

Liturgical Resources for Advent

These resources have been prepared at the request of the Bishop of Southwark by his Advisory Group for Liturgy in the hope that they may be of help to Parishes in entering into the season of Advent, with penitence and hope properly mixed.

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A Litany of Hope and Promise

This litany is intended to serve a number of different purposes. It can be used as a whole. Alternatively sections can be extracted for use in other liturgical settings. Each section has its own tone and flavour, and brief rubrics indicate the sources and themes to help if it is desired to select one or a few for particular use. Optional opening biddings and closing collects are provided for each section, some composed for the occasion, others borrowed from Common Worship. The Advent Wreath cycle has also been provided with plainchant in case it is desired to use each sub-section as a focal point on Sundays in Advent.

O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL

A litany drawn from the Advent Antiphons, with general themes of confident hope.

In the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace. As we wait in hope for the coming of Christ our Emmanuel, let us pray in peace to the Lord.

Lord Jesus, you are the hope and promise of the world.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Lord Jesus, you are our light in the midst of darkness and anxiety.

Come, Lord Jesus.

O Lord, our Emmanuel, save us from our sins.

Come, Lord Jesus.

O Lord, the wisdom from on high, deepen our faith and love.

Come, Lord Jesus.

O Lord, the king of kings, renew the joy of salvation in the lives of all your people.

Come, Lord Jesus.

O Lord, the Root of Jesse, deliver us from our fears and needs.

Come, Lord Jesus.

O Lord of David's Key, bring unity among all who believe in you.

Come, Lord Jesus.

O Lord, the bright light of our day, be the strength of all who love you.

Come, Lord Jesus.

O Lord, the desire of the nations, grant your peace to all who seek you.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Lord Jesus, bless us as we bring our prayers before you.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Lord Jesus, remain with us always.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Lord Jesus Christ, hope of the nations,
and the strength of all who trust in you;
grant us the gifts of your hope and joy,
that we may shine as lights in your world.

For all peace and glory are yours,
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

PATIENCE AND WAITING

In the season of Advent we are brought once again to a liminal space. It is a place of watching and waiting. A time of preparation as we look back in order to look forward, readying ourselves for what God will do next by reminding ourselves of what God has already done. This litany invites us to reflect on the moments before and reminds us that our waiting has purpose.

As we wait patiently for the Lord, we pray that he will set our feet on a rock, give us a firm place to stand, and put a new song in our mouths, a hymn of praise to our God.

Cf. Psalm 40

In obsidian darkness before God spoke
We wait for the Lord, wait patiently for the lord.

On the eve of Exodus with blood smeared door
We wait for the Lord, wait patiently for the lord.

On the mountaintop and the cleft of a rock
We wait for the Lord, wait patiently for the lord.

In the belly of the whale and the bottom of the pit
We wait for the Lord, wait patiently for the lord.

With Zechariah in his silent state
We wait for the Lord, wait patiently for the lord.

With Elizabeth in her seclusion
We wait for the Lord, wait patiently for the lord.

As Joseph watched over his new wife
We wait for the Lord, wait patiently for the lord.

As Mary caressed her growing form
We wait for the Lord, wait patiently for the lord.

In a world made strange by infection and disease
We wait for the Lord, wait patiently for the lord.

With a longing to hold once again those we love
We wait for the Lord, wait patiently for the lord.

In a season subdued, as a fallow year
We wait for the Lord, wait patiently for the lord.

Until the time when it is done
We wait for the Lord, wait patiently for the lord.

O Lord our God,
make us watchful and keep us faithful
as we await the coming of your Son our Lord;
that, when he shall appear,
he may not find us sleeping in sin
but active in his service
and joyful in his praise;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

THE ADVENT WREATH

This section, which reflects sequentially on the traditional Advent cycle of Patriarchs, Prophets, John the Baptist, The Virgin Mary, and The Christ, can be further sub-divided, each cycle beings used as a short Litany to be used when lighting the Advent wreath: plain Chant is provided for the first four sections in case they are to be used as a focal point of the service.

We are surrounded by a great cloud of witness, among whom we wait in joyful expectation for Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God; we give thanks that we are receiving with them a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

THE PATRIARCHS

Holy Lord, God of the Patriarchs,
have mercy on us.



May we, like Abraham and David, obediently follow you this Advent.
Hear us, good Lord.



May we open our hearts to receive you, O Lord of Light.

Hear us, good Lord



Hear us, good Lord.

THE PROPHETS

Holy Lord, God of your Prophets,
have mercy on us.



have mer-cy up-on us.

May we, like them, reflect your light and your love.
Hear us, good Lord.



Hear us, good Lord.

May we too rejoice in the joy and light that you give.
Hear us, good Lord.



Hear us, good Lord.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Holy Lord, God of your witness John the Baptist,
have mercy on us.



have mer-cy up-on us.

May we, in word and deed,
prepare others to receive your Son in their hearts.

Hear us, good Lord.



Hear us, good Lord.

May we too be heralds of peace, justice and your Good News.
Hear us, good Lord.



Hear us, good Lord.

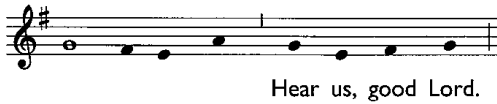
THE VIRGIN MARY

Holy Lord, God worshipped by the Virgin Mary,
have mercy on us.



have mer-cy up-on us.

May we, in our Advent journey, be daily renewed in your image.
Hear us, good Lord.



Hear us, good Lord.

May we, like Mary, respond to your call with joy.
Hear us, good Lord.



Hear us, good Lord.

