



PARISH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW WESTHOUGHTON

St Bartholomew

St Thomas

St George

Sunday 29th November 2020 – Advent Sunday

TODAY'S SERVICES HAVE BEEN CANCELLED – Private prayer at St. Bart's 10:30 – 11:30
No services at St. George's or St. Bartholomew's churches today due to lockdown
restrictions in place.
St. Bartholomew's church will be open for private prayer between 10:30 – 11:30am

We pray for:

Those who are ill: Cassie Buono, Brian Cato, Christopher Davies, Revd Malcolm Edwards, Lisa Ginniff, Irene Halliwell, Jenny Harris, Keith Haworth, Mario Heaton, Edith Ibbotson, Joan James, Patricia James, Mike Johnson, Jeffrey Lyon, Eileen Marsh, Norman Sidlow, James Tonge.

Those who have died recently: Frank Mangnall, Allan Brindle, Thomas Ashton, Irene Booth

And on their anniversaries this week we remember: Joan Davies, Trevor Dootson, Alice Latham, Margaret Tattum, Mary Thompson.

This week:

“Happy New Year” – it's Advent Sunday when we start the cycle of the church's year again.

A few changes for Advent. We use the Year B cycle of readings, so our Sunday Gospels come from St. Mark, although as his is the shortest of the Gospels, they get “topped up” from the other three now and again. During Advent, we're trying the daily readings on the pewsheet from the “Easy to Read” version of the Bible to see if it's any better to follow [the Sunday readings will stay with the familiar NRSV]. The daily prayers this month should all be Advent-themed.

We'll also have a Pewsheet Plus Advent Calendar of Hymns with an Advent hymn for each of the days of Advent. There's a cracking set to choose from [it's the best time of year to be an organist] and it's just a pity we're not allowed to be together to sing them. So, this is second-best, but we organists do know how to have fun. Those better at computers than me should be able to find them on YouTube if you want to sing along but they are guaranteed to have different words, different numbers of verses, and the wrong tune in an unsingable key.

Those who have read the November Monthly Newsletter will have seen that this weekend marks the 30th anniversary of the fire at St. Bartholomew's and today is also the organ's 25th birthday from the opening organ recital. I came to that inaugural recital, little knowing that I'd be back almost exactly 12 years later as Director of Music, so it's 25 years to the day that I first set foot in St. Bartholomew's. I'll let you decide if that was a good or bad thing.

In view of the latest lockdown restrictions in force, we are not allowed to open churches for public worship in November.

As the current lockdown is lifted on 2nd December, church services will be back at 9:15am at St. George's and 11:00am at St. Bartholomew's on Sunday 6th December

What is going ahead:

The **Christmas Dinner on Jesus** collection of 500 packets of crackers is ongoing and this is the last weekend for dropping them off at church.

We're also planning the Toy Service for Bolton Lions on Sunday 6th December. You can drop off unwrapped gifts this weekend or next [details at the end of the pewsheet in the notices].

PCC Meeting: is this **Thursday 3rd December at 7:30pm** at St. Bartholomew's church.

What's awaiting a decision:

Pretoria Pit Anniversary 21st December: the Town Council events in Ditchfield Gardens at 7:45am have been cancelled this year. We're looking at how we can mark this in church.

Christmas Services: when it's clearer what's allowed in December, we'll let you know what Christmas services are happening when and where.

Please do send in items of news to list to put on the pewsheet so that we can all keep in touch with what's going on.

As Lockdown 2 starts, these pewsheets and on-line services will continue. Do keep any news, views and feedback coming. Please also check our Team YouTube channel for online services – **there are two this week**, a Service of the Word and an Advent Christingle Service featuring children from across the team:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDx266HLh9ShYeBJnON8ODg>



PARISH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW WESTHOUGHTON

St Bartholomew

St Thomas

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The Collect:

Almighty God, your as kingdom dawns, turn us from the darkness of sin to the light of holiness, that we may be ready to meet you in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ **Amen.**

Old Testament Reading : Isaiah 64. 1 - 9

¹O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence – ²as 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! ³When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. ⁴From 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. ⁵You 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. ⁶We 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. ⁷There 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. ⁸Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. ⁹Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity for ever. Now consider, we are all your people.

New Testament Reading: 1 Corinthians 1. 3 - 9

My brothers and sisters: ³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind – ⁶just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you – ⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading: Mark 13. 24 - end

Jesus said to his disciples: ²⁴In those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will

not give its light, ²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶Then they will see “the Son of Man coming in clouds” with great power and glory. ²⁷Then 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. ²⁸From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. ³²But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It 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. ³⁵Therefore, 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, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.’



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 for ever. **Amen**



PARISH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW WESTHOUGHTON

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Homily – Carol McCabe – Advent Sunday

Happy New Year, for today is the first Sunday of Advent so our church year begins again. Advent is a time of expectation and hope. Advent means arrival or coming and it prompts us to pause and remember why Jesus came at Christmas. Traditions vary but common ways of commemorating Jesus' birth are through calendars, wreaths and candles. The light of Christ coming into the world.

Some years ago, now, Advent began in a very dramatic way for 7 potholers who emerged unharmed after ten days underground in French caves. Trapped by flooding, 40 metres down they managed to stretch out their small amount of provisions and in freezing conditions survived. Search parties drilled through the rock and lowered microphones without detecting anything at first.

Two groups of people, each listening for the other in the darkness, hoping the other was there. Neither knew for certain, but they kept on going, as if life depended on it. Which of course it did. And out of the darkness eventually came the light.

At some time or another during our lives we all cry out to our heavenly father to come and find us, letting us know that He is there, that He is with us in our darkness.

At this time of another national lock down, life does indeed seem dark but we are encouraged today, encouraged by the news of a vaccine and by the words of Paul, as he writes to his friends in Corinth.

He writes to them after Christ's birth, the promised Saviour, the light has come. His letter is full of the confidence which comes from knowing that, although we cannot save ourselves and our weaknesses are as weak as ever, the light that comes from knowing Jesus will keep us strong in all the troubles of today's world. For with Christ we are given hope.

