

Poole Bay Methodist Circuit worship
Sunday 3rd December 2023: Advent 1

Are we ready? – Reverend Karen James

Welcome to this first Sunday in Advent, the beginning of a new lectionary year and a new season where we intentionally prepare space for God in our everyday lives and within ourselves. The Methodist Church is using the statement “Preparing for the extraordinary” to describe this Advent season overall.

I wonder when you begin to put up the decorations in your home, or even if you do! If you are anything like me, getting everything out of the boxes usually causes a lot of mess before I can sit back and enjoy the sparkle of the lights and decorations. When we are getting ready for something there is usually that time when things get messy, we have to clear out and sort, work out what needs to stay and what needs to go. Sometimes these are easy decisions to make-but sometimes they can be painful and that is when we look beyond our immediate selves and situation to see the bigger picture- and be prepared for something extraordinary.

You may have your own advent wreath; you may wish to have a candle, or you may wish to just sit still and imagine these. But we start with our advent prayer.

Our way to mark this start of Advent is waiting. We’ll open up traditions, new and old, with challenge and with change.

Advent God, challenge us today.

Our box of decorations stands ready to be explored. We reassess the treasures in this bulging cardboard box. Let’s sort the treasure from the trash the needed from the not.

Advent God, challenge us today.

Our living is refocused with preparations underway. Our ordinary and everyday will be challenged along the way. Letting go of stuff to do God’s will, is here to stay.

Advent God, challenge us today.

In the mundane and ordinary, stars will start to fall, challenging and changing us with holy goodness breaking through.

Advent God, challenge us today.

Advent God, as we light this, our first Advent candle may we let go of what swamps us and serves no purpose for us, so that we can meet the challenges that lie ahead of us. May our ordinary lives be enriched by your extraordinary love for us.

Amen.

Come into this space, Immanuel God.

Light of the world,

This Advent season comes as an annual reminder that you are not a God of distance, of highheavens and of power,

Rather, you are a God of presence, of earthly-ordinariness and of poverty.



Prince of peace,
In a world of much injustice, fighting, disaster and pain,
Bring your Christmas light.
Amen. *(from the Vine at home 03 12 23)*

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

We praise and adore you,
that you are a God who calls us to be one with you.
And, as you are always open to us,
may we keep our hearts open to receive you,
our lives open and serving you,
and our churches open to welcome you.
in friend and stranger.
In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen. ([Prayers \(rootsontheweb.com\)](https://www.rootsontheweb.com))

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Song: STF 317 – At the name of Jesus

The music and words can also be found here: [YouTube Link](#)

At the name of Jesus
ev'ry knee shall bow,
ev'ry tongue confess him
King of glory now;
'tis the Father's pleasure
we should call him Lord,
who from the beginning
was the mighty Word.

Humbled for a season
to receive a name
from the lips of sinners
unto whom he came,
faithfully he bore it
spotless to the last,
brought it back victorious
when from death he passed;

Bore it up triumphant
 with its human light,
 thro' all ranks of creatures
 to the central height,
 to the throne of Godhead,
 to the Father's breast,
 filled it with the glory
 of that perfect rest.

In your hearts enthrone him;
 there let him subdue
 all that is not holy,
 all that is not true;
 crown him as your captain
 in temptation's hour;
 let his will enfold you
 in its light and pow'r.

For this same Lord Jesus
 shall return again
 in his Father's glory,
 with his angel train;
 for all wreaths of empire
 meet upon his brow,
 and our hearts confess him
 King of glory now.

(Caroline Maria Noel)

Reading: Mark 13:24-37

²⁴ “But in those days, following that distress,

“the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light;

²⁵ the stars will fall from the sky,

and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’^[a]

²⁶ “At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

²⁸ “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it^[b] is near, right at the door. ³⁰ Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

The Day and Hour Unknown

³² “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Be on guard! Be alert^[c]! You do not know when that time will come. ³⁴ It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

³⁵ “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back— whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. ³⁶ If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. ³⁷ What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’” (NIV)

Reflection on the reading

In today’s Gospel reading, Jesus paints a vivid picture of his second coming – a day of great cosmic events and divine intervention. He implores us to "stay awake and watch" for the return of Jesus, as no one knows the exact time.

This passage challenges us to ponder our readiness for that coming – a good Advent theme. How prepared are we? It's easy to become complacent in our faith, to become engrossed in the routines of life, and to forget that we are awaiting something of eternal significance, the arrival of love unbound- preparing for something extraordinary!

Consider these questions:

- *Do you consider yourself ‘spiritually awake’?*
Life's distractions can lull us into spiritual slumber. We must remain vigilant, not merely going through the motions of faith but actively seeking God's presence in our lives. It is vital that we create moments to pause and be still and allow God’s spirit to fill us and strengthen us. Especially as we face the build-up for the ‘holidays. This time of Advent is a deliberate space to slow down the pace, to reorientate our focus and energy for the season. Of course we can still get ready in the material sense, but we don’t let that aspect consume us.
- *Are you watchful?*
Just as a watchman waits for the dawn, we are called to eagerly anticipate Christ's return. This anticipation should shape how we live, love, and serve. This is a call to active waiting. We engage in the world, looking out for God’s presence, in every face and situation, and finding ways to serve others. As individuals and as church communities we seek justice for all. This will look different in every community; it will be something that we notice needs addressing within our local contexts. It may be something seemingly small or we may be involved in a more national campaign nevertheless as we watch and wait for Christ’s return, we continue to show God’s kingdom on earth in the here and now.
- *Are you prepared?*
A question that is constantly implied in the huge array of Christmas adverts and displays. Food for the parties, presents, lights. But strikingly some of the charity adverts also make an impact as well. Can you and are you prepared to help others who will be struggling this Christmas. Advent and Christmas fall at the same time every year and still it always seems to surprise me with its arrival. With The unpredictability of Christ's return, and the possibility of encountering the incarnate Christ in anyone we meet, see, talk to, or think about in our day-to-day lives should motivate us to

live with intentionality. Are we living lives that reflect our faith? Are we extending love and grace to others? Are we faithfully following Jesus' teachings? Are we noticing the blessings that God is sharing with us, showing to us?

