

This service can be just read for an act of Worship.
Or you might like to prepare and make a couple of items as part of an interactive service.
Things to make: A Christingle and an advent wreath.
If you want to actually make these you might want to read through first then gather a few items together and then use the service when you are ready. So let us celebrate the.....



Colours of Advent.

First we use the words of our Advent Liturgy in our Advent liturgy Booklet.

Call to worship

The words of 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 will be our opening and closing words in this act of worship.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

Hymn STF 188

There's a light upon the mountains, and the day is at the spring,
when our eyes shall see the beauty and the glory of the King;
weary was our heart with waiting, and the night-watch seemed so long;
but his triumph-day is breaking, and we hail it with a song.

There's a hush of expectation, and a quiet in the air;
and the breath of God is moving in the fervent breath of prayer:
for the suffering, dying Jesus is the Christ upon the throne,
and the travail of our spirit is the travail of his own.

He is breaking down the barriers, he is casting up the way;
he is calling for his angels to build up the gates of day:
but his angels here are human, not the shining hosts above;
for the drum-beats of his army are the heart-beats of our love.

Hark! We hear a distant music, and it comes with fuller swell;
'tis the triumph-song of Jesus, of our King, Immanuel:
Zion, go now forth to meet him; and, my soul, be swift to bring
all your finest and your noblest for the triumph of our King!

Henry Burton (1840-1930)

Prayer based on A Christingle.

I am missing seeing the nativity plays at this time of year and the Christingle services.
So in our opening prayer let's think of the orange which in a christingle reminds us of the world God has given to us. Let's reflect on the beauty of our world, the blessings it gives us.
Maybe recall a place you visited and it made you glad to be alive.....and give thanks.

Now think of the four sticks in our christingle. They represent the four seasons and we put 12 fruits, 3 on each stick to remind us of God's provisions all through the year. The child in me would like 366 sweets put on seven sticks...! You do the maths! But doesn't our heart leap when we think of how every day, every hour every second, every breathe, we are surrounded by Gods bounty. We are his children and he showers upon us good things in every moment of our lives.
Think of a time when you felt overwhelmed by joy and give thanks.

The christingle of course has a red band running around the middle of the orange. It's a hard symbol.

Representing the blood of Christ. But our world is and always has been a place where there are hard things to cope with, to understate the obvious! The red band reminds us that there is no situation in this world where our God does not stretch out his arms to heal and offer hope no matter the cost He had to pay. It's a long time since we have been able to reflect on this costly act of love through the sacrament of communion.

Take a moment think of a time when you have taken communion and felt the comfort and love of God flowing through you.....and be assured that love has never ceased...give thanks.

Lastly the moment we look forward to the christingle candle and it's being lit and the light growing and being shared and spread. Imagine that light growing and spreading still today in what ever we are facing and give thanks. **Amen.**

Old Testament Reading....Isaiah 61:1-4, The Good News of Deliverance

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.
They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

I love what I describe as, the playfulness of the tune to this next hymn. The verse especially for us ladies has us trying to sing right down in our boots! As low as you can go! Then the chorus reminds me of the bright lights of a fairground or showman organ. When you read the text that rings true. Especially the last two verses about worrying. The brightness of the chorus urges us forward, reminded of the bright hope within us and which is ours to share. Enjoy!

Hymn. STF 404

God's spirit is in my heart;
he has called me and set me apart.
This is what I have to do, what
I have to do:

*He sent me to give the good news to the poor,
tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more,
tell blind people that they can see, and set
the down-trodden free, and go tell everyone
the news that the kingdom of God has come;
and go tell everyone the news that
God's kingdom has come.*

Just as the Father sent me,
so I'm sending you out to be
my witness throughout the world -
the whole of the world:

Don't carry a load in your pack;
you don't need two shirts on your back;
God's workers can earn their own keep -
can earn their own keep:

Don't worry what you have to say;
don't worry, because on that day
God's spirit will speak in your heart -
will speak in your heart:

v. 1 and refrain A1an T Dale (1902-1979) vv. 2-4 Hubert Richards (b. 1921) Words and Music: © 1969 Vanguard Music Corp

The Gospel Reading.....John 1:6-8, 19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' He said, 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord" ', as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, 'Why then are you baptising if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?' John answered them, 'I baptise with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.' This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptising.

Reflection

Just a few short thoughts as this service offers quite a bit of Advent reflection.

Have you ever tried sketching out your life? Some therapies encourage you to draw a kind of time line with all the important events that have happened in your life. It's an interesting experience and in the group that I did this with. We all found that the timelines were not straight or ordered, as we remembered different events and changed or added things in, as they came to mind. The pathways were definitely not straight. Something we are called to aspire to even in our gospel reading. We quote it to don't we, "now be straight with me", "just give me a straight answer", and so on.

I guess we have all tried at times to draw a straight line without a ruler. We choose something we think will work and nope the outcome is less than perfect. Even with a ruler we can slip and the line on the page is spoiled.

The joy of Advent is that we see our world with all its mistakes and wrong paths. The rules we have tried to follow and not measured up too. By our own efforts we fall and fail. In the words of the child within us, we try to be good but too often we end up on Santa's naughty list!

So where is the joy? We are called to try and make straight our paths and there is one who came into our world whose path was clear and straight. In His presence we would be humbled indeed. Not fit even to offer to tie His shoe laces. Yet as we turn to Him, he takes what we might feel are the messed up pages of our lives and he wipes them clean. Giving us new pages to write our lives on each and every day or time that we need. Our part is to prepare room to receive, to use and accept His gifts.

One last thought have you been in the situation where your being given so many things you can't hold onto them all? Advent is that season when we clean out all the things in our lives that could get in the way of receiving the best gift of all, The love of God in Christ Jesus. What might you need to let go of so you can hold onto the precious gift that is ours in Christ Jesus? That grudge your holding onto? Whatever it is let go and reach out for the one who will guide you down a straighter path. One that is the best way in all the wildernesses of life.

Prayers for others and ourselves based on an Advent Wreath.

If you have some colourful candles lovely if not and you can use crayons or felt tips draw a red, an orange and a green candle...if you can't do either just imagine as we share these prayers that you are lighting a different coloured set of advent candles that are of course the same as traffic light signals



Ready: we see the light of the red candle. Which causes us to stop and think.

What are the needs of our world, our families and friends and ourselves that we need to bring to God today?

Steady: we see the light of an orange candle. A colour that speaks of the need for preparation.

What do we need to prepare in our own hearts this advent season so that we may truly do Gods will and with the love that He freely bestows on us, share this with others. Even those who we find a challenge?

Go: we see the light of the green candle.

Let us pray for those places in our world that lack colour. Those who mourn, or suffer in any way. Let us go back in our minds to the items in the news that have disturbed us this week and pray that God will send people to go and bring healing and joy to those places.

What colour candle do you want to see next? The ones in a traditional advent wreath that reminds us of Mary and the coming of Christ. Ponder for a moment what colour you would choose and what the colour represents for you and your Advent journey.... and give thanks to God for all his blessings. Now with our colourful lights burning brightly let us reflectively **say the Lords Prayer.**

Another hymn to enjoy and sing with gusto, see if the neighbours can hear you!

JOY= Jesus first, others next and yourself last. So let us in the true spirit of Joy sing...

Hymn STF 330

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature
sing.

Joy to the world, the Saviour reigns!
Let all their songs employ;
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Closing Prayer.

In this season of Advent when there are so many questions and still the usual questions about what shall I ask for? what shall I wear? what shall I buy? So many questions and so many decisions. Help us Lord to choose you and your ways.

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this. Amen