God's nature is to act with grace and mercy, and through that grace and mercy comes the outpouring of love and generosity to each and every-one of us. More than enough to empower us to be the people God wants us to be.

"We walk by faith, not by sight", something else Paul wrote about in his second letter to them. He also quoted from the prophet Isaiah, when he wrote "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him"- these things God has revealed to us through the empowering gift of the Spirit'.

For us the difference between light and dark is intensified during Advent, because in our part of the world, it comes in winter. The days are short, the nights are long and the sun is low in the sky. There are times when we are so aware of the darkness that our hearts ache for the light. But the Christian message is one of hope "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness- on them light has shined. Isaiah again and this time the prophet speaks of the end of a time of war and the beginning of peace, the coming of the prince of peace. This is at the heart of the Advent hope.

Usually, at this time of year, we do our best to push back the darkness of the winter by creating spectacular shows of light in shops. Street decorations. Community Christmas Trees all a glow. I don't know what will actually happen this year as we slowly come out of lockdown, but I think our homes and even gardens will twinkle. But this new church year is no doubt going to be different.

The prophesy was not fulfilled in Isaiah's time, but the coming of Jesus inspired the early Christians to believe it was fulfilled in him. However, we are still waiting for the fullness of His kingdom, which can only come when we all turn from the darkness and walk in the light which Christ brought into the world - the light of love.



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In today's gospel Jesus is speaking to us of real and serious things. Jesus is always straight with us and He treats us with respect and so He warns us and prepares us, to listen to what He is saying.

He speaks of turmoil, of self-appointed leaders who may lead us astray. He warns us not to be taken in. To remember that even Jesus is not in possession of the exact times and dates of the second coming. But is concerned to pass on to us, with considerable urgency, the need to be alert and watchful, so whatever time the end comes we will be ready and prepared.

Advent is such a great time, it gives us space, it gives us time to pause. To recognise the true light that shines in our lives through our relationship with the living God and to prepare ourselves for when He comes again. So once again may I wish you a Happy New Year.

Let us pray:

Lord, we watch, we wait, we look, we long for you.
Dispel the clouds and darkness and awaken us to your glory,
That we may walk in your light.
Amen.

Intercessions:

O Lord, our Lord

How majestic is your name in all the earth

You have set your glory above the heavens

And from the lips of children ordained praise

O Lord, our Lord

How majestic is your name in all the earth

Creative God, breath of all life

Through whom all things

are created and sustained;

all sons and daughters

flocks and herds,

all birds of the air

and fish of the sea

You walked this earth

as child and Creator

You touched the soil

quenched your thirst

embraced this world

brought life and light

love and laughter

into dark and death-filled lives

Creative God, breath of all life

Through whom all things

are created and sustained

We bring to you our sacrifice

of a contrite and willing heart

(Imagine throwing a pebble into the centre of a pond, and the circles of ripples that move out from the centre.)

We pray firstly for those closest to us, our immediate family and closest friends - for their health, needs, joys and fears.

God of creation, God of Salvation

Hear the prayers of our hearts

We pray for our extended family and friends who we might not see each week - for their love and concern, for their wellbeing.

God of creation, God of Salvation

Hear the prayers of our hearts

As the ripples reach out toward the land we pray for those who we only have contact with annually or less - for a blessing this Advent-time

God of creation, God of Salvation

Hear the prayers of our hearts



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And as the ripples reach their furthest point we pray for this world and its people - for the needs of this week and the future.

God of creation, God of Salvation
Who speaks to us through thunder and whisper
Who loves us as if there were but one of us to love

Hear the prayers of our hearts

Lord, thou hast given us thy Word for a light to shine upon our path;
grant us so to meditate on that Word, and to follow its teaching,
that we may find in it the light that shines more and more until the perfect day;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Jerome, c 342 - 420)

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

2 Ev'ry eye shall now behold him,
robed in dreadful majesty;
those who set at naught and sold him,
pierced, and nailed him to the tree,
deeply wailing, deeply wailing, deeply wailing,
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.
O come quickly, O come quickly, O come
quickly;
Thou shalt reign and thou alone.

For details about this hymn, see the December Monthly Newsletter.

Reflection



Our Advent 1 reflection from Bishop Mark Davies is now available to view on [Youtube](#).



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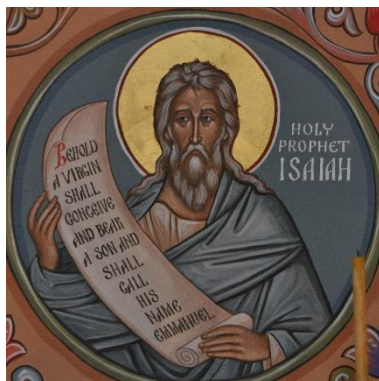
St Bartholomew

St Thomas

St George

Background: Isaiah part I

Isaiah, whose name translates as “God is Salvation” lived in Jerusalem in about 740BC. His book is the second largest of the major prophets in the Old Testament with 66 chapters although as it covers a long timespan, it is argued that there may be three different authors [chapters 1 – 39 before the exile, chapters 40 – 55 during the exile and chapters 56 – 66 after the exile].



Isaiah seems to have been from a priestly family; he had access to the King and knew the ruling classes of his society although that did not stop him condemning their corruption. He is well educated, writes in a vivid style and knows with the prophetic tradition known to his slightly older contemporary, Amos [we’ve covered him in summer]. Four eminent Hebrew prophets addressed the people of Israel and Judah in the latter half of the 8th century BC: Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah. Strangely, no evidence suggests that any of these knew in person any of the others. Seemingly, they were apart and alone, yet Isaiah and Amos follow essentially the same lines of thought and differ significantly only in that Amos had addressed the northern kingdom (Israel) while Isaiah would emphatically include Judah and Jerusalem in the Southern Kingdom. The basic similarities in style and substance strongly suggest

influence of the one on the other.



