

6 December 2020, 11am
*Christ Church New Southgate &
Friern Barnet*

Please join with us at 11am to read this service together either in person, online or in printed form.

Each person in the church is assigned a deacon who will call you to see if you are alright in these times and to pray for you. Please feel free to call Ruth too if you wish – only happy to help! 020 8368 8157

Welcome to Christ Church NSFB on Sunday 6 December 2020.

You are warmly welcome to this service today. We are delighted that we are now able to meet again in person and still able to welcome those online and those joining us through a paper service too.

Advent candle

As we look forward to Christmas we have been lighting our advent candles at home, and using our advent calendars with families. But I begin with an apology – we should have lit the first advent candle at church last week. Today as a symbol of all our little advent candles that have been lit at home, I light the first candle. As I do so I invite you to hold up your first finger.

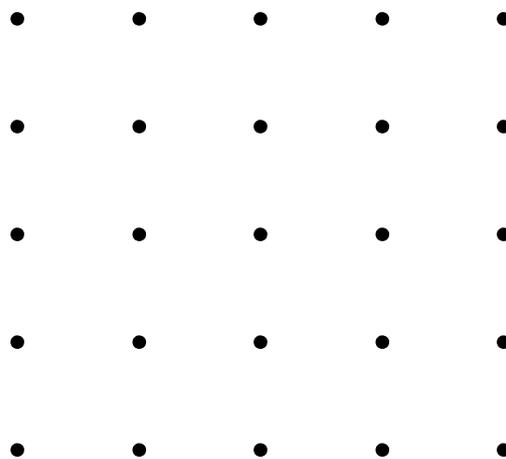
The first candle in our crown is lit for the first time Jesus came to earth. A shining example of how we should live, Light of the World from his humble birth.

Jesus, help us live more like you,
ALL: O come, O come Emmanuel.

Spirit-filled and shining bright,
O come, O come Emmanuel.

All age activity – Thank you squares

Some of you may have played this game before. Take a piece of paper, and draw dots in rows on it. Let's draw 5 dots by 5 dots to make a square.



There are two ways to play from here: if you're bubbled with another person, each take it in turns to draw lines like so. Once you have finished a square, write a letter in it for someone or something you are thankful for. F for friends, C for church, J for Jesus. Or by yourself, make the squares and quietly write the initial of someone you would like to give thanks for to God.

Thank you God for all of the people and places we have shared today. Help us to always give thanks to you for all you have given to us. Amen.

Reading: 2 Peter 3.8-13 read by Peter who is recovering well from his recent surgery.

⁸But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a

roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

¹¹ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

Advent poem from Engage worship:

Come back, Lord Jesus, and do not be slow.
Refine, renew, restore. We hope, we yearn.
When is this coming? Why can we not know
how long we have to wait for your return?
Come back, Lord Jesus, and do not be slow!
Or, help us in the lingering to learn
your saving way that savours love, and so
refine, renew, restore. We hope, we yearn.
Come back, Lord Jesus, and do not be slow:
refine, renew, restore. We hope, we yearn.

Our hymn today is a new song written by
Sam Hargreaves, One day for the Lord

<https://youtu.be/8osmMUgUtCQ>

*One day for the Lord's like a thousand years,
and a thousand years like a day.
The Lord is not late,
he is patient to wait,
so help us be ready, we pray.*

God, where is the "coming" you've
promised,
the time when all things are put right?
You hold back the day
Wanting all to be saved,
then you'll come like a thief in the night.
One day for the Lord...

The heavens will vanish in thunder,
as earth is consumed in the flames,
new heavens will dawn,
as the earth is reborn,
where your goodness and justice will reign.
One day for the Lord...

We'll live in the light of your coming,
awaiting the day you appear,
a people of peace
living holy and free
till your home and your heaven is here.
One day for the Lord...

Words and music © Sam Hargreaves, admin.
Jubilate Hymns Ltd.

Sermon

Two weeks ago there was a short video clip on Good Morning Britain all about a woman nicknamed Mrs Christmas – Thank you to Rebecca for posting it online! Mrs Christmas is a bubbly blond middle-aged woman from Essex with a real passion for Christmas. She is so devoted to preparing for Christmas that this year she spent £7000 on new Christmas decorations.

When hosts Eamonn and Ruth asked her why she had spent so much, Mrs Christmas replied: well I normally spend about £3000 but I thought this year had been so awful, I figured I might as well cheer myself up. And I think the outdoor ones bring a smile to all the school kids too. Mrs Christmas is not alone.

As Guardian journalist Arwa Mahdawi asked in mid-November: 'Is it too early to put up Christmas decorations? Not after the year we've had. We all need cheering up.' The BBC reported last week from Heather Parry from the British Christmas Tree Growers Association (BCTGA) who said several of her 320 members reported it is the busiest they've ever been. UK farms usually sell

about eight million trees each year. This year they predict it could reach as many as 10 million. Growers say wholesale business to retailers is already 24% higher than this time last year.

Advent has always been a season of preparation, decorating, of waiting and counting down the days until Christmas Day arrives. But no amount of fairy lights can make 2020 look any better. We have been challenged on every front, in our health, our relationships, our working patterns, and the effect on the economy is and will continue to be significant.

Do we put decorations up early to distract and comfort ourselves? Or do we feel with Christmas trees up and decorated we might speed the end of this most challenging of years? Are we trying to speed the coming of Christmas?

2 Peter 3 is a really interesting part of the bible for here the bible unpacks what it means to wait. Here waiting isn't hanging around, its waiting with expectancy. Or an active expectation. In advent we wait to celebrate Christ's birth every year at Christmas.

