

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS.

2. ADVENT LITURGY

Advent is a season of expectation and preparation, as the Church prepares to celebrate the coming (adventus in Latin) of Christ in his incarnation, and also looks ahead to his final advent as judge at the end of time. The readings and liturgies not only direct us towards Christ's birth, they also challenge our modern reluctance to confront the theme of divine judgement. We may especially think of climate change and climate justice in this connection. The prayers we are using are the Advent Antiphons that the Church has prayed since the 8th century from 16th -24th December.

The characteristic note of Advent is expectation, rather than penitence ...The anticipation of Christmas under commercial pressure has also made it harder to sustain the appropriate sense of alert watchfulness, but the fundamental Advent prayer remains 'Maranatha' – 'Our Lord, come' (1 Corinthians 16.22).

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. John 1.1-5

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. Amen.

ALL: Come, Lord Jesus.

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. Amen.

ALL: Come, Lord Jesus.

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

ALL: Come, Lord Jesus.

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. Amen.

ALL: Come, Lord Jesus.

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. Amen.

ALL: Come, Lord Jesus.

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. Amen.

ALL: Come, Lord Jesus.

O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, hope of the nations and their saviour: come and save us, O Lord our God. Amen.

ALL: Come, Lord Jesus.

As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.' *Genesis 8.22*

ALL: Almighty God, as your blessed Son Jesus Christ first came to seek and to save the lost; so may he come again to find in us the completion of his redeeming work; for he is now alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever Amen.

(from Church of England prayers for Advent, and from a World Council of Churches Advent Liturgy of 2009.)

3. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

On September 25th 2015, countries adopted a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda. The goals relate to the following areas:

1. Poverty	7. Energy	13. Climate
2. Hunger & food security	8. Economic growth	14. Oceans
3. Health	9. Industrialisation and infrastructure	15. Biodiversity, forests, desertification
4. Education	10. Inequality	16. Peace, justice, strong institutions
5. Gender equality and women's empowerment	11. Cities	17. Partnership
6. Water & sanitation	12. Sustainable consumption & production	

Each goal has specific targets to be achieved over the next 15 years. In this session, we will look at some data for the countries in the USPG booklet, Faith in a Changing Climate – Brazil, Fiji, Madagascar and Myanmar + Ethiopia – and compare those with Saudi Arabia, the UK and the USA on a number of indicators relating to Sustainable Development (see Table).

Source: <https://data.worldbank.org/dat-catalog/world-development-indicators>

Faith in a Changing Climate, pages 10-18:

Page 10, Polynesia: “Today the land to which I belong is in crisis. The source of my identity and belonging is threatened by the immense changes being brought about by climate change”.

Page 12, Myanmar: “Myanmar is facing many consequences of climate change. Since 2006, cyclones, which were once rare, have been battering the country almost

every year. Myanmar is also experiencing extreme heat which is causing water scarcity and chaos in the livelihoods of people”.

Page 14, Brazil: ‘Brazil has been badly affected by climate change, which is putting entire communities at risk, as well as increasing poverty and inequality.”

Page 16, Madagascar: “The most obvious experience of climate change is how unusual it is to have so many cyclones...not only is the number of cyclones increasing but so is their speed and strength.”

4. BIBLE STUDY, Isaiah 64, verses 1-9 (first Sunday in Advent) O 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 forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

5. SILENT PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Prayers

Lord Jesus, open my eyes and my heart to recognise you wherever you are to be found. (*Barbara Wood (1986) Our world; God's World. p.13*)

God of the universe, we thank You for Your many good gifts - for the beauty of Creation and its rich and varied fruits, for clean water and fresh air, for food and shelter, animals and plants. Forgive us for the times we have taken the earth's resources for granted and wasted what You have given us. Transform our hearts and minds so that we learn to care and share, and to touch the earth with gentleness and with love. We pray for all those who suffer as a result of our waste, greed and indifference, and we pray that the day would come when everyone has enough food and clean water. Help us to respect the rights of all people and all species and help us willingly to share your gifts today and always. Amen. (*Fiona Murdoch, Eco-Congregation Ireland*)

