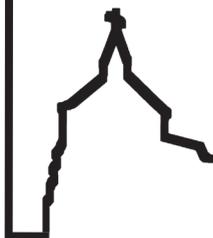


ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH  
CANTERBURY

# From Darkness to Light

ADVENT SUNDAY





This service is being live-streamed on YouTube for those who are unable to attend in person. By attending this service, you may appear online.



An induction loop system for the hard of hearing is installed in our Church. Hearing aid users should adjust their aid to 'T'



Large print orders of service are available from the sidespersons. Please ask.



Toilet facilities are available in the Church Hall. Please ask a Sidesperson for directions.

# *From Darkness to Light*

## **A Service for Advent Sunday**

### **About this service**

This service takes us on a pilgrimage. We begin in darkness with one candle being lit and gradually the light permeates the darkness as the first Advent candle is moved through the building. But the journey is about far more than one candle lighting up many and making the building look pretty. It is also about the light of Christ illuminating even the deepest crevices and backwaters of our lives. As the service progresses we steadily expose our flawed and sinful humanity. The service seeks to make us vulnerable to the loving purposes of God seen most clearly in the sending of Jesus Christ as our King, our Saviour, our Redeemer and, ultimately, our Judge. It also provides us with the resolution to our state of life: ultimately a call to say that we are sorry.

The richness of the music and the readings of Advent from Scripture help move us along our journey of illumination. They help us understand that longing and movement in the human soul towards God.

The shape of the journey is given by each part of the service commencing with the singing and contemplation of the great 'O' Antiphons. Customarily these antiphons (verses) are sung before the Magnificat at evensong in the week running up to Christmas Day and provide for us a frame around the words of hope and salvation sung by Mary when the Angel Gabriel announced to her that she was to be the bearer of Jesus. The antiphons gradually build one by one towards a crescendo by reiterating again and again the word, 'come'. You will also notice that each of our congregational hymns also contains that same word. The word becomes our prayer... 'Lord, Jesus come into my life, come and be my Redeemer and my Saviour'.

During the service as the light becomes brighter, as our lives are revealed in that light for what they are, so too the light and hope shine brighter into our present and illuminate our pathway into the future.

*The choir gathers at the back of the church. When the vestry bell has been rung, please STAND if you are able, and turn to face the west end.*

## INTROIT

### **I look from afar**

*Palestrina*

I look from afar: and lo, I see the power of God coming, and a cloud covering the whole earth.

Go ye out to meet him and say: Tell us, art thou he that should come to reign over thy people Israel?

High and low, rich and poor, one with another, go ye out to meet him and say: Hear, O thou Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a sheep, tell us, art thou he that should come?

Stir up thy strength, O Lord, and come to reign over thy people Israel.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

I look from afar: and lo, I see the power of God coming, and a cloud covering the whole earth. Go ye out to meet him and say: Tell us, art thou he that should come to reign over thy people Israel?

*The first candle on the altar is lit as the first Antiphon is sung.*

## ANTIPHON I

### **O Sapientia**

O wisdom, coming forth from the Most High, filling all creation and reigning to the ends of the earth; come and teach us the way of truth.

## READINGS

*Wisdom 9.9–11*

With you is wisdom, she who knows your works  
and was present when you made the world;  
she understands what is pleasing in your sight  
and what is right according to your commandments.  
Send her forth from the holy heavens,  
and from the throne of your glory send her,  
that she may labour at my side,  
and that I may learn what is pleasing to you.  
For she knows and understands all things,  
and she will guide me wisely in my actions  
and guard me with her glory.

*1 Corinthians 2.6–10*

Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a  
wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to  
perish. But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God  
decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age  
understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the  
Lord of glory. But, as it is written,  
    'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,  
    nor the human heart conceived,  
    what God has prepared for those who love him'—  
these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit  
searches everything, even the depths of God.

## COLLECT

Almighty God,  
you have created the heavens and the earth  
    and made us in your own image.  
Teach us to discern your hand in all your works,  
and to serve you with reverence, joy and thanksgiving;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme  
    over all things now and for ever.

*All*     **Amen.**

*The second candle is lit.*

## ANTIPHON 2

### O Adonai

O Lord of Lords, and ruler of the House of Israel, you appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush, and gave him the law on Sinai: come with your outstretched arm and ransom us.

