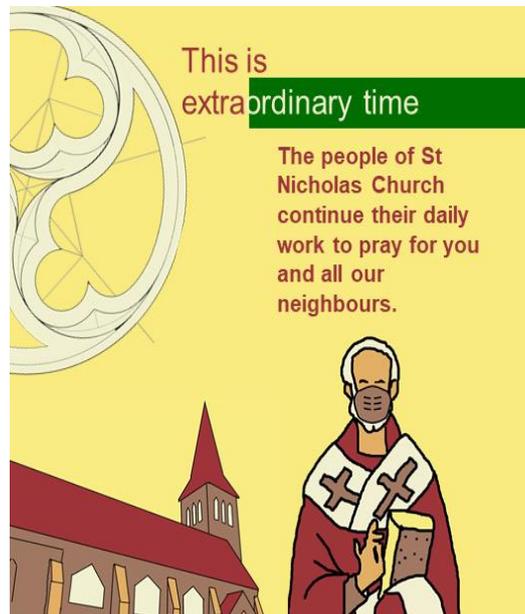


**Worship at St. Nicholas, Sutton
for 1st Sunday of Advent, 29 November 2020
Collect, hymns, readings & sermon**



Please join me for our service at 10.30am today (or at another convenient time) by following the Order of Service in your own home.

I will be thinking of you all and praying for you at The Rectory at the same time and longing for our future reunion in Church.

Frances

Revd Frances Arnold, Priest-in-Charge

Collect (prayer of the week)

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;
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,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Hymns

Opening *Hark! a herald voice is calling*

Gradual *O come, O come, Emmanuel*

Readings

Isaiah 64.1-9

A Prayer of Penitence

64O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—
² as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!
³ When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
⁴ From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.
⁵ You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.
But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we transgressed.
⁶ We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
⁷ There is no one who calls on your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.
⁸ Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
⁹ Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD,
and do not remember iniquity for ever.
Now consider, we are all your people.

1 Corinthians 1.3-9

Salutation

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech

and knowledge of every kind—⁶just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Mark 13.24-end *The Coming of the Son of Man, The Lesson of the Fig Tree, The Necessity for Watchfulness*

24 'But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light,

²⁵ and the stars will be falling from heaven,

and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

²⁶Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds" with great power and glory.

²⁷Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

28 'From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

32 'But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come.

³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch.

³⁵Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.'

Sermon from the Bishop of Kingston for Advent Sunday 2020

The season of Advent, which begins today, is often seen simply as a time of busy preparation for the celebrations of Christmas. This year, with all the huge uncertainties, challenges and limitations on us from the pandemic, there is a very understandable desire to want to get to the time of festivity and celebration as soon as we possibly can. We all need a break! Even in a more normal year the temptation to rush through Advent is very considerable. However, if we give in to this temptation we can lose some extremely important insights and themes from our Christian faith which are more vital than ever in a time of adversity. Sometimes it is better to travel slowly.

When I was 11 in 1966 my family moved to Surbiton from just south of Manchester. Surbiton had a fast and reliable train straight into Waterloo. I occasionally took the fast train in order to go to things in the middle of London. It meant that my experience was rather limited to Surbiton and its surroundings and central London, but not much in between. Over the 18+ years in which I have

served as Bishop of Kingston my knowledge of all the stops in between Surbiton and Waterloo, and many other places, has become much more profound. I have engaged with many different churches and communities. All bring their own richness and diversity. There is much to be gained by taking the slow train and getting off at the various stops.

So, too, in Advent, however tempting it might be to rush through to first stop Christmas Day, it is well worth taking the slow train through Advent.

Advent's central theme is about ***waiting in hope for the coming of God in Christ into our world***. Advent invites us to see our lives in the light of God's presence - at the beginning of creation, in Christ's incarnation, and into eternity.

Its traditional themes of death, judgement, heaven and hell, and the focus on Christ's coming, not only in Bethlehem, but also at the end of time, might seem unduly sombre in our current situation. However, I want to suggest that these next few weeks of Advent represent a real opportunity to reflect and pray about what really matters in our lives, where we place our fundamental hopes, and how we seek to live. The pandemic has made us all think about how we really want the world to be, and there is much debate about building back better. If we can enter into the deep themes of Advent this will help us see how God is at work in the midst of all things to bring about new life and new hope, and especially through the coming of Christ. So I want to encourage us all to try to take Advent seriously, perhaps more seriously than ever, this year. If we learn to wait in hope then we discover the deep foundations of our Christian faith which bring new life and light even in the darkest of times.