Loving God, to whom this world with all its goodness and beauty belongs, give us grace joyfully to live our life in your name, and to fill each day with an active love for you and for our neighbour. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. (*A Shorter Morning and Evening Prayer, 1974. Week 3, Tuesday morning, slightly adapted*)

Reflections

"In the wilderness justice will come to live and integrity in the fertile land; integrity will bring peace, justice give lasting security (Isaiah, 32 v 17)." This is the Christmas message we long for: the coming of Christ, his spirit pouring into our hearts and transforming the world into one of peace, security, plenty and happiness. ... The passage in Isaiah is preceded by very different images – failing harvests, fertile land falling into wasteland, deserted cities ... Jesus does not say 'when these things come to pass, hang your heads in despair'... He tells us to lift our heads and face the problems squarely in the knowledge that he is there in the midst of them... The call Jesus gave seemed to be so simple: "Follow me". But that, as the disciples soon

discovered, was where the simplicity ended... To follow Jesus means to become involved, listening to what he is telling us through the events in the world as well as through his words in scripture and through others. (*Barbara Wood (1986) Our World; God's World. p. 12-13*)

There is this man Jesus, who is living all the time virtually in sight of the Kingdom of God, of the coming fullness of life, the justice and peace that he says are promised to the world. And there is his call to come and learn with him what that vision means, and how what we do with what we have can fit into it and be made part of its realisation. (*Neville Ward (1969) Enquiring within p.32*)

In the Love of Jesus, there shall be thine Help. (*Cloud of Unknowing, 14th century*)

If the central narrative of Christianity – that God became incarnate in the small body of a small human – is true, then we must always turn to the small, knowing that the small is the container of the important; knowing that the voice that is ignored must be listened to; knowing that the life that is in need is the life that is speaking truth. (*Padraig O Tuama, Corrymeela Community Leader, in Corrymeela magazine, 2017, vol 16, no 2, p5.*)

6. ACTION:

Eco-Church is an award scheme from the charity A Rocha UK. A Rocha is a Christian conservation charity that aims to equip churches to show that the Gospel is good news for all creation. Eco-Church is an audit tool to challenge and equip church members to care for God's world in all areas of our life together. Eco-Church is a successor to Eco Congregation; this developed from a partnership between the Government funded environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy and the Environmental Issues Network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. It aims to encourage churches to consider environmental issues within a Christian context and enable local churches to make positive contributions in their life and mission.

We will divide up into twos and threes and work through the audit tool and then decide whether this is something that we would like to recommend to the PCC.

7. CLOSING PRAYER:

Our Father, in heaven...

You are also at home in the air, the soil, the forests and the oceans,

Hallowed be Your name...

by the care we take of your creation,

Your kingdom come...

all that you see is good,

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...

Your will to till and care,

Give us this day our daily bread...

that all may have sufficient to live life in fullness,

Forgive us our trespasses...

our greed, our exploitation, our lack of concern for other species and for future generations,

As we forgive those who trespass against us...

by reconciliation with justice and peace,

Lead us not into temptation...

the temptation to equate dominion with exploitation,

And deliver us from evil...

the evil of destroying your gift of creation,

For Yours is the Kingdom...

Yours Lord, not ours,

The Power and the Glory...

in the cross and the resurrection,

For ever and ever...

You were the beginning and you are the end.

Amen. As we await our coming Saviour, may we go in peace to love and serve the Lord. In the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Diary dates

Our next meeting will be on Saturday 10 February, 10-12 in the Hall. Topics: water, energy and Carbon Fast for Lent.

Web Sites

A Rocha (includes Eco Church) : <http://arocha.org.uk>

Carbon Fast: <http://www.greenanglicans.org/carbon-fast-lent-2015>

Church of England: <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/shrinking-the-footprint>

Climate Coalition: <https://www.theclimatecoalition.org/>

Earth Day: <https://www.earthday.org>

Eco-Church South West: <https://ecochurchsouthwest.org.uk>

European Christian Environmental Network: <http://www.ecen.org/>

Guide to running a greener church, 2008? book by G Straine and N Oxley
www.churchofengland.org/media/42554/forcreedandcreation280207.pdf

Mary Robinson Foundation for Climate Justice: <https://www.mrfcj.org>

Operation Noah: <http://operationnoah.org>

USPG: <http://www.uspg.org.uk/climate>