His call to prophesy comes in chapter 6 although, he’s already prophesying in chapter 1.

Isaiah shared with Amos and with the people the long-standing tradition that a special bond united Israel and its God. Since the days of Abraham and Moses there had been an agreement, a solemn “Covenant” between them: Israel was to be God’s people and he their God. He had chosen them and cared for them. Isaiah knew and honoured this ancient tradition, but, more significantly, he also shared the conviction of Amos that this arrangement was wholly conditional on the people’s conduct. Behaviour such as Amos saw about him in Samaria and Isaiah saw about him in Jerusalem could cancel that Covenant. In the vineyard parable [chapter 5] God is

compared to the careful and industrious cultivator of a vineyard who, angry at the “wild grapes” of injustice and violence that is his crop, threatens to take away his care and protection, the wild grapes being his people who disobey him and worship other gods.

As Isaiah knew him, Israel’s God did not fit into the picture of injustice and misery rampant in Israel at that time. For Isaiah, God was, in fact, more concerned about people than about how his subjects performed for him their oft-rehearsed rituals. Isaiah suggest that God finds the motions of worship repugnant [ch 29. 11 / ch 1. 10 – 15] He was overawed by the holiness of God and thought that the offerings were unseemly or, at the least, irrelevant. Although, like Amos, Isaiah gives it to them straight [there’s no beating about the bush], and he ranked moral conduct above ritual conformity.

Isaiah, however, also contains the comforting view that God shapes history, traditionally entering the human scene to rescue his people from national peril. But, according to Isaiah, God could also intervene quite correctly to chastise his people when they went the wrong way, and he could employ a human agent (e.g., a conquering enemy) to that end.

More readily than Amos, perhaps because a decade had passed, Isaiah could identify the enemy force as Assyria. Isaiah’s call to prophecy roughly coincides with the beginning—after a period of relative inactivity—of the westward expansion of the Assyrian empire under the victorious command of Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BCE).

Current events did not escape the prophet’s attention. Isaiah appears to have read the omens, as Amos had done; he could clearly see God using Assyria against Israel: “Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger, the staff of my fury! Against a godless nation I send him...” (10:5–6).

So let’s see what the first part of Isaiah’s prophesy has to say.



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Monday 30th November

Today the church remembers St. Andrew the Apostle

So, here's St. Andrew's top ten best bits:

1. St. Andrew, also known as Andrew the Apostle, was a Christian Apostle and the older brother to St. Peter.
2. According to the New Testament, Andrew was born in the village of Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee during the early first century. Much like his younger brother, Simon Peter, Andrew was also a fisherman.
3. Andrew's very name means strong and he was known for having good social skills in bringing others to Jesus.
4. In the Gospel of Matthew, it is said Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee and saw Andrew and Simon Peter fishing. It is then he asked the two to become disciples and "fishers of men." In the Gospel of Luke, Andrew is not initially named. It describes Jesus using a boat, believed to be solely Simon's, to preach to the multitudes and catch a large amount of fish on a night that originally was dry. Later, in Luke 5:7, it mentions Simon was not the only fisherman on the boat, but it is not until Luke 6:14 that there is talk of Andrew being Simon Peter's brother.
5. The Gospel of John tells a separate story, stating Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist. When Jesus walked by one day, John the Baptist stated, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" It is then that Andrew and another made the decision to follow Jesus, the first apostle named in that Gospel.
6. Little else is said about Andrew in the Gospels, but it is believed Andrew was one of the closer disciples to Jesus. It was he who told Jesus about the boy with the loaves and fishes, according to John 6:8. When Philip wanted to speak to Jesus about Greeks seeking him, he spoke to Andrew first. Andrew was also present at the last supper.
7. In Christian tradition, Andrew went on to preach the Good News around the shores of the Black Sea and throughout what is now Greece and Turkey.
8. Andrew was martyred by crucifixion in Patras [Greece] around 60/70AD. He was bound, rather than nailed, to an X-shaped cross, known as a "saltire" or "St. Andrew's Cross." It is believed Andrew requested to be crucified this way, because he deemed himself "unworthy to be crucified on the same type of cross as Jesus."
9. St. Andrew is venerated in Georgia as the first preacher of Christianity in that territory and in Cyprus for having struck the rocks creating a gush of healing waters upon landing on the shore. His saltire cross is featured on the flag of Scotland and is represented in much of his iconography. He is commonly portrayed as an old man with long white hair and a beard, often holding the Gospel book or a scroll.
10. St. Andrew is the patron saint to several countries and cities including: Scotland, Romania, Russia, Ukraine and Patras.



*Almighty God,
who gave such grace to your apostle Saint Andrew
that he readily obeyed the call of your Son Jesus
Christ and brought his brother with him:
call us by your holy word,*

*and give us grace to follow you without delay
and to tell the good news of your kingdom;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*



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Isaiah 52 . 7 – 10

⁷How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces
peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'
⁸Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,
together they sing for joy;
for in plain sight they see
the return of the LORD to Zion.
⁹Break forth together into singing,
you ruins of Jerusalem;
for the LORD has comforted his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.
¹⁰The LORD has bared his holy arm
before the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.

Romans 10. 12 – 18

¹²There is no distinction between Jew and Greek;
the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all
who call on him. ¹³For, 'Everyone who calls on the
name of the Lord shall be saved.'