THE CHRIST

Holy God, Emmanuel,
have mercy upon us.

Prince of Peace, fill our lives with your Light.
Hear us, good Lord.

May we, who know your joy in our lives,
share that joy with others.
Hear us, good Lord.

May we shine as your lights in the world,
and sing of your glory with the angels.
Hear us, good Lord.

We give you thanks, Heavenly Father,
for those with whom we await
the fulfilment of all things:
kindle in us the fire of your Spirit
that when your Christ comes again
we may shine as lights before his face;
who is alive and reigns now and for ever.
Amen.

ADVENT LITANIES OF DARKNESS AND LIGHT

This section is intended to take us on a journey from darkness into light, though each of the three sub-sections can also be used separately. The first sub-section is adapted from sources in the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.

The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it. As we wait in darkness, let us pray to the Lord.

WAITING HOPEFULLY IN DARKNESS

We wait in the darkness, expectantly, longingly, anxiously, thoughtfully.
You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.

The darkness is our friend: in the darkness of the womb,
we have all been nurtured and protected.
You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.

In the darkness of the womb,
the Christ-child was made ready for the journey into light.
You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.

It is only in the darkness that we can see the splendour of the universe:
blankets of stars, the solitary glowings of distant planets.
You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.

It was the darkness that allowed the Magi to find the star
that guided them to where the Christ-child lay.
You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.

In the darkness of night,
desert people find relief from the cruel, relentless heat of the sun.
You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.

In the blessed desert darkness,
Mary and Joseph were able to flee with the infant Jesus to safety in Egypt.
You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.

In the darkness of sleep,
we are soothed and restored, healed, and renewed.
You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.

In the darkness of sleep, dreams rise up:
God spoke to Jacob and Joseph through dreams, God is speaking still.
You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.

In the solitude of darkness, we remember those
who are demoralized and discouraged, whose fear has turned to cynicism,
whose vulnerability has become bitterness.
You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.

In the darkness, we remember those who are near to our hearts
and ask God to bless and protect them in all that they do.
You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.

In the solitude of darkness we come face to face with ourselves
and with the road that lies ahead of us.
You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.

In that same darkness, we find companionship for the journey.
You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.

We know you are with us, O God, yet we still await your coming.
You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.

In the darkness that contains both our hopelessness and our expectancy,
we watch for a sign of God's hope.
You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.

DARKNESS AND LIGHT ARE BOTH ALIKE

For the darkness of waiting, of not knowing what is to come,
of staying ready and quiet and attentive,
We praise you, O God, for darkness and light are both alike to you.

For the darkness and the light are both alike to you, for the darkness of
staying silent, for the terror of having nothing to say, and for the greater
terror of needing to say nothing,
We praise you, O God, for darkness and light are both alike to you.

For the darkness of loving in which it is safe to surrender, to let go of our
self-protection, and to stop holding back our desire,
We praise you, O God, for darkness and light are both alike to you.

For the darkness of choosing when you give us the moment to speak, and
act, and change, and we cannot know what we have set in motion, but we
still have to take the risk,
We praise you, O God, for darkness and light are both alike to you.

For the darkness of hoping in a world which longs for you, for the wrestling
and labouring of all creation for wholeness and justice and freedom,
We praise you, O God, for darkness and light are both alike to you.

A SHORT LITANY FOR ADVENT

O Morning Star, splendour of light eternal and bright Sun of righteousness:
come and enlighten all who dwell in darkness and in the shadow.
Lord Jesus, come soon!

O King of the nations, you alone can fulfil their desires:
cornerstone, you make opposing nations one:
come and save the creature you fashioned from clay.
Lord Jesus, come soon!

O Emmanuel, hope of the nations and their Saviour:
come and save us, Lord our God.
Lord Jesus, come soon!

God, our light and our salvation:
illuminate our lives,
that we may see your goodness in the land of the living,
and looking on your beauty
may be changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COME, THOU LONG EXPECTED JESUS

A short Litany drawing on Charles Wesley's hymn

As we wait, knowing that the time is coming when he will come on clouds
descending, and every eye shall behold him, let us pray to the Lord.

You were born to set your people free: release us from your fears and sin
Long expected Jesus, come!

You are the hope of all the earth: let us find our rest in you
Long expected Jesus, come!

You were born a child and yet a king: reign in us forever
Long expected Jesus, come!

Now by your eternal spirit, bring your gracious kingdom
Long expected Jesus, come!

Rule in all our hearts by your own sufficient merit
Long expected Jesus, come!

Raise us to your glorious throne
Long expected Jesus, come!

Dear Saviour, whom all adore,
high on your eternal throne,
take the power and the glory;
claim the kingdom for thine own:
come quickly, come quickly.
Amen.

Advent Themes and Reflections

UNEXPECTED INTERRUPTIONS

This year more than any other we have had to reconcile ourselves with unexpected interruptions. Life has been turned upside down and the world has been made strange to us. New words have been introduced into our vocabulary, new face attire has become commonplace, new skills have had to be mastered. And we recognise that we are living in a world disordered.

In Advent we anticipate and build up to the cosmic interruption of light into darkness. We tell the story of Almighty God stepping into the world in the most unexpected way, as a baby to a teenage mother, in an unremarkable village in the Middle East. Here are four readings and reflective prayers, one for each week in Advent, which can be used to explore the theme 'unexpected interruptions.' Each one focusses on the experience of a different person around the birth narrative of Jesus.

WEEK 1 - ZECHARIAH

READINGS

In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years.

Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. Now at the time of the incense-offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.' Zechariah said to the angel, 'How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years.' The angel replied, 'I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. But now, because you did not believe my words, which will

be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur.'

Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah, and wondered at his delay in the sanctuary. When he did come out, he could not speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them and remained unable to speak.

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. But his mother said, 'No; he is to be called John.' They said to her, 'None of your relatives has this name.' Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. He asked for a writing-tablet and wrote, 'His name is John.' And all of them were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. Fear came over all their neighbours, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. All who heard them pondered them and said, 'What then will this child become?' For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has looked favourably on his people and redeemed them.
He has raised up a mighty saviour[a] for us
in the house of his servant David,
as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who
hate us.

Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered his holy covenant,
the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,
to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,
might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness
before him all our days.

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.

By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon[b] us,

to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.'

Luke 1.5-22 and 57-79

REFLECTIVE QUESTION

Zechariah's voice was taken away during this time and when it was restored, he voiced a powerful prophetic declaration about his son John and about Jesus. How might being mute have felt for Zechariah? How could it have hindered him? How could it have helped him?

PRAYER

'Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel'.
As Zechariah was mute before you
Let us hold our silence and contemplate
the grace of God in Christ.
As his mouth was opened
In declaration of your salvation
Let us proclaim
The glory of the one who came to save.
Amen

WEEK 2 - ELIZABETH

READINGS

After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, 'This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favourably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people.'

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'

Luke 1.24-25 and 39-45

REFLECTIVE QUESTION

Elizabeth was an older woman, past child-bearing age, who had been carrying the cultural 'shame' of having been barren. The story tells us she went into seclusion for 5 months and then Mary came to stay with her. Consider what the experience of time alone might have been to her and what the gift of Mary's company could have brought.

‘In these days the Lord has shown his favour’
 As Elizabeth remained faithful when barren
 Let us continue to trust God
 in times of struggle
 As she rejoiced at God’s precious gift
 Let our hearts overflow
 With gratitude
 for all that is good.
Amen.

WEEK 3 - JOSEPH

READING

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’ All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

‘Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
 and they shall name him Emmanuel’,

which means, ‘God is with us.’ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Matthew 1.18-25

REFLECTIVE QUESTION

Joseph was engaged to Mary and had thoughts and plans for how their life together would be, but reality required him to adjust his expectations. Consider what Joseph faced in caring for his young wife who found herself exposed to potential scandal, accepting responsibility for a child he did not father, and in patiently waiting before being able to lie with Mary.

PRAYER

‘He did what the Lord commanded him’
 As Joseph strove to do right amid confusion,
 Let us seek God’s wisdom
 In our uncertainty.

As he patiently followed
God's instruction,
let our lives too be characterised by
faithful obedience
to the one who leads us in all truth.
Amen.

WEEK 4 - MARY

READINGS

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Luke 1.26-38, 2.1-7

REFLECTIVE QUESTION

Mary was young and suddenly found herself at the centre of God's story and plan. A plan which involved telling her betrothed that she was pregnant with God's child, an arduous journey while heavily pregnant and giving birth

in a strange place. What did it take for Mary to accept her role in this and what might have sustained her in all the upheaval and uncertainty?

PRAYER

'From now on all generations will call me blessed.'
As Mary said yes to God's call on her life
Though there was cost in the accepting,
Let us embrace the invitation
God holds out to us.
As she set off on her journey not knowing where it would end,
Let us follow where God leads,
Trusting in his goodness and care.
Amen.

An Advent Cycle of Reflection

This is a cycle of four reflective services of the same pattern, intended either for use week by week during Advent as stand-alone liturgies, or as sources for material to be incorporated into other services. They offer a cycle of reflection and repentance on themes drawn from the customary Advent themes of the Patriarchs, the Prophets, John the Baptist, and the Virgin Mary.

However, in this unusual year, it has been thought possible that an emphasis on the penitential element in Advent, drawing on the echoes of Lent that are readily to be found in this season, may be particularly helpful. Thus each week also offers penitential reflections drawing on the four riders of Revelation 6, with words of repentance for our own complicity:

v.2, the rider on a white horse coming out to conquer: general domination of the world (natural and human), using it for our own purposes rather than God's

vv. 3-4, the rider on a red horse who was permitted to take peace from the earth: war and violence

vv. 5-6, the rider on a black horse who held a pair of scales in his hand: hunger and want -

vv. 7-8, the rider on a pale green horse whose name was Death: disease, including human responsibility for COVID-19

Each liturgy ends with a hymn and a blessing, so as to conclude by pointing to redemption.

Much of this material has been adapted from Common Worship, whilst some has been composed specially for the occasion. The hymns are from the New English Hymnal.

Reflection in Advent 1

In Advent 1, prompted by Rev 6.2, and our seasonal reflections on the Patriarchs, we repent of the will to dominate and control. As with the other four liturgies in this series, this is designed to work both as a stand-alone Service of the Word (perhaps suitable for mid-week evening use) and also to provide elements that can be incorporated into other forms of worship and prayer.

OPENING

It is time for us to wake out of sleep, for deliverance is nearer to us now than it was when first we believed. Let us therefore cast off the deeds of darkness and put on our armour as soldiers of the light.

The grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
and also with you.

My brothers and sisters, we meet today in the solemn season of Advent as we prepare to celebrate the coming of Christ. Let us in this holy season reflect on his coming to bring light to the world, and repent of our reluctance to live in the light, and of the shadows we cast. In this first week of Advent, let us cast away all desire to dominate and control the world and those around us, walk in the light that shines on our path, and renew within ourselves the hope of glory to which he beckons us.