One way of illustrating some of the rich themes of Advent is through the ***Advent ring of candles*** which many churches use in this season. There are four candles in a ring surrounding a central white candle. Each of the four surrounding candles are lit on the Sundays in Advent in turn as we move through this season, and the final central one on Christmas Day. Each of them represents an important theme for each of the Sundays in Advent.

On Advent Sunday we remember all God's people ***waiting in faith***. It is so easy in a busy world, which extols activism, to spend very little time being genuinely still and waiting on God. When we can learn to do that our perspective on life begins to change. Psalm 62 begins by saying, "*On God alone my soul in stillness waits. From him comes my salvation*". Psalm 27 ends by saying, "*Wait for the Lord: be strong and he shall comfort your heart, wait patiently for the Lord*". We have been encouraged this Advent to be very intentional in our daily prayers and to ***take time to be still***. However short that moment might be, it can make a real difference to how we see things and how we live.

On the second Sunday in Advent we remember the prophets and the ***hope in God*** about which they spoke. They were often in their own times living through very tough situations and people were asking all kinds of questions about where is God in the midst of this? The message of the prophets was always that God is at work in both judgement and salvation to bring hope and right order even through the most difficult of times. So we might want to ***reflect on the basis of our hope in our own challenging times***, and especially our hope in God and how God is at work in our world through the coming of Christ.

On the third Sunday of Advent we remember John the Baptist, the forerunner Christ, and especially his ***call to repentance***. With the coming of Christ and the kingdom of God we are called to repentance and re-orientation from our self-centred ways to being God centred and other people centred. It matters that we live lives of love and care and justice for all. So we might want to take time this Advent to ***review the way we live our lives***. And especially in the light of the challenges of

the pandemic with the calls for economic, environmental and racial justice and how we are responding to these. And our keeping of the two great commandments to love God and to love our neighbours. God does forgive, but we need to reflect and repent and seek forgiveness before new life and new hope can flourish.

On the fourth Sunday in Advent we remember Mary, the mother of Jesus, and her willingness both **to hear and to obey the call of God** to bear the Christ-child. What does her example of obedience inspire us to?

- What does God want of each one of us at this time?
- Are we being called in a new direction, either individually, or together as a Church and as the world?

These are just some of the themes of Advent. By paying careful attention to them, they help us to wait in hope and to prepare the great celebration of the coming of Christ both at Christmas and at the end of time. They remind us of God's eternal presence all things, in both judgement and salvation.

So it's really worth **taking the slow train through Advent** and trying deliberately to stop at the various points as we go through. This Advent, as we wait in hope, I hope we won't be tempted to take the fast train to Christmas, however attractive and appealing that might seem. In Advent we are offered the opportunity to discover afresh the basis of our Christian hope, and so find the comfort and joy which the presence and love of God in Christ can bring to us and to all creation.

Amen.

I encourage you to make a habit of daily prayer, whether *A Way of Daily Prayer* (attached, or on website under Useful Information-Service Sheets);

Common Worship *Daily Prayer* <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer>;
or *Book of Common Prayer*.

Bible readings for Morning and Evening Prayer:

Sunday 29 November 1st Sunday of Advent

MP Isaiah 2.1-5, Luke 12.35-48

EP Isaiah 1.1-20, Matthew 21.1-13

Monday 30 November Andrew the Apostle

MP Ecclesiasticus 14.20-end, John 12.20-32

EP Zechariah 8.20-end, John 1.35-42

Tuesday 1 December

MP Isaiah 43.1-13, Revelation 20

EP Isaiah 26.1-13, Matthew 12.22-37

Wednesday 2 December

MP Isaiah 43.14-end, Revelation 21.1-8

EP Isaiah 28.1-13, Matthew 12.38-end

Thursday 3 December

MP Isaiah 44.1-8, Revelation 21.9-21

EP Isaiah 28.14-end, Matthew 13.1-23

Friday 4 December

MP Isaiah 44.9-23, Revelation 21.22-22.5

EP Isaiah 29.1-14, Matthew 13.24-43

Saturday 5 December

MP Isaiah 44.24-45.13, Revelation 22.6-end

EP Isaiah 29.15-end, Matthew 13.44-end