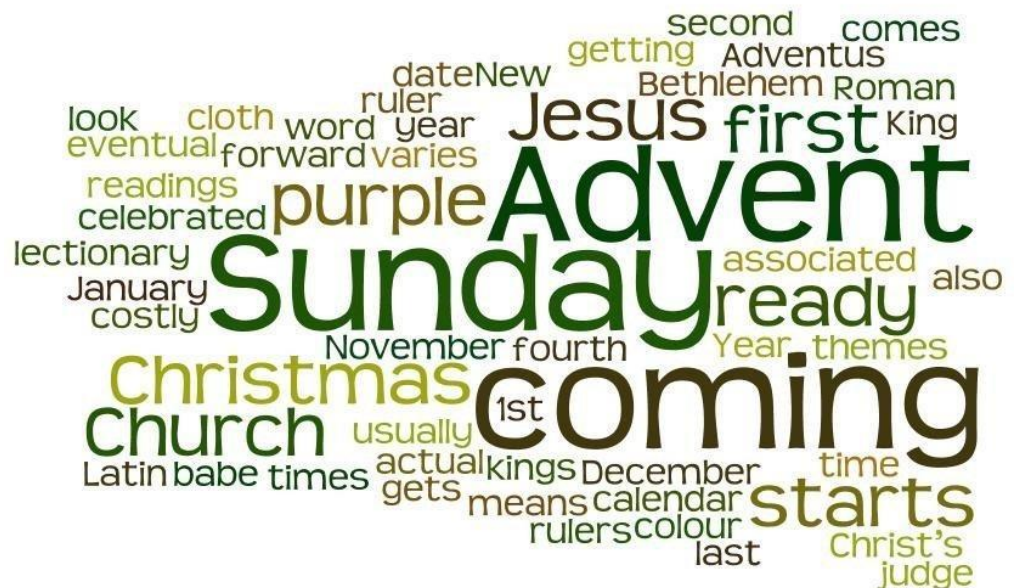
*In this Advent of expectation
draw us together in unity,
that our praise and worship
might echo in these walls
and also through our lives.
In this Advent of expectation
draw us together in mission,
that the hope within
might be the song we sing,
and the melody of our lives.
In this Advent of expectation
draw us together in service,
that the path we follow
might lead us from a stable
to a glimpse of eternity.*

¹⁴But how are they to call on one in whom they
have not believed? And how are they to believe in
one of whom they have never heard? And how
are they to hear without someone to proclaim
him? ¹⁵And how are they to proclaim him unless
they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are
the feet of those who bring good news!' ¹⁶But not
all have obeyed the good news; for Isaiah says,
'Lord, who has believed our message?' ¹⁷So faith
comes from what is heard, and what is heard
comes through the word of Christ. ¹⁸But I ask,
have they not heard? Indeed they have; for

'Their voice has gone out to all the earth,
and their words to the ends of the world.'

Matthew 4. 18 – 22

¹⁸As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw
two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and
Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake
– for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to
them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for
people.' ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and
followed him. ²¹As he went from there, he saw
two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and
his brother John, in the boat with their father
Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called
them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their
father, and followed him.





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1 The Lord will come and not be slow,
his footsteps cannot err;
before him righteousness shall go,
his royal harbinger.

2 Truth from the earth, like to a flow'r,
shall bud and blossom then,
and justice, from her heav'nly bow'r,
look down on mortal men.

3 Rise, God, and judge the earth in might,
this wicked earth redress;
for thou art he who shall by right
the nations all possess.

4. The nations all whom thou hast made
Shall come and all shall frame
To bow them low before thee, Lord
and glorify thy name.

5 For great thou art, and wonders great
by thy strong hand are done:
Thou, in thine everlasting seat,
remainest God alone.

Words: John Milton [1608-74] from psalms 85 & 86 probably written when he was 15 years old; best known for writing "Paradise Lost" in 1667.

Tune: St Stephen [Newington] by William Jones [1726-1800] vicar of Nayland in Suffolk

Tuesday 1st December

Isaiah 11. 1 - 9

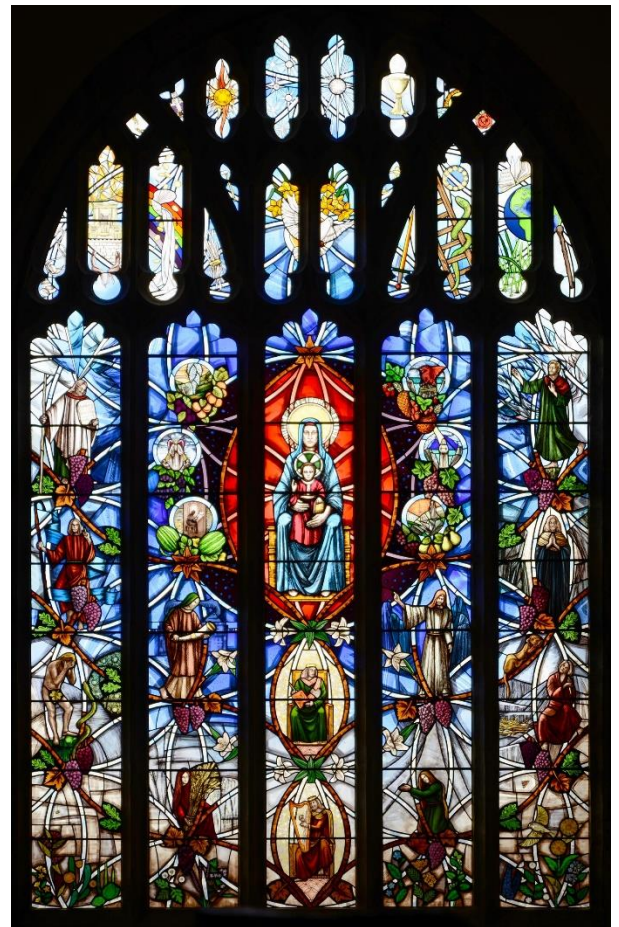
The King of Peace Is Coming

11 A small tree will begin to grow from the stump of Jesse. That branch will grow from Jesse's roots. **2** The LORD's Spirit will always be with that new king to give him wisdom, understanding, guidance, and power. The Spirit will help him know and respect the LORD. **3** He will find joy in obeying the LORD.

This king will not judge people by the way things look. He will not judge by listening to rumours. **4-5** He will judge the poor fairly and honestly. He will be fair when he decides what to do for the poor of the land. If he decides people should be beaten, he will give the command, and they will be beaten. If he decides people must die, he will give the command, and those evil people will be killed. Goodness and fairness will be like a belt he wears around his waist.

