

Third Sunday before Advent
Sunday, 7th November 2021



Dear Friends in Christ,

‘The Kingdom of God is near!’
Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!’ (Mark 1: 15)

It seems as if the whole world has been focussed on the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow this week. With good reason – this is a pivotal opportunity for nations across the globe to agree on what is hailed as our last chance to control the worrying trajectory of climate change: limiting the rising trend in global warming; halting the impact of escalating weather patterns on thousands of lives, livelihoods, landscapes and livestock; encouraging governments, businesses and civil society to undertake meaningful collaborations which go beyond hollow words, to ensure generations to come might enjoy the rich blessings of our beautiful world. As disciples of Christ, we are being called, not to take the easy yoke, but to live a life of righteous selfless, generous stewardship of all God has given into our care.



‘The Umbrellas’ by Auguste Renoir

Our Collect prayer for this week sums up the complex predicament of our ravaged planet as we seek God's guidance, help and loving paternal forgiveness for our sinful abuse of His perfect creation. Mark's Gospel introduces us to learning a new way of stewardship – of our own faith relationship with Jesus, and through Him, our commitment to the needs of others and our world.

In his first chapter, Mark gives us Jesus' unequivocal message: *'The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!'* Jesus teaches us discipleship – laying down our old and sinful ways to gain the rich, vibrant life of faith in Him. We are called to a life of obedient sacrifice: challenged to be fruitful stewards, not blind and selfish hoarders of our resources, time, talents and creature comforts. Jesus is our grace-filled, radically generous, compassionate and thoughtful role-model in all things. By His selfless giving of His own life for us, Jesus teaches us to love as He loves us. He dies for us, teaching that greatness is in living out that love by active service before our gracious and generous God.

COP26 points us to the mess we have made of the stewardship of Creation. It shows us the cost of ignoring Jesus' call. It is our time to wake up and work for real change – especially for those most affected by climate change who have done the least to cause it.



'Walrus found sleeping on Dutch submarine, hundreds of miles from her Arctic home' Source: The Guardian

This week I have drawn together some public reflections from Pope Francis, David Attenborough and Her Majesty the Queen – forgive me if you have already read them. These individuals emphasise our need to embrace a change in our attitudes to the way we live, the things we take for granted, and commit to ways in which we can each take what might feel like small, insignificant steps, that together will make a difference for the resilience and healing of the planet for generations to come.

Yours, in the righteousness of Christ,

Jax
Rector, The Downs Benefice

Her Majesty the Queen – Address to World Leaders at COP26



I am delighted to welcome you to the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference; and it is perhaps fitting that you have come together in Glasgow, once a heartland of the industrial revolution, but now a place to address climate change. This is a duty I am especially happy to discharge, as the impact of the environment on human progress was a subject close to the heart of my dear late husband, Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh.

I remember well that in 1969, he told an academic gathering: 'If the world pollution situation is not critical at the moment, it is as certain as anything can be, that the situation will become increasingly intolerable within a very short time. If we fail to cope with this challenge, all the other problems will pale into insignificance.'

It is a source of great pride to me that the leading role my husband played in encouraging people to protect our fragile planet, lives on through the work of our eldest son Charles, and his eldest son William. I could not be more proud of them. Indeed, I have drawn great comfort and inspiration from the relentless enthusiasm of people of all ages – especially the young – in calling for everyone to play their part.

In the coming days, the world has the chance to join in the shared objective of creating a safer, stable future for our people and for the planet on which we depend. None of us underestimates the challenges ahead: but history has shown that when nations come together in common cause, there is always room for hope. Working side by side, we have the ability to solve the most insurmountable problems and to triumph over the greatest of adversities.

For more than seventy years, I have been lucky to meet and to know many of the world's great leaders. And I have perhaps come to understand a little about what made them special. It has sometimes been observed that what leaders do for their people today is government and politics. But what they do for the people of tomorrow - that is statesmanship.

I, for one, hope that this conference will be one of those rare occasions where everyone will have the chance to rise above the politics of the moment, and achieve true statesmanship.

