

# Church at home

East Leake Methodist Church 2020

*Sit comfortably in a quiet place and prepare, start with a brief period of silence, turning your mind and spirit towards God. You may want to have a cross or candle in view as a focus.*

*For this service you will need a comfortable chair, a candle to light and for the final prayer a face covering.*

## Advent one

### Call to Worship

The people who walk in darkness  
will see a great light.

For those who live in a land of deep darkness,  
a light will shine.

You will enlarge the nation of Israel,  
and its people will rejoice.

They will rejoice before you  
as people rejoice at the harvest  
and like warriors dividing the plunder.

Isaiah 9: 2-3 NLT

### A gathering prayer with candle lighting

Gathered here today,  
we light a candle of hope,  
knowing that in dark times  
there is always a light that can be lit.  
Let us, people in dusk and dawn,  
light the light of vigilance,  
knowing that God is always calling us  
to justice, mercy and humility –  
at this time of year,  
and all times of the year.

**Amen.**

## Hymn: StF 165

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.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Joda2Is-6o>

## Prayer of approach

We come to your house, God,  
sometimes aware, and sometimes not aware.  
Sometimes aware of our need, sometimes ignoring others' needs.  
You wait for us, O God, and as you wait,  
you call us to wait for you, too.  
As we gather,  
may we remember how you have helped us –  
in the kindness of a stranger,  
in the comfort of a friend,  
in the call for justice,  
in the shout for mercy.  
And make us, who wait for you,  
approach you and each other  
with new vigilance, and with new hope.  
**Amen.**

## A prayer of adoration

God, your name is Love, and in your great love  
you have called us into community with each other.  
With you and in you and because of you,  
we are nurtured in love.  
Yours is the name that lasts for ever.  
Your love reaches into all corners,  
confirming those who wait for you –  
that they wait in the name of Great Love.  
**Amen.**

## **Prayer of confession**

We have turned our face from you, O God,  
whose face is always turned towards us.  
We have forsaken what we know is just.  
We have ignored what we understand is true.  
We have refused to believe what should be believed.  
We have deceived ourselves in word and deed.  
For this, we humbly repent,  
and we turn our face towards you –  
who waits for us, and makes us ever new.  
Make us ever new now, O restoring God.  
**Amen.**

## **Lord's Prayer**

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy Name;  
Thy kingdom come;  
They 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

## **Hymn: StF 173 Into the darkness of this world**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXKOxub5obc>

*Introduction: Jesus speaks of coming dark days when people will be close to losing hope. He urges them therefore to stay awake to signs that offer hope to the coming deliverance, which will certainly come, though at an unexpected time.*

## **Reading: Mark 13: 24-37**

## Hymn: StF 174 Light a candle in a darkened place

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9M8SmWh2Fo>

### Reflection

Today one of the best-loved times of the Christian Year begins – the season of Advent. But what does Advent mean to us apart from Advent candles, traditional hymns, and a sense that Christmas is getting closer? All too often that's about it; yet it shouldn't be, for Advent is above all a time for preparation, a time for looking back to the Christ who came, and looking forward with hope to the Christ who shall come again. It is an invitation to reflect not simply on Christmas, but on the whole of the Gospel, and to ask ourselves the all-important question: 'What does it mean for me?'

The season of Advent is for many not a happy time, this year we have indeed all faced challenges that we have not faced before. Many of us have been separated from our loved ones, our friends, our work colleagues and even our church buildings. Words like lockdown, social distance, furlough are now in our everyday speech. Face coverings obscure the face, make us uncomfortable, it is often said at this time of year: "there is a reason for the season." We are all very much aware of the reason why we have had to change many things this year.

As I began to think about Advent, and the text for this week, everything speaks into no immediate hope being offered. Are we left feeling the same? What signs of hope are there in the wake of such a challenging pandemic? As we begin the journey that once again will lead us to the Christ Child, the bright lights and celebrations can highlight losses or emphasise the darkness that some people carry inside themselves.

The song 'Blue Christmas' comes to mind. Many will be reflecting on 2020 and wondering what is in store for 2021. If we listen to the message the BBC news is giving, it seems Christmas is cancelled this year! What events in recent history have left people feeling bereft or hopeless? What signs of hope are there in the wake of such challenging times?

Mark 13 reminds us how to live while we wait for Christ's return. We all have the responsibility of keeping the message of Christmas alive. We should not be afraid to share the Christmas story with those we meet.

My Grandma is the person I believe set me on my Christian journey, she taught me how to love by the way she lived her life. I can see her now, very small in stature (yet

the biggest person I have known) standing in the kitchen 'pinny' on baking Christmas treats singing 'Go tell it on the mountain ...our Jesus Christ is born.' Even though COVID-19 lockdown is to be lifted for a few days, how we share love and hope with our families, friends, neighbours, students who have to stay on campus, those suffering lockdown fatigue, is going to be different this year. Christmas is not cancelled! The message remains the same:

*"For a child is born to us,  
A son given to us.  
The government will rest on his shoulders.  
And he will be called;  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God;  
Everlasting Father, Prince of peace." Isaiah 9:6 NLT*

So, let us continue to journey together this Advent to welcome afresh the child born in a manger to bring love and hope to the world. **Amen**

**Hymn: H&P 135 Go, tell it on the mountain**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=72LE487YZ-U>

**Prayer of Intercession and Sending out prayer**

Adapted from: Moderator of the United Church of Canada, Revd Richard Bott

**A prayer as I put on my mask:**

Loving God,  
as I prepare to go into the world,  
help me to see the sacrament  
in the wearing of this cloth -  
let it be "an outward sign  
of an inward grace" -  
a tangible and visible way of living  
love for my neighbours,  
as I love myself.  
Christ,  
since my lips will be covered,  
uncover my heart,  
that people would see my smile  
in the crinkles around my eyes.  
Since my voice may be muffled,

help me to speak clearly,  
not only with my words,  
but with my actions.

Holy Spirit,  
As the elastic touches my ears,  
remind me to listen carefully -  
and full of care -  
to all those I meet.

May this simple piece of cloth be  
shield and banner,  
and each breath that it holds,  
be filled with your love.

In your Name and  
in that love,

I pray. **Amen** *(put on your face covering and sit for a few moments of  
silent reflection)*

### **Blessing**

We have been called in,  
to be renewed in the name of the one who is love.  
Even in the darkest night,  
even when there is only one small candle lit,  
your power and love restore us.  
Let your light shine on us as we go from here,  
so that we may be warmed and strengthened  
to light your light all around.

**Amen.**