6 Then wolves will live at peace with lambs, and leopards will lie down in peace with young goats. Calves, lions, and bulls will all live together in peace. A little child will lead them. **7** Bears and cattle will eat together in peace, and all their young will lie down together and will not hurt each other. Lions will eat hay like cattle. **8** Even snakes will not hurt people. Babies will be able to play near a cobra's hole and put their hands into the nest of a poisonous snake.

9 People will stop hurting each other. People on my holy mountain will not want to destroy things because they will know the LORD. The world will be full of knowledge about him, like the sea is full of water.





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¹⁰ At that time there will be someone special from Jesse's family. He will be like a flag that all the nations gather around. The nations will come to him and ask him what they should do. And the place where he is will be filled with glory.

One of Jesse's sons was David, who followed Saul as king of Israel. David overcame all of Israel's enemies, established national worship and prepared for the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem (1 Chronicles chapters 11 to 29). 'Son of David' was a title of the Messiah that the people in Judah and Israel were expecting. The "Jesse Tree" is a common theme in stained glass windows showing the descendants from King David to Jesus.

David did many great things for his people. But his own life was not perfect (2 Samuel chapters 11 to 12). God's Spirit will provide the king that is coming with special gifts and qualities which other national leaders can only pretend to possess such qualities.

The Messiah's arrival will bring about perfect harmony in all life. This includes the animals, especially those animals that are natural enemies. No person or animal will be afraid of another.

*The Advent story
of hope and mystery,
anticipation,
preparation,
a kingdom
of this world and the next,
and a king
appearing when we least expect.
Heaven touching earth,
the footsteps of the divine*

*walking dusty roads
as once they did in Eden,
and a people,
searching for a Saviour,
and walking past
the stable.
Open eyes and hearts,
that this might be
an Advent of hope to the world.*

1. Hills of the North, rejoice;
River and mountain spring,
Hark to the advent voice;
Valley and lowland, sing;
Though absent long, your Lord is nigh;
He judgment brings and victory.

2. Isles of the southern seas,
Deep in your coral caves
Pent be each warring breeze,
Lulled be your restless waves:
He comes to reign with boundless sway,
And makes your wastes His great highway.

3. Lands of the East, awake,
Soon shall your sons be free;
The sleep of ages break,
And rise to liberty.
On your far hills, long cold and grey,
Has dawned the everlasting day.

4. Shores of the utmost West,
Ye that have waited long,
Unvisited, unblest,
Break forth to swelling song;
High raise the note, that Jesus died,
Yet lives and reigns, the Crucified.

5. Shout, while ye journey home;
Songs be in every mouth;
Lo, from the North we come,
From East, and West, and South.
City of God, the bond are free,
We come to live and reign in thee!

Words: *Charles Edward Oakley [1832-65], rector of St. Paul's, Covent Garden and believed to be the only hymn he wrote.*

Tune: *Little Cornard by Martin Shaw [1875-1958] – do read a biography, it's an incredible life*



PARISH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW WESTHOUGHTON

St Bartholomew St Thomas St George

Wednesday 2nd December

Isaiah 25. 6 - 10

God's Banquet for His Servants

⁶The LORD All-Powerful will give a feast for all the people on this mountain. At the feast, there will be the best foods and wines. The meat will be good and tender, the wine pure and clear.

⁷But now there is a veil covering all nations and people. This veil is called "death." ⁸But death will be destroyed forever. And the Lord GOD will wipe away every tear from every face. In the past, all of his people were sad, but God will take away that sadness from the earth. All of this will happen because the LORD said it would.

⁹At that time people will say,
"Here is our God!

He is the one we have been waiting for.

He has come to save us.

We have been waiting for our LORD.

So we will rejoice and be happy when he saves us."

¹⁰The LORD's power is on this mountain,
and Moab will be defeated.



Better theologians than I think that we should read Isaiah chapters 24 to 27 together as they contain a single idea of how the country will fall as well as hymns of praise to God.

The word "country" appears many times in these chapters, but it's not always clear to what Isaiah is referring so it all gets very confusing.

a) It was 'the country' that God gave to Abraham. When Isaiah wrote his book, 'the country' had belonged to various different nations, including Judah, Israel, Philistia, Egypt, Edom, Moab and others. Between 750 and 550 B.C., God used Assyria and Babylon to destroy 'the country'. Isaiah 24:1-13 describes the future state of 'the country' after Assyria and Babylon have destroyed it and in verses 14-23, the people that remain praise God in song.

b) 'the country' also meant places like Assyria and Babylon. Babylon destroyed 'the country' called Assyria and then God used other armies to destroy 'the country' called Babylon. The people that remain may be the people in Assyria and Babylon. They may also be foreign people that lived in those places.

c) it may be a description of what will happen to the world as also described in the book of Revelation right at the end of the bible.

So, for the Jews, 'the country' meant their country that consisted of Judah and Israel where the Jews lived. But it may also mean the countries called Assyria and Babylon. For us, it may mean the whole Earth. The one important take home message that Isaiah tells us is this - when 'the country' ends, there will still be people to praise God.

The mountain [v.6] is probably Zion, which is in Jerusalem and there's going to be the best party with the finest food and wines. In verses 7-8 Isaiah talks about the veil of death that will be destroyed for ever by Jesus. The Hebrew word for 'destroy' really means 'swallow'. So in 1 Corinthians 15:54, when Paul says, 'Victory will swallow death!' Paul means God's victory when he defeats his last enemy, death.

John, too, uses Isaiah's words. In Revelation 7:17, John writes, 'God will wipe away all tears from their eyes.' The same Hebrew word means 'faces' here and it means 'cover' in verse 7. The 'cover' refers to death, so if there is no cover, there will be no tears because there will be no more death!

We do not know why Isaiah mentions Moab here. Moab was a country that was east from Judah and sometimes Moab's people were enemies of Judah's people. Here, Moab's people were God's enemies, fighting against God who will later punish them.



