

# Camel-Allen Churches

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

## 'Happy New Year!'



*Welcome on this Advent Sunday, the season of hope and light; and the beginning of a new Church year.*

*For this service, you may wish to have to hand a candle, something with which to light it and a Bible, although these are not essential.*

## WE PREPARE

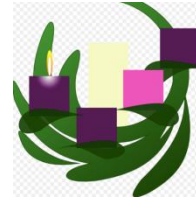
### A call to worship...

Wintry questions circle the earth,  
in struggles for survival,  
tinged grey with cynicism and apathy.  
The dead leaves have lost their colour  
and lie among the white coldness on the earth  
as the hearts of the people wait and wait for the spring.  
In faith and hope, we wait in this time of Advent.

After the suffering in these days,  
the Child of God will be seen  
deep in the heart of the winter,  
gentle in the centre of harshness,  
and vulnerable in the midst of our vulnerability,  
a frail but sure sign of the promises of God.  
In faith let us worship God.

Restore us, God;  
let your face shine, that we may be saved *[Psalm 80:3]*

*We light our Advent Candle, placing the open Bible beside it*



We light this candle as a sign  
that heaven and earth may pass away,  
but the Word of God will be present in the world  
for ever and ever.

## HYMN

**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, O come, Thou Lord of might,  
who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height  
in ancient times didst give the law  
in cloud and majesty and awe.  
*Rejoice, rejoice . . .*

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 . . .*

O come, Thou dayspring, come and cheer  
our spirits by Thine advent here;  
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
and death's dark shadows put to flight.  
*Rejoice, rejoice . . .*

O come, Thou key of David, come  
and open wide our heavenly home;  
make safe the way that leads on high,  
and close the path to misery.

*Rejoice, rejoice . . .*

### We say, 'Sorry'...

O God, as we enter the season of Advent, the waiting time,  
we confess that there are many things about our own life  
and the life of the world  
which test our faith in your coming in love

When the struggle in our own lives overwhelms us:  
Come to us in grace, O God.  
Lord, have mercy,

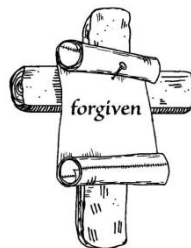
When we can only think of violence as the path to peace  
and our trust in the possibility of human community wears thin:  
Come to us in grace, O God.  
Christ, have mercy,

When we feel that the universe itself is challenging your grace  
and your Word is hard to find:  
Come to us in grace, O God.  
Lord, have mercy,

Restore us, God;  
let your face shine, that we may be saved [*Psalm 80:3*]

### ...and receive Assurance of God's Pardon...

Nothing can separate us  
from the love of God in Christ Jesus,  
neither the emptiness of the land  
nor the droughts of the soul.



The Christ will come,  
even when there seems to be no room  
and no place prepared.  
Grace is ours,  
love will come to us and to all humankind.  
Thanks be to God. Amen.

### We give Thanks...

When life seems hard, we give you thanks for unexpected things:  
gifts which arise in tough places from people who have little,  
surprising sharing which did not seem to be there  
until we all had less than before,  
community which deepens in the face of need,  
faith which is born in nothing but hope  
and the age-long testimony of your faithfulness, O God.  
Thanks be to you, Jesus Christ,  
thanks be to you, Holy Spirit  
and great Creator who is making all things new. Amen.

## THE WORD OF GOD

### Gospel Reading

Mark 13: 24 - 37

#### The Coming of the Son of Man

*Jesus said,* <sup>24</sup> "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, <sup>25</sup> and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. <sup>26</sup> And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. <sup>27</sup> And 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.



### The Lesson of the Fig Tree

<sup>28</sup> "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. <sup>29</sup> So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. <sup>30</sup> Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. <sup>31</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

### No One Knows That Day or Hour

<sup>32</sup> "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>33</sup> Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. <sup>34</sup> It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. <sup>35</sup> Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— <sup>36</sup> lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. <sup>37</sup> And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake."

