



# Highcliffe and Bransgore **Methodist Churches**

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2020, 10:30am “Advent #1 – Hope” Luke 1:67-80**

**Prepared by Rev'd Phillip Dixon.**

Welcome to our first week of the Advent season. Advent means ‘a coming’, God coming to His people. Each year the season of Advent provides us, as Christians, with a special opportunity to connect with and celebrate God’s unfolding salvation plan for us and the world in which we live. Advent has us looking at three aspects of time; looking back to the prophecies of the Old Testament leading to the birth of Jesus as Messiah in Bethlehem, looking to the present and God’s salvation work among people today and looking forward to when Jesus will come again.



## **Lighting the Advent Candle**

We who wait with anticipation and feel hope rise up within us. And so we light this first candle and name it **HOPE**.

### **Advent Hymn: Light a candle in a darkened place StF 174**

Sing/read/pray/proclaim.

Light a candle in a darkened place,  
in its flame see hope on every face,  
Christ our Saviour will be born,  
heralding a brand new dawn,  
so let it burn.

In the darkness, see the coming light,  
Word of God speaks through the darkest night,  
keep a watch, the time is near,  
time for hope and not for fear,  
so let it burn. Clare Stainsbury (b 1959)

*Each week of Advent a further verse will be added.*

## **Opening Prayer:**

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 came to us in great humility as a vulnerable baby. And so, on the last day when He shall come again in His glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, may we rise to life immortal. We pray this through Him who is alive and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.** Advent 1 Collect from Book of Common Worship

### **Hymn: Long ago prophets knew StF 178**

Sing/read/pray/proclaim.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OeLA1LhqFA4&ab\\_channel=mkariobangi](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OeLA1LhqFA4&ab_channel=mkariobangi)

Long ago, prophets knew  
Christ would come, born a Jew,  
come to make all things new;  
bear his people's burden,  
freely love and pardon.

*Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!*  
*Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!*  
*When he comes,*  
*when he comes,*  
*who will make him welcome?*

God in time, God in man,  
this is God's timeless plan:  
He will come, as a man,  
born himself of woman,  
God divinely human The linked video misses out the  
last two verses

### *Refrain*

Mary hail! Though afraid,  
she believed, she obeyed.  
In her womb, God is laid:  
till the time expected,  
nurtured and protected.

### *Refrain*

Journey ends! Where afar  
Bethlehem shines, like a star,  
stable door stands ajar.  
unborn Son of Mary,  
Saviour, do not tarry!

*Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!*  
*Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!*  
*When he comes,*  
*when he comes,*  
*who will make him welcome?* Fred Pratt Green  
(1903-2000)

### **Prayer of confession:**

*When the Lord comes, He will bring to  
light the things now hidden in darkness  
and will disclose the purposes of the heart.  
Therefore in the light of Christ let us now  
confess our sins.*

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

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

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

*A time of quiet to ask forgiveness for  
ourselves and to listen to what God may  
be saying to us .*

Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has  
come to us and offered us a kingdom that  
cannot be destroyed, thank you for the  
forgiveness of our sins, open our eyes to  
Your truth, strengthen us to do Your will  
in this Advent season and grant us the joy  
of Your kingdom, through Jesus Christ our  
Lord. **Amen.** Confession and Absolution from Church of  
England Common Worship

### **Hymn: O' Come O' Come Emmanuel**

**StF180** Sing/read/pray/proclaim.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p07w4479>

O come, O come, Emmanuel  
And ransom captive Israel  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;  
From depths of hell Thy people save,  
And give them victory o'er the grave.  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

O come, Thou Key of David, come  
And open wide our heav'nly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery. *Rejoice!  
Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

O come, Thou Dayspring, from on high,  
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel*

*Shall come to thee, O Israel.* Latin 18<sup>th</sup> century  
based on the ancient Advent Antiphons translated by John  
Mason Neale (1811 -1866)

### **A Prayer for Hope (Advent 1)**

Heavenly Father, Advent is a time for remembering and reflecting on the birth of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Father, I pray that you will turn my heart toward you as Christmas approaches. Let me not get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the season this year and miss the chance to celebrate the gifts of hope, peace, joy, love, that you sent to us on that first Christmas.