## READINGS

*Isaiah 2.3–5*

Many peoples shall come and say,  
'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,  
to the house of the God of Jacob;  
that he may teach us his ways  
and that we may walk in his paths.'  
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,  
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.  
He shall judge between the nations,  
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;  
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,  
and their spears into pruning-hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war any more.

O house of Jacob,  
come, let us walk  
in the light of the Lord!

*Hebrews 12.18, 22a, 23b, 24a, 25a, 29*

You have not come to something that can be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking; for indeed our God is a consuming fire.

*We STAND to sing the following hymn, during which the choir and clergy process to the crossing.*

## HYMN

### **Come thou Redeemer of the earth**

*New English Hymnal 19, omit vv. 5 & 7*

## COLLECT

Lord God our Redeemer, who heard the cry of your people  
and sent your servant Moses to lead them out of slavery:  
free us from the tyranny of sin and death  
and, by the leading of your Spirit, bring us to our promised land;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

*The third candle is lit.*

## ANTIPHON 3

### **O Radix Jesse**

O root of Jesse, standing as a sign among the nation; kings will keep silence  
before you for whom the nations long; come and save us and delay no longer.

*We SIT for the readings.*

## READINGS

*Isaiah 11.10, 12; 12.1–2*

On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples;  
the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

He will raise a signal for the nations,  
and will assemble the outcasts of Israel,  
and gather the dispersed of Judah  
from the four corners of the earth.

You will say on that day:  
I will give thanks to you, O Lord,  
for though you were angry with me,  
your anger turned away,  
and you comforted me.

Surely God is my salvation;  
I will trust, and will not be afraid,  
for the Lord God is my strength and my might;  
he has become my salvation.

*Revelation 5.2–4a, 5*

And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?’ And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. And I began to weep bitterly. Then one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.’

## CHOIR ANTHEM

### **A tender shoot**

*English text by William Bartholomew*

*Music by Otto Goldschmidt (1829–1907)*

A tender shoot hath started up from a root of grace,  
as ancient seers imparted from Jesse’s holy race.  
It blooms without a blight, blooms in the cold bleak winter  
turning our darkness into light.

This shoot, Isaiah taught us, from Jesse’s root should spring.  
The Virgin Mary brought us the branch of which we sing.  
Our God of endless might, gave her this child to save us,  
thus turning darkness into light.

## COLLECT

Almighty God and most merciful Father,  
who would have the kingdoms of the world  
become the kingdom of your Son Jesus Christ:  
bestow your blessing upon all who labour for peace  
and righteousness among the peoples:  
that the day may be hastened when war shall be no more,  
and your will only shall govern the nations upon earth;  
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

*The fourth candle is lit.*

## ANTIPHON 4

### **O Clavis David**

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, and break  
down the walls of death.

## READINGS

*Isaiah 42.5–7*

Thus says God, the Lord,  
who created the heavens and stretched them out,  
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,  
who gives breath to the people upon it  
and spirit to those who walk in it:  
I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness,  
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;  
I have given you as a covenant to the people,  
a light to the nations,  
to open the eyes that are blind,  
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,  
from the prison those who sit in darkness.

*Luke 4.16–20*

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:  
‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’  
And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

*We STAND to sing the hymn.*

## HYMN

### **Hills of the North, rejoice**

*New English Hymnal 7*

## COLLECT

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn  
but the sword of righteousness,  
and no strength known but the strength of love:  
so mightily shed abroad your Spirit  
that all peoples may be gathered under the banner  
of the Prince of Peace as children of one Father, Lord of Love,  
to whom alone be dominion and glory, now and for ever.

*All* **Amen.**

*The fifth candle is lit.*

## ANTIPHON 5

### O Oriens

O morning star, splendour of the light eternal and bright sun of righteousness:  
come and bring light to those who dwell in darkness and walk in the shadow of  
death.

*We SIT for the readings.*

## READINGS

*Isaiah 60.1–3*

Arise, shine; for your light has come,  
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.  
For darkness shall cover the earth,  
and thick darkness the peoples;  
but the Lord will arise upon you,  
and his glory will appear over you.  
Nations shall come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

*Luke 1.76–79*

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 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.'