### SONG

#### All over the world the Spirit is moving,

all over the world as the prophet said it would be;  
all over the world there's a mighty revelation  
of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

All over His Church God's Spirit is moving,  
all over His Church as the prophet said it would be;  
all over His Church there's a mighty revelation  
of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Right here in this place the Spirit is moving,  
right here in this place as the prophet said it would be;  
right here in this place there's a mighty revelation  
of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

### Reflection

This letter is to each one of us:

*Dear Friends,*

*I'm writing to tell you that I shall be in your neck of the woods  
sometime in the near future.*

*I can't say exactly when, because my time isn't my own.*

*The reason for writing is to ask you if you will be able to put me  
up.*

*It will be a question of turning up on your doorstep unexpectedly  
– I hope you won't mind.*

*I'm looking forward to seeing you all again, and hearing the  
latest news.*

*My father and I send our love.*

*See you soon.*

*P.S. Keep in touch*

How would you react to a letter like that?

To a child, such a letter would be good news!

The questions would begin:

"When is he coming?" "How many more sleeps?"

"What will we do when he's here?" "How long will he stay?"

The excited remarks:

"I can't wait." "We'll have such fun."

"I've got so much to tell him." "It will be great to see him again."

Most children will receive such news with excited anticipation.

But what about most adults? Would we show such excitement?

"He could have given us a better idea of when he'll arrive."

"The freezer will have to be kept full and the bed aired."

"An extra mouth to feed – more work all round."

"Oh yes, it'll be good to see him, but I wish he'd waited to be invited, instead of just turning up."

You may well be thinking,

"No-one I know would ever send a letter like that."

But, whether we know him or not, Jesus has already sent each one of us just such a letter.

His letter to us is written for all to read in Mark chapter 13.

Jesus says, 'Men will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. I tell you the truth, (which means we can believe it.), this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.' (Mk 13: 26,30)

These 'things' to which Jesus refers are the signs which herald his coming.

But what are the signs?

Jesus says that just as budding twigs tell us that summer is on the way, so the signs heralding the coming of Jesus at the end of the age, began as soon as the Christian church came into being.

Therefore, we are in the final age now.

So where does that put us? It has begun. Jesus is coming.

There are more signs in Jesus' list: wars famine earthquakes.

The signs are ever before us.

Every day we learn, from the news, of man's inhumanity to man; of deception and betrayal, of natural disasters.

The daily news tells us that the signs of the end of the age are occurring every day.

The message is clear: Jesus is coming.

On a previous occasion, Jesus had said, "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt.18:3)

Are we like children, excited and anticipating his coming, asking: "When is he coming?" "What will it be like when he comes?" "How long will he stay?"

Or are we facing it with dread or, even worse, disinterest?

So, when will Jesus come?

In Mark chapter 13 verse 32, Jesus says,

"No- one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

All we know is that Jesus will come, he is coming, and he is on his way; that's how it is with the coming of Jesus, the signs are there, Jesus is on his way.

But for some Christians, not knowing when, is unacceptable. They spend hours studying, poring over the scriptures, looking for clues, making calculations in order to fix the exact time of Jesus' coming.

Surely they are wasting their time for in Peter's second letter he writes

'With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.' (2Peter 3:8)

We cannot know when Jesus will come; he will come in God's time, not ours.

But what will it be like when he does come?

'God himself will be with his people and he will be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.' (Rev. 21:3,4)

That's what it will be like.

When Jesus comes, deep pain and desolate despair will be wiped away; memories of rejection and loneliness, of anguish will be

swept away. When Jesus comes, love will reign undefeated, peace will dwell in our hearts.

That's what it will be like when Jesus comes! ...

Isn't the coming of Jesus something to await with expectation and longing?

And, when Jesus comes, for how long will he stay?

Once again the answer is to be found in the scriptures.

'We will be with the Lord for ever.' (1Thess. 4:17)

When Jesus comes he won't just be paying us a visit, he will be coming for good, bringing about the completion of God's work on earth-as-we-know-it.

It's not that everything is going to come to an end;  
rather everything will come to completion in Jesus,  
as he draws all the strands together in himself.