COLLECT

Silence may be kept

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors:
to you be praise and glory for ever.
You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith
and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfilment.
May we be obedient to your call
and be ready and watchful to receive your Christ,
a lamp to our feet and a light to our path;
for you are our light and our salvation.
Blessed be God for ever.

THE WORD OF GOD

A reading from Revelation:

I heard one of the four living creatures call out, as with a voice of thunder, 'Come!' I looked, and there was a white horse! Its rider had a bow; a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering and to conquer.

Revelation 6.1b-2

Psalm 103 is said or sung, in a manner suitable to the place.

- 1 Bless the Lord, O my soul, ◆
and all that is within me bless his holy name.
- 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, ◆
and forget not all his benefits;
- 3 Who forgives all your sins ◆
and heals all your infirmities;
- 4 Who redeems your life from the Pit ◆
and crowns you with faithful love and compassion;
- 5 Who satisfies you with good things, ◆
so that your youth is renewed like an eagle's.
- 6 The Lord executes righteousness ◆
and judgement for all who are oppressed.
- 7 He made his ways known to Moses ◆
and his works to the children of Israel.
- 8 The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, ◆
slow to anger and of great kindness.
- 9 He will not always accuse us, ◆
neither will he keep his anger for ever.
- 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, ◆
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.
- 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, ◆
so great is his mercy upon those who fear him.
- 12 As far as the east is from the west, ◆
so far has he set our sins from us.
- 13 As a father has compassion on his children, ◆
so is the Lord merciful towards those who fear him.
- 14 For he knows of what we are made; ◆
he remembers that we are but dust.
- 15 Our days are but as grass; ◆
we flourish as a flower of the field;
- 16 For as soon as the wind goes over it, it is gone, ◆
and its place shall know it no more.
- 17 But the merciful goodness of the Lord is from of old
and endures for ever on those who fear him, ◆
and his righteousness on children's children;
- 18 On those who keep his covenant ◆
and remember his commandments to do them.
- 19 The Lord has established his throne in heaven, ◆
and his kingdom has dominion over all.
- 20 Bless the Lord, you angels of his, ◆
you mighty ones who do his bidding
and hearken to the voice of his word.

21 Bless the Lord, all you his hosts, ♦
you ministers of his who do his will.

22 Bless the Lord, all you works of his,
in all places of his dominion; ♦
bless the Lord, O my soul.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

A reading on the Patriarchs

The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. So the Lord said, “I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.” But Noah found favour in the sight of the Lord. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God.

Genesis 6.5,7-8,9b

PRAYERS OF PENITENCE

A voice cries out in the wilderness,
‘Make straight the way of the Lord.’
So let us listen, and turn to the Lord in penitence and faith.

Through fear and weakness of faith
we have wanted to dominate and control your Creation:
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

We have sought to save our lives
rather than lose them for your sake and for the Gospel:
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

We have come out to conquer
rather than resting secure in the shadow of your wings:
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

This or another authorised absolution is used:

May almighty God have mercy on *us*,
forgive *us our* sins,
and bring *us* to everlasting life,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PRAYERS

Prayers of intercession are offered - if these are to be composed for the occasion it is suggested that they should be on the theme of rejecting dominance, control and conquering - alternatively the following form may be used:

In joyful expectation of his coming to our aid we pray to Jesus.

Make us steadfast like Noah in obedience,
and give us grace, Lord, to trust
not in our own meagre skill and power,
but in your immortal holiness and strength.

Maranatha:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Comfort and save by your mighty yet gentle power
all those who are dominated and conquered:
in particular we pray for the people of [...].

Maranatha:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

For all those held down and dominated
by sickness of mind or body, particularly [...]
let there be healing, O God;
and may we be channels of your liberating love.

Maranatha:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

We pray for the natural world
where it is marred by human conquest:
protect, O Lord, the forests and the oceans,
and all that you have made to flourish in them.

Maranatha:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The intercessions may conclude with the Collect for Advent:

Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;
that on the last day,
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;

through him who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer is said.

HYMN

A hymn may, subject to regulations, be sung - or else a recorded version may be heard, or the tune may be hummed whilst the congregation reflects on the words.

Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes where Thy body lay.
*Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.*

Lo, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb.
Lovingly He greets us, scatters fear and gloom;
let His church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,
for the Lord now liveth; death hath lost its sting.
*Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.*

No more we doubt Thee, glorious Prince of life!!
Life is nought without Thee; aid us in our strife;
make us more than conqu'rors, through Thy deathless love;
bring us safe through Jordan to Thy home above.
*Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.*

CONCLUSION

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon *us*,
scatter the darkness from before *our* path,
and make *us* ready to meet him when he comes in glory;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among *us* and remain with *us* always.
Amen.

Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Reflection in Advent 2

In Advent 2, prompted by Rev 6.4, and our seasonal reflections on the Prophets, we repent of war and violence. As with the other four liturgies in this series, this is designed to work both as a stand-alone Service of the Word (perhaps suitable for mid-week evening use) and also to provide elements that can be incorporated into other forms of worship and prayer.

OPENING

It is time for us to wake out of sleep, for deliverance is nearer to us now than it was when first we believed. Let us therefore cast off the deeds of darkness and put on our armour as soldiers of the light.

The grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
and also with you.

My brothers and sisters, we meet today in the solemn season of Advent as we prepare to celebrate the coming of Christ. Let us in this holy season reflect on his coming to bring light to the world, and repent of our reluctance to live in the light, and of the shadows we cast. In this second week of Advent, let us repent of our complicity in war and violence, determined to walk in the light that shines on our path, and renew within ourselves the hope of glory to which he beckons us.

