

Welshpool & Bro Hafren Methodist Circuit

Home Worship Sheet, 6th December - the 2nd Sunday in Advent

This short act of worship has been prepared and written for you by Mrs Andrea Davies.



“Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps”

Eternal, loving God, some of us may be weary or downhearted and yet our hearts should be glad, for you are always here.

Let us meet and talk to you with confidence because you have always been with us. You will always be with us.

Let our hearts be glad!

Amen.

Our first hymn follows this Advent season through the message of the candles. This week we are only really concerned with verses 1 – 3 but it is a lovely hymn to enjoy in its entirety.

Hymn: Advent candles tell their story

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the hymn.

- 1 Advent candles tell their story
as we watch and pray,
longing for the Day of Glory,
‘Come, Lord, soon,’ we say.
Pain and sorrow, tears and sadness
changed for gladness
on that day.**

- 2** Prophet voices loudly crying,
making pathways clear,
glimpsing glory, self-denying,
calling all to hear.
Through their message — challenged, shaken —
hearts awaken:
God is near!
- 3** John the Baptist, by his preaching
and by water poured,
brought to those who heard his teaching
news of hope restored:
'Keep your vision strong and steady,
and be ready
for the Lord.
- 4** Mary's gift, beyond all telling,
was to give Christ room.
She gave God a human dwelling
in a mother's womb.
Who could guess the final story?
— cross and glory;
empty tomb!
- 5** Advent candles tell their story
on this Christmas Day.
Those who waited for God's glory:
they prepared the way.
Christ is with us: loving, giving,
in us living,
here today!

Mark Earey (b. 1965)

Old Testament Reading - Isaiah 40: 1-11

To listen to this reading, by David Suchett from BibleGateway in a new tab press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the reading.

**Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to
Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been**

completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

A voice of one calling: 'In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'

A voice says, 'Cry out.' And I said, 'What shall I cry?'

'All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures for ever.'

You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, 'Here is your God!'

See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. He tends his flock like a shepherd: he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

Lord God, you have comforted your people. You have lifted up valleys and made high places low. You have gathered your people in your eternal love as a shepherd gathers his sheep.

When our hearts are open to you, you speak to us and forgive our wandering ways.

We give you thanks and praise for all those who went before, preparing the way for the coming of Christ. Your word came to us through the prophets of old and we cherish those scriptures. John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah and we remember too, all those people of more recent years who have nurtured us in our faith and helped to bring us closer to you.

We give you thanks and praise for the gift of your Holy Spirit who supports and guides us, lifts us up and holds us in the light.

Above all else we thank you for your light, your love, your eternal faithfulness and for the gift of Jesus Christ, your son and the son of Mary. Amen.

A prayer of confession

Loving and forgiving God we do not always remember your goodness to us. Even at this time of reflection and preparation we can become caught up with the frippery of the season and lose sight of the important things.

In our joyful celebrations we sometimes forget those who have nothing to celebrate.

We can often be complacent and find it easier to pass by on the other side rather than disturb our plans in order to help those in real need.

We find excuses because what *can* we do? The world is so full of problems and hardship and we have no real power.

Forgive us all our self-serving, forgive us for forgetting that we should be faithful to the example set by your son, Jesus Christ.

We ask this, certain that if we really wish to walk in your ways you will bless us with the forgiveness we seek. Amen.

Hymn: Come, thou long expected Jesus

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the hymn.

- 1 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.**

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

3 Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a king,
born to reign in us for ever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.

4 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)

New Testament Readings

2 Peter 3: 8-15

To listen to this reading, by David Suchett from BibleGateway in a new tab press **Shift** and **Ctrl** together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the reading.

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom that God gave him.

Mark 1: 1-8

To listen to this reading, by David Suchett from BibleGateway in a new tab press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the reading.

The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

**‘I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way’ – ‘a voice of one calling in the wilderness,
“Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.”’**

And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him.

Confessing their sins, they were baptised by him in the River Jordan. John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt round his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: ‘After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.’

Reflection:

When we have such wonderful Bible readings as we have had today it is sometimes difficult to just pull out one main thread because like an onion you could just peel off layer upon layer that was worthy of comment and elaboration. I think I would be remiss if I did not invite you, if you have the time, to listen to the early pieces from the “Messiah” which are based on the words from Isaiah 40. For very many people these words plus Handel’s wonderful music just embody the true spirit of Christmas.

All our readings are full of reassurance and comfort. Again we are reminded of the transience of human life and that God’s time is not our own; we are warned that we need to continue to lead godly lives but the overwhelming feeling that comes from these readings is one of love and hope for the future. I am reminded of a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins; he observes the glory of God’s world and the generations of people who have not recognised the Lord and are spoiling and

destroying nature for the sake of trade and profit. In spite of it all God still cares for them and for all of his creation.

“And though the last lights off the black west went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward springs –
Because the Holy ghost over the bent

World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.”

Hopkins recognises the eternal quality of God’s faithfulness and his everlasting love. Isaiah too, knows the great power of God but also his tenderness and care for his people.

“He tends his flock like a shepherd: he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart.”

Isaiah speaks of comfort, of everything being made easier, obstacles removed and the glory of the Lord being revealed for everyone.