It is the hope of many that the legacy of this summit – written in history books yet to be printed – will describe you as the leaders who did not pass up the opportunity; and that you answered the call of those future generations. That you left this conference as a community of nations with a determination, a desire, and a plan, to address the impact of climate change; and to recognise that the time for words has now moved to the time for action.

Of course, the benefits of such actions will not be there to enjoy for all of us here today: we none of us will live forever. But we are doing this not for ourselves but for our children and our children's children, and those who will follow in their footsteps.

And so, I wish you every good fortune in this significant endeavour.

Pope Francis - Message on Radio 4: 'Thought for the Day' 29.10.21



Climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic have exposed our deep vulnerability and raised numerous doubts and concerns about our economic systems and the way we organize our societies. We have lost our sense of security, and are experiencing a sense of powerlessness and loss of control over our lives.

We find ourselves increasingly frail and even fearful, caught up in a succession of "crises" in the areas of health care, the environment, food supplies and the economy, to say nothing of social, humanitarian and ethical crises. All these crises are profoundly interconnected. They also forecast a "perfect storm" that could rupture the bonds holding our society together within the greater gift of God's creation. Every crisis calls for vision, the ability to formulate plans and put them rapidly into action, to rethink the future of the world, our common home, and to reassess our common purpose.

These crises present us with the need to take decisions, radical decisions that are not always easy. At the same time, moments of difficulty like these also present opportunities, opportunities that we must not waste. We can confront these crises by retreating into isolationism, protectionism and exploitation. Or we can see in them a real chance for change, a genuine moment of conversion, and not simply in a spiritual sense.

This last approach alone can guide us towards a brighter horizon. Yet it can only be pursued through a renewed sense of shared responsibility for our world, and an effective solidarity based on justice, a sense of our common destiny and a recognition of the unity of our human family in God's plan for the world. All this represents an immense cultural challenge. It means giving priority to the common good, and it calls for a change in perspective, a new outlook, in which the dignity of every human being, now and in the future, will guide our ways of thinking and acting.

The most important lesson we can take from these crises is our need to build together, so that there will no longer be any borders, barriers or political walls for us to hide behind.

Some days ago, on 4 October, I met with religious leaders and scientists to sign a Joint Appeal in which we called upon ourselves and our political leaders to act in a more responsible and consistent manner. I was impressed by something said by one of the scientists present at that meeting. He told us: 'If things continue as they are, in fifty years' time my baby granddaughter will have to live in an unliveable world.'

We cannot allow this to happen!

It is essential that each of us be committed to this urgent change of direction, sustained by our own faith and spirituality. In the Joint Appeal, we spoke of the need to work responsibly towards a "culture of care" for our common home, but also for ourselves, and the need to work tirelessly to eliminate 'the seeds of conflicts: greed, indifference, ignorance, fear, injustice, insecurity and violence.'

Humanity has never before had at its disposal so many means for achieving this goal. The political decision makers who will meet at COP26 in Glasgow are urgently summoned to provide effective responses to the present ecological crisis and in this way to offer concrete hope to future generations. And it is worth repeating that each of us - whoever and wherever we may be - can play our own part in changing our collective response to the unprecedented threat of climate change and the degradation of our common home.

David Attenborough – Address to COP26



As you spend the next two weeks debating, negotiating, persuading and compromising, as you surely must, it's easy to forget that ultimately the emergency climate comes down to a single number — the concentration of carbon in our atmosphere. The measure that greatly determines global temperatures and the changes in that one number is the clearest way to chart our own story. For it defines our relationship with our world.

For much of humanity's ancient history, that number bounced wildly between 180 and 300 (parts per million). And so too, did global temperatures. It was a brutal and unpredictable world. At times, our ancestors existed only in tiny numbers. But just over 10,000 years ago, that number suddenly stabilised and with it, Earth's climate. We found ourselves in an unusually benign period with predictable seasons and reliable weather. For the first time, civilisation was possible and we wasted no time in taking advantage of that. Everything we've achieved in the last 10,000 years was enabled by the stability in this time. The global temperature over this period has not wavered over this time by more than +/- 1 degree Celsius. Until now.