All that we have been hoping for will come to pass,  
and we shall be with Jesus for ever.

How do you respond to Jesus' announcement that he's coming?

Is it with a child's excitement and enthusiasm?

Is it with a feeling of being inconvenienced?

Or is it in an apathetic frame of mind?

If we are excited by the news, then we must be diligent in our preparation to receive him;

for to sit back and merely wait for it all to happen would be negligent.

Today, Jesus wants us to hear again the announcement of his coming.

And having heard his announcement, Jesus wants to know our response,

and how we respond is between each one of us and Jesus.

Your response to Jesus is between you and him.

Why not read Jesus' letter again, and his postscript? Amen

*In response to the Word*



*Let us pause for a moment and look for signs of love which are already among us. Let us name some of those signs, a glimpse of gold to remind us of the hope that already lies here*

*And holding in mind those glimpses of hope let us affirm our faith in God*

We believe in light beyond our seeing,  
flowing forth from the flame of life in God  
who goes on creating in us  
down through the ages of ages.

We believe in healing beyond our knowing,  
from the Christ  
whose robe stands close  
to the reach of our hand  
and the pain of our struggle  
beyond the end of time.

We believe in the energy of God's Spirit  
stirring in our being  
with a rhythm of courage and passion,  
moving our feet  
to risk Christ's way again  
as those who are always called to be  
the humble, human witnesses  
to the faithfulness of God. Amen.



Restore us, God;  
let your face shine, that we may be saved *[Psalm 80:3]*

## SONG

**There is a Redeemer,**  
Jesus, God's own Son,  
precious Lamb of God, Messiah,  
Holy One.

*Thank You, O my Father,  
for giving us Your Son,  
and leaving Your Spirit  
till the work on earth is done.*

2 Jesus, my Redeemer,  
name above all names,  
precious Lamb of God, Messiah,  
O for sinners slain:

*Thank You . . .*

3 When I stand in glory  
I will see His face,  
and there I'll serve my King for ever  
in that holy place.

*Thank You . . .*

## WE PRAY TOGETHER

O God of hope and bearer of peace,  
we remember before you this day  
those who most long for love to be born among them,  
those near to us and those far away....

Come claim your ground, O holy God,  
and show us more clearly your standing places.  
We long to be one with you there.

Where are you among the lonely?  
Where are you among the poor?  
We long to be one with you there.

Where are you among the homeless?  
Where are you among the lost?  
We long to be one with you there.

Where are you among the races?  
Where are you among the cultures?  
We long to be one with you there.

Where are you among the churches?  
Where are you among the workers?  
We long to be one with you there.

On the holy ground of the city,  
come, claim your people, O God.  
We offer ourselves as those who try to walk with you  
seeking to share your Love and Word.  
Come, create holy ground under our feet,  
in Jesus' name we ask. Amen.

## A collect for today

Come, Lord, come down, come in, come among us.  
Enter into our darkness with your light.  
Come, fill our emptiness with your presence.  
Dispel the clouds and reveal your glory.

Come refresh, renew, restore us.

Come Lord, come down, come in, come among us. Amen.



And we make our prayers  
in the name of the One who taught us to pray,  
Our Father who art in heaven.....

# Advent

*A Season of Hope  
& Expectation*

## HYMN

**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 for ever;  
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.

## OUR SERVICE DRAWS TO A CLOSE

Restore us, God;  
let your face shine, that we may be saved *[Psalm 80:3]*

May we go in trembling hope to point to the signs of love.  
May we go in peace, for God will never fail us.

May the star-light of the heavens bring promises each night,  
the signs of coming life be near our feet as we walk  
and the hand of God reach out in all the earth  
for the creation of a new future. Amen.

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*Service material drawn from:  
'Liturgies for Daily Life' & 'Liturgies for the Journey of life'  
both by Dorothy McRae-McMahon  
Hymns taken from Mission Praise CCL#999402  
Service put together by Claire & Sue  
Reflection by Sue Wilcox*