But as Christians we are in fact waiting all the time, we are waiting for Christ to return again. For as exciting as it is to remember when Jesus came to the earth 2000 years ago, he promised he would return. Peter – the author of 2 Peter, calls us to wait in a particular way

V 11-12 You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming... So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him."

As Christians we ought to have our noses facing the wind, watching for Christ and living lives that might speed his return. We await the day when Jesus will come again to

the earth, we await the restoration of heaven and earth, with every good thing made new and abundant life for all.

So how should Christians decorate their homes at Christmas time? Well, you can put up whatever decorations you wish of course, for it's a wonderful time of the year.

But let us consider how we might decorate for a sustained advent, how might our lives look as people who are always waiting for God? Who are actively waiting for the Lord that we might speed his return?

For some this means pulling on a sandwich board and ringing a bell outside a shopping centre saying the end is nigh. Others might prefer to stick our heads in the sand. Peter suggests that we look forward to Christ's return as we live in ways that please God.

When we live in ways that please God, we live as Christ did. We work wherever we can for the good of his creation. We celebrate all that God has made and protect it. We seek to build a community and society that seeks justice and fairness. We should communicate the Kingdom of God in how we speak and live and so not only proclaim it, but even somehow "speed its coming".

I saw a quote once that said: We have a decaf sovereign in a double espresso world. We have a decaf sovereign god in a double espresso world. This phrase exposes what we know and love about God. Our God is not hyper, on edge and coming up with 100 ideas a minute. He's not looking for something to perk him up, his way is steadfast, considered and patient.

Even if we might be a people constantly looking forward, here we must exercise caution. For just as we are to be a waiting people, we also serve the God who waits. Our God is patient. He is waiting for all to come to him. He is the patient father waiting for his

children to return. He is waiting for all to return, for all to be able to take part in his gift of forgiveness and restoration.

Imagine a compass where north is God's kingdom. What would our life be like if we orientated our existence to following north, not distracted by east or west and certainly not always looking back to south. What if set our compass forward north and kept going? As we hear the call from Peter to look forward to the day Christ returns, we must exercise good judgement in all that we pursue as individuals and as a church. Does an activity we are thinking about build the kingdom? Does it point towards justice? Does it lead people onto faith and growth?

And further still if our outlook is forward facing, our speed should be steady. There is wisdom in slowness for when we are purposeful, we can exercise patience that is inclusive, welcoming and echoes the father heart of God. May we walk through this advent, delighting in all that sparkles but considering carefully what in our lives draws us into God's purposes and how we might echo God's patience and waiting heart today. May we walk steadily and patiently, seeking Christ this advent and throughout our lives.

Advent candle We light the second candle here, for the second coming of Christ. He will return, ending pain and fear, restoring the world to life.

Jesus, we trust in your return;
ALL: O come, O come Emmanuel.
Help us live with patient hope,
O come, O come Emmanuel.

Slowing Down Prayer

The first half of the lines (marked >) can be prayed on the inhale, and the second half (<) on the exhale.

- .
- > Where I am fearful, eternal Father,
< help me regain your calm.
 - > Where I am rushing, eternal Father,
< guide me to your unhurried pace.
 - > Where I am restless, eternal God,
< help me to know your patience.

 - > Where I am anxious, eternal God,
< may I breathe in your peace.
 - > I breathe in your peace, Jesus,
< and breathe out anxiety.

 - > I breathe in your patience, Jesus,
< and breathe out restlessness.
 - > I breathe in your unhurried pace, Jesus,
< and breathe out my rushing.
 - > I breathe in your calm, Jesus,
< and breathe out my fear.

 - > Holy Spirit, < fill me with your rest.
 - > Holy Spirit, < fill me with your quiet.
 - > Holy Spirit, < fill me.
 - > Holy < Spirit.

Text © Sam and Sara Hargreaves,
engageworship

Intercession

We pray for ongoing Brexit negotiations, may they create helpful new patterns of engaging with each other. We pray for wisdom for our government in this time of crisis, trying to balance so many critical issues at once. Grant them strength, peace and grace.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for all those working in the retail sector with great economic pressure coming to bear on many high street shops. We pray that you will sustain workers and grant relief to those in the greatest need.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray especially for the people of Burnley near Manchester today. We learnt this week of the significant and heart-breaking levels of poverty for a town that has been pushed to the edge with the effect of Covid 19. We pray that you would grant rest to the ministers who appeared in the recent BBC film, that you would sustain them and their community.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for the mental health of our nation. The cost of Covid 19 is felt in so many ways and not the least in our individual and collective mental health. Draw us on lord, helps us to walk in faith, trusting in your promise to renew and restore us.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for Thailand with growing pressure from students for reform to their monarchy and the military's role in the country. We pray that those who govern would hear the cries of their people and respond in kindness, fairness and with a spirit of equality for all are equal in Christ.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for the Democratic Republic of Congo where nearly 22 million people in are facing acute food insecurity, due to conflict , Covid-19 pandemic and climate change. We pray for change for people who are poor, displaced and without power. Lord make a way for all to flourish in the DRC.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Blessing

In Christ we are a new creation:

ALL: remade, renewed, restored.

Jesus you will come again, perfecting all of creation: **remade, renewed, restored.**

Help us live in the light of your coming, lives of grace and peace:

remaking, renewing, restoring.

Send us out, to bless the earth and bless all people:

remaking, renewing, restoring. Amen.