

Barthol Chapel and Tarves Kirks
Order of Service Sunday 28 November 2021
First Sunday in Advent

Call to Worship

Leader: From a branch sprouting

All: hope is coming.

Leader: The heavens are shifting,

All: hope is coming.

Leader: A troubled world waits.

All: Hope is coming.

Leader: Lord, we, your people, wait patiently,
hanging on with Advent hope.

Lord, we bring you ourselves,

All: we bring you our worship.



Praise: CH4 273 O come, o come, Emmanuel

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.*

O come, O come, Thou Lord of might,
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times did'st give the Law,
In cloud, and majesty and awe.

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

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

O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and
cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

Prayers of Approach

Advent Candle Lighting

The Word of God

Jeremiah 33:14-16

14 The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 15 In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 16 In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'

St Luke 21:25-36

5 'There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. 26 People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in a cloud" with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.'

29 Then he told them a parable: 'Look at the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. 31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.'

34 'Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, 35 like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.'

Reflection

In August 2017 Greta Thunberg took a day off school to protest against climate change. By January 2019 she was speaking to the World Economic Forum made up of business and government leaders in Davos Switzerland. This is what she told that forum...

"Our house is on fire....

We are facing a disaster of unspoken sufferings for enormous amounts of people. And now is not the time for speaking politely or focussing on what we can or cannot say..... Now is the time to speak clearly...

We all have a choice. We can create transformational action that will safeguard the living conditions for future generations. Or we can continue with our business as usual and fail.....

We must change almost everything in our current societies. The bigger your carbon footprint, the bigger your moral duty. The bigger your platform, the bigger your responsibility.

Adults keep saying we owe it to the young people to give them hope. But I don't want your hope. I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act. I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if our house is on fire because it is."

I don't know about you but I find those words of Greta Thunberg's deeply challenging. Her voice is undoubtedly a prophetic one for our time. In some ways she sounds like the Old Testament prophets who play such a key role in our bible reading during this season of Advent. Thunberg identifies what is wrong in our world and she calls on us to change and do things differently. Like the prophets of old, she is not out to win a popularity contest. She does not ask people to follow her. She asks us to open our eyes and see the signs of our times and to follow the scientific advice about climate change. There is no doubt that we need to change and change now when it comes to the impact our carbon footprint is having on our planet.

However, the words which I found most disturbing are the words that Greta uses about hope. She rejects the offer of hope. She does not want us to be hopeful. But hope is a key theme of Advent. We began our service today by affirming this hope. Hope is coming was our refrain. And even Jeremiah renowned as the gloomiest of Old Testament prophets does not leave his audience without hope. Earlier we heard these words from the Book of Jeremiah

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

From David's line will come one who will bring about justice and righteousness – this is God's promise and it is the source of hope that Jeremiah holds out to his people. This hope is echoed in Luke's Gospel by Jesus himself when he promises redemption through his own coming in power and glory.

Yet neither of these promises are platitudes. They are not intended simply as words of comfort or reassurance because they are intrinsically linked to justice and righteousness – the very things that Greta Thunberg is calling for. The good news is that these promises that we find in Jeremiah and Luke do not depend on us because God is faithful to his Word. Yet these promises can never be wholly fulfilled until each and every one of us learns to prioritise justice and righteousness. The Christian hope is not something that lets us sit back – it should be the thing that motivates us to act – to be alert, to be on our guard.

It saddened me that earlier this month there was a separate Cop26 Youth Conference. It is great that so many young people are passionate about this issue and want to be involved. Many of them have moving stories about their own experiences of climate change. But by having a separate youth conference it is almost as if the young people have been sidelined from the main debate. After all is this not what we do when people say things that we find hard to hear.

Is this not what the Church has been doing for years – sidelining the young people, and I include myself here. We sent them out of worship to Sunday School, to Messy Church, to Youth Groups. We gave them a separate Youth Assembly. We have said that we want them to have a voice but what we have effectively done is that we have sidelined them from the heart of the Church and they have voted with their feet. And I for one miss the challenge that young voices bring into our midst. Yes they can be noisy and there can be messy fall-out from their presence. Their presence means we have to do things differently. But their absence hurts more.