Our burning of fossil fuels, our destruction of nature, our approach to industry, construction and learning, are releasing carbon into the atmosphere at an unprecedented pace and scale. We are already in trouble. The stability we all depend on is breaking. This story is one of inequality as well as instability. Today, those who've done the least to cause this problem are being the hardest hit. Ultimately all of us will feel the impact, some of which are now unavoidable.

Is this how our story is due to end? A tale of the smartest species doomed by that all too-human characteristic of failing to see the bigger picture in pursuit of short-term goals. Perhaps the fact the people most affected by climate change are not some imagined future generation, but young people alive today. Perhaps that will give us the impetus we need to rewrite our story, to turn this tragedy into a triumph. We are, after all, the greatest problem solvers to have ever existed on Earth.

We now understand this problem, we know how to stop the number rising and put it in reverse. We must halt carbon emissions this decade. We must recapture billions of tonnes of carbon from the air. We must fix our sights of keeping 1.5 degrees in reach. A new industrial revolution powered by millions of sustainable innovations is essential and is indeed already beginning.

We will all share in the benefits of affordable clean energy, healthy air and enough food to sustain us all. Nature is a key ally, whenever we restore the wild it will recapture carbon and help us bring back balance to our planet. As we work to build a better world, we must acknowledge no nation has completed its development because no advanced nation is yet sustainable. All have a journey still to complete so all that nations have a good standard of living and a modest footprint.

We again have to learn together how to achieve this, ensuring none are left behind. We must use this opportunity to create a more equal world and our motivation should not be fear, but hope. It comes down to this, the people alive now are the generation to come, will look at this conference and consider one thing: Did that number stop rising and start to drop as a result of commitments made here? There's every reason to believe that the answer can be 'yes.'

If working apart, we are a force powerful enough to destabilise our planet. Surely working together, we are powerful enough to save it. In my lifetime, I've witnessed a terrible decline. In your lifetimes, you could and should witness a wonderful recovery. That desperate hope is why the world is looking to you and why you are here.



Source: The Guardian

Collect Prayer for the Third Sunday before Advent

Almighty Father,
whose will is to restore all things
in your beloved Son, the King of all:
govern the hearts and minds of those in authority,
and bring the families of the nations, divided and torn apart by the ravages of sin,
to be subject to his just and gentle rule;
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.



Mark 1:14-20 - The First Disciples

Later on, after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News. 'The time promised by God has come at last!' he announced. 'The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!'

One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. Jesus called out to them, 'Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!' And they left their nets at once and followed him.

A little farther up the shore Jesus saw Zebedee's sons, James and John, in a boat repairing their nets. He called them at once, and they also followed him, leaving their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired men.

Schedule of Services

This schedule is correct at this time but may be subject to future alterations – please check on our website for the most up-to-date information.

All services start at 10am, unless marked differently on the table below

Please could you continue to book to attend services by contacting the Benefice
Office on 01962 880 845 or office@downsbenefice.org.uk

Please would you also continue to wear masks until we are advised otherwise.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Ch</i>	<i>Cr</i>	<i>Li</i>	<i>Sp</i>	<i>Wh</i>
<i>7th Nov</i>	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion	4pm – Café Church (<i>in Church Room</i>)		
<i>11th Nov (Thurs)</i>			10.55am – Act of Remembrance <i>at the War Memorial</i>		10.55 – Act of Remembrance <i>at the War Memorial (with Wherwell School)</i>
<i>14th Nov</i>	10.55am Remembrance Service	10.55am Remembrance Service <i>at the War Memorial</i>	<i>Service at Sir John Moore Barracks. (Seated by 10.35am)</i>	10.55am Remembrance Service	<i>With Chilbolton</i>
<i>21st Nov</i>		Morning Prayer		8am – Holy Communion (BCP)	
<i>24th Nov (Wed)</i>			Mid-Week Holy Communion		
<i>28th Nov</i>			Patronal Festival	Morning Prayer and Baptism	8am – Holy Communion (BCP)
<i>5th Dec</i>	<i>Morning Prayer</i>	Holy Communion	4pm – Posada		6pm – Autumn Mediations – Maximillian Kolbe
<i>12th Dec</i>		6pm – Carol Service	Holy Communion	6pm – Carol Service	Carol Service

