

AN ADVENT PRAYER SERVICE

If this service is used on the First Sunday of Advent it may be suitable to bless the Advent Wreath during it. If so, the Order for the Blessing of an Advent Wreath (available for download on the Salford Liturgy Office website) should be inserted where indicated.

I: Lucernarium

Gathering

All gather in semi-darkness with unlit candles. The leader comes out and begins:

L: The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light.
All: On those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone.

L: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
All: Amen

L: May the Lord, whose face shines upon us, be with you always.
All: And with your spirit *or* And also with you.

[If the Advent Wreath has not been blessed, the Prayer of Blessing is used here and the first candle is lighted]

L: We are longing and waiting for the Lord to be revealed ...
All: The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon.

L: Let us live decent lives, bathed in the light of the Lord ...
All: The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon.

L: We know not when the master comes: evening, midnight, dawn ...
All: The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon.

L: God of hosts, bring us back ...
All: Let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.

The congregation's candles are lighted from the Advent Wreath, during which a suitable hymn is sung – suggestions are found at the end of this Service

Opening Prayer

L: Lord, *[Roman Missal]*
Let your glory dawn to take away our darkness.
May we be revealed as the children of light
at the coming of your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit
one God, for ever and ever.
All: Amen.

II: Listening

Readings can be chosen from any of those in the Lectionary for Advent. The following are suggestions.

First Reading: Isaiah 35:1-10 *God himself is coming to save you*

Let the wilderness and the dry-lands exult,
let the wasteland rejoice and bloom,
let it bring forth flowers like the jonquil,
let it rejoice and sing for joy.

The glory of Lebanon is bestowed on it,
the splendour of Carmel and Sharon;
they shall see the glory of the Lord,
the splendour of our God.

Strengthen all weary hands,
steady all trembling knees
and say to all faint hearts,
'Courage! Do not be afraid.

'Look, your God is coming,
vengeance is coming,
the retribution of God;
he is coming to save you.'

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
the ears of the deaf unsealed,
then the lame shall leap like a deer
and the tongues of the dumb sing for joy;

for water gushes in the desert,
streams in the wasteland,
the scorched earth becomes a lake,
the parched land springs of water.

The lairs where the jackals used to live
become thickets of reed and papyrus.

And through it will run a highway undefiled
which shall be called the Sacred Way;
the unclean may not travel by it,
nor fools stray along it.

No lion will be there
nor any fierce beast roam about it,
but the redeemed will walk there,
for those the Lord has ransomed shall return.

They will come to Zion shouting for joy,
everlasting joy on their faces;
joy and gladness will go with them
and sorrow and lament be ended.

After the reading there maybe a sung response: this may take the form of a chant (such as Taizé “Wait for the Lord...” or a scriptural hymn – suggestions are listed at the end of the service)

Gospel Reading: Luke 3:1-6 *All mankind shall see the salvation of God*

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar's reign, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the lands of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the pontificate of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. He went through the whole Jordan district proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah:

“A voice cries in the wilderness:
Prepare a way for the Lord,
make his paths straight.
Every valley will be filled in,
every mountain and hill be laid low,
winding ways will be straightened
and rough roads made smooth.
And all mankind shall see the salvation of God.”

III: Watching and Waiting

The following Litanical Reflection should be used to create a sense of our longing for the coming of the Lord. It should be read slowly, perhaps with a sung refrain. Gentle background music may be used. Other invocations may be added.

L: As we look at the imperfections and problems of our world and our lives, we must realise that Jesus promises something better: our Advent longing is for him to come again, bringing the Kingdom of God in its fullness.

Reader 2: We look at our world, and see war and terrorism, destroying lives and creating fear. We see violence in our streets and homes. We experience anger and hostility. We look for a better world ... God’s Kingdom to come.

Reader 1: We look at our world and see people hungry and thirsty, dying for lack of food and water. We see famines and droughts, disasters and disease taking lives. We experience selfishness and greed. We look for a better world ... God’s Kingdom to come.

Reader 2: We look at our world and see refugees and asylum seekers looking for safety and hope. We see homelessness on our streets. We experience anxiety for financial security for ourselves and our families. We believe in a better world ... God’s Kingdom to come.

