

# Teddington Circuit Worship at Home Sheet

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2020

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

## Opening Prayer

Loving, faithful God,  
As your people of old waited and watched for your coming in Jesus,  
So we wait and watch for your coming today.  
As we come before you now, waiting and watching,  
Fill us with your light and love.  
*(If you have an Advent wreath at home, you may wish to light one candle)*

## Hymn: STF 177

### Lo, he comes with clouds descending

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBw0JMdh57k>

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

Every eye shall now behold him  
robed in glorious majesty;  
we who set at nought and sold him,  
pierced and nailed him to the tree,  
deeply wailing,  
shall the true Messiah see.

Those dear tokens of his passion  
still his dazzling body bears;  
cause of endless exultation  
to his ransomed worshippers:  
with what rapture  
gaze we on those glorious scars.

Sing, amen, let all adore thee,  
high on thine eternal throne;  
Saviour, take the power and glory,  
claim the kingdom for thine own:  
come, Lord Jesus!  
Everlasting God, come down!

*Charles Wesley (1707-1788)*

Let us pray together

Timeless God  
Stretching across eternity  
In every season of every year, in every second of every day  
We gather from all corners of our world, from all corners of our circuit

To bring you our worship, to praise you  
to thank you for all the good things you give us  
And to wait with you this morning.

## Waiting God

As we wonder at your glory  
We look forward with joy to the promise to come.  
Be with us in the stillness of anticipation  
And the growing excitement.  
Bless us with patience.

## Patient God

When we have taken wrong turns and made poor choices  
When we have closed eyes and ears  
When selfishness and carelessness have clouded our thoughts and actions  
We long for your forgiveness

## Forgiving God

We are thankful that Jesus comes with open hands  
Bringing the gift of good news  
Offering words of grace to light our way  
Saving us from ourselves  
We are thankful that you watch over us and hold us in your heart.

## Loving God

As you watch over us  
Help us to be mindful of your presence  
To be awake to your life-breathing Spirit  
growing in and through us and into your world  
Amen

**Today's Reading from the Old Testament** Isaiah 64: 1-9

**Today's Gospel Reading:** Mark 13: 24-37

## Time to Reflect

As we begin Advent again, the season can be summed up with one uplifting inspiring word – Hope! Hope is what keeps people going in hard times. That is what so many people are clinging on to now. And the beginning of Advent, when we symbolically begin the

process of lighting a series of candles, reminds us again, that we do have a Saviour, not in the sense of a miraculous vaccine or treatment, but a Saviour from all our ills, in whom we can trust. And the promise that brings gives us all hope.

The Psalmist wrote, "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word, I put my hope". This text combines two states of mind - waiting and hoping. How often is our waiting full of hope? In today's world, many have weakened the meaning of "hope" into something much less confident. When we say we hope something will happen, we express doubt, as if it were a matter of chance.

But for the Jews, for God's people awaiting the coming of the Messiah, it wasn't that kind of hope. They knew He was coming. The prophets knew. It wasn't a matter of "if". It was a matter of "when". We, of course, have the benefit of knowing when it happened. It happened just over 2000 years ago. The certainty they had of their Advent hope has been fulfilled, and we are living with that knowledge.

Waiting in a queue can be a test of patience. We may be tempted to count the people in front of us. And then to time how long it takes each person to be served and try and work out how long the wait is. Parents are familiar with the impatient cry from children on a journey of, "Are we nearly there yet?"

The message of Advent, and the hope which it brings, is that we should be confident, but also patient. Not just because we know the Saviour did come that first Christmas, but that God promises us more.

Thomas Cranmer's Advent collect, composed when writing the 1662 Book of Common Prayer says,

'Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy son Jesus Christ came to visit us".

This link between hope and light runs through so many of the activities associated with Advent. The child who came, Jesus, later was to proclaim, "I am the light of the world". Hope became light.

What is the first word that comes into your head, when you hear the word "Advent"? Calendar? Candle? Ring? The calendar's windows are opened each day until we see the baby Jesus. The candle burns down by a measured section each day, and finally burns out on Christmas Day. But the light which

the Advent hope promised does not go out. It burns forever in our hearts. In the ring, first one, then two, then three, then four red candles are lit and finally the central white one.

The first red candle, lit today, symbolises hope, the second love, the third joy, and the fourth peace.