COLLECT

Silence may be kept

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true:
to you be praise and glory for ever.
Of old you spoke by the mouth of your prophets,
but in our days you speak through your Son,
whom you have appointed the heir of all things.
Grant us, your people, to walk in his light,
that we may be found ready and watching
when he comes again in glory and judgement;
for you are our light and our salvation.
Blessed be God for ever.

THE WORD OF GOD

A reading from Revelation:

I heard the second living creature call out, 'Come!' And out came another horse, bright red; its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people would slaughter one another; and he was given a great sword.

Psalm 46 is said or sung, in a manner suitable to the place.

- 1 God is our refuge and strength, ♦
a very present help in trouble;
- 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved, ♦
and though the mountains tremble in the heart of the sea;
- 3 Though the waters rage and swell, ♦
and though the mountains quake at the towering seas.
- 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, ♦
the holy place of the dwelling of the Most High.
- 5 God is in the midst of her;
therefore shall she not be removed; ♦
God shall help her at the break of day.
- 6 The nations are in uproar and the kingdoms are shaken, ♦
but God utters his voice and the earth shall melt away.
- 7 The Lord of hosts is with us; ♦
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.
- 8 Come and behold the works of the Lord, ♦
what destruction he has wrought upon the earth.
- 9 He makes wars to cease in all the world; ♦
he shatters the bow and snaps the spear
and burns the chariots in the fire.
- 10 'Be still, and know that I am God; ♦
I will be exalted among the nations;
I will be exalted in the earth.'
- 11 The Lord of hosts is with us; ♦
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

A reading on the Prophets

Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets
who lead my people astray,
who cry 'Peace'
when they have something to eat,
but declare war against those
who put nothing into their mouths.
Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision,
and darkness to you, without revelation.
The sun shall go down upon the prophets,

and the day shall be black over them;
the seers shall be disgraced,
and the diviners put to shame;
they shall all cover their lips,
for there is no answer from God.
But as for me, I am filled with power,
with the spirit of the Lord,
and with justice and might,
to declare to Jacob his transgression
and to Israel his sin.

Micah 3.5-8

PRAYERS OF PENITENCE

A voice cries out in the wilderness,
'Make straight the way of the Lord.'
So let us listen, and turn to the Lord in penitence and faith.

You bring our fear into the light of love;
we prefer to hide in the shadows.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

You promise healing for the earth;
we turn our backs on our common world.
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

You come near in the vulnerable word made flesh;
we worship distant idols of celebrity and power.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

This or another authorised absolution is used:

May almighty God have mercy on *us*,
forgive *us our* sins,
and bring *us* to everlasting life,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

PRAYERS

Prayers of intercession are offered - if these are to be composed for the occasion it is suggested that they should be on the theme of war and violence - alternatively the following form may be used:

**We are waiting, Jesus;
come and live with us soon.**

Jesus, we are waiting because we know who you are:
the Creator of the world,
the God who took on human form,
the son of Mary, a girl just like any other girl.
We are waiting, Jesus; Maranatha:
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Jesus, we are waiting because we have faith in you.
We know that we can trust you.
We remember that you are good to us,
and we thank you for all the good things that you give to us every day.
We are waiting, Jesus; Maranatha:
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Jesus, we are waiting here, here in,
waiting for you to come into our houses, our streets, our shops and offices,
to fill them with your light and peace.
We are waiting, Jesus; Maranatha:
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Jesus, we are waiting for you to come and change things:
to bring health to our sick ones,
to make our asylum seekers welcome,
to comfort those who have lost loved ones;
and to turn us around
so that we can be your hands and feet, your eyes and ears,
in this world that needs you so much.
We are waiting, Jesus; Maranatha:
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The intercessions may conclude with the Collect for Advent:

Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;
that on the last day,
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer is said.

HYMN

A hymn may, subject to regulations, be sung - or else a recorded version may be heard, or the tune may be hummed whilst the congregation reflects on the words.

Forth in the peace of Christ we go;
Christ to the world with joy we bring;
Christ in our minds, Christ on our lips,
Christ in our hearts, the world's true king.

King of our hearts, Christ makes us kings;
Kingship with him his servants gain;
With Christ, the Servant-Lord of all,
Christ's world we serve to share Christ's reign.

Priests of the world, Christ sends us forth,
The world of time to consecrate,
The world of sin by grace to heal,
Christ's world in Christ to recreate.

Christ's are our lips, his word we speak;
Prophets are we whose deeds proclaim
Christ's truth in love that we may be
Christ in the world, to spread Christ's name.

We are the Church; Christ bids us show
That in his Church all nations find
Their hearth and home where Christ restores
True peace, true love, to humankind.

CONCLUSION

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon *us*,
scatter the darkness from before *our* path,
and make *us* ready to meet him when he comes in glory;
and the blessing if God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among *us* and remain with *us* always.
Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Reflection in Advent 3

In Advent 3, prompted by Rev 6.6, and our seasonal reflections on John the Baptist, we reflect on and repent of our part in hunger and want. As with the other four liturgies in this series, this is designed to work both as a stand-alone Service of the Word (perhaps suitable for mid-week evening use) and also to provide elements that can be incorporated into other forms of worship and prayer.

OPENING

It is time for us to wake out of sleep, for deliverance is nearer to us now than it was when first we believed. Let us therefore cast off the deeds of darkness and put on our armour as soldiers of the light.

The grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
and also with you.

