

Bulletin for Sunday 29th November 2020

Good morning on this, the first Sunday in Advent. Traditionally each Advent Sunday has a theme, and the theme of the first week is Hope. Even at this, one of the darkest times of year - and a particularly difficult year, at that - we can hold to the hope we have in Christ. In today's reading, Jesus points to signs in the world of summer coming!

Hymn: O come, O come, Immanuel (R&S 126)

Prayer: God of many names,
 in this dark and difficult time,
 as we watch and wait for your coming again,
 may we light a candle of hope in the darkness...
 We ask your blessing on everything we do,
 and everything we bring to you or give in your service,
 today and every day. In Jesus' name. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Readings: Mark chapter 13: verses 24-37

Reflection: This may seem like a strange and rather dark reading for the first Sunday in Advent, the beginning of the church's year. But Jesus lived in difficult and dangerous times, and this Gospel - Mark's - was written to the background of the revolt against Roman rule in AD 66-70, when the Romans destroyed not just the temple, but much of the region and its people. Signs of hope were desperately needed.

Jesus reminded them - and us - that God will come, bringing light into the darkness, even though the time of that coming is unknown. He pointed to the tiny green shoots of a fig tree as a symbol of the beginning of the end of the dark winter... and a sign that summer will eventually be here. So every year at this time, when days are dark and short (and getting darker and shorter still), when we are in need of hope, and light to guide us in the darkness, we are reminded that we are waiting for God, whose coming will be unexpected but sure. We are given hope to hold onto as we wait - tiny green shoots of hope, alive and growing towards the light! May we be alert to the growing signs of God's kingdom. Amen

Hymn: Come, thou long-expected Jesus (R&S 138)

Prayer: God of compassion, whose love lights up the world,
 we pray for those struggling in the darkness of loneliness,
 and for those suffering pain, sickness or grief
 who feel that the morning will never come;
 may your light and your warmth, like a candle flame,
 gently break through to rekindle their hope...

We pray for our communities, our families and our friends;
and for ourselves as we wait for you....
In Jesus' name we ask all our prayers, Amen

Hymn: God is working his purpose out (R&S 573)

Blessing: May God's light shine on us, and in us,
as we wait for the coming of Immanuel;
and may the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and with all those we love
today and always. Amen

Sad news that Revd Amanda, Interim Minister here from 2006 to 2009, died peacefully on Thursday afternoon. She had been very ill with cancer for some time.

There will be an evening service - Sunday at Six - on Zoom at 6pm this and every Sunday. All welcome, online or using a landline phone, contact me for details. The After Church Coffee Zooms are still taking place at 11.30 every Sunday morning and it would be lovely to welcome anyone who would like to join in.

The Monday evening discussion group will meet on Zoom during Advent. First meeting this Monday 30th November, at 7pm. We'll be using a York Course entitled 'Living in hope', and would love you to join us. Contact Gerald or Anne for more details.

At Christmas it has been the custom, particularly in Pulborough, to give to Christian Aid in lieu of sending cards to all church friends. This year we won't be able to put 'stars' on a tree and collect the money in the usual way, but contributions to Christian Aid (very much needed this year) can be passed directly to Joyce (or the equivalent person in the other churches). We must keep our churches clear and not pass things around while we're there, so we need to find different ways to exchange any cards, too. But greetings - by post, phone call or email - will be particularly important this strange Christmas. Let's remember especially all the friends we haven't seen in person this year.

Anne Lewitt