And it is not just in the Church that this sidelining goes on. And it is not only young people who are on the receiving end. Successive governments have been shelving the very real problems that exist in relation to health and education, and of course, as has been highlighted this week, the crisis of refugees and immigrants. For years issues lying at the heart of the problems that face our country today have not been dealt with. Committees and commissions have been set up to hear the awkward voices and the problems have effectively been put to one side - a future government can deal with it. But we cannot go on like this – failing to address the issues that are key to a fair and just world.

The Advent hope will not allow us to do so... the Advent hope demands that we act in the interests of justice and righteousness now. Without that action all hope is empty and meaningless. God's Word of love, made flesh in Jesus Christ falls on deaf ears. So this Advent I would challenge you to hear God's promise of hope for creation, and not only to hear it but to act on it, as Thunberg would say "as if our house is fire because it is".

Praise CH4 281 People look East

People, look east. The time is near
of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able,
trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look East, and sing today:
Love, the Guest, is on the way.

Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,
one more seed is planted there:
give up your strength the seed to nourish,
that in course the flower may flourish.
People, look East, and sing today.
Love, the Rose, is on the way.

Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim
one more light the bowl shall brim,
shining beyond the frosty weather,
bright as sun and moon together.
People look East and sing today:
Love, the Star is on the way.

Angels, announce with shouts of mirth
Christ who brings new life to earth.
Set every peak and valley humming
with the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look East, and sing today:
Love, the Lord, is on the way.

Communion

Communion Responses

Invitation to Communion

Leader: In this feast both familiar and extraordinary

ALL: Jesus meets us

Leader: To banish our darkness with his light

ALL: God with us

Leader: In ancient patterns made new

ALL: His Spirit is here

The Lord be with you

And also with you

Lift up your hearts

We lift them to the Lord

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Let us pray.....

All: Holy, holy, holy Lord

God of power and might

Heaven and earth are full of your glory

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes

In the name of the Lord

Hosanna in the highest.

Jesus, Lamb of God
Have mercy on us
 Jesus bearer of our sins
Have mercy on us
 Jesus redeemer of the world
Grant us your peace

Communion is shared

The Peace

Praise CH4 290

The race that long in darkness pined
 Has seen a glorious light;
 The people dwell in day who dwelt
 in death's surrounding night.

To us a child of hope is born;
 To us a Son is given;
 him shall the tribes of earth obey,
 him all the hosts of heaven.

His name shall be the Prince of Peace,
 for evermore adored;
 the Wonderful, the Counsellor,
 the great and mighty Lord.

His power increasing still shall spread,
 his reign no end shall know:
 justice shall guard his throne above,
 and peace abound below.

Blessing

Take Home Suggestion

During the Advent period consider creating your own Advent ring or display adding a candle each week to it that you can light for a period each day.

Add your first candle this week and take a few moments each day to think about what you long to see change in the world. Write some of those thoughts down on slips of paper and leave them scattered around your ring.

Notices

Sunday 5 December Second Sunday in Advent All Welcome

9.30am Tarves Kirk The Church will be laid out café-style and coffee will be served after worship. The service can also be accessed live on Zoom.

11.15am Barthol Chapel Gather from 10.45am. Bring your own coffee.

Please note that certain restrictions will still apply, viz, hand-sanitising, wearing of masks and Contact and Trace. Please respect in so far as possible the wishes of anyone who wants to maintain physical distancing. Anyone with symptoms of Covid should remain at home and join us on Zoom.

Wednesday 1 December 7.30pm Barthol Chapel Board and Session meetings on Zoom – link will be circulated.

Wednesday 8 December 7.00pm Tarves Session meeting on Zoom – link will be circulated.

Tuesday 14 December 7.30pm Parish Grouping Working Group Methlick Church.

Pastoral Care Please contact Alison 01651 851295.