Father God, every word in scripture points to the gift of hope that we have because of Christ Jesus. The Christmas story wasn't the beginning of that message of hope because the Old Testament is full of glimpses of your plan to redeem your people and restore them into a relationship with you, but we are able to truly begin to see and understand just how great your love for us is when we read the story of Jesus' birth in scripture.

You showed us a glimmer of that hope as you chose to send Your Son to this earth through a family tree that was a little bent and scarred. We saw it again as you chose a tribe that was small and a city that was lowly. It can be seen also when we recognize that you didn't send your Son to be birthed in a fancy palace among the wealthy and the elite, but our King of Kings and Lord of Lords was born among

common shepherds and livestock in a barn.

Help us Lord God to see that You are with us. Nothing is too difficult, too messy, or too dirty for You. Jesus came to offer us the gift of eternal life through the salvation that only You, our Heavenly Father, can give when we believe on Your Son, repent of our sins, and confess Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.

That first Christmas, you gave us the gift of hope wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. Thank you, Father, for your immeasurable gift. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. **Amen** [Christianity.com](http://Christianity.com)

**Prayer:** Lord God as we read Your Holy Word this Advent Sunday and study the accompanying notes, we pray that our hearts and minds will be open to hear what You are saying to us. **Amen**

### **Reading: Luke 1: 67-79**

<sup>67</sup> His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

<sup>68</sup> 'Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

<sup>69</sup> He has raised up a horn of salvation for us

in the house of his servant David

<sup>70</sup> (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),

<sup>71</sup> salvation from our enemies

and from the hand of all who hate us –

<sup>72</sup> to show mercy to our ancestors

and to remember his holy covenant,

<sup>73</sup> the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

<sup>74</sup> to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,

and to enable us to serve him without fear  
<sup>75</sup> in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

<sup>76</sup> And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;  
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,  
<sup>77</sup> to give his people the knowledge of salvation  
through the forgiveness of their sins,  
<sup>78</sup> because of the tender mercy of our God,  
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven  
<sup>79</sup> to shine on those living in darkness  
and in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the path of peace.'

New International Version UK

**A time to pause, read again, pray, and reflect.**

**Preaching notes:**

This section of scripture is known by many as the "Benedictus", a name that originates from the Latin translation of the first word in verse 68 which in the King James Version is "blessed be the Lord..." It is also sub-titled the "Song of Zechariah" and is frequently (often daily) used in many traditions, notably the Church of England, as a Canticle (a song, hymn which is said or sung with its words from a Biblical text). These traditions use this scripture in their worship services as often as the Lord's Prayer, the reason being is that this exclamation of praise and thanksgiving, spoken as prophesy from God by Zechariah, contains the promise from God that is at the very heart of our salvation: "The oath He swore to Abraham" (see Genesis 12:3) as a holy covenant to provide "salvation from our

enemies", the enemy being the sin (pride, arrogance, the over-reliance on the law and its selective application) inside us.

Our scripture is in two distinct parts; following the introductory verse (67) which reminds us that these are God's words spoken by Zechariah under the power of the Holy Spirit we read verses 68-75 which are directed to all people, it is both a promise and an offer, salvation is being held out to the people. The second part (verses 76 to 79) are directed towards the baby John, who is to be the forerunner of Jesus. It is John who will be the prophet who will go before Him and prepare the way for Him -note the very strong link with Isaiah 40: 3-5 with exactly the same words "prepare the way". Further forward in Luke (3:1-20) these links of John fulfilling the earlier prophesies of Isaiah become even more apparent, this is the reason why Luke writes in his opening words: "after investigating everything carefully from the very first" (1:3).

Verse 77 is particularly important for us today. We are reminded that salvation -to be rescued or saved- comes from the repentance and forgiveness of sins, that is "the knowledge of salvation". We consider Johns words later in his ministry, "flee from the wrath to come" (Luke 3:7) - words used as a qualifying question by John Wesley to those who desired to join his early Methodist societies. Repentance, the answer given to "the people" at the time of Pentecost (Acts 2:38) "repent and be baptised everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven".