My brothers and sisters, we meet today in the solemn season of Advent as we prepare to celebrate the coming of Christ. Let us in this holy season reflect on his coming to bring light to the world, and repent of our reluctance to live in the light, and of the shadows we cast. In this third week of Advent, let us repent of our shared responsibility for hunger and want in the world, determined to walk in the light that shines on our path, and renew within ourselves the hope of glory to which he beckons us.

COLLECT

Silence may be kept

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true:
to you be praise and glory for ever.

Your prophet John the Baptist was witness to the truth
as a burning and shining light.

May we your servants rejoice in his light, and so be led to witness to him
who is the Lord of our coming kingdom, Jesus our Saviour and King of the
ages.

Blessed be God for ever.

THE WORD OF GOD

A reading from Revelation:

I heard the third living creature call out, 'Come!' I looked, and there was a black horse! Its rider held a pair of scales in his hand, and I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, 'A

quart of wheat for a day's pay, and three quarts of barley for a day's pay, but do not damage the olive oil and the wine!

Revelation 6.5b-6

Psalm 41 is said or sung, in a manner suitable to the place.

- 1 Blessed are those who consider the poor and needy; ♦
the Lord will deliver them in the time of trouble.
- 2 The Lord preserves them and restores their life,
that they may be happy in the land; ♦
he will not hand them over to the will of their enemies.
- 3 The Lord sustains them on their sickbed; ♦
their sickness, Lord, you will remove.
- 4 And so I said, 'Lord, be merciful to me; ♦
heal me, for I have sinned against you.'
- 5 My enemies speak evil about me, ♦
asking when I shall die and my name perish.
- 6 If they come to see me, they utter empty words; ♦
their heart gathers mischief; when they go out, they tell it abroad.
- 7 All my enemies whisper together against me, ♦
against me they devise evil,
- 8 Saying that a deadly thing has laid hold on me, ♦
and that I will not rise again from where I lie.
- 9 Even my bosom friend, whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, ♦
has lifted up his heel against me.
- 10 But you, O Lord, be merciful to me ♦
and raise me up, that I may reward them.
- 11 By this I know that you favour me, ♦
that my enemy does not triumph over me.
- 12 Because of my integrity you uphold me ♦
and will set me before your face for ever.
- 13 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, ♦
from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

A reading on John the Baptist

The crowds asked John, 'What then should we do?' In reply he said to them, 'Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.' Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, 'Teacher, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.' Soldiers also asked him, 'And we, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Do not extort

money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.'

Luke 3.10-14

PRAYERS OF PENITENCE

A voice cries out in the wilderness,
'Make straight the way of the Lord.'
So let us listen, and turn to the Lord in penitence and faith.

You enter the desert to face the hardest truth;
we live in self-deception.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

You offer the bread that gives true life;
we consume what leaves us craving more.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

You refuse to worship empty power;
we let greed rule our world.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

This or another authorised absolution is used:

May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive *us our* sins,
and bring *us* to everlasting life,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PRAYERS

Prayers of intercession are offered - if these are to be composed for the occasion it is suggested that they should be on the theme of hunger and want - alternatively the following form may be used:

In expectation let us pray to our Saviour and Redeemer, saying, Lord Jesus, come soon!

O wisdom, from the mouth of the Most High, you reign over all things to the ends of the earth:

come and teach us how to live.

Lord Jesus, come soon!

O Lord, and head of the house of Israel,
you appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush

and you gave the law on Sinai:
come with outstretched arms and ransom us.
Lord Jesus, come soon!

O Branch of Jesse, standing as a sign among the nations,
all kings will keep silence before you
and all peoples will summon you to their aid:
come, set us free and delay no more.
Lord Jesus, come soon!

O Key of David and sceptre of the house of Israel,
you open and none can shut; you shut and none can open:
come and free the captives from prison.
Lord Jesus, come soon!

O Morning Star, splendour of the light eternal
and bright Sun of Righteousness:
come and enliven all who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death.
Lord Jesus, come soon!

O King of the nations, you alone can fulfil our desires:
Cornerstone, you make opposing nations one:
come and save us, creatures you fashioned from clay.
Lord Jesus, come soon!

O Emmanuel, hope of the nations and our Saviour:
come and save us, Lord our God.
Lord Jesus, come soon!

The intercessions may conclude with the Collect for Advent:

Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;
that on the last day,
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer is said.

HYMN

A hymn may, subject to regulations, be sung - or else a recorded version may be heard, or the tune may be hummed whilst the congregation reflects on the words.

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
announces that the Lord is nigh.
Awake and harken, for he brings
glad tidings of the King of kings!

Then cleansed be every life from sin:
make straight the way for God within,
and let us all our hearts prepare
for Christ to come and enter there.

We hail you as our Saviour, Lord,
our refuge and our great reward.
Without your grace we waste away
like flowers that wither and decay.

Stretch forth your hand, our health restore,
and make us rise to fall no more.
O let your face upon us shine
and fill the world with love divine.

All praise to you, eternal Son,
whose advent has our freedom won,
whom with the Father we adore,
and Holy Spirit, evermore.

CONCLUSION

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon *us*,
scatter the darkness from before *our* path,
and make *us* ready to meet him when he comes in glory;
and the blessing if God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among *us* and remain with *us* always.
Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Reflection in Advent 4

In Advent 4, prompted by Rev 6.8, and our seasonal reflections on the Virgin Mary, we repent of our part in the spread of disease, particularly this year. As with the other four liturgies in this series, this is designed to work both as a stand-alone Service of the Word (perhaps suitable for mid-week evening use) and also to provide elements that can be incorporated into other forms of worship and prayer.

