

***From Darkness to Light***

***A Service for the first Sunday of Advent***



***held in the church of St John the Evangelist, Fernham***

***Sunday 3 December 2023 at 5.30pm***

*The service begins in darkness as the light of Christ, from the Paschal Candle, is spread among us from the back of the church*

*The choir sing:     Let all mortal flesh keep silence*

***Hymn (tune: Christ is made the sure foundation)***

Advent is a time of waiting  
for the life that is to be.  
When the Christ, by prophets promised,  
sits enthroned on Mary's knee,  
human in the way that we are;  
come to earth for you and me.

Choirs of angels are rehearsing  
Glory to our God on high  
Shepherds in the fields are watching  
where their bleating charges lie.  
Distant magi, watching, restless  
scan the dark mysterious sky.

Hope is all our theme for Advent,  
hope for all the human race.  
All our hope on God is founded,  
God who shows a human face.  
God who made the Earth and planets  
now appears in time and space.

We await the Christ,  
**the one who will reveal God to us.**  
He comes to us as sparkling light:  
**twinkling with joy and playfulness.**  
He comes to us as everyday light:  
**brightening the ordinary world around us.**  
He comes to us as softened light:  
**creating a gentle, healing space in the shadows.**  
He comes to us as a focused spotlight:  
**bring truth and justice into stark relief.**  
This is the light of the world:  
**Jesus Christ, coming to shine among us.**

**Our Father,**  
**which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;**  
**thy kingdom come;**  
**thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.**  
**Give us this day our daily bread.**  
**And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that**  
**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.**

*The lights are turned on and candles extinguished*

*Handbells – Hark, the herald angels sing*

Almighty God,  
who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be  
destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's  
truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of  
his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**We believe in God, robed in splendour, veiled in  
mystery,  
ruler alike of darkness and light.**

**We encounter God in Jesus Christ, who was tortured  
and put to death, but whose radiance could not be  
quenched;**

**whose touch brings a blaze of colour to a dull, drab  
world: reviving the weary, healing the wounded,  
dazzling the satisfied.**

**We walk with God, guided by the light of God's loving  
Spirit, who enters the shadowed places of our hearts  
and leads us into truth and life.**

**We wait for God, and for the fulfilment of God's  
promises,  
for the time when the darkness will hold no fear and  
the light will no longer blind, but creation will be  
made whole once more and God's peace will reign for  
ever.**

**Hymn 535** O come, O come, Emmanuel

**Reading 1:** Genesis 1: 1-5

**Reading 2:** Psalm 13

*The choir sing: This is the truth sent from above*

**Reading 3:** Baruch 4: 36 – 5: 9

**Reading 4:** Isaiah 7: 10-15

**Hymn 584**                Of the Father's love begotten  
                                      (omit vv3 &4)

**Reading 5:** Luke 1: 26-33

**Reading 6:** Luke 1: 68-79

**Hymn 832**                Who would think that what was needed

## **Prayers**

Almighty God,  
who in Jesus Christ  
has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed,  
forgive us our sins,  
open our eyes to God's truth,  
strengthen us to do God's will  
and give us the joy of his kingdom,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

Lord by your presence, light up the past, that we may  
learn from it with thankfulness.

Light up the present, that we might live in it with love.

Light up the future that we may prepare for it in hope.

As we watch and wait and pray, may we be always ready  
to encounter the Lord who is already and always with us.

**Amen**

We thank you, God, for the people whose lives have been light in dark places. We pray for ourselves that God's light may shine in us.

**Amen**

**Lord Jesus we thank you, that when the world was very dark, you came to bring light into our darkness.**

**You came into the night to bring light into the lives of Mary and Joseph.**

**You came to Bethlehem, then, as now, a very troubled town, bringing light to all who came to trust you.**

**You come to us now, into our lives and into our world, bringing light still to your people.**

**We ask you now, once again, to accept this worship that we bring as we come again to the manger.**

**Help us to see there the light that will shine for us; not just at Christmas, but every day of the year. Amen**

The light of God  
Lead us and make us unafraid  
The power of God  
Protect us and make us strong  
The joy of God  
Heal us and make us happy  
The grace of God  
Bless us and keep us loving now and evermore.

**Amen**

**Hymn 449**

Lo, he comes with clouds descending,

Now, as we enter this time of waiting,  
stay with us, Lord.

**Stay with us, Lord.**

Soon, as we say goodbye to each other,  
stay with us, Lord.

**Stay with us, Lord.**

Always and everywhere, as we travel homewards,  
stay with us, Lord.

**Stay with us, Lord. Amen**

*The choir sing: O radiant dawn*

***Thank you for coming to the service this evening***

***Please join us after the service for refreshments***

***We look forward to singing Christmas carols with you  
on Elmside Green on 21 December and to welcoming  
you at any of the Christmas services across the Benefice***