

Wyre Forest West Churches

Diocese of Worcester
Mamble with Bayton, Rock with Heightington and Far Forest

Sunday 29th November – Advent Sunday

10.00 a.m.	Morning Prayer	On-Line with Zoom
10.45 a.m.	'Virtual' Coffee Morning	On-Line with Zoom
11.30 a.m.	Annual Parochial Church Meetings	

Dear Friends,

Following all the various announcements that have been made by the government this week, I am pleased to say that we will be able to hold our services in church from next Sunday (6th). There are, of course, still many restrictions that we need to follow in order to keep people safe, and minimise the risk of spreading the virus, but we will be returning to the pattern of services that we had prior to the second 'lockdown'. We will be holding a service of Holy Communion at 9.30 a.m. in one of the churches in the benefice each Sunday, and on 2 Sundays each month there will also be a service in the afternoon or early evening. Next Sunday (6th December) there will be a service at 9.30 a.m. at Mamble.

We are still awaiting some clarification of what exactly we will be permitted to do e.g. singing, but it appears that most of what we planned to do for Christmas will be possible, which is wonderful news! Please look out for details around the benefice - posters, pew sheet, our website, our Facebook page, emails, leaflets - as we are still finalising some events, but if all else fails then just give me a call.

At 11.30 a.m. today (Sunday 29th) we will be holding the Annual meeting of parishioners and Annual Parochial Church Meetings for each of our 3 parishes. These are important meetings where the Annual Report and Accounts are presented to the parishes and churchwardens and PCC members are elected by the parishes. Everyone is welcome to join us. Unfortunately, this year we cannot meet in person, but you can join us via Zoom or by normal telephone. The details are shown below but if you have any problems or questions about how to do this then please give me a call.

Topic: APCM

Time: Nov 29, 2020 11:30 AM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/94287368414?pwd=bnVMN1J0dHFRV2FETE+Fb0ZmNVJWZz09>

Meeting ID: 942 8736 8414

Passcode: 196327

One tap mobile

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Dial by your location

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+44 131 460 1196 United Kingdom

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+44 208 080 6592 United Kingdom Meeting ID: 942 8736 8414

Passcode: 196327

Today is Advent Sunday, the first Sunday of a new church year, and the first Sunday in Advent. So, as we begin to journey towards Christmas we pray:

Come, Lord, come down, come in, come among us. Enter into our darkness with your light. Come fill our emptiness with your presence. Dispel the clouds and reveal your glory. Come refresh, renew, restore us. Come Lord, come down, come in come among us. Amen.

May God Bless You and Keep you Safe

Rev Sallie

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Bible Readings for today – Advent Sunday

Isaiah 64.1-9, Psalm 80.1-8,18-20, 1 Corinthians 1.3-9, Mark 13.24-37

Collect for this week

Almighty God, as your kingdom dawns, turn us from the darkness of sin to the light of holiness, that we may be ready to meet you in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Requests for Prayer

Please continue to pray for all those who are ill, especially Annie Round, Paul Mills, Sylvia Jenkins, Susan Godwin, Edna Mills, Mary McGrath, Pearl Green, Margaret Wright, Polly, Maureen Boswell, Peter Cotterill, Gladys Bradley, Sandra, David Sargent, Stella Jones, Sheila Ward and Sheila Whitelaw. We pray for all those suffering with, and affected by, Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Pray for the family and friends of Terry Harvey and Sylvia Perkins, and for all those who have recently died, and for all those who mourn.

Intercessions

We come before Christ our Saviour with our prayers, saying,
Jesus Light of the World: **Shine in the darkness, we pray.**

We pray for all those who suffer through homelessness, unemployment or poverty. Help them to know that in you they have riches, purpose and an eternal home.

Jesus Light of the World: **Shine in the darkness, we pray.**

We pray for all who live with failure and distress. Help them to know the victory of your Cross.

Jesus Light of the World: **Shine in the darkness, we pray.**

We pray for all who are friendless, lonely and in despair. Help them to find in you the faithful friend, who will always stay beside them.

Jesus Light of the World: **Shine in the darkness, we pray.**

We pray for who are ill in mind or body. Help them to feel your healing touch on their lives.

Jesus Light of the World: **Shine in the darkness, we pray.**

We pray for all who rule our country and our world. Help them to show your compassion to all who are helpless and vulnerable.

Jesus Light of the World: **Shine in the darkness, we pray.**

We pray for ourselves, that we may share the light of your presence with everyone we meet particularly this Advent. Help us to draw others to you, the one true light.

Merciful Father, **Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Hymns for this week's service,

**1. The advent of our God
with eager prayers we greet,
and singing haste upon the road
his glorious gift to meet.**

**The everlasting Son
scorns not the virgin's womb;
that we from bondage may be won
he bears a bondsman's doom.**

**Daughter of Sion, rise
to meet thy lowly King;
let not thy stubborn heart despise
the peace he comes to bring.**

**On clouds of dazzling light,
as judge he comes again,
his scattered people to unite,
with him in heaven to reign.**

**Let evil flee away,
ere that great hour shall dawn,
let this old Adam day by day
the new man all put on.**

**Praise to the incarnate Son,
who comes to set us free,
with Father and with Spirit one,
to all eternity. Amen.**

**2. Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us;
let us find our rest in thee.**

**Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.**

**Born thy people to deliver;
born a child and yet a King;
born to reign in us for ever;
now thy gracious kingdom bring.**

**By thy own eternal Spirit,
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thy all-sufficient merit,
raise us to thy glorious throne.**

Some thoughts on today's gospel reading from St Mark as we begin the season of Advent and a new church year.

