



**St. Dunstan's**  
ANGLICAN CHURCH



**THE SEASON OF ADVENT**  
A Season of Expectation and Preparation  
Year A

by Fr. J. Michael Strachan, Ph.D.

# SEASONS OF THE CHURCH

## ADVENT

*November 30–December 24, 2025*

## CHRISTMAS SERVICES

*December 24*

*4 p.m., 7 p.m. (en español), 10:30 p.m. (Carols), 11 p.m.*

*December 25 at 10:00 a.m.*

## CHRISTMASTIDE

*December 25–January 5, 2026*

## EPIPHANY

*January 6–February 17, 2026*

## LENT

*February 18–March 28, 2026*

## HOLY WEEK

*March 29–April 4, 2026*

## EASTERTIDE

*April 5–May 23, 2026*

## PENTECOST INTO ORDINARY TIME

*May 24–November 28, 2026*

# INTRODUCTION

Advent is a season that focuses on both the past and the future. During Advent, we prepare for Christ's first coming (*adventus*), born in humility for our salvation, and also for his return in glory to judge the living and the dead. One advent is behind us, and another is ahead, yet in this season, we prepare for both with anticipation and readiness. Our prayer during this time echoes the earliest Christians: Maranatha—"Our Lord, come" (1 Cor 16:22). Because it looks forward and backward, Advent teaches us to live in the tension of the "already but not yet," remembering what God has done and longing for what he has promised to do still.

The traditional color of Advent is purple, a sign of repentance, but this season's distinctive tone is one of expectation rather than sackcloth and ashes. For this reason, we use Sarum Blue, a shade evoking the night sky before dawn, which reminds us that the light of Christ is near. Blue also draws our attention to Mary, with whom blue is traditionally associated, whose obedient trust reminds us that the work God brings into the world is his gift, not our achievement.

This booklet provides weekly devotional reflections based on the Sunday readings designated for this year, each centered on a specific theme revealed in Christ's coming—his reign, his peace, his joy, and his love. These readings encourage us to slow down during a season that often pulls us toward distraction and haste. You are invited to spend time with the Scriptures, to read slowly, to pray sincerely, and to allow silence to create space for expectation. Use these pages as spiritual anchors to steady your heart as you wait for the Lord, whose arrival is both remembered and eagerly anticipated.

For each week, there is also a simple liturgy for lighting the candles on the Advent wreath in your home. Whether you use that liturgy daily or weekly, light the candle(s), say the responses, read the appointed Scripture, and pray the collect for the week. In doing so, your household joins the whole Church in worship. Together we are all waiting in hope for the Lord who is near. May God kindle hope in us, deepen our repentance, teach us to wait with joy, and prepare our hearts for both the child born in Bethlehem and the King who will come again in glory. Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus.

# ADVENT I

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 30-DECEMBER 6, 2025

*Sunday's Readings: Isa 2:1-5; Ps 122; Rom 13:8-14; Matt 24:29-44*

## THE DAWN OF HOPE

Advent begins not with celebration but with a call to attention. The apostle Paul interrupts the regular rhythms of our lives with a surprising statement: “You know the time” (Rom 13:11). Advent raises a question we seldom think about: *When are we?* Paul answers this by dividing human history into two periods—night and day. The “night” represents the era of sin, darkness, and confusion before Christ’s first coming. The “day” symbolizes the glorious new age that has already started through Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension. According to Paul, the night is almost over, and the day is at hand (Rom 13:12).

Because this new day has dawned, Paul calls us to wake up from our sleep (Rom 13:11). He isn’t referring to physical rest or simply turning away from obvious sin. Jesus warns that before the flood, people were eating, drinking, and marrying (Matt 24:38). Life seemed normal; they were unaware of God’s coming judgment. Advent reminds us that distraction can be just as dangerous as rebellion. Darkness exists not only in obvious evil but also in a life that forgets to live in the light of God’s new world.

Paul gives us a clear command: “Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light” (Rom 13:12). Just as we dress differently for morning than for night, so we are to live differently now that the new day has dawned. Dressing for this new day means living lives that resemble the life of Christ, which is why Paul commands us to “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 13:14). He is our savior from the darkness and our exemplar for living in the light.

