



**Broomhill Hyndland
Parish Church**

"Lighting the Way"

for **Sunday 29 November 2020**

Happy New Year!

Welcome, and yes - the start of a new Christian Year and the longing for Christ in our world. And with the newness comes also the hope of better things in the future.

This is the first Sunday in Advent and whilst we are restricted (this is our second Sunday on Zoom because our Sanctuaries are closed) we are still sending out the Good News of the coming Child.

Sheila Brown is organising that an email of Mary and Joseph be sent around as we have done with the knitted versions in the past. The Junior Church have organised our Church Christmas card to be sent out too.

The Newsletter gives information of the services we will be able to hold during the Festive period. Of particular interest, I hope, are the three 'trial' services which will be streamed - our traditional Nativity service, our Watchnight service and the first Sunday of 2021 pointing us to a new time with vaccines coming over the hill.

The Watchnight service will be recorded at 7pm on Christmas Eve and then streamed later on to the comfort of your own homes, so, in a deeper way, we can celebrate the turn to Christmas Day and the joy of Christ being born.

In our prayers we remember the family of Sheila Milne, whose funeral took place on Thursday 26th November, and the family of Margaret Steven whose funeral will take place on the 9th December. St Margaret's Hospice will once again hold their 'Light up a Life Campaign' illuminating their Christmas tree from Sunday 29 November until Wednesday 6 January 2021. Due to the pandemic this will be done virtually, with the service being live-streamed from the grounds of the Hospice. If you wish to support the appeal you can complete the form online with the link:

www.smh.org.uk/light-up-a-life-2020

Christ is coming! Remember to have your candle at the ready - and let Christ light up your life.

Every blessing,

George

**First Sunday of Advent (Year B)
Sunday 29 November 2020**

For those who like to follow all the lectionary readings for the Sunday and dip into the Old Testament and Epistles, the readings for this Sunday are: Isaiah 64: 1-9; Psalm 80: 1-7, 17-19; 1 Corinthians 1: 3-9; Mark 13: 24-37.

For those who miss the hymns I have added them in here. The congregation in Naseby and in Kingsborough, whilst unable to sing them, have enjoyed following the words; giving them an opportunity to think more of what they mean and how they tie into the theme of the service.

Sunday's hymns are: 273 O come, O come Emmanuel; CH3 488 Jesus bids us shine; SGP 51 In a byre near Bethlehem; 472 Come, thou—long expected Jesus.

Our Sunday reflection will be based on Isaiah but please read and ponder the suggested Scripture and see how it connects and what it says to you.

Rest in His arms read, reflect, rejoice...

CALL

A Pathway to Peace:
this is the road we travel.
Following the Peacemaker:
this is the road we travel.
Walking through Advent:
this is the road we travel.
Towards the Prince of Peace
let us walk together.

INTROIT

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.*
(CH4 273)

OUR ADVENT CANDLE

Take this light, let it shine:
call of God, love divine,
summons old Abram's line,
hope for all the nations,
gift of God's salvation.
Shine, O candles, shine,
Burn with love divine,
to the night
comes the light
of the Father's glory.
(Now, light your candle)



PRAYER

We walk in your light, Lord, as we come to learn your ways,
so that we may walk on your paths.
As we await the coming of Christmas in this Advent season,
teach us patience and grant us understanding.

May we be instruments of peace,
part of the beating of swords into ploughshares,
for your name's sake.

In the last days they will beat their swords into ploughshares
and their spears into pruning hooks: so says Isaiah.

So, in these days,
we will turn around the camera of our self-centred selfies
to take a long, loving look at the face of Christ in others.

So, in these days,
we will upturn the podium of our calculated competitiveness

and elevate the least among us.

So, in these days,
we will dismantle the walls of our fear,
which keep at arm's length the refugees, the foreigners, the homeless,
and build them homes with those same bricks and these same arms...
Father, we confess our complacency.
Comfortable in zones of our own making,
we often seek to maintain things as they are.
So we are unprepared when the winds of change
sweep us off course; off our feet.

You entered this world and changed everything;
as we prepare to meet you, incarnate, humbled,
help us to prepare also for your coming in power and glory,
by handing control of our lives to you.
Lord, we praise you for the hope you hold out to a weary world.
We give thanks for this season now beginning,
in which we look to the dawning of light and the hope of peace.
As we remember the Christ-child and approach again to adore him,
we are thankful for the man that he became;
wise, yet understanding of the foolish; strong, yet living in weakness.
We seek to grow in him,
grateful to tread the imprint of his footsteps.

(The Lord's Prayer)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors
and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil
for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever, AMEN

Let us turn to God's Word, found in the prophet Isaiah chapter 64, verses 1-9.

'This is the Word of God. Thanks be to Him.'



MUSICAL INTERLUDE

ILLUMINATION

In this Advent of disquiet, remember God comes to us. Let us offer our empty hearts to God as we begin the journey to Bethlehem. God approaches, to fill them with grace and hope. God approaches, to teach us new songs of love.
AMEN

REFLECTION

Look at the picture overleaf.

At the moment, we are in the fourth tier of lockdowns. As the picture suggests, remaining open, despite some controversy, are the 'essential shops'. I wonder what you would define as essential.



The dictionary defines the word 'essential' as:- absolutely necessary, indispensable, fundamental, basic.'

What might be 'essential' to you might differ quite considerably if you lived in another part of the world. One thing we have discovered in this pandemic is beautifully summed up by Fumio Saki who wrote, "Living with only the bare essentials has not only provided superficial benefits such as the pleasure of tidying a room or the simple ease of cleaning, it has led to a more fundamental shift. It has given me a chance to really think what makes me happy."

