

Morning Prayer

at home with your
Parish Church

in the Diocese of Birmingham



ALL SAINTS
KINGS HEATH

Advent Sunday

3rd December 2023

Preparation

You may wish to mark your time of worship by arranging a table with a cloth and your Bible, or anything, such as flowers, that makes it a special reflective space. If possible and safe, have four tea lights and matches ready,

Music: click on the links to hear and join in the music. Click stop at the end of each.

HYMN [Christ, be our light](#)

1. Longing for light, we wait in darkness.

Longing for truth, we turn to you.

Make us your own, your holy people,

light for the world to see.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in our hearts. Shine through the darkness.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in your church gathered today.

2. Longing for peace, our world is troubled.

Longing for hope, many despair.

Your world alone has power to save us.

Make us your living voice.

3. Longing for food, many are hungry.

Longing for water, many still thirst.

Make us your bread, broken for others,

shared until all are fed.

4. Longing for shelter, many are homeless.

Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.

5. Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.

(words & music: Bernadette Farrell)

At home, we pause to remember those gathered in Church who, in turn remember us.

We take this time, united in Christ, to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to hear and receive God's holy word, to pray for the needs of the world, and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may find new ways to serve God.

*In this first Sunday of Advent now light **one** of the candles to remember:*

First Sunday – the Hebrew Fathers and Mothers of our Faith

Second Sunday – the Prophets

Third Sunday – John the Baptist

Fourth Sunday – the Virgin Mary

PRAYER: Today we remember the Hebrew Fathers and Mothers of our faith: boyish yet brave Abraham, grumpy but tenacious Sarah; moody Moses and dancing Miriam; clumsy Jacob and manipulative Rachel; persistent, prayerful Hannah and loyal Ruth; brave diplomat Esther; bold, if wilful David. We thank you for their stories and how their gifts inspire us and their weakness teaches wisdom. Especially we celebrate that you can turn our flaws and mistakes into opportunities for grace. Let their experience of you be a light on our path as we prepare to welcome you anew at Christmas. **Amen.**

Prayers of Penitence

We confess:

Heavenly Father, you have created a universe of light: forgive us when we return to darkness.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you are the light of the world: cleanse and heal our blinded sight.

Christ, have mercy.

Holy Spirit, you give us light in our hearts: renew us in faith and love.

Lord, have mercy.

We keep silence, then pray:

May almighty God who forgives all who truly repent have mercy upon us, pardon us from all our sins, confirm and strengthen us in all goodness and keep us in eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Word of God

OLD TESTAMENT READING

Isaiah 64:1-9

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—
as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!
When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.
You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.
But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we transgressed.
We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
There is no one who calls on your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.
Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD,
and do not remember iniquity for ever.
Now consider, we are all your people.

PSALM 80:1-8 *If you are able, you might stand to read this psalm aloud.*

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock!
You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth
before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.
Stir up your might,
and come to save us!
Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.
O LORD God of hosts,
how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?
You have fed them with the bread of tears,
and given them tears to drink in full measure.
You make us the scorn of our neighbours;
our enemies laugh among themselves.
Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

You brought a vine out of Egypt;
you drove out the nations and planted it.

GOSPEL READING Mark 13:24-end

Jesus said: 'But in those days, after that suffering,
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.
Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds" with great power
and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from
the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

'From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes
tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So
also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is
near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass
away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will
pass away, but my words will not pass away.

'But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in
heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you
do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a
journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with
his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the
watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master

of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.'

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH *We stand if able and turn to look in the direction of Church, to emphasise our gathering around a precious, shared story:*

We declare our faith in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ:

**Christ died for our sins
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he was buried;
he was raised to life on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures;
afterwards he appeared to his followers,
and to all the apostles,
this we have received and this we believe. Amen.** (cf 1 Corinthians 15:3-7)

Prayers

We pray THE COLLECT for Advent Sunday

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 the life immortal, through him who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

LORD'S PRAYER

We pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

All: Our Father in heaven...

FOR REFLECTION

Nearly two months of slaughter and destruction in Israel and Gaza may well make us want to scream at the sky "Why won't you tear the heavens open and come down to sort this out?"

That's not a bad prayer. It is full of lament, rage, frustration, longing. But Isaiah quite quickly moves on having got that off his chest and looks carefully into the human heart, acknowledging that the mess is the result of humanity's abuse of free will. He does pointedly make room for the possibility that it is a little bit God's fault - "Because you hid yourself, we sinned" - but overall he accepts human it's about human folly and frailty. So Isaiah asks God to come and judge the situation in such a way as to resolve conflict.

Jesus, on the other hand, warns us that God's judgement is coming, but using the image of the sleepy doorkeeper, holds up a mirror so we can see we may not really be ready to receive it. Because of our colonial, imperial, wealthy past, the church is shy of the language of judgement

and perhaps would rather not hear it. We are challenged by our readings to consider what in the world, and in our own hearts really needs to be exposed to divine judgement, and what really needs divine intervention to be resolved. Then we are challenged to think further about whether if we're honest, we really want God to intervene at all.

The contradiction is not God's. It's in our teenage human attitude: "Leave us alone, don't interfere, don't limit our freedom..."

....but then when something goes wrong we shout "why weren't you there for us? Why didn't you stop this? Why don't you sort it out?"

We turn our reflection into PRAYERS:

Open your heart and mind to let crises, situations, places, institutions that may need to be exposed to God's fierce, insightful, judging gaze.

See where outstanding goodness in those difficult situations and places already reveals what needs to be put right.

Pray for those whose generous, courageous behaviour amidst conflict embodies God's judgement and sheds light.

Pray for readiness to receive the unpalatable wisdom we may need to hear if conflicts are to be resolved and human conflict with creation is to be healed.

In the Church we pray for Bishop Michael Volland, consecrated on Thursday, who will come to serve as Bishop of Birmingham early next year.

Among those who are unwell we pray for Adrian Koslowski,

Among those who have died we remember Robin Centre volunteer Greg Mason, Norman Brookes, Dorothy Jones, Eric James, Helen Hunt (from Kings Heath Cricket Club) and Pat Flynn.

HYMN [Lo, he comes with clouds descending](#)

1. Lo, he comes with clouds descending,
once for mortal sinners slain;
thousand thousand saints attending
swell the triumph of his train.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Christ appears on earth to reign.

2. Ev'ry eye shall now behold him
robed in dreadful majesty;
we who set at naught and sold him,
pierced and nailed him to the tree,
deeply grieving, deeply grieving, deeply grieving,
shall the true Messiah see.

3. 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!

4. Yea, amen, let all adore thee,
high on thine eternal throne;
Saviour, take the pow'r and glory,
claim the kingdom for thine own.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Thou shalt reign, and thou alone.

*(words: Charles Wesley, John Cennick & Martin Madan alt;
music: from Charles Wesley's 'Select Hymns with Tunes Annexed' [1765]; descant: Richard Lloyd)*

PRAYER FOR BLESSING

May God the Father, judge all-merciful, make us worthy of a place in his kingdom. **Amen.**

May God the Son, coming among us in power, reveal in our midst the promise of his glory. **Amen.**

May God the Holy Spirit make us steadfast in faith, joyful in hope and constant in love. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among *us* and remain with *us* always. **Amen.**

Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England

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