The first candle of Advent is the candle of hope because, like Paul, true hope understands what time it is. True hope is not vague optimism about our present circumstances. True hope comes through participation in the light that has already broken into this world through Jesus. This hope refuses to live as if Christ has not come and will not return. Instead, this hope lives now in the light of the future God has promised, like the world Isaiah envisioned, a world where nations walk together to the mountain of the Lord, and weapons become tools that promote life rather than destroy it (Isa 2:2, 4). As we light this first candle, we proclaim in hope that the night is passing and a new day has dawned. The Lord has come. He will come again. Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus. ✚



Image: *The Annunciation*, Fra Angelico, c. 1450

## Lighting of Advent Candle I (Hope)

*Light one blue/purple candle.*

**Leader:** Today, we light the candle of hope.

**All:** May Christ kindle hope in our hearts.

*Read Titus 2:11–13.*

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

*Pray the collect for the week.*

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

# ADVENT II

WEEK OF DECEMBER 7–13, 2025

*Sunday's Readings: Isa 11:1-10; Ps 72:1-15; Rom 15:1-13; Matt 3:1-12*

## PREPARING FOR THE KINGDOM OF PEACE

Matthew 3 starts in an unexpected way. After outlining Jesus's lineage and showing how his birth "fills full" Israel's story, Matthew does not mention Jesus's childhood or training. Instead, he suddenly shifts to introduce John the Baptist. This shift is intentional. John, the forerunner of the Lord, prepares the way for Jesus both historically and in the Gospels. To understand Jesus, we need to begin with John.

Many of the most important parts of Jesus's life and teachings appear in only one or two Gospels. However, all four Gospels introduce John as the forerunner of Jesus and identify him with the messenger from Isa 40:3. That passage promises a voice in the wilderness that will call God's people to prepare his way as he returns at last to Zion. John is that voice, and his message is clear: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:2). John isn't offering casual advice; he is announcing an arrival. He is proclaiming the climax of God's covenant with Israel and the reign of God foretold in the Old Testament breaking into human history. If all this is happening, then the people must be prepared.

That preparation begins with repentance. This is the season of Advent, not Lent, but the command to repent remains. John is not calling us to mournfulness or self-pity. Repentance is not sorrow for its own sake; it is an act of preparation. It clears space in our lives for the king who is coming. Repentance prepares the way for the Lord in our hearts, who is on his way to establish his kingdom forever and ever.

And where God reigns as king, peace follows—not sentiment, not escape, but genuine peace as Daniel and Isaiah describe it, the kind of peace that only comes when evil is confronted, injustice is judged, creation is restored, and life is renewed under the rule of the true Son of David (Isa 11:1–9). Repentance does not create this peace, but it does make space for it and welcome it.

John still calls us to repentance this Advent. To repent is to surrender to the king who brings peace. Repentance is how we prepare our hearts for his kingdom of peace that will never be destroyed. As we light the second candle of Advent, we hear the cry in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord. Christ offers us his peace, but first, our hearts must be prepared. Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus. ✚



Image: *The Peaceable Kingdom*, Edward Hicks, c. 1826

## Lighting of Advent Candle II (Peace)

*Light two blue/purple candles.*

**Leader:** Today, we light the candles of hope and peace.

**All:** May Christ kindle hope in our hearts and bring peace on earth.

*Read Micah 5:2, 4-5*

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And he shall be their peace.

*Pray the collect for the week.*

Blessed Lord, who caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and the comfort of your holy Word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

# ADVENT III

WEEK OF DECEMBER 14-20TH, 2025

*Sunday's Readings: Isa 35:1-10; Ps 146; James 5:7-20; Matt 11:2-19*

## JOY FOR THE WAITING AND THE DOUBTING

John the Baptist once leaped in his mother's womb at the nearness of Jesus. He is the one who saw Jesus walking toward him and cried out, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" (John 1:29). He is the herald who announced the end of exile and the Lord's return to Zion. Yet we find this same John sending messengers from prison to ask Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" (Matt 11:3). Jesus is not acting as many expected the Messiah to act. John waits in prison for judgment, victory, restoration — but Jesus heals, eats with sinners, touches lepers, and shows compassion to the poor. John's doubt is likely not about who Jesus' identity is, but rather about how Jesus chooses to be the Messiah.

Jesus does not shame John; instead, he redirects him. "Go and tell John what you hear and see" (Matt 11:4). The blind see. The lame walk. Lepers are cleansed. The deaf hear. The dead are raised. The poor receive good news. Jesus alludes to Old Testament promises like Isaiah 35, where not only are people restored but the wilderness bursts into bloom, and the ransomed of the Lord return with "everlasting joy upon their heads" (Isa 35:10). Everlasting joy begins when God's future breaks into our present, as it was in the ministry of Jesus. True joy is not naive optimism. True joy comes from recognizing the first flowers of God's future growing in the desert of the present.

Psalms 146 tells us to look for God where the world least expects: freeing prisoners, lifting the bowed down, upholding the widow and orphan (Ps 146:7-9). James 5 calls us to wait like farmers who trust that the seed they buried will indeed bear fruit (James 5:7-8). This is what Jesus invites John to do: to keep watching and listening until who he is and what he is accomplishing becomes impossible to deny.