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God of hope, who brought love into this world,
be the love that dwells between us.
God of hope, who brought peace into this world,
be the peace that dwells between us.
God of hope, who brought joy into this world,
be the joy that dwells between us.
God of hope, the rock we stand upon,
be the centre, the focus of our lives
always, and particularly this Advent time.



1. Come, thou long expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.

2. Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.

3. Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.

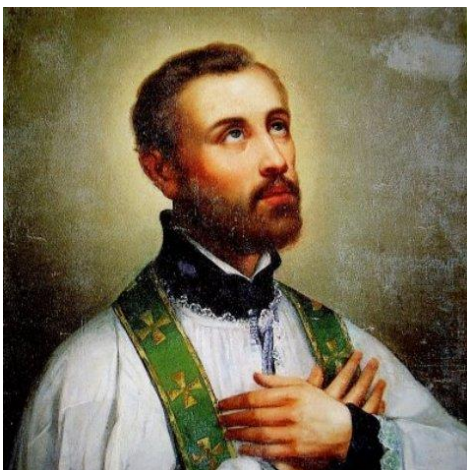
4. By thine own eternal spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit,
raise us to thy glorious throne.

Words: Charles Wesley [1707-88] from his 1744 collection of "Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord" so really meant as a Christmas hymn

Tune: Cross of Jesus by Sir John Stainer [1840-1901] originally written for his Passiontide cantata "The Crucifixion" where it's set to the words "Cross of Jesus, Cross of Sorrow."

Thursday 3rd December

TODAY the church remembers St Francis Xavier, missionary 1552



St. Francis Xavier was a Navarrese-Basque Roman Catholic missionary born on April 7, 1506. He was the youngest in his family and resided in a castle which still partially stands today and is in the possession of the Jesuit order.

As the young Francis grew, he was surrounded by war. When the war stopped and Francis came of age, he was sent to study at the University of Paris. While there he roomed with his friend, Peter Favre. They were heavily influenced by Ignatius of Loyola [see 17th October], who encouraged Francis to become a priest.

On August 15, 1534, Francis Xavier along with Peter Favre, and several other friends, made vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and planned to travel to the Holy Land until war stopped them.

Francis Xavier started his study of theology that same year and was ordained on June 24, 1537.

Pope Paul III approved the formation of their order in 1540, which became The Society of Jesus or Jesuits.

At this time, Portugal was colonizing India but the Portuguese settlers were losing their faith and Christian values. To restore these values, the King of Portugal asked the Pope to send missionaries to



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the region. Pope Paul III asked the new order to take the mission and Ignatius decided to send Francis. He left for India in 1541, on his thirty-fifth birthday. He arrived in the region and colony of Goa, India on May 6, 1542. Although Goa had churches and even a bishop in the Portuguese colony, there were few people to preach and minister to the Portuguese, especially outside the walls of the city. Xavier ministered first to the sick and the children and spent three years among them, building 40 churches.

Xavier eventually decided to travel to Malacca and the Maluku Islands spending two years in the region. While in Malacca, a Japanese man named Anjiro caught up with him. Anjiro was accused of murder in Japan but had managed to flee. Learning about Xavier, he decided to find Xavier and tell him about Japan, which he did. Xavier converted Anjiro to Christianity, making him the first Japanese convert to Christianity.

Xavier became very interested in visiting Japan. In 1549, he finally departed for the country, arriving in July of that year.

He departed India for the last time in April, 1552 and stopped in Malacca to obtain official documents attesting to his status as a representative of the Portuguese king but encountered many problems. His ship reached China in August, stopping at an island off the Chinese coast. From there, Xavier was on his own. He managed to find a man to agree to take him to China for a large fee, but while he was waiting for his boat to arrive became ill with a fever and died on December 3, 1552.

He was canonised by Gregory XV on March 12, 1622 at the same ceremony as Ignatius of Loyola.

Isaiah 26. 1 - 6

A Song of Praise to God

26 At that time people will sing this song in Judah:

We have a strong city with strong walls and defences.

But God gives us our salvation.

² Open the gates for the good people to enter.

They are the God's faithful followers.

³ God, you give true peace

to people who depend on you,

to those who trust in you.

⁴ So trust the LORD always,

because in the LORD YAH you have a place of safety forever.

⁵ But he will destroy the proud city

and punish those who live there.

He will throw that high city down to the ground.

It will fall into the dust.

⁶ Then poor and humble people will walk on those ruins.

We continue here from the end of chapter 25, where God has used an enemy [Isaiah doesn't say who] to defeat the people in Moab. Moab's defeat is also a description of how God will defeat all his enemies. The strong city is Jerusalem or the New Jerusalem ([Revelation 21:2](#)). In Hebrew, the last sentence of this verse includes the word 'jeshuah' meaning 'rescue' - when something or someone makes people safe. The people are returning to a place of safety from where their enemies have held them.

In [verse 4](#), the Hebrew word for peace (shalom) appears twice together (shalom shalom). When a word appears twice together in Hebrew, that means 'very' or 'great'. It shows us that the word is important. Some other Hebrew words appear twice here - 'always' and 'LORD' to emphasise that God will always be their place of safety.

[Verse 5](#) refers back to [Isaiah 25:12](#) where he mentions the cities in Moab. Those cities were on hills. He also says what God will do to those cities in both verses. 'He makes it low' and 'he makes it level' are the same word in the Hebrew. It is another



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example of a word that appears twice together to make it important. The people are humble because God will destroy their city, scattering the proud but exalting the humble.