OPENING

It is time for us to wake out of sleep, for deliverance is nearer to us now than it was when first we believed. Let us therefore cast off the deeds of darkness and put on our armour as soldiers of the light.

The grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
and also with you.

My brothers and sisters, we meet today in the solemn season of Advent as we prepare to celebrate the coming of Christ. Let us in this holy season reflect on his coming to bring light to the world, and repent of our reluctance to live in the light, and of the shadows we cast. In this first week of Advent, let us reflect on and repent of our shared responsibility for disease in the world, particularly the current pandemic, determined to walk in the light that shines on our path, and renew within ourselves the hope of glory to which he beckons us.

COLLECT

Silence may be kept

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, merciful and gentle:
to you be praise and glory for ever.

Your light has shone in our darkened world
through the child-bearing of blessed Mary;
grant that we who have seen your glory
may daily be renewed in your image
and prepared like her for the coming of your Son,
who is the Lord and Saviour of all.

Blessed be God for ever.

THE WORD OF GOD

A reading from Revelation:

I heard the voice of the fourth living creature call out, 'Come!' I looked and there was a pale green horse! Its rider's name was Death, and Hades

followed with him; they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, famine, and pestilence, and by the wild animals of the earth.

Revelation 6.7b-8

Psalm 107.1-3,10-22,42-3 is said or sung, in a manner suitable to the place.

- 1 O give thanks to the Lord, for he is gracious, ◆
for his steadfast love endures for ever.
- 2 Let the redeemed of the Lord say this, ◆
those he redeemed from the hand of the enemy,
- 3 And gathered out of the lands
from the east and from the west, ◆
from the north and from the south.
- 10 Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, ◆
bound fast in misery and iron,
- 11 For they had rebelled against the words of God ◆
and despised the counsel of the Most High.
- 12 So he bowed down their heart with heaviness; ◆
they stumbled and there was none to help them.
- 13 Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, ◆
and he delivered them from their distress.
- 14 He brought them out of darkness and out of the shadow of death, ◆
and broke their bonds asunder.
- 15 Let them give thanks to the Lord for his goodness ◆
and the wonders he does for his children.
- 16 For he has broken the doors of bronze ◆
and breaks the bars of iron in pieces.
- 17 Some were foolish and took a rebellious way, ◆
and were plagued because of their wrongdoing.
- 18 Their soul abhorred all manner of food ◆
and drew near to the gates of death.
- 19 Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, ◆
and he delivered them from their distress.
- 20 He sent forth his word and healed them, ◆
and saved them from destruction.
- 21 Let them give thanks to the Lord for his goodness ◆
and the wonders he does for his children.
- 22 Let them offer him sacrifices of thanksgiving ◆
and tell of his acts with shouts of joy.
- 42 The upright will see this and rejoice, ◆
but all wickedness will shut its mouth.
- 43 Whoever is wise will ponder these things ◆
and consider the loving-kindness of the Lord.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

A reading on the Virgin Mary

Standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

John 19.15b-28

PRAYERS OF PENITENCE

A voice cries out in the wilderness,
'Make straight the way of the Lord.'
So let us listen, and turn to the Lord in penitence and faith.

Mary was obedient when you called her:
where we have preferred to go our own way,
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Mary was willing to go beyond what she knew she could do:
where we have not dared to live abundantly,
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

Mary gave life at great cost to herself;
where we have been unwilling to heal and comfort,
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

This or another authorised absolution is used:

May almighty God have mercy on *us*,
forgive *us our* sins,
and bring *us* to everlasting life,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

PRAYERS

Prayers of intercession are offered - if these are to be composed for the occasion it is suggested that they should be on the theme of disease and healing - alternatively the following form may be used:

In joyful expectation of his coming to our aid we pray to Jesus.

Make us open to your loving purposes, Lord,
willing to walk with you and hear your voice,
despite uncertainty and fear;
and as we live your risen life,
may we bring your healing love to those around us.

Maranatha:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Heal the world, O God:
take from us the scourge of disease;
turn us from ways of living that disrupt the order of creation;
let all your children live in loving obedience and peace.

Maranatha:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

God of healing and order,
We thank you for the skill and commitment of doctors, nurses
and all who care for the sick;
we ask you to strengthen and encourage them;
and we pray for those developing a vaccine for the coronavirus,
that they may find hope in their work,
and that it may soon be crowned with success:

Maranatha:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Father, let healing come to all who are sick,
both those struck down by COVID,
and those many more suffering from other diseases:
in particular we bring before you [...]
give them comfort in adversity and relief from pain.

Maranatha:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Receive those who have died, we pray:
may they rest from suffering and rise to abundant life;
we remember before [...]
and we pray for all who mourn

Maranatha:

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The intercessions may conclude with the Collect for Advent:

Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;

that on the last day,
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer is said.

HYMN

A hymn may, subject to regulations, be sung - or else a recorded version may be heard, or the tune may be hummed whilst the congregation reflects on the words.

Thou to whom the sick and dying
Ever came, nor came in vain,
Still with healing word replying
To the wearied cry of pain;
Hear us, Jesus, as we meet
Suppliants at Thy mercy-seat.

Still the weary, sick and dying
Need a brother's, sister's care,
On Thy higher help relying
May we now their burden share,
Bringing all our off'rings meet
Suppliants at thy mercy-seat.

May each child of Thine be willing,
Willing both in hand and heart,
All the law of love fulfilling,
Comfort ever to impart,
Ever bringing off'rings meet
Suppliant to Thy mercy-seat.

So may sickness, sin and sadness
To Thy healing virtue yield,
Till the sick and sad, in gladness,
Rescued, ransomed, cleansèd, healed,
One in Thee together meet,
Pardoned at thy judgment-seat.