Clintons Cards complain they are closed while supermarkets can sell greeting cards? Is that fair? Are cards essential? Are gyms essential? Are supporters in stadia essential?

Is visiting loved ones up and down the country after the 11th December essential, for five days at Christmas, putting others at risk, essential? 'Cancel Christmas,' is the cry from some quarters and those of us who are religious point out that Christmas will happen anyway... .. Because it is essential for us.

This week's readings are stark. They are in your face. They are straight to the point.

These are readings not about cheap cheer and festive frivolities and 'Mamma kissing Santa underneath the Christmas tree...'; they are readings that remind us, if we need reminding, that our world is not 'okay'. The prophet Isaiah questions the hiddenness of God because we transgressed.

This is about the bare essentials.

What is necessary, what is essential, is to be honest and truthful; that's what the first Sunday in the new Christian calendar asks of us. In our faith we are asked to describe the world as it is, not as it painted to be. This is a common tension at Christmas time. Of course we all rejoice in the season, for us the birth of God's Son, but there is a stark reality to it all.

We know how he will be born and where.

We know what his ministry will encounter.

We know he will act in a counter-cultural way.

You and I are called to echo the words of the prophet Isaiah, that we need God, He is fundamental to our living,

He is 'essential'.

We need God to be in our world. We need God to stay. We need God to hold us,

to be with us, to love us and deliver us through and from our troubles. We were created to have company, to be held, to be loved, to be intimate and during this past year that which is really essential has been missing.

Isaiah wants God to carry out some amazing acts, something astounding and awesome and don't we all. We know what God is capable of: don't we all ask, hope and pray for a deed that is breath-taking? You might recall one of the stories I told from a previous charge to the children. There, at the front of the chancel, I told them that I had bought a new car and after listening to suggestions of Fiat, Ford, Skoda, Nissan Micra. I showed them the key ring which said, 'Lamborghini'!

To say they doubted me was an understatement.

Underneath the communion table was a model Lamborghini, which I would show to the children to get them to understand that God was far bigger than our human minds could imagine.

"You'll never drive that," one wee boy said. "Why not?" I asked. "Your a** is too big!"

Advent starts with the God of the Big Things expected.

Remembering and recalling the Exodus, Isaiah calls on God to do the same. He asks for mountains to tremble, earthquakes to shake the foundations, nations to tremble and for fire, lots of fire. We've been there in this past year – put an end to the pandemic. End racial injustice. Protect the vulnerable. Help the unemployed and those whose businesses are not deemed to be essential and are going down the plug-hole. Then we wish for an end to hunger and malnutrition and a halt to the world we all are destroying.

What is essential?

"Tear open the heavens and come down."

And God's reaction to Isaiah's cries? And God's reaction to ours?

God sends a baby, a child.

It was Fredrick Buechner who wrote in a sermon the following:

"Those who believe in God can never in a way be sure of him again. Once they have seen him in the stable, they can never be sure where he will appear or to what lengths he will go or to what ludicrous depths of self-humiliation he will descend in his wild pursuit of humankind. If holiness and the awful power and majesty of God were present in this least auspicious of all events, this birth of a peasant's child, then there is no place or time so lowly and earthbound but that holiness can't be present there too."

It seems to me that the essential thing is to welcome and receive God not as we might wish him to be but as He is. Not as I insist he should act, though that doesn't stop my prayers for the end of many things, but the way He believes is best.

Advent reminds us who He truly is and how He will respond. It is okay to ask that He 'opens the heavens and comes down', though we are encouraged to wait and be patient. And waiting is hard and being patient is hard for we know this as we scrambled through this year longing for a vaccine.

We believe, though we often demand more, that Christ is essential.

The push for Christmas to be celebrated, as opposed to other religious festivals both Christian and of other faiths, is to mix up the essentials. But then Christmas often is just that. Many of those who have celebrated the forthcoming dash into Glasgow City Centre believe they are buying what is essential and has little or nothing to do with the Christian faith. (Remember, we missed out

on Easter – politicians have missed out in saying this!!)

I have my doubts.

No wonder the child to be born comes to the world amidst the busyness of a city but makes an appearance in the backwater. What Christmas is about, the gift that is ignored, is truly the essential one.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN

PRAYER

When the carols of choirs are stilled, as they are in silent sanctuaries,
when so many dear ones are gone,

it seems like the stars have blinked their tears into darkness,

when the year has kept so many home

and endangered the homes of so many others,

when the shepherds of the year are health care workers,

police officers, refuse collectors and shop assistants,

and, like those flock-keepers long ago,

those in essential but poorly-honoured jobs,

the work of Advent begins:

to find the grieving, the fearful, the lost,

to heal those broken in spirit with the story of an unexpected hope
in another time of great danger,

to feed, clothe, shelter, employ those financially insecure,

to release the prisoners – especially those in immigration detention,

to rebuild all the nations,

because the epiphany is that gifts come not out of our own chimneys
but from strangers who live far away,

to become stable-makers that shelter peace, health, wisdom

and care for the earth itself,

to sing the carols in our homes and teach the words and maybe one tune

to someone, perhaps a child, who longs for a new harmony.

ANTICIPATION

CH4 472 Come, thou long-expected Jesus

BENEDICTION

Be brave and admit your fears.

Be daring and speak out your hopes,

and be confident that the God of Advent,

of Christmas and of all time, is with you.

Go in Peace and may the Blessing of God Almighty, Father,

Son and Holy Spirit be with you. AMEN

Broomhill Hyndland Church of Scotland

Minister: Rev George Mackay

Tel 0141 959 8694 Mob 07711 569 127

Church Office: 64 - 66 Randolph Road, Glasgow G11 7JL Tel 0141 569 5059

office@broomhillhyndlandchurch.org

www.broomhillhyndlandchurch.co.uk

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