*Advent God,
we journey with you,
to Bethlehem's stable
and a new-born King,
ears attuned
to the song of angels,
eyes alert
for Bethlehem's star.
Forgive us*

*if on our journey
if we are distracted
by the tempting offers
of this world.
Keep our hearts aflame
with the hope
of Christmas,
and the promise
of a Saviour. Amen*

I. Make way, make way
For Christ the King
In splendour arrives
Flung wide the gates and welcome Him
Into your lives

*Make way! (Make way!)
Make way! (Make way!)
For the King of kings
(For the King of kings)
Make way! (Make way!)
Make way! (Make way!)
And let His kingdom in*

2. He comes the broken hearts to heal
The prisoners to free
The deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance
The blind shall see

3. And those who mourn with heavy hearts
Who weep and sigh
With laughter, joy and royal crown
He'll beautify

4. We call you now to worship Him
As Lord of all
To have no gods before Him
Their thrones must fall!

Words & Music: [Graham Kendrick](#)

Friday 4th December

Isaiah 29. 17 - end

A Better Time Is Coming

¹⁷This is the truth: After a very short time, Lebanon will become rich farmland, and the farmland will be like thick forests. ¹⁸The deaf will hear the words in the book. The blind will see through the darkness and fog. ¹⁹The LORD will make poor people happy. The poorest people will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

²⁰This will happen when the people who are mean and cruel have come to an end. It will happen when those who enjoy doing bad things are gone. ²¹(They lie about good people. They try to trap people in court. They try to destroy innocent people.)

²²So the LORD, who made Abraham free, speaks to Jacob's family. He says, "Now the people of Jacob will not be embarrassed and ashamed.

²³Yes, when they see all their children,
the children I myself have made for them,
they will honour my name as holy.

They will respect the God of Israel.

²⁴Many of these people did not understand, so they did what was wrong.
They complained, but now they will learn their lesson."



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Well, as the hymn puts it, "We're turning the world upside-down." On the mountains in Lebanon, forests grow, but God will turn them into fruit trees. Carmel has orchards of fruit trees that God will turn into forests. Carmel is a hill on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, south from Lebanon. The Hebrew word 'carmel' means 'garden of fruit trees' but we are not sure whether there were any fruit trees on the hill itself.

Verse 18 looks at personal changes rather than changes to the country. The scroll mentioned in verse 11 is now open and people can read it, deaf people will hear it and blind people will be able to see! Paul refers to similar changes in [Ephesians 5:8](#) and [1 Thessalonians 5:4-5](#). When God turns things round, then people change!

The humble and poor people here are those to whom the leaders have been cruel [v.19] making them work and taking nearly all they earn. But God will change all that! Another translation of this verse is, 'And the LORD will make the underdogs happy again!'

Verse 20 gives the cause of all the changes in verses 17-19. The LORD will destroy three groups of people: those who are cruel using their power to help themselves; those who laugh at God and do not believe in a moral law; and those that have evil plans making trouble for others.

At the time when Isaiah was alive, the gate of the city was a special place like 'a court of law' where the judge made his decisions. The trap made the judge decide wrongly so an innocent person did not get a fair decision.

Verse 22 Isaiah refers to Abraham. Usually, the prophets in the Bible do not do that. But Isaiah does it four times [see [Isaiah 41:8](#); [Isaiah 51:2](#) and [Isaiah 63:16](#)]. The Hebrew word for 'made free' really means 'redeemed' (rescued). But we aren't sure when God redeemed Abraham. It refers to a time when God rescued Abraham from trouble but may be a story not in the Bible.

Verse 23 'Children' probably means 'grandchildren and their children, for many years'. Some Bible students translate it like this. 'Their children see what God has done. Then they will keep my name holy.' 'My name' means 'God himself'. Here we read the name 'Holy [God] of Jacob'. This is the only place where that name appears in the Bible. So God will change things completely, those people will become the opposite of what they were before ([verses 18-20](#)) and everything will become clear.

God of hope

be with us in our Advent journey
to the stable and beyond,
be with us in our meeting
and in our travelling together,

be with us in our worship
and our praying together,
be with us in our Advent journey
to the stable and beyond,
our God of hope.

1 Thou art coming, O my Saviour,
thou art coming, O my King,
in thy beauty all resplendent,
in thy glory all transcendent;
well may we rejoice and sing:
coming! in the op'ning east
herald brightness slowly swells:
coming! O my glorious Priest,
hear we not thy golden bells?

2 Thou art coming, thou art coming:
we shall meet thee on thy way,
we shall see thee, we shall know thee,
we shall bless thee, we shall show thee
all our hearts could never say:
what an anthem that will be,
ringing out our love to thee,
pouring out our rapture sweet
at thine own all-glorious feet.

3 O the joy to see thee reigning,
thee, my own beloved Lord!
Ev'ry tongue thy name confessing,
worship, honour, glory, blessing
brought to thee with glad accord;
thee, my Master and my Friend,
vindicated and enthroned;
unto earth's remotest end
glorified, adored, and owned.





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Words: *Frances Ridley Havergal [1836-79] – verses with 9 lines – it's just madness. Better known for her hymn "Take my life, and let it be." The last line of v.1 became the title of the "Golden Bells" hymnal*
Tune: *Beverley by William Henry Monk [1823-89] – an organist best known for his tune "Eventide" set to "Abide with me."*

Saturday 5th December

Isaiah 30. 19 – 21 & 23 - 26

¹⁹ You people who live in Jerusalem on Mount Zion will not continue crying. The Lord will hear your crying, and he will comfort you. When he hears you, he will help you.

²⁰ The Lord might give you sorrow and pain like the bread and water you eat every day. But God is your teacher, and he will not continue to hide from you. You will see your teacher with your own eyes. ²¹ If you wander from the right path, either to the right or to the left, you will hear a voice behind you saying, "You should go this way. Here is the right way."

²³ At that time the Lord will send you rain. You will plant seeds, and the ground will grow food for you. You will have a very large harvest. You will have plenty of food in the fields for your animals. There will be large fields for your sheep. ²⁴ Your cattle and donkeys will have all the food they need. There will be much food. You will have to use shovels and pitchforks to spread all the food for your animals to eat. ²⁵ Every mountain and hill will have streams filled with water. These things will happen after many people are killed and the enemy's towers are pulled down.

²⁶ At that time the light from the moon will be as bright as the sun, and the light from the sun will be seven times brighter than it is now. One day of sunlight will be like a whole week's worth. This will happen when the LORD bandages his broken people and heals the hurts from their beatings.