CONCLUSION

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon *us*,
scatter the darkness from before *our* path,

and make *us* ready to meet him when he comes in glory;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among *us* and remain with *us* always.
Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

An Advent Service of Penitence

INTRODUCTION AND BIDDING

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ,
who was, who is, and who is to come,
be always with you:
and also with you.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, Advent is a season of preparation, when we make ourselves ready to celebrate afresh the mystery of our Lord's coming as one like us, the beginning of our redemption. Advent moves us to look forward with renewed hope to the second coming of Christ, when God's plan of salvation will be brought to fulfilment. As we rejoice in this hope, we come together to reflect in penitence on the brokenness of the world and the needs of creation, committing ourselves in the name of the Lord to the healing of divisions and compassionate stewardship of the gifts he has given to each of us. May God, in his love and grace, make us ready in heart and mind for the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which we are soon to celebrate in the great festival of Christmas.

Let us pray ...

Almighty and merciful God,
you have brought us together in the name of your Son
to receive your mercy and grace in our time of need.
Touch our hearts and convert us to yourself.
Where sin has divided and scattered,
may your love make us one again;
where sin has harmed your creation,
may your power strengthen and heal;
where sin has brought sorrow and sadness,
may your Spirit broker reconciliation.
Give us a new heart to love you,
so that our lives may reflect the image of your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the Lord,
the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
'Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you.'

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,
but it shall be for God's people;
no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray.
No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.
And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Isaiah 35

**Pour down, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness.**

Turn your fierce anger from us, O Lord,
and remember not our sins for ever.
Your holy cities have become a desert,
Zion a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation;
our holy and beautiful house,
where our ancestors praised you.

**Pour down, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness.**

We have sinned and become like one who is unclean;
we have all withered like a leaf,
and our iniquities like the wind have swept us away.
You have hidden your face from us,
and abandoned us to our iniquities.

**Pour down, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness.**

You are my witnesses, says the Lord,
and my servant whom I have chosen,
that you may know me and believe me.
I myself am the Lord, and none but I can deliver;
what my hand holds, none can snatch away.

**Pour down, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness.**

Comfort my people, comfort them;
my salvation shall not be delayed.
I have swept your offences away like a cloud;
fear not, for I will save you.
I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,
your redeemer.

**Pour down, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness.**

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.

Romans 8. 18-26

Or

A reading from the Second Letter of St Peter.

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

2 Peter 3. 8-13

THE SERMON / HOMILY

LITURGY OF PENITENCE

The Officiant introduces a period of silent prayer and reflection.

There follows a litany or act of penitence.

LITANY OF CREATION

Let us confess our sins, and the brokenness of our world in the misuse of God's creation.

God our Father, we are sorry
for the times when we have used your gifts carelessly,
and acted ungratefully.
Hear our prayer, and in your mercy:
forgive us and help us.

We enjoy the fruits of the harvest,
but sometimes forget that you have given them to us.
Father, in your mercy:
forgive us and help us.

We belong to a people who are full and satisfied,
but ignore the cry of the hungry.
Father, in your mercy:
forgive us and help us.

We are thoughtless,
and do not care enough for the world you have made.
Father, in your mercy:
forgive us and help us.

We store up goods for ourselves alone,
as if there were no God and no heaven.
Father, in your mercy:
forgive us and help us.

Or

LITANY OF RECONCILIATION (COMMUNITY OF THE CROSS OF NAILS)

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

The hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class,
Father, forgive.

The covetous desires of people and nations to possess what is not their own,
Father, forgive.

The greed which exploits the work of human hands and lays waste the earth,
Father, forgive.

Our envy of the welfare and happiness of others,
Father, forgive.

Our indifference to the plight of the imprisoned, the homeless, the refugee,
Father, forgive.

The lust which dishonours the bodies of men, women and children,
Father, forgive.

The pride which leads us to trust in ourselves and not in God,

Father, forgive.

Be kind to one another, tender hearted,
forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.
Amen.

Or

The Word became flesh and lived among us, that we may see his glory full of grace and truth. For those times and occasions we have failed to acknowledge Christ in creation, in the world, and in one another, let us repent, and seek reconciliation and peace, as we pray ...

**Father eternal, giver of light and grace,
we have sinned against you and against our neighbour,
in what we have thought,
in what we have said and done,
through ignorance, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We have wounded your love,
and marred your image in us.
We are sorry and ashamed,
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past;
and lead us out from darkness
to walk as children of light. Amen.**

The Priest pronounces the Absolution.

May the God of all healing and forgiveness
draw *you* to himself
and cleanse *you* from all our sins,
that we may behold the glory of his Son,
the Word made flesh,
even Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

THE PRAYERS

Prayers of intercession may be included.

Confident in the Lord's never-failing mercy, and in the joyful knowledge of our God who comes to our aid in all times and places, let us pray with confidence in the words that Jesus, our Saviour and Redeemer, taught us:

Our Father ... / Our Father in heaven ...

Loving God, on the first day of creation, you made the light that scatters all darkness. Let Christ, the light of lights, shine in the hearts of your people and free us from the darkness of sin; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Heavenly Father, you have shown us your mercy and have made us a new creation in the likeness of your Son. Make us living signs of your love for the world to see, that all may be brought to your grace and peace. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

THE BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

The Lord be with you:
and also with you.

May God himself, the God of peace,
make you perfect and holy,
and keep you safe and blameless, in spirit, soul and body,
for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;
and the blessing ...

Go in peace to prepare a way for the Lord.

Thanks be to God.