

SERVICE ORDER
Sunday, 11th December
Third Sunday of Advent

WELCOME TO WORSHIP

**Lord, listen to our prayers.
Come to us in your kindness,
and lighten the darkness of our hearts.
For you live and reign
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.
Amen.**

OPENING SENTENCE: James 5:8

Be patient and stand firm, because the lord's coming is near.

Be patient and stand firm, because the lord's coming is near

INVOCATION

*In the name of the Father and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.*

LHS 159 O FOR A THOUSAND TONGUES

**O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of our God and King, the triumphs of His grace.**

**My gracious Master and my God, assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad the honours of Your name.**

**Jesus! the name that charms our fears, that bids our sorrows cease;
such music in the sinner's ears is life, and health, and peace.**

**Glory to God, and praise, and love, be ever, ever given
by saints below and saints above, the Church in earth and heaven.**

Charles Wesley 1707-88, alt.

LIGHTING OF THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE

*John came to bear witness to the light,
so that all might believe through him.*

***The true light, who enlightens everyone,
was coming into the world.***

CONFESSION

*Let us draw near to God our Father with a true heart to confess our sins,
and ask Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.*

Almighty God, merciful Father, I, a poor helpless sinner, confess to You all my sins, and repent of all the evil I have done. I have deeply displeased You and deserve Your punishment in time and in eternity. But I am sorry for my sins, and I ask You, for the sake of the holy innocent sufferings and death of Your dear Son Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me. Amen.

*Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy on us, and has given His only Son to die for us, and for His sake forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in His name He has given the right to become children of God, and has given them His Holy Spirit. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved.
Grant this, Lord, to us all. **Amen.***

PSALM 146:5-10

**⁵ Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD their God.**

Lord, come and save us

⁶ He is the Maker of heaven and earth,
the sea, and everything in them – he remains faithful for ever.

⁷ He upholds the cause of the oppressed
and gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free,

⁸ the LORD gives sight to the blind,
the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down, the LORD loves the righteous.

⁹ The LORD watches over the foreigner
and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the
wicked.

Lord, come and save us

¹⁰ The LORD reigns for ever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.

Praise the LORD.

Lord, come and save us

**Glory to the Father and the Son
and the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now,
and will be forever.**

Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray that we receive Christ with joy.

[silence]

*Jesus, our promised Messiah,
John the Baptist went ahead of you
and proclaimed the good news
of your coming.*

*Encourage us to receive you with joy
as our redeemer,
and faithfully follow you.*

*For you live and reign
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.*

Amen.

BIBLE READING

FIRST READING: Isaiah 35:1-10 God himself will come to save us (NIVUK)

³⁵ The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, ² it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendour of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendour of our God. ³ Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; ⁴ say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.'
⁵ Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. ⁶ Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. ⁷ The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow. ⁸ And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way. The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not go about on it. ⁹ No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, ¹⁰ and those the LORD has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

After the reading

This is the Word of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: James 5:7-10 Do not lose heart (NIVUK)

⁷ Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹ Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! ¹⁰ Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

After the reading
This is the Word of the LORD.
Thanks be to God.

ALLELUIA VERSE

Alleluia!
Alleluia! Alleluia!
The Spirit of the Lord is upon me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the poor.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL: Matthew 11:2-11 Jesus and John the Baptist (NIVUK)

Before the reading
Glory be to You, O LORD.

² When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples ³ to ask him, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?’ ⁴ Jesus replied, ‘Go back and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy^[a] are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. ⁶ Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.’ ⁷ As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: ‘What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? ⁸ If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings’ palaces. ⁹ Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written: “‘I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.”^[b] ¹¹ Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

After the reading
This is the gospel of the LORD.
Praise be to You, O Christ.

*Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for coming as the promised Messiah.
Help us to receive you in joyful faith.
Amen.*

APOSTLE'S CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,

**born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell.**

**The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God, the Father almighty,
from thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen**

LHS 13 ON JORDAN'S BANKS

**On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry announces that the Lord nigh;
come then and hearken, for He brings glad tidings from the King of kings.**

**Then cleansed be every heart from sin;
make straight the way for God within;
prepare we in our hearts a home where such a mighty guest may come.**

**For You are our salvation, Lord, our refuge and our great reward;
without Your grace we waste away like flowers that wither and decay.**

**To heal the sick stretch out Your hand, and bid the fallen sinner stand;
shine forth, and let Your light restore
earth's own true loveliness once more.**

**To Him who left the throne of heaven to free us all, let praise be given;
and praise be to the Father done, and Holy Spirit, Three in One.**

Charles Coffin 1676-1749 Tr John Chandler 1806-76 alt.

