

**First Sunday of Advent,
Sunday, 27th November 2022**



Dear Friends,

'Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.' (Isaiah 2: 5)

Advent Sunday marks the start of a new Church Year and, together with Christians all over the world, we begin a journey marked out by a time of reflection and prayer, as we look forward to the birth of the Christ Child on Christmas Day.

Advent is a time of faithful watching and hopeful waiting. A time made all the more precious as we rejoice at being able to worship together in peace in our country, praying fervently for all those whose prayer is for peace in their own homeland. As we focus on our personal festive arrangements, so our hearts are also with those who are suffering the plight of homelessness and hunger – in Afghanistan, Syria, Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Yemen, with Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Pakistan and now parts of China struggling with food insecurity and economic privations. On our own streets, people are sleeping rough and many households are struggling to heat their homes and feed themselves as a consequence of the war in Ukraine.



Image – DesireJesus.com

Advent arrives with all the promise of remembrance and celebration. We *remember* because the light of the Lord shone upon us in the coming of His Son. And we *celebrate*, because this is the very essence of Christmas: The birth of Christ our Saviour. This period of Advent helps us each year to ponder afresh the enormity of the peace Christ would bring to us through His death and resurrection - the fulfilment of His saving work.

Christ speaks into the injustices of our world. And gives us even greater impetus to lay down our earthly ways and follow Him into the light of His saving life. As you plan Christmas gifts for your loved ones, perhaps this year make a donation in their name to a charity such as The Winchester Beacon (formerly Winchester Nightshelter), The Trinity Centre, Karis Kids or the national DEC appeal. And pray for peace in our world. Isaiah exhorts us to '*walk in the light of the Lord.*' For the light of Christ will shine through each act of generosity you make. You may think your gift is insignificant, but it will make a profound difference in the lives of others. One local man made homeless after losing his job has recently said: '*This place has turned my life around. Without the staff and people at The Winchester Beacon I reckon I would be dead by now.*'



As we rejoice in a new Church year, not only are we opening our hearts and minds to remember and celebrate Christ's first coming into the world. Advent is also an opportunity for us to prepare for His second coming – for the advent of the end time when He will come in God's name to shine His light of truth into the darkness of our damaged world and free us from sin once and for all. '*For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.*' (Matthew 16: 27)

In our Gospel reading for this Advent Sunday, Jesus is pointing to His second coming, warning us to '*be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.*' (Matthew 24: 44) Jesus will review and evaluate our lives, looking at the opportunities we have had to use the gifts he has blessed us with. At that time, God will deliver the righteous and condemn the wicked. This is the consolation for all who suffer at the hands of others in our broken world. In our preparation, we must be asking ourselves how we will shape up when His light falls upon us.

Yours, watching, waiting and hoping for the coming of Christ,

Jax
Rector, The Downs Benefice

Collect Prayer for the First Sunday of Advent

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 Christ came to us in great humility;
that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal;
through him who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.



Isaiah 2:1-5

- 1 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.
- 2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.
- 3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
- 4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.
- 5 O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.



Matthew 24:36-44 - The Day and Hour Unknown

But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Schedule of Services

Services start at 10am unless stated otherwise

Date	Ch	Cr	Li	Sp	Wh
27 th November	5pm – Advent Meditation		11.15am - Patronal Festival with Commissioning of the Anna Chaplain	Morning Worship	8am – Holy Communion (BCP) <i>PLUS</i> 5.30pm – Advent Carol Service
2 nd December					9.30am – <i>Sparsholt School Christingle Service</i>
4 th December	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion	4pm – Café Church (in the Church Room)		
11 th December	4pm – Carol Service	6pm – Carol Service	Holy Communion and Celebration of Canon Bruce Kington's 50th Anniversary of Ordination	6pm – Carol Service	Carol Service <i>PLUS</i> 6pm – Autumn Meditations
15 th December					6pm – <i>Wherwell School Christmas Service</i>
18 th December	Holy Communion	Morning Worship	6pm – Carol Service	8am – Holy Communion (BCP)	
24 th December	4pm – Crib Service		4pm – Crib Service	4pm - Crib Service <i>PLUS</i> 11.30pm – Midnight Service	2.30pm – Crib Service

25th December	Christmas Family Service	Christmas Family Service	Christmas Holy Communion	Christmas Family Service	Christmas Family Service
28th December			Mid-week Holy Communion		