This are beautiful yet very powerful words, "to shine on those living in

darkness and in the shadow of death” is a message that needs repeating over and over again to a world and a people who are fearful and lost. It is the will of God for all wrong relationships to be made right, the first being the relationship between man and Himself and that is why Jesus came -to restore that relationship and save humanity from its sins. **Amen**

**Song: On Jordan’s bank the Baptist’s cry**  
**StF182** Sing/read/pray/proclaim words.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqOf0Qo6A24&ab\\_channel=CantoDeoChoirs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqOf0Qo6A24&ab_channel=CantoDeoChoirs)

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry  
announces that the Lord is nigh.  
Awake and harken, for he brings  
glad tidings of the King of kings!

Then cleansed be every life from sin:  
make straight the way for God within,  
and let us all our hearts prepare  
for Christ to come and enter there.

For you are our salvation Lord,  
our refuge and our great reward,  
without your grace we waste away  
like flowers that wither and decay.

All praise eternal Son to thee  
whose advent sets thy people free,  
whom with the Father we adore,  
and Holy Spirit, evermore. John Chandler (1806-1876)

#### **A Poem for the Hope of Advent:**

Hope is a strange thing.  
Hope in the face  
of uncertainty,  
of discord,  
of disease,  
of brokenness,  
of adversity,  
of wickedness,  
of bad news  
seems irresponsible and naive.

But . . . Hope sees a way where the path  
appears blocked.

Hope is  
that which pulls us  
toward possibility.  
Hope is foolishness  
in the eyes of a pessimistic world.

Hope is  
the audacious persistence  
of a young expectant  
mother  
who sings songs of deliverance  
in the shadow of  
occupation and patriarchy  
because of the promise held  
in her womb.

O, the voice of hope  
It will not  
waver in the presence of fear.  
It will not  
yield under the strain of adversity.  
It will not  
fail in the grip of oppression.

Courage,  
Faith,  
Love,  
Resistance,  
Change,  
are impossible without it.  
In this season of Advent,  
In this season of waiting,  
In this season of anticipation,  
may we live our lives “as if”  
in this “not yet” world;  
may we be known  
as people of hope. *Brian Shivers*

#### **The Lord’s Prayer:**

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
Your Kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom,  
the power and the glory are yours.  
Now and for ever. **Amen.**

#### **Prayers of Intercession:**

We pray for our world, a world of conflict, greed and oppression. As we gather we are aware of the ongoing conflict in Ethiopia between the Tigray separatists in the north and the Ethiopian government, we pray for the safety of innocent civilians caught up in the conflict. We pray for the many refugees fleeing across the border to Sudan which does not have the resources to cope.

We pray for our brothers in sisters around the world who are suffering oppression and discrimination because they are Christians. We pray for the authorities in Pakistan, India, China, Malaysia and Iran to respect justice and fairness and release Christians held on false and unfair charges. We pray for the persecuted to be encouraged and strengthened as they endure suffering for Your name.

Lord we give thanks for answering our prayer concerning a vaccine for the Covid-19 virus, we pray now for the acceptance of the different vaccines from the regulatory authorities of the different countries and for the plans being made for its distribution. Give wisdom to our Government and all those responsible.

We pray for our families and friends who do not yet know You as their Lord and Saviour, that in this time of Advent they would accept Your offer of forgiveness and eternal life. In Jesus' name. **Amen**

**Closing Song: Come thou long expected Jesus StF169** Sing/read or proclaim the words.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFenxly2was&ab\\_channel=TheHymnWriters](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFenxly2was&ab_channel=TheHymnWriters)

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.

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

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

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

Charles Wesley (1707 -1788)

#### **Blessing:**

Be people of hope.

Let hope live in your heart and share the hope of Christ with all you meet. Share hope by noticing someone else's humanity.

Share hope by listening to someone's story. Share hope by praying for our world. In this Advent season, we need to see, feel, and share hope.

As you go out into the wonder of God's creations, share hope with those you meet. **Amen.** From [Liturgylink.net](http://Liturgylink.net)

Phillip Dixon, November 2020. YouTube links are external resources and are provided to help you engage with the songs. Singing the Faith and Hymns and Psalms resources are provided under license: CCLI 178182