There is a well-known Collect which begins, "Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord; and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night". The period of Advent represents a time of movement from darkness to light. As Isaiah wrote, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light."

And so, Advent represents a time when we should remember that we walk in the light of God. It is a perpetual light, which shines in the darkest places of life and never burns out like a candle.

That is what the coming of Jesus, the fulfilment of Advent hope, did for the world that first Christmas. It transformed a fallen world where people couldn't see where they were going. They were lost. Jesus enabled people to find a sense of direction, to see purpose in life around them. To have hope. And it does the same for us, regardless of the apparent darkness descended upon today's world. Jesus is the light in which we can all walk. He is the light that enables us to live our lives to the full.

We are beginning to be surrounded again by the trappings of Christmas - lights - some early this year. We begin to put extra lights in our houses, and on the outside. We see trees lit up in front gardens. There is a sense of expectation in the air. It is as if we are all trying to hasten the coming light.

This time of year, which we call Advent, should be a time when we look forward, not back. There will be regrets and disappointments about this year. There will be sadness and losses. Many are experiencing financial distress and job uncertainty. But we can be messengers of hope.

When you look forward towards a light, the shadows and darkness fall behind you unseen. When you turn your back on the light to focus on the past, the shadows and darkness are before you. Let us pray that during this Advent, despite it all, we look forward in hope towards the light. May the celebration of the

coming of Jesus help us, and those around us, put the darkness behind us.

Isaiah said, "*Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*"

*"Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the hip. Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy".*

The Christian message of Advent hope can bring relief to folk who are in the depths of despair. The Advent hope is no "pie in the sky" wish, it is a confident hope that we of the faith will deliver hope. We should be the people through whom God works together for good to give hope to those around us.

So, as we rush into a season of preparation, absorbed in a million things needing to be done, albeit differently this year with more remote shopping, and less gatherings to share gifts, let us remember those with missing pieces in their lives, in their family jigsaws, loved ones gone.

Maybe we've felt sad that secularisation has extinguished the real meaning of Christmas,

Maybe we've longed for simpler more sacred Christmases like the ones of good old yesteryear.

Well perhaps this year, we will have our wish granted, although not in the way we imagined.

So rather than bemoaning the limitations on our secular celebrations, let us focus on Jesus.

And so, as we enter the season of Advent, let us invite that light to come afresh into our lives.

Let us behold His glory. Let us celebrate the coming of Jesus. And let that light sustain our hope.

## **A time of prayer**

Loving God, who comes in Jesus,  
We bring to you all who wait for you,  
in hope and faith, or in fear and despair.

We pray for all who wait for peace, for justice, for their voices to be heard.

We pray for all who live in fear, of war, violence, abuse or bullying.

We pray that our Churches may wait on your guidance, so we may serve you faithfully.

We pray for all who wait for test results, news about their jobs, news of loved ones, or for the coming of a child.

We pray for all who are ill, all who are close to death, and all who watch and wait with them.

May we watch and wait with them, be people of peace and justice, and bring hope, comfort and healing, light in the darkness.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

*Our Father .....*

**Hymn: Listen to** STF 173 Into the darkness of this world

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsjHf-IX8qo>

**or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind**

Into the darkness of this world,  
into the shadows of the night;  
into this loveless place you came,  
lightened our burdens, eased our pain,  
and made these hearts your home.  
Into the darkness once again --  
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

*Come with your love  
to make us whole,  
come with your light to lead us on,  
driving the darkness far from our souls:  
O come, Lord Jesus, come.*

Into the longing of our souls,  
into these heavy hearts of stone,  
shine on us now your piercing light,  
order our lives and souls aright,  
by grace and love unknown,  
until in you our hearts unite --  
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

*Come with your love  
to make us whole,*

*come with your light to lead us on,  
driving the darkness far from our souls:  
O come, Lord Jesus, come.*

O Holy Child, Emmanuel,  
hope of the ages, God with us,  
visit again this broken place,  
till all the earth declares your praise  
and your great mercies own.  
Now let your love be born in us,  
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

*Come in your glory,  
take your place,  
Jesus, the Name above all names,  
we long to see you face to face,  
O come, Lord Jesus, come.*

*Maggi Dawn (b. 1959)*

### **A prayer of blessing**

God of hope, the Dawn from on high, break upon us,  
and fill us with light and hope. Send us out to be light  
and hope wherever we are. Amen.

Original Materials by Judith Lincoln  
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