I have heard that if you live to be seventy years old, you will spend three years of your life just waiting. Waiting in a queue at the supermarket, waiting in the doctor's surgery, waiting for lunch to be ready, waiting for a bus - I suspect that we in Britain wait even longer as we seem much happier to queue than some other nationalities.

In what turned out to be his final book, "Oh, the Places You'll Go," Dr. Seuss talks about a place called "the waiting place." He describes it as a useless place where people are just waiting.

Waiting for a train to go
or a bus to come, or a plane to go
or the mail to come, or the rain to go
or the phone to ring, or the snow to snow
or waiting around for a Yes or No
or waiting for their hair to grow.
Everyone is just waiting.

©Oh, the Places You'll Go! Dr. Seuss. Random House 22/01/1990

I don't particularly like waiting, do you? I don't like it, but I don't know of any way to avoid it. We all have to spend some time in this "waiting place" that Dr. Seuss talks about, but I don't think it has to be a useless place. While we are waiting, life goes on, and we must make good use of our time. What can we do? Well, we could read a good book or call a friend on the phone. We could make a list of things we need to do today or, what we need to do to be ready for Christmas. Well, maybe that's going a bit too far, but there are many things we can do besides just passively waiting.

Today is the first Sunday of Advent and that is particularly when we begin waiting for Christmas. I wonder what in particular you notice each year that reminds you that Christmas is on its way? Decorations in our shops, Christmas cards arriving on the doormat, special appointments or events appearing in our diaries, the berries disappearing on my holly trees.

There is a scene in *The Lion, the Witch and the wardrobe* when it is always winter but never Christmas - how awful that must be! Forever getting ready but it never arriving!

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us to keep alert and check the signs which will tell us when he is going to come again. This time he won't be coming as a tiny baby, but full of God's glory and in great power, riding on the clouds of heaven. It will be such an amazing event that it will rock the whole cosmos - the whole of nature will be shaken. Jesus tells us that the sun will be darkened, and the moon will lose its light, and stars will fall from heaven. This is something that every being will notice, both those who are alive on earth at the time and those who will have already died. Jesus tells us that even he doesn't know exactly when it will happen, but it certainly will take place, and we will all need to be ready for it, whether we are still alive or already dead.

So how can we make sure that we are ready? How can we read the signs?

The best way of making sure we stay ready is by keeping our eyes open - our spiritual eyes. That means keeping in touch with God on a daily basis. We need to get into the habit of praying, not just once a week on Sundays, not even just once a day, but at all times of every day.

One man, let's call him John, did that. It was near Christmas in the season of Advent, and John waited for God to come. He prayed every day 'God show me your face and I shall be saved.' John had tried to live a good life; he was now old and looked forward to the coming of God. He continued to work in his paper shop, where he had worked most of his life. Here he heard all sorts of conversations and met many people. A single mum telling a friend how she did not have enough money to buy presents for her child. When everyone else had gone, John said to her, 'I heard what you said. I have a few toys on the shelves; they're not selling very well, go pick anything you would like.' She could hardly believe it for there were some wonderful things on the shelves. As she went away with her arms full, John was delighted. His reward was her smile.

Later that day, he caught a young lad stealing a magazine from the shelves. He was on the way out with the magazine up his jumper when John stopped him. He could have called the police or told the boy's parents. He saw the boy was poor and afraid, and he felt sorry for him. 'If you want a magazine, and have no money, talk with me,' he said. 'Magazines are soon out of date; I can always find one to give to you. You must not just help yourself. Take the magazine for free and ask me another time.' The boy's face changed from a look of fear to a beaming smile. He thanked John and ran from the shop.

An old man came into the shop and was saying how lonely he was since his wife died. This would be his first Christmas on his own - he was not looking forward to it. John said, 'Why don't you come join my wife and me. I'm sure that there'll be plenty of food, so it would be good to share Christmas with you.' The old

man's face lit up in a beautiful smile and he said, 'You have made me feel so wanted, and I would love to come.'

That night John prayed his Advent prayer, 'Show me your face Lord and I shall be saved.' In a dream God spoke to him and said 'John, today I came to you and three times you made me smile. Grace and peace be upon you.'

So, waiting for God isn't about sitting back and waiting for something to happen it's about, and here Jesus used a particular word 'Alert', which is so much more about being actively ready. It's also not about frantically rushing around, something that can so often happen in the run up to Christmas. The getting all of the peripheral elements of Christmas ready but never spending any quality time thinking about what is at the heart of Christmas - the gift from God of that tiny baby, who came to save the world. If we think on these things then we are drawn to doing what we can to help others. Thinking about giving to charity, the Foodbank (we will be collecting food throughout Advent to be donated to the Foodbank in Kidderminster, Maggs Day Centre in Worcester (we will be collecting clothing and toiletries throughout Advent and money at some of our carol singing events for Maggs), being aware of those around us who might find Christmas time difficult - doing whatever we can to make this special time better for all those around us.

It's also not just about being ready at Christmas. It's about waiting and being 'alert' throughout the year, and in this way, when Jesus does come again, we will be ready to receive him.

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, as we spend time in this waiting place, we look forward with great joy to the celebration of Jesus' birth and to the day when he comes again. May we be actively ready to meet you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

If you'd like to join us for our after 'virtual' coffee morning at 10.45 a.m. we will be able to discuss anything from our Bible reading that has particularly touched or meant something to you today.