So where should we look for joy today, even in the midst of our doubts? Society tells us to look for joy in all the wrong places. Instead, we should look for true joy where the kingdom is breaking into this world, i.e., where the hungry are fed, the sick are cared for, the lonely are remembered, and the weary are upheld. That joy is not the fullness of the kingdom, but it is the real beginning of it. Thanks to Jesus, the flowers of God's future are already blooming in the desert of this world. As we light the third candle of Advent, we wait with joy. The future of God's kingdom is already at work among us. Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus. ✚



Image: *The Preaching of John the Baptist*, Domenico Ghirlandaio, c. 1490

## Lighting of Advent Candle III (Joy)

*Light two blue/purple candles and one rose/pink candle.*

**Leader:** Today, we light the candles of hope, peace, and joy.

**All:** May Christ kindle hope in our hearts, bring peace on earth, and fill us with his joy.

*Read Philippians 4:4-6*

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

*Pray the collect for the week.*

O Lord Jesus Christ, you sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation. Grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise make ready your way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient towards the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world, we may be found a people acceptable in your sight; for with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

# ADVENT IV

WEEK OF DECEMBER 21–24, 2025

*Sunday's Readings: Isa 7:10–17; Ps 24; Rom 1:1–7; Matt 1:18–25*

## LOVE MADE NEAR, LOVE MADE MIGHTY

Matthew shares the story of Jesus's birth from a perspective we don't often consider: Joseph's. Joseph is afraid to marry Mary. He knows there will be questions, whispers, and judgment about a child conceived before marriage, and it would have been easier to step away quietly. Yet, amid his fear, there comes a message of comfort: "Do not be afraid" (Matt 1:20). Before Christ is born in Bethlehem, God's love first enters a troubled heart. Advent teaches us that love does not wait for the world to be tidy or safe. Love comes close in the places we fear most. Matthew then tells us that the child will be called Immanuel, "God with us;" this name reveals the true character of God. Long before the world saw Jesus, the Lord spoke to Israel, saying, "I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jer 31:3). God does not simply feel love or perform acts of love. God is love—steadfast and faithful, overflowing with mercy and compassion (Exod 34:6). In Jesus Christ, that eternal love has drawn near: close enough to hold, close enough to be misunderstood, close enough to suffer, close enough to save.

Yet Matthew offers us another name to consider, a name Joseph himself is commanded to speak over the child. He shall be called Jesus (or Joshua), meaning "the Lord saves." If 'Immanuel' reveals love that draws close, then 'Jesus' reveals love that acts. God doesn't just stand with us; God acts for us. Jesus is the true and greater Joshua, not leading Israel into a strip of land, but leading God's people into the life of the new creation. He conquers not through violence, but by laying down his life. He frees us not only from earthly captivity but from the deeper bonds of sin and death. The one who is God-with-us is also God-who-delivers-us. These names are inseparable. Love that doesn't draw near cannot redeem; love that doesn't redeem has not truly drawn near.

As Advent comes to an end, we hold both names—Emmanuel and Jesus—tightly together as we prepare to welcome the child who embodies both presence and rescue, both the God who enters our fears and the God who overcomes everything we fear. Love has come close, remained faithful, and acted on our behalf. Therefore, we prepare not for an idea, a poetic season, or fleeting feelings of comfort or nostalgia, but for God Himself—love made near and love made mighty. Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus—God with us, God who saves. ✚



Image: *The Visitation*, Domenico Ghirlandaio, c. 1491

## Lighting of Advent Candle IV (Love)

*Light two blue/purple candles, one rose/pink candle, and then the last blue/purple candle.*

**Leader:** Today, we light the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love.

**All:** May Christ kindle hope in our hearts, bring peace on earth, fill us with his joy, and draw us deeper into his love.

*Read 1 John 4:9–12.*

In this, the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us.

*Pray the collect for the week.*

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us, and as we are sorely hindered by our sins from running the race that is set before us, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. **Amen.**

# CHRISTMAS DAY

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2025



Image: *Adoration of the Shepherds*, Gerard van Honthorst, c. 1622

## Lighting of the Christ Candle

*Light all the candles of the Advent Wreath, including the Christ candle.*

**Leader:** Alleluia! Unto us a child is born.

**All:** O come let us adore him. Alleluia!

*Read Luke 2:10-14.*

And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

*Pray the collect for Christmas Day.*

Almighty God, you have given your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to be born of a pure virgin: Grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with you and the same Spirit be honor and glory, now and forever. **Amen.**