- *Are you hopeful?*

There is much to be concerned about in our world at this time. Peace seems to be a distant dream in many places, so many people have been uprooted through circumstances over which they have had no control and struggle to find a safe place to be. Even amid uncertainty and chaos, we hold on to the hope of Christ's promise. Our faith isn't grounded in fleeting circumstances but in the enduring Word of God.

As you reflect on Mark 13:24-37, challenge yourself to live with spiritual awareness and watchfulness. Embrace the anticipation of Christ's return as a driving force for your faith and actions. Let this passage remind you that, as followers of Christ, we are called to live with purpose, hope, and readiness for God's glorious appearing.

- Will you be vigilant in this Advent season?
- Will you be preparing for the extraordinary?

Reflection from Advent 1B - 3rd December 2023

The Vine at Home is compiled and produced by twelvebaskets and some of my own additions.

Song: STF 706 – Longing for the Light

The music and words can also be found here: [YouTube Link](#)

Longing for Light, We Wait in Darkness.
 Longing for Truth, We Turn to You.
 Make Us Your Own, Your Holy People,
 Light for The World to See.

*Christ, Be Our Light!
 Shine in Our Hearts.
 Shine Through the Darkness.
 Christ, Be Our Light!
 Shine in Your Church Gathered Today.*

Longing For Peace, Our World Is Troubled.
 Longing for Hope, Many Despair.
 Your Word Alone Has Power to Save Us.
 Make Us Your Living Voice. *Christ, Be Our Light...*

Longing For Food, Many Are Hungry.
 Longing for Water, Many Still Thirst.
 Make Us Your Bread, Broken for Others,
 Shared Until All Are Fed. *Christ, Be Our Light...*

Longing For Shelter, Many Are Homeless.
Longing for Warmth, Many Are Cold.
Make Us Your Building, Sheltering Others,
Walls Made of Living Stone. *Christ, Be Our Light...*

Many The Gifts, Many the People,
Many the Hearts That Yearn to Belong.
Let Us Be Servants To One Another,
Making Your Kingdom Come. *Christ, Be Our Light... (Bernadette Farrell)*

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God,
when we prefer comfort to change, challenge us.
When we are distracted not attentive, forgive us.
When we are feeble not faithful, strengthen us.
And, at all times, transform our dreams into your realities.
In Jesus' name.

Amen. [Prayers \(rootsontheweb.com\)](http://rootsontheweb.com)

In a moment of stillness, we bring before you, the things that we regret saying or doing and the times when we were silent and inactive.

Pause

Loving God, as we turn back to you, we hear your words of assurance and grace.

“Your sins are forgiven” Amen.

Prayers for others

Let us bring the thoughts and concerns on our hearts and minds to God...

Restore us O God; **let your face shine, that we may be saved** (Psalm 80:3)

Lord Jesus, during this season of anticipation, I pause for a moment to remember those who are suffering and in need. To pray for the hungry, the homeless, and the marginalised. May I, as your hands and feet, reach out to offer comfort, sustenance, and hope to those who need it most.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, I ask for your guidance and wisdom to be with our leaders and decision-makers. around the world. May they make choices that promote justice, equality, and the well-being of all. Grant them the courage to act in accordance with your divine will.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Today, on this first Sunday of Advent, I pray for all those who are suffering from illness, grief, or despair. Bring your healing touch to their lives and comfort them in their times of need. May they find strength and hope in your presence.

Lord in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

As I embark on this Advent journey, may my prayers and actions reflect the love, hope, and peace that Christ brings to the world. In Jesus' holy name, I pray. **Amen**

Restore us O God, Lord of hosts; **let your face shine, that we may be saved** (Psalm 80:19)

from Advent 1B - 3rd December 2023 The Vine at Home is compiled and produced by twelvebaskets

Song: STF 167 – Colours of Day

The music and words can also be found here: [YouTube Link](#)

Colours of day dawn into the mind,
The sun has come up, the night is behind.
Go down in the city, into the street,
And let's give the message to the people we meet.

So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
Open the door, let Jesus return.
Take seeds of His Spirit, let the fruit grow,
Tell the people of Jesus, let His love show.

Go through the park, on into the town;
The sun still shines on, it never goes down.
The light of the world is risen again;
The people of darkness are needing a friend.

So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
Open the door, let Jesus return.
Take seeds of His Spirit, let the fruit grow,
Tell the people of Jesus, let His love show.

Open your eyes, look into the sky,
The darkness has come, the Son came to die.
The evening draws on, the sun disappears,
But Jesus is living, His Spirit is near.

So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
Open the door, let Jesus return.
Take seeds of His Spirit, let the fruit grow,
Tell the people of Jesus, let His love show.

Blessing

In the name of God
who calls you to be his disciple,
who cherishes you as a precious child,
who invites you to be part of his kingdom work:
be bold, be blessed and be yourself.

Amen.

[Prayers \(rootsontheweb.com\)](http://rootsontheweb.com)

Every Blessing for the week ahead.

Rev Karen