



# **March Team Ministry**

**March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda**

*Welcome*

**2nd Sunday of Advent**

**December 6th 2020**

Please keep in touch with one another, and I am always glad to hear from you on 01354 279232 or at [andrew.marchurch@gmail.com](mailto:andrew.marchurch@gmail.com)

**We have Church services with social distancing, and also, for the foreseeable future, our zooming, emailing and leaflet deliveries. We want people to have a genuine choice. We are also trying to allow other aspects of the church's life to happen. Ideas and suggestions welcome.**

**St Peter's Sundays 8am & 11am; Wednesdays 10am**

**St Mary's Sundays 9.15am**

**St John's Sundays 9.30am; Tuesdays 10am**

**"Stay in touch, take care, keep safe, continue praying and God bless."**

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## **Prayers for this Week**

With tender comfort and transforming power you come into our midst, O God of mercy and might. Make ready a way in the wilderness, clear a straight path in our hearts, and form us into a repentant people, that the advent of your Son may find us watchful and eager for the glory he reveals. We ask this through him whose coming is certain, whose day draws near: your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

Wild God of the wastes, whose gospel begins with a cry and a summons: take us to a pathless place where we can start again to taste creation's gifts anew and await the Spirit's touch; through Jesus Christ, the one who is to come.

**Amen.**

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# The Nicene Creed

*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.*

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## Meditation

Last week, patriarchs and God the Father; this week, as we light the second advent candle, prophets and Jesus Christ, God the Son. Prophets; what are our associations there? old men in beards? people who rant? fortune tellers/ future predictors? books of the bible? or what?

Certainly, in some of our advent and Christmas carol services, we have readings from that part of the Old Testament named after individual prophets, which point to who Jesus is. Or rather, that show that there were messianic expectations, which the early church could clearly see were fulfilled in Jesus. We hear of new growth from a tree stump, to show that Jesus is the new growth from the royal line of David; a line that was thought of as extinct but which now brings new life. We hear of a comforter who is coming, we hear of heralds who bring good news, God's rule and again new life. We hear of a young woman heavy with child, and that God's blessing will arrive with this child. We hear of a suffering servant who is true to God, and who, despite terrible indignities and torture, remains God's chosen vehicle and receives God's blessing.

Now, it would be easy to get the impression from this seasonal use that the Old Testament's main value and significance is to point to Jesus, explain who he is, and help us to recognise him as the Messiah. This fits into a picture of prophets as men (It is hard to find many female prophets in the bible) who predict the future. This pictures prophets making, often surprising, utterances which may have little meaning to those who first heard them, but that generations later, suddenly have huge significance as Jesus of Nazareth walks the earth, and explains who he is. Of course, we do have to note that those who were most familiar with their scriptures were those who were most unable to recognise Jesus as the Messiah, when they met him face to face, and heard his words with their own ears. Whether it was hard for them because they expected a Messiah to be big and powerful? or just for the Jews? or a King or a Priest? or even to accept that God had indeed come amongst them?

I think we should not devalue the notion both of a living God, and scripture which is a continuing inspiration. God relates to his people in all times; scripture may have something to say to people in very different times and situations. So, for me, the prophets spoke for their own age, for those who saw and heard first hand, but that they were recorded and preserved, and are also read again, even to this day, because they have something to say to us as well. So all these prophetic ideas were not so much predicting, but reminding us that when God came to earth in his Son, this was the sort of Son He is, and this is the sort of God that God is. And that meant Jesus came as servant, to suffer, to serve, to love, to restore people's dignity; and that is an unexpected way of being King, powerful, glorious and Lord!

So we have the Church's explanation and proclamation; *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.*

This is full of the fundamental paradox of the reality of Jesus; he is both fully God, and fully human. On the one hand, through him all things were made, on the other, he could be subject to a mere Roman provincial governor, on one hand being judged worthy of death, yet on the other being the judge of the living and the dead. I am sure we can all find many other things that seem to be opposites, yet Jesus contains and embraces both. For some it is surprising that we have no mention of Jesus as a teacher, story teller, healer, gatherer of both followers and those thought to be disreputable, and so much of what makes up the content of our four gospels. For the creeds concentrate on who Jesus is, not what he does, but both these avenues lead to the same place, the “kingdom which will have no end”.

Prophets, and not those who predict the future, rather they are those who communicate the deepest truth of God; they speak the word of the Lord. they speak, without fear or favour, to the powerful and to the ordinary. When Jesus returns to his home synagogue he quotes from a prophet, Isaiah, “*The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour*” Jesus chooses to stand in this prophetic tradition, but takes it further, for he adds as his sermon “Today in your hearing, this has been fulfilled”. The kingdom without end had begun. And we, all of us, are in its jurisdiction and are its citizens. The kingdom was inaugurated in the past and exists to the end of time, so is here now in the present. The prophets spoke in the long past, and help Jesus to be seen, but they also take us into the future, and affirm that the living God still communicates with us in the here and now. Your kingdom come, on earth as it is heaven.

Next Week, as promised, John the Baptist and the Holy Spirit.

## God bless, Andrew

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### Prayers

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 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.**

Watchful at all times, let us pray for strength to stand with confidence before the Lord our Maker and Redeemer; that God may bring in his kingdom with justice and mercy:

that God may establish among the nations his sceptre of righteousness; that we may seek Christ in the scripture, and recognise him in the breaking of bread:

*(We name those in need we have been particularly asked to pray for)*

that God may bind up the broken-hearted restore the sick and raise up the fallen; that the light of God’s coming may dawn on all who live in darkness and the shadow of death:

*(We pray for those who have died recently, and those who died at this time of year)*

that with all the saints in light we may shine forth as lights for the world:

Let us commend the world, which Christ will judge, to the mercy and protection of God.

Almighty God, as your blessed Son Jesus Christ first came to seek and to save the lost; so may he come again to find in us the completion of his redeeming work; for he alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.

**Amen.**