## ANTHEM

### **O thou the central orb**

*Words by H. R. Bramley*

*Music by Charles Wood (1866–1926)*

O Thou, the central orb of righteous love,  
Pure beam of the most High, eternal Light  
Of this our wintry world, Thy radiance bright  
Awakes new joy in faith, hope soars above.

Come, quickly come, and let thy glory shine,  
Gilding our darksome heaven with rays Divine.

Thy saints with holy lustre round Thee move,  
As stars about thy throne, set in the height  
Of God's ordaining counsel, as Thy sight  
Gives measured grace to each, Thy power to prove.

Let Thy bright beams disperse the gloom of sin,  
Our nature all shall feel eternal day  
In fellowship with thee, transforming clay  
To souls erewhile unclean, now pure within. Amen.

## COLLECT

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the light of the world,  
the desire of all nations, and the shepherd of our souls.  
Let your light shine in the darkness,  
that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God.  
By the lifting up of your Cross, gather the peoples into your fold;  
so that there may be one flock, one shepherd,  
one holy kingdom of righteousness and peace,  
one God and Father of all, above all, and in all, and through all.

*All* **Amen.**

*We STAND to sing the hymn.*

## HYMN

### **On Jordan's bank**

*New English Hymnal 12*

## ANTIPHON 6

### O Rex Gentium

O king of the nations, you alone can fulfil their desires: cornerstone, binding all together: come and save the creature you fashioned from the dust of the earth.

*We SIT for the reading.*

## READING

*Isaiah 9.2, 6–7*

The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined.  
For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
His authority shall grow continually,  
and there shall be endless peace  
for the throne of David and his kingdom.  
He will establish and uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time onwards and for evermore.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

## ANTHEM

### Jesus Christ the Apple Tree

*Words from 'Divine Hymns or Spiritual Songs', compiled by Joshua Smith  
Music by Elizabeth Poston (1905–87)*

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | The tree of life my soul hath seen,<br>Laden with fruit and always green:<br>The trees of nature fruitless be<br>Compared with Christ the apple tree. | 3 | For happiness I long have sought,<br>And pleasure dearly I have bought:<br>I missed of all; but now I see<br>'Tis found in Christ the apple tree. |
| 2 | His beauty doth all things excel:<br>By faith I know, but ne'er can tell<br>The glory which I now can see<br>In Jesus Christ the apple tree.          | 4 | I'm weary with my former toil,<br>Here I will sit and rest awhile:<br>Under the shadow I will be,<br>Of Jesus Christ the apple tree.              |

5 This fruit doth make my soul to thrive,  
It keeps my dying faith alive;  
Which makes my soul in haste to be  
With Jesus Christ the apple tree.

## COLLECT

O King of all and master of our lives,  
entering into glory by your cross,  
to whom all authority is given both in heaven and on earth:  
come, O Christ, enter into your kingdom,  
subdue the world by the power of your love,  
and be known and adored to all the ends of the earth;  
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

*The seventh candle is lit*

## ANTIPHON 7

### O Emmanuel

O Emmanuel, our King and Law-giver, hope of the nations and their saviour:  
come and save us, O Lord our God.

## READING

*Matthew 1.18–23*

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.’

*We STAND to sing the hymn.*

## HYMN

### O come, O come, Emmanuel

1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here,  
Until the Son of God appear.  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*Lower voices* 2 O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;  
From depths of hell Thy people save,  
And give them victory o'er the grave.

*Higher voices* 3 O come, Thou Dayspring, from on high,  
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

4 O come, Thou Key of David, come  
And open wide our heav'nly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery.

5 O come, Adonai, Lord of might,  
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,  
In ancient times didst give the law  
In cloud and majesty and awe.  
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

## COLLECT FOR ADVENT SUNDAY

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:  
so 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 and the Holy Spirit,  
one God now and for ever.

*All* **Amen.**

# THE BLESSING

## HYMN

**Lo! He comes with clouds descending**

*New English Hymnal 9*

## DISMISSAL

*Music by Stephen Barker (b. 1977)*

O Lord Jesus Christ, come at evening time with light,  
and in the morning with your glory:

*Choir* **To guide our feet into the way of peace.**

He who receives our prayers says: Surely I come quickly.  
I am the root and offspring of David, I am the bright and the morning  
star.

*Choir* **Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.**

## ORGAN VOLUNTARY

**Toccata on 'Veni Emmanuel'**

*Andrew Carter (b. 1939)*