Reader 1: We look at our world and see people persecuted for their beliefs and principles; we see human rights ignored, denied and trampled. We experience intolerance and bigotry. We believe in a better world ... God’s Kingdom to come.

Reader 2: We look at our world and see unfairness and inequality, as human beings are demeaned and degraded. We see people used and abused. We experience unfair wages and working conditions. We believe in a better world ... God's Kingdom to come.

Reader 1: We look at our world and see so much sadness and unhappiness, so many lives burdened by concerns and worries about the present and the future. We experience family breakdowns, betrayal and carelessness, creating misery in our lives. We believe in a better world ... God's Kingdom to come.

Reader 2: We see so many situations in our world that could be changed for the better, but people are apathetic and indifferent. We see threats to our environment through selfishness and greed. We experience a lack of care and concern for the needs of others. We believe in a better world ... God's Kingdom to come.

Reader 1: We see disease and sickness in our world and in our society. And we see death touch every human life, every human heart. We experience the fears of ill health, the anxiety of death, the pain of mourning. We believe in a better world ... God's Kingdom to come.

There should always be a period of silence for people to reflect and pray

IV: Prayer

L: We turn to the Lord who is coming and ask him to bring his light, to end this world's dark night of longing.

Reader: Come, Lord Jesus, break the chains of warfare and terrorism ...

All: The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon.

Reader: Come, Lord Jesus, break the chains of poverty and hunger ...

All: The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon.

Reader: Come, Lord Jesus, break the chains of homelessness ...

All: The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon.

Reader: Come, Lord Jesus, break the chains of oppression, persecution and denial of human rights ...

All: The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon.

Reader: Come, Lord Jesus, break the chains of inequality and unfair practices in our society ...

All: The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon.

Reader: Come, Lord Jesus, break the chains of anxiety and unhappiness ...

All: The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon.

Reader: Come, Lord Jesus, break the chains of apathy and indifference ...

All: The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon.

Reader: Come, Lord Jesus, break the chains of sickness, disease and death ...

All: The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon.

L: **We pray for God's Kingdom to come, in the words Jesus taught us:**
All: Our Father...

Concluding Prayer

L: **Father in heaven,** *[Roman Missal]*
**the day draws near when the glory of your Son
will make radiant the night of the waiting world.
May the lure of greed not impede us from the joy
which moves the hearts of those who seek him.
May the darkness not blind us
to the vision of wisdom
which fills the minds of those who find him.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.**
All: Amen.

V: Blessing and Dismissal

When the leader is a priest or deacon:

L: **The Lord be with you.**
All: And with your spirit *or* And also with you.

L: **Bow your heads and pray for God's blessing.**

L: **You believe that the Son of God once came to us;
you look for him to come again.
may his coming bring you the light of his holiness
and free you with his blessing.** *[Roman Missal]*

All: Amen

L: **May God make you steadfast in faith, joyful in hope
and untiring in love, all the days of your life.**

All: Amen

L: **You rejoice that our redeemer came to live with us as man.
when he comes again in glory, may he reward you
with everlasting life.**

All: Amen

L: **May Almighty God bless you, the Father ✠ and the Son and the Holy Spirit.**
All: Amen.

[If a lay minister presides:

L: **May the light of Christ lead us to the joy of his kingdom, now and for ever.**
All: Amen.]

A hymn may be sung to end the service.

Hymns

O come, O come, Emmanuel ...
 The king shall come when morning breaks ...
 City of God ("Awake from you slumber...")
 Come to set us free ...
 Come, thou long-awaited Jesus ...
 Lo, he comes with clouds descending ...
 Out of darkness ...
 The race that long in darkness ...
 When the King shall come again ...
 Dear maker of the starry skies (Conditor Alme Siderum)
 The coming of our God ...
 The light of Christ ...
 Oh, let all who thirst ...
 Rorate caeli desuper ...
 Come, O divine Messiah ...

Litanies and Refrains

"Wait for the Lord" (Taize)
 "Within our Darkest Night" (Taize)
 "Exaudi Now, Domine" (Margaret Rizza)
 "Kindle a Flame" (Iona Community)
 "Like a Sea Without a Shore" (Chorus)
 "For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits..."