

Advent Prayer Service

Hymn: Come to us, O Emmanuel*begins very quietly, building up gradually...*

Opening prayer: Lord, on this Advent day and at this Advent time,
we pray with longing and waiting for your coming;
our hearts desire the warmth of your love
and our minds are searching for the light of your Word.

Increase our longing for Christ our Saviour
and give us the strength to grow in love,
that the dawn of his coming
may find us rejoicing in his presence
and welcoming the light of his truth.

Scripture Reading - Jas 5:7-10

Be patient, brothers and sisters,
until the Lord's coming.
Think of a farmer:
how patiently he waits for the precious fruit of the ground
until it has had the autumn rains and the spring rains!
You too have to be patient;
do not lose heart, because the Lord's coming will be soon.

Reflection

Sometimes waiting feels good...like when we are looking forward to meeting someone, or waiting to go on holidays.... This kind of waiting is different to waiting frustratedly for the bus to come, or the phone to ring. When it is good to wait, it is because we believe that we will be fulfilled, that something wonderful and great will happen.

Advent invites us to wait.....to wait consciously.....to wait openly for God.....to wait and notice God in our lives...in the bits and pieces of everyday. Advent invites us to live each day in expectation

God is not in the past, in all our mistakes and failings and things we have left undone.

God is not in the future, in all things we are rushing to do.

God is in the present, trying to break through, to become incarnate in our world right now, in this moment.

But only those who are waiting..... expecting.... watching for something wonderful..... will notice.

Sung Response: Come to us, O Emmanuel

Scripture Reading - Is 7:10-14

The Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying:
'Ask the Lord your God for a sign for yourself,
coming either from the depths of Sheol or from the heights above.'
'No', Ahaz answered, 'I will not put the Lord to the test.'

Then Isaiah said:

'Listen, O house of David!

Are you not satisfied with trying the patience of men

without trying the patience of God, too?
The Lord himself, therefore, will give you a sign:
the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,
and shall name him Emmanuel.'

Reflection

Emmanuel, God-with-us – this is the message of Christmas, that God is with us,wherever we are...in school,by the fireside,on the football field, in town, or.....in the wilds of the countryside,or in the heart of our homes Christmas reminds us that God is with us, that God so wanted to be with us that he comes as a small baby, to grow up among us and to live our lives, cheek by jowl with us.....

Being open to new possibilities and choices,.... allowing life with all its bits and pieces, all its shades and hues, to ask questions of us,.....changing my mind is hard,doing what I hadn't planned to do,..... seeing someone in a new light.....all of this can be difficult. And yet what does *God-with-us* mean, if it is not that God walks with you and with me, in our lives, and asks us to do likewise.....

Who is God-with-us, if not the one who invites me, us, to see life not just from my angle but from many angles..... *God-with-us* looks at our lives with the eyes of truth and helps us to see where we are closing our eyes to truth, living a lie, where we are less, oh, so much less than we can be.....

God-with-usnudging us to look afresh at our lives and our living, to hear again the invitation of Advent....God with us – Emmanuel – be with us today, this day, this Advent..

Sung Response: Come to us, O Emmanuel –

Promise of re-commitment in Advent

Leader: Let us take some time to reflect
on all we have heard and seen. *All sit.... Long Pause*

We have begun a journey together.
We have begun to ask ourselves questions
about the way we live.
We have begun to ask whether we are truly following Christ's example and to think
about difficult decisions
in the light of our answers to these questions.
Now we ask for the courage to continue our journey.

Reader: Lord Jesus, may we learn from you
how to live more simply and more generously.

All: **Lord, grant us the courage to transform our lives and to follow your example.**

Lighting of incense/candle ...

Reader: Lord Jesus, embolden us to cry out in the wilderness, that we
may find a voice to disarm power and a way to challenge prejudice

All: **Lord, grant us the courage to transform our lives and to follow your example.**

Lighting of incense/candle...

Reader: Lord Jesus, meet us as we face the darkness of our world

that we may embrace you in the shadows
and move out to greet your light.

All: **Lord, grant us the courage to transform our lives and to follow your example.**

Lighting of incense/candle...

Reader: Lord Jesus, show us how to pray and to praise.

All: **Lord, grant us the courage to transform our lives and to follow your example.**

Lighting of incense/candle...

Leader: May we always remember
and respect the promises we have made
and go out from here today
renewed in hope and commitment.

As we wait in joyful expectation
for the coming of Christ our Lord,
may we always turn to him for guidance as we pray...Our Father....

Closing Prayer

Leader: Lord, you came to bring light to our world.
As we prepare for your coming,
free us from old ways
and make our hearts ready to receive your light.

All: **Amen**

Leader: Lord, you came to be good news to the poor.
As we wait with eager expectation,
fill us with joy at your coming that we may be messengers of hope.

All: **Amen**

Leader: Lord, you call us to build a better world.
As we work for the coming of your kingdom,
help us to share what we have so that everyone has what they need.

All: **Amen.**

Leader: May almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All: **Amen**

Leader: **Go in the peace of Christ**

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Closing Hymn: Wait for the Lord.... Taizé chant