



# **March Team Ministry**

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

*Welcome*

## **Advent Sunday - 27th November 2022**

Please keep in touch with one another, and I am always glad to hear from you on 01354 572117 or at [andrew.marchurch@gmail.com](mailto:andrew.marchurch@gmail.com)

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*We are still asking people to be sensible and sensitive . Mask wearing is optional. Respect people's space. Washing hands is a good idea. Wine offered (for those wishing it). Dipping is not recommended.*

**~ Services with Social Distancing ~**

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

**St Mary's Sundays 9.15am ~ St John's Sundays 9.30am; Tuesdays 10am**

**St Wendreda's Sundays 11am**

**TOMORROW (SUNDAY) - JOINT CHORAL ADVENT SERVICE - 4pm at St Peter's**

### **Prayer, Collect, for this week**

People of God; awake!

The day is coming soon when you shall see God face to face. Remember the ways and works of God, God calls you out of darkness to walk in the light of his coming. You are God's children.

Lord make us one as we walk with Christ today and for ever. Amen.

God of majesty and power, amid the clamour of our violence your Word of truth resounds; upon a world made dark by sin the Sun of justice casts his dawning rays. Keep your household watchful and aware of the hour in which we live. Hasten the advent of that day when the sounds of war will be for ever stilled and the darkness of evil scattered, and all your children will be gathered into one. 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.

Holy Thief, stealing away our false insecurities and idle vanity: awaken us from the dull sleep that clings to empty fear and vacant routine; unfold on us the time of crisis when love of truth floods a thirsty world; through Jesus Christ, the one who is to come. Amen

### **Old Testament - Isaiah 2 v1-5**

*The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!*

## **Epistle - Romans 13 v 11-14**

*Brothers and sisters, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.*

## **Gospel of Matthew 24 v36-44**

*Jesus spoke to his disciples: 'About that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.'*

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## **Meditation**

The Vicar got up into his pulpit on Advent Sunday and began: 'Everyone in this parish is going to die!' A little man sitting in the front row, whom he had never seen before, burst out into hysterical laughter. Glaring at him, the Vicar began again: 'Everyone in this parish is going to die!' Gales of laughter came from the front pew. Exasperated, the Vicar tried for a third time: 'Everyone in this parish is going to die!' By now the little man was almost uncontrollable with mirth. Angrily the Vicar shouted at him: 'What is so funny about that?' Through his laughter the little man replied, 'I'm not from this parish.'

We all like to avoid unpleasant truths. But the one certainty in this life is that it will end. It is therefore right that we should give some thought to preparing for what we believe will be the life hereafter. The Church provides two seasons for self-examination, Advent before Christmas and Lent before Easter, in both of which the liturgical colour is sombre purple. While the latter still receives some considerable attention, the former is largely forgotten in the commercial scramble that now exhausts us for Christmas. For the health of all of us, both spiritual and physical, Advent needs to regain a much higher profile in the Christian calendar.

Looking back at Christ's birth, death and resurrection, his followers saw that God's reign had been inaugurated though it was not yet enjoyed in all its fullness. The kingdom was breaking in and God's ultimate victory was assured. But its full realisation depended on those who acknowledged his rule. This had long been the Hebrews' understanding of what was required of the faithful. The prophetic cry was not for more religion, more prayer, more sacrifices, more feats: rather it was:

Learn to do good;  
Seek justice;  
Correct oppression;  
Defend the fatherless;  
Plead for the widow.

Positive involvement was required. Religion without commitment to righting society's wrongs was not merely worthless but sinful. Only through righteousness, that is right relations in society, could the Messianic Kingdom be realised.

Advent calls us once more to dedicate ourselves to strive for that kingdom of perfect shalom, peace and harmony. It will require discipline, labour and sweat – Gethsemane and Golgotha are part and parcel of the incarnation. So in her wisdom the Church provides, in Advent, a season for penitence and reflection, an opportunity to come to terms with what has been, and a chance to try again for what God wills us to be.

It is up to us to use this season, to involve ourselves in it. All of us could make some gesture towards it – perhaps some kind of self-denial to remind us, in the materialistic spree that makes up the secular season of Christmas, that man does not live by bread alone – to remind us that some people have hardly any bread at all. As

important, we could take on some spiritual commitment – at least give us some time for quietness and reflection. It is so easy to come to Christmas in a flurry of tinsel and holly that we quite forget what it is all about – God submitting himself to humankind in the backyard of a public house that they might not only know, but handle, infinite love.

Nor should anyone come to Christmas without looking back at what has been, before looking forward to what can be – be if we allow God to let it be. For the past has its lessons for the future, and unless these lessons are learnt, the future – the true end for you and me – remains unobtainable. We must allow ourselves, in the frantic and frenetic orgy that marks the affluent society's response to the poverty of God, we must allow ourselves the quiet of celebrating, stepping aside to step out again.

For the Eucharistic dismissal rings loud and clear: 'Go in peace to love and serve the Lord'. And go we must, go to involve ourselves in the struggle that is life, go from the manger to Galilee and Golgotha, go in the name of the Lord of Life. So, as we worship this Sunday, we can only say thank you for what has been, even the pain and sorrow which has made us more truly ourselves. May God bless what is to be. Then we must get on with the job, the job of enabling his kingdom to come, come in all its fullness. And as the Vicar of my opening story reminds us, we only have a limited time in which to do this.

## 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.