears on earth to reign.

Ev'ry eye shall now behold him
robed in dreadful majesty;
we who set at naught and sold him,
pierced and nailed him to the tree,
deeply grieving,
shall the true Messiah see.

Those dear tokens of his passion
still his dazzling body bears,
cause of endless exultation
to his ransomed worshippers:
with what rapture
gaze we on those glorious scars!

Yea, amen, let all adore thee,
high on thine eternal throne;
Saviour, take the pow'r and glory,
claim the kingdom for thine own:
Alleluia!
Thou shalt reign, and thou alone.

THE BLESSING

May God the Father, who loved the world so much that he sent his only Son, give you grace to prepare for life eternal. **Amen.**
May God the Son, who comes to us as redeemer and judge, reveal to you the path from darkness to light. **Amen.**
May God the Holy Spirit, by whose working the Virgin Mary conceived the Christ, help you bear the fruits of holiness. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**.

THE DISMISSAL

As we await our coming Saviour, go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Go in peace. Proclaim the Word made flesh.
Glory, thanks and praise to God.