SERMON

At this point you may wish to Listen to Sermon,
or Read and Discuss the Sermon
For Church YouTube Channel ([click here](#))
The Sermon online may be different to the manuscript.
For LCA Worship Resources ([click here](#))

AT 313 CHRIST BE OUR LIGHT

**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! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness. Christ, be our light!
Shine in Your church gathered today.**

**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! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness. Christ, be our light!
Shine in Your church gathered today.**

**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! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness. Christ, be our light!
Shine in Your church gathered today.**

Bernadette Farrell (1993) OCP Publications

OFFERING PRAYER

*Our loving heavenly Father,
we thank you for all the good things you have given us.
Teach us to serve you with patience
and with compassion to one another and all people.
Amen.*

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

*Jesus told his disciples: 'Go back and report to John what you hear and see.
The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the
deaf hear, the dead are raised.'*

So let us pray with confidence to our loving heavenly Father

Heavenly Father, through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, you have promised to bring healing to the world. Strengthen our hearts and give us patience to wait expectantly, that we may rejoice to see your work among us. Keep us believing that Jesus is the promised Christ and that in him we have your forgiveness.

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

Grant to your church, O God, faithful messengers who proclaim the good news of your coming to strengthen the weak and fearful. We pray for all who struggle with doubt, and question if Jesus is the one: that their eyes and hearts may be opened to the marvellous things that you do within and around them. Be with all who suffer for their faith, imprisoned and

persecuted Christians, and those suffering discriminations. Sustain them and give them hope.

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

Lord of all, give vision to our nation and to all in authority throughout the world, that they may share in your work to bring justice to the oppressed and homeless, food to those who hunger, and care for all who have physical disabilities. We thank you for those who are working to bring freedom and justice for people, and care for refugees. We pray that violence, terrorism and bloodshed may end, that the innocent may be sheltered, and peace be established in the hearts of all.

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

Gracious and compassionate God, we thank you that you know what it is to suffer. Help us to remember Jesus' suffering, and to know that he is truly with us in our suffering. By your Spirit, heal and renew all who are burdened by illness, disability, addiction or abuse. Bring your peace and assistance to all who are struggling as they approach death, as they receive palliative care and comfort in their pain and distress.

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

Loving Father, we praise you for your care and love every day, and thank you for your many blessings. Be with the homeless, the unemployed or underemployed, and any less fortunate. Give them hope in their anxiety, and help them to trust your promises.

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

Lord God, continue to bless us and this parish, that we may reflect your grace and goodness to those around us. Strengthen our faith, and make us confident in your power to save. These things and whatever else you know we need, kind Father, grant us for the sake of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come,
Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are Yours
now and forever. Amen.**

BLESSING

Let us bless the LORD.
God be praised forevermore.
The LORD bless us and keep us.
The LORD make His face shine on us and be gracious to us.
The LORD look upon us with favour, and give us peace.
Amen!

GROWING FAITH AT HOME BLESSING

God is coming to save you.
May he calm your fears and give you a brave heart.
God is coming to save you.
May he calm your fears and give you a brave heart.

WORDS OF SENDING

Go in peace. Wait for the Lord with patience, and stand firm.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

AT 20 COME, LORD JESUS, COME

Come, Lord Jesus, come, into this weary world.

O, how we long for You to come, Lord, come.

Wars have come and wars have gone; Come, Lord, come!

Still the cry goes up, "How long?" Come, Lord, come!

Come, Lord Jesus, come, into this weary world.

O, how we long for You to come, Lord, come.

Hearts are breaking, tears fall down; Come, Lord, come!

Come and free us, we are bound. Come, Lord, come!

Come, Lord Jesus, come, into this weary world.

O, how we long for You to come, Lord, come.

Darkness grows as night wears on; Come, Lord, come!

Will we live to see the Dawn? Come, Lord, come!

Come, Lord Jesus, come, into this weary world.

O, how we long for You to come, Lord, come.

Nations rise and nations fall; Come, Lord, come!

God is with us through it all, Come, Lord, come!

Come, Lord Jesus, come, into this weary world.

O, how we long for You to come, Lord, come.

Robin Mann

HYMNS AND SONGS

First reading: Isaiah 35:1-10

LHS

6 Ye sons of men, in earnest* G3

16 Hail to the Lord's Anointed G6

159 O for a thousand tongues to sing* G5

386 In Thee is gladness* G7

732 Comfort, comfort all my people GS

739 When the King shall come again

AT

25 Comfort, comfort
220 There'll be peace
364 In you is gladness
416 We will rise up
437 God's time
454 Your God will come

Second reading: James 5:7-10

LHS

17 Come, Thou long-expected Jesus G6
185 Sun of righteousness divine*
260 Lord Jesus Christ, with us abide*
390 Wait, my soul, with patience*
490 O Son of God, we wait for Thee*
731 Come, Lord Jesus, come GS
736 O Saviour, rend the heavens wide

AT

20 Come, Lord Jesus, come
187 Help us, Lord
221 They were waiting
300 Everyone should be quick to listen
302 Soon and very soon

Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11

LHS

1 Hark, a herald voice is calling* G7
13 On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry G4
14 Let the earth now praise the Lord* G4
159 O for a thousand tongues to sing* G5

AT

221 They were waiting
313 Christ, be our light
389 Light of the nations
441 Jesus was sent
450 When Jesus Christ worked here on earth