Peter is equally reassuring for he tells us that God’s promises will be fulfilled, in God’s own time; we are reminded once again that to God, a thousand years might seem just like a day. The message here encourages patience from us to match God’s patience. He is not slow in coming again but patient because he does not want anyone to miss out on the opportunity for salvation. This time of waiting, in a kind of limbo, a wilderness if you like, is a time which can be used positively. This is one challenge from these readings, that we use our time of waiting, our time in the wilderness, in a positive fashion. Where we need to improve our lives, this can be a time of new beginnings not just an empty hope for the future.

Whenever my sister goes to an appointment – doctor, hospital, hairdresser, she always takes her current WIP (work in progress) with her. She has probably knitted or crocheted many a gift sitting in a waiting room and judging by the conversations she has had with others over her work she has probably stirred up a lot of interest in crafting as well. With a little thought any time of waiting can be both productive and enjoyable. Are we productive while we wait? Our time at the moment certainly has the feel of being adrift in the wilderness; if only we can be positive and productive for God then our time will be well spent and much more tolerable.

But wait, we are not done yet with either challenges or reassurance. Nothing could be more positive than the opening words of our Gospel reading,

**“The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah,
the Son of God...”**

Mark is in no doubt about the identity and the importance of Jesus Christ and gives this assurance to his readers in his bold opening words. The rest of this first section though is not about Jesus, but about John the Baptist who appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. This introduction clearly links what was happening at the time back to the prophecies of Isaiah,

**“.....a voice of one calling in the wilderness
Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.”**

This leads us on to another bigger challenge. John the Baptist was a messenger of the “Good News”, he was truly preparing the way for Jesus Christ. We are now in a position to prepare the way, it is now down to us not just to be good on our own behalf but to see that we spread the word and let the light of God shine out from us, every day, everywhere we go. If we go back to the prophecy of Isaiah we can see that not only do we prepare the way but the news, the joy of salvation, is so wonderful that we need to shout it out, to be the messenger,

**“...go up on a high mountain....lift up your voice with a shout,
... do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, “Here is your God”.**

It is a big ask. God and/or religion are not popular topics of conversation in the modern everyday but if ever we could be said to be in the wilderness it is now. Can we make our actions and our voices be heard, loudly and joyfully proclaiming the love of an eternal God? Can we be the means of taking the glory of his light into dark places, bringing knowledge and comfort to others? Can we say that we are truly trying to prepare a way through the wilderness so that,

“Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps”.

Are we ready and prepared to accept the challenge?

Amen.

A prayer of intercession:

Eternal, loving God, you are all-seeing and all-knowing but it helps us to talk to you and to share with you those things which lie heavy on our hearts.

Today as we continue with our seasonal activities and prepare for the coming celebration of Christmas, we pray for all those who feel that they have nothing to celebrate; those whose lives have been shattered by natural disaster, famine, war or pandemic; those who light no candles or have no candles to light.

Lord, let them see your light.

We pray for those who hold the future of government in their hands; those who are so weighted down with responsibility and for whom there are no easy answers; those for whom there seems not even a candle flicker at the end of the tunnel.

Lord, let them see your light.

We pray for all those who are struggling to come to terms with such an uncertain and constrained way of life. There are many who feel adrift and alone and whose minds may become full of troubling and dark thoughts.

Lord, let them see your light.

We pray for our church and for all churches everywhere. May they continue to be beacons of hope, places of welcome and of refuge; may they keep their faithful strong.

Lord, let them shine out your light.

Finally we pray for ourselves. This time of year is a time for both reflection and celebration, help us remember what Christmas is really about and help us stay strong in faith and hope.

Lord, let us see your light; let your light shine from us so that we can prepare the way for you.

We ask all these things in the name of the child whose birthday we love to prepare for and celebrate, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

Our final hymn encourages us to accept the challenge and take our Lord to the people we meet.

Hymn: Colours of day dawn into the mind

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press **Shift** and **Ctrl** together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the hymn.

**1 Colours of day dawn into the mind,
the sun has come up, the night is behind.
Go down in the city, into the street,
and let's give the message to the people we meet.**

**So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
open the door, let Jesus return.
Take seeds of his Spirit, let the fruit grow,
tell the people of Jesus, let his love show.**

2 Go through the park, on into the town;
the sun still shines on; it never goes down.
The light of the world is risen again;
the people of darkness are needing a friend.

**So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
open the door, let Jesus return.
Take seeds of his Spirit, let the fruit grow,
tell the people of Jesus, let his love show.**

3 Open your eyes, look into the sky,
the darkness has come, the sun came to die.
The evening draws on, the sun disappears,
but Jesus is living, his Spirit is near.

**So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
open the door, let Jesus return.
Take seeds of his Spirit, let the fruit grow,
tell the people of Jesus, let his love show.**

Sue McClellan (b. 1951), John Paculabo (b. 1946)
and Keith Ryecroft (b. 1949)

Closing prayer

We are renewed in the name of the one who is love.

Even in the darkest light your power and love restore us.

**Let your light shine on us so that we may be bold and strong to spread
that light everywhere we go.**

Amen

