

Swindon Old Town Partnership of Churches

Advent Carol Service

Sunday 30th November 2025

6.30pm



Led by the Revd. Daphne Hardwick

Preacher: David Cain

Organist – Tim Eyles (Christ Church)

Conductor- the Revd. Geoffrey Gleed (Immanuel)



INTRODUCTION TO THE SEASON

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.



Processional Hymn: Come thou redeemer of the earth (arr. David Willcocks)

Choir only:

Come, thou Redeemer of the earth,
And manifest thy virgin birth:
Let ev'ry age adoring fall;
Such birth befits the God of all.

All:

Begotten of no human will,
But of the Spirit, thou art still
The Word of God in flesh arrayed,
The promised fruit to man displayed.

From God the Father he proceeds,
To God the Father back he speeds;
His course he runs to death and hell,
Returning on God's throne to dwell.

O equal to thy Father, thou!
Gird on thy fleshly mantle now;
The weakness of our mortal state
With deathless might invigorate.

Thy cradle here shall glitter bright,
And darkness breathe a newer light,
Where endless faith shall shine serene,
And twilight never intervene.

All laud, eternal Son, to thee
Whose advent sets thy people free,
Whom with the Father we adore,
And holy Ghost for evermore.
Amen

Bidding prayer and Lord's prayer

First lesson: Isaiah 40: 1-8 – Read by Francis Maples from Christ Church

God's People Are Comforted

Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the Lord's hand
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:

'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.
Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'

A voice says, 'Cry out!'

And I said, 'What shall I cry?'
All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand for ever.

Choir: People Look East (arr. Malcolm Archer)

Second lesson: Jeremiah 23: 5-6 – Read by Judith Hawkins from Christ Church

The Righteous Branch of David

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'

Hymn: O come, O come Emmanuel

O come, O come Emmanuel!
Redeem thy captive Israel,
That into exile drear is gone
Far from the face of God's dear Son.

Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Men:

O come, thou Branch of Jesse, draw
The quarry from the lion's claw;
From the dread caverns of the grave,
From nether hell thy people save.

Ladies:

O come, O come, thou Dayspring bright!
Pour on our souls thy healing light;
Dispel the long night's ling'ring gloom,
And pierce the shadows of the tomb.

Men:

O come, thou Lord of David's Key!
The royal door fling wide and free;
Safeguard for us the heav'nward road,
And bar the way to death's abode.

O come, O come Adonai,
Who in thy glorious majesty
From that high mountain clothed with awe
Gavest thy folk the elder law.

Third lesson: Zechariah 9, 9-10 – read by Stephen Brain from Immanuel

The Coming Ruler of God's People

Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!

Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!

Lo, your king comes to you;

triumphant and victorious is he,

humble and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim

and the warhorse from Jerusalem;

and the battle-bow shall be cut off,

and he shall command peace to the nations;

his dominion shall be from sea to sea,

and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Choir: Lift up your heads (William Mathias)

Fourth lesson: Haggai 2: 6-9 – read by Samantha Chandler Benjamin from Immanuel

For thus says the Lord of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all the nations, so that the treasure of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with splendour, says the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the Lord of hosts. The latter splendour of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity, says the Lord of hosts.

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 ev'ry nation,
Joy of ev'ry 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 thine all-sufficient merit,
Raise us to thy glorious throne.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Fifth lesson: Isaiah 35: 1-6 – read by George Kennedy from Bath Road

The Return of the Redeemed to Zion

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the Lord,
the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.

Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
'Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.

He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.

He will come and save you.'

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then the lame shall leap like a deer,

and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert

Choir: Sleepers, wake (Felix Mendelssohn)

Sixth lesson: Luke 1: 26-35, 38 – read by Dorothy Kennedy from Bath Road

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

Hymn: Hills of the north, rejoice

Hills of the north, rejoice,
Echoing songs arise,
Hail with united voice
Him who made earth and skies:
He comes in righteousness and love,
He brings salvation from above.

Isles of the southern seas
Sing to the list'ning earth,

Carry on ev'ry breeze
Hope of a world's new birth:
In Christ shall all be made anew,
He word is sure, his promise true.

Lands of the east, arise,
He is your brightest morn,
Greet him with joyous eyes,
Praise shall his path adorn:
The God whom you have longed to know
In Christ draws near, and calls you now.

Shores of the utmost west,
Lands of the setting sun,
Welcome the heav'nly guest
In whom the dawn has come;
He brings a never-ending light
Who triumphed o'er our darkest night.

Shout, as you journey on,
Songs be in ev'ry mouth,
Lo, from the north they come,
From east and west and south:
In Jesus all shall find their rest,
In him the longing earth be blest.

Charles Edward Oakley (1832-1865) adapted

Seventh lesson: Mark 1: 1-15 – read by Anne Macmillan from S Mary's

The Proclamation of John the Baptist

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;

the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

“Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight” ’,

John the baptiser appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

The Baptism of Jesus

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

The Temptation of Jesus

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

Choir: There is no Rose (Graham Ellis)

Sermon – David Cain

Hymn: Lo! He comes with clouds descending

Lo! He comes with clouds descending,
Once for favoured sinners slain;
Thousand thousand saints attending
Swell the triumph of his train:
Alleluia!
Alleluia!
Alleluia!
God appears on earth to reign.

Every eye shall now behold him
Robed in dreadful majesty;
Those who set at naught and sold him,
Pierced and nailed him to the three,
Deeply wailing,
deeply wailing,
deeply wailing
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,
with what rapture,
with what rapture
Gaze we on those glorious scars!

Yea, amen! Let all adore thee,
High on thine eternal throne;
Saviour, take the power and glory:
Claim the kingdom for thine own:
O come quickly!
O come quickly!
O come quickly!
Alleluia! Come, Lord, come!

Collect

Blessing

Closing voluntary: Chorale prelude “Wachet auf” BWV645 (JS Bach)

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Christmas at Christ Church
with St Mary's



IN CHRIST CHURCH

Christingle Service

4pm Sunday 14th December

Service of Lessons & Carols

6.30pm Sunday 21st December

Christmas Eve

4pm Crib Service

11pm Midnight Mass

Christmas Day

8am & 10am Holy Communion

AT ST MARY'S

Carol Service

2.30pm Sunday 14th December

'Blue Christmas'

7pm Monday 22nd December