



Dear All,

*The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness has not overcome it. (Joh 1:5)*

Longing for light, we wait in darkness  
Longing for truth, we turn to You.  
Make us Your own, Your holy people  
Light for the world to see.

Christ, be our light!  
Shine in our hearts.  
Shine through the darkness.  
Christ, be our light!  
Shine in Your church gathered today

The Advent is here! The first Sunday of Advent is this weekend and heralds the start of a new Church Year. We, in the west, keep the season of Advent in winter and winter determines how we keep it. As we move towards the darkest time of the year, we sense again the ancient stirrings of hope for the return of the light of the sun to warm the earth and bring with it the possibility of spring and new life. This year, we could also add our hope and waiting for the normality of life to be restored, after it has been lost for many months now due to the pandemic.



Advent is a unique invitation to the fragile but certain hope, the hope of the few, of the small, of the unknown, and of the powerless and unnoticed. As alone and isolated as you may feel, and as vulnerable, and unnoticed as the tiny flame of candle you may seem; yet, your prayers, your gestures, your warm smile and your holding on will heal the world! The time indeed will come, when that light will return to banish the terror of the darkness. It is just a matter of time, and until this time, we need to remain hopeful and watchful as we trust deep inside us that the greyness, paleness and emptiness around us now will not have the last word.

This recent uncertain and challenging time called us back to simplicity, to be simple in our preparations and our expectations. Part of the simplicity is to go back to the roots (this is the literal meaning of being "radical"). One of the ancient elementary themes for the four weeks of the Advent is Hope, Peace, Joy and love. Let us be inspired and filled by these basic yet in-depth themes as we journey this year together through the Advent. There will be a daily an online post on our page in line with these themes as a way to encourage us to keep going in the journey. Also, you can sign up for free Advent and Christmas email reflections, through the church of England new campaign "Comfort and Joy". It may also help us to use an Advent book (or app) during this season of waiting. There are many available from online bookshops covering a wide taste. This year Lynne is going to be using



'The Meaning is in the Waiting: The Spirit of Advent' by Paula Gooder, one of her favourite authors (£8.99 from Amazon). It would be good to share over email or Zoom what we are reading and learning during this season.

From 6 December we should be back in the Parish Church for the 10.30 am service, and 3 pm for family service each week (at St. Luke's) will include prayers, hymns, readings and a talk to help us to 'Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him' (Ps 37:7). All of the usual safety precautions will remain in place to keep you safe. Meanwhile do join us for the online service this Sunday at the usual times of 10.30 am & 3 pm.

May, the Lord of Hope, transform our worries, heal our brokenness, and fill us with His Joy as our hope rests in Him. Amen

*May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all, now and evermore. Amen*

Yours in Christ,  
Revd Adel Shokralla  
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