This passage starts a new section about God's love for his people. These verses are probably about the LORD's return to the Earth and are a promise for the future!

We need bread and water every day. In the Old Testament times, the Jewish people followed the law and deviating from it meant that God would punish theologians think that the word teacher should be plural, 'teachers' so it would not be a name for God, but it would be a name for his prophets. Others think that the Hebrew word actually means 'early rain' as in something or someone that is coming soon.

Verse 23 links with the bread and water in v. 20. There, the Hebrew word for 'bread' is the same as the word for 'food' here. The people's punishment is over as is the curse that God declared in [Genesis 3:17-19](#). Paul also wrote about the curse in [Romans 8:21-22](#). Animals can wander in wide fields and be safe (verse 23) with the best food. The streams are permanent, not just appearing when it rains. We read here about the enemy's towers being pulled down but again it's not clear to what that refers. Perhaps an enemy destroyed the tall buildings, and in that way they killed many people. Those words may refer to [Isaiah 2:12-17](#) and [Isaiah 25:1-5](#).

There are parallels between verses 25 and 26 which tell us what is going to happen and when. Here, we get the idea that maybe the LORD will destroy the armies and tall buildings. That makes it clearer that perhaps Isaiah was referring to [Isaiah 2:12-17](#) and [Isaiah 25:1-5](#) in which case, it will happen after the LORD returns to the Earth so 'you will see him' (verse 20). [Revelation 19:11-18](#) also describes a great battle when Jesus returns to the Earth and that is when Jesus says, 'People will see me' ([Mark 13:26](#)).



PARISH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW WESTHOUGHTON

St Bartholomew

St Thomas

St George

Maranatha,

Come, Lord Jesus, come soon.

*The glory of God shall be revealed
and all flesh shall see it together*

Maranatha,

Come, Lord Jesus, come soon!

*Sing aloud, waste places of Jerusalem!
Sing to the God who gives courage and strength.*

Maranatha,

Come, Lord Jesus, come soon!

You who are unsure of what you believe,

1 Hark! A thrilling voice is sounding!
"Christ is near," we hear it say.
"Cast away the works of darkness,
all you children of the day!"

2 Startled at the solemn warning,
from the darkness we arise;
Christ, our sun, all ill dispelling,
shines upon the morning skies.

5 Honour, glory, might and merit
to the Father and the Son,
with the everlasting Spirit
while eternal ages run.

or whether you believe at all: listen!

*You who are weighed down by thoughts of failure,
or feelings of grief: listen!*

*You whose hearts are heavy,
whose problems seem insurmountable: listen!*

*Soon God's salvation will come;
God's deliverance will be revealed.*

*For a woman shall conceive and bear a son
and shall call his name Emmanuel: God with us*

Maranatha

Come, Lord Jesus, come soon!

3 See, the Lamb so long expected
comes with pardon down from heaven.
Let us haste, with tears of sorrow,
one and all, to be forgiven;

4 so when next he comes in glory
and the world is wrapped in fear,
he will shield us with his mercy
and with words of love draw near.

Words: *Edward Caswell [1814-78] based on the Latin Vox clama [5th or 6th century].*

Tune: *Merton by William Henry Monk [1823-89] – see yesterday*





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St Bartholomew

St Thomas

St George

Christmas Dinner on Jesus:

This year we're collecting **savoury crackers** [the eating with cheese sort, not the pulling to get a paper hat and joke crackers]. Between our team and schools we're aiming to collect 500 packets.

We'll be collecting on Sunday 29th November [10:30 – 11:30am] and Saturday 28th November between 9:30 – 11:00am at St. Bartholomew's church but if you want to buy them in advance, please make sure that the sell-by / eat by date is after Christmas.

With lockdowns, redundancies and all that is going on at the moment, the need this year is greater than ever.

Many thanks in advance for your generosity.



Toy Service:

Advance Notice that we're planning this for **Sunday 6th December at St. Bartholomew's** with the toys distributed by Bolton Lions. In view of the lockdown, we'll be collecting this weekend and next on **Saturdays between 9:30 – 11:00am and Sundays from 10:30 – 11:30am.**

Christingle 2020

Although we're not able to run a Christingle Service as usual this year, we have set up a fundraising page so that you can donate to the Children's Society if you wish.

The fundraising page has an automatic donate feature included where donations will go directly to Westhoughton Parish Christingle this year, can be Gift Aid marked at the same time.

This is the link: <https://thyg.uk/CUS042122>



Church of England – Christmas Campaign “Comfort and Joy”

Comfort
and Joy





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Christmas will be very different this year. Not only will attendance at church services be restricted in order to be Covid secure, but it is uncertain whether other national or local restrictions will also be in place. It is unlikely there will be any congregational singing of the carols we love so much. In addition, as we know well, Christmas comes at the end of an exhausting year which has been exceptionally tough for so many of us.

And yet, never has Christmas been more important. More than ever, we need to hear the message of the angels, and to be reassured that God's light continues to shine in the midst of darkness. It is an encouragement that faithful Christians will wish to hear once more, and also a message of hope we can give as a gift to our wider communities.

COMFORT AND JOY RESOURCES

Resources from the Church of England include a printed booklet containing daily reflections for use during Advent. Also a range of online services and events and an Advent activity calendar. Visit the [Church of England website](http://www.churchofengland.org.uk) for all the details.

Next Sunday: The Second Sunday of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 40. 1-11 / 2 Peter 3. 8-15a / Mark 1. 1-8

9:15am Service at St. George's
11:00am Service at St Bartholomew's – Toy Service

Do contact us if we can offer any help or support at this time.

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Team Vicar: Revd Angela Wynne 01204 468150 – revawynne@gmail.com

FACEBOOK – locate us by searching Westhoughton parish Follow us on twitter @Wparishchurch
@Westhoughtontowerbellringers

Material for the news sheet should be sent to Joan Warner by Wednesday morning 01942 818821 joan.warner35@outlook.com

To receive these pewsheets, newsletters or special events leaflets electronically, please e-mail
westhoughtonparish@outlook.com