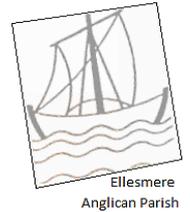
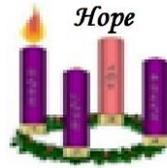


**Northwest Christchurch, Hororata  
and Ellesmere Parishes**

**Church@Home Service  
27 November 2022  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent  
HOPE**



This is the day that the Lord has made:  
**Let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

**Our theme today is: COMING READY OR NOT!**

*Today is the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent. The service includes a candle-lighting section and you are welcome to light your own candle during this part of the service (or to figuratively light a candle)*

*We invite you to take a moment or two to be still and ask God to be present with you as you worship.*

**Opening Song**

**What a Beautiful Name**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUBBIddm\\_rM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUBBIddm_rM)

**[Advent blessing of the Advent Wreath and lighting of hope candle with prayer.](#)**

Lord our God we praise you for your Son Jesus Christ. He is Emmanuel, the hope of all peoples; He is the wisdom that teaches and guides us, He is the Saviour of every nation. O God let Your blessing come upon our community gathered here before you. Bless us and our Advent Wreath.

**May the light that shines from this wreath lighten our way as we begin our Advent journey, and wait in hope for your coming in glory. We pray this prayer through Christ who is the Light and hope of the World. Amen.**

**Lighting of the Hope Candle with prayer**

Prepare the way of the Lord.

We light this candle in hope

The hope of our coming Saviour, Jesus

**Prepare, then, the way of the Lord.**



*Based on Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19*

God is the hope of ages past and for the generations to come.

**Blessed be God's glorious name forever. Let the earth be filled with God's glory.**

Human rulers disappoint us, even at their best, yet our hope in God is not crushed.

**Blessed be God's glorious name forever. Let the earth be filled with God's glory.**

The rivers, mountains, and creatures are beloved to their Creator and their trust is not misplaced.

**Blessed be God's glorious name forever. Let the earth be filled with God's glory.**

Even when the wounds of our hearts are fresh, we breathe on, relying on the sunrise that has not failed yet, a symbol of Divine constancy.

**Blessed be God's glorious name forever. Let the earth be filled with God's glory.**

This first candle is a reminder that we are Advent people, trusting and responding to what is already true and hoping in what is promised to come.

**Blessed be God's glorious name forever. Let the earth be filled with God's glory.**

God of all hopefulness, we thank you for your faithfulness to your covenants and to your creation. As you have kept your word from generation to generation, so we are able to live faithfully as your people. Strengthen us in Christian hope that we may bravely go into the world, meeting Christ in others and serving him in word and deed. Amen.

*Adapted from <https://www.liturgylink.net/page/3/?s=Advent+1>*

**Song: A candle is burning – Hope**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ovtqHos\\_4o&t=3s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ovtqHos_4o&t=3s)

A candle is burning, a flame warm and bright,  
A candle of HOPE in December's dark night  
While angels sing blessings from heaven's starry sky,  
Our hearts we prepare now for Jesus is nigh

## A time of confession

*For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his love for those who fear him;  
as far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our transgressions from us*

*Psalm 103*

*God, we are ready for hope. We long for the light of hope to shine in our lives. Yet as we rush through our days, we fail to see the hope-filled gifts you've given us. Help us to slow down.*

We come seeking forgiveness  
for all we have failed to be and do  
as members of Christ's body.

*A time of silence as we bring our sins and the sins of the world to the Lord.*

In God there is forgiveness.

**Loving and all-seeing God,  
forgive us where we have failed to support one another  
and to be what we claim to be.  
Forgive us where we have failed to serve you;  
and where our thoughts and actions have been  
contrary to yours we ask your pardon.**

God forgives us; be at peace.

*Silence*

Let us rejoice and be glad,  
for Christ is resurrection,  
reconciliation for all the human race.

**We shall all be one in Christ, one in our life together.  
Praise to God who has created us,  
praise to God who has accepted us,  
praise to God who sends us into the world.**

*Enter our hearts with a gentle reminder of the hope you bring. Open our eyes to the many blessings we've received so that we can turn toward others and share your gifts of hope.*

## Sentence and Prayer for the day

Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob;  
that He may teach us His ways and that we may walk in His paths.

*Isaiah 2:3a*

### **Prayer**

Almighty God, You give us this season to make ourselves ready for the coming of Your Son. In this time of waiting and hoping, assist us to order our lives so that we may be ready to welcome Jesus in the flesh. Through Jesus Christ our Liberator, who is alive and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

## Ministry of the Word

### **1<sup>st</sup> Reading      Isaiah 2:1-5**

**2** The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

**2** In days to come

    the mountain of the LORD's house  
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,  
    and shall be raised above the hills;  
all the nations shall stream to it.

**3** Many peoples shall come and say,  
'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,  
    to the house of the God of Jacob;  
that he may teach us his ways  
    and that we may walk in his paths.'

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,  
    and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

**4** He shall judge between the nations,  
    and shall arbitrate for many peoples;  
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,  
    and their spears into pruning-hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
    neither shall they learn war any more.

**5** O house of Jacob,  
    come, let us walk  
    in the light of the LORD!

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **2nd Reading      Romans 13:11-14**

**11** Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; **12** the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; **13** let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. **14** Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel according to **Matthew 24:36-44**

### **Praise and glory to God.**

<sup>36</sup> `But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son,<sup>[h]</sup> but only the Father. <sup>37</sup> For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup> and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>40</sup> Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. <sup>42</sup> Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day<sup>[i]</sup> your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup> But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. <sup>44</sup> Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.

This is the Gospel of Christ.

### **Praise to Christ, the Word.**

## **SERMON / REFLECTION for 27 November 2022**

### **Coming Ready or Not!**

(An audio recording of this sermon will be available at the following link)

<https://www.northwestchchparish.org.nz/sound>

*Moya*

Coming, ready or not is a good theme for Christmas! I am going to speak a little about that and then focus on Jesus' words in the Gospel and Paul's letter to the Romans.

It's the first Sunday in Advent, and Advent is a preparation time before Christmas. That is usually a bit frantic, with break-ups, cake-making (not so common now), plans for who is with whom and when, shopping for presents, maybe sending cards and so on. My sister-in-law always bakes two batches of mince pies, (my favourite, bless her!). I know another person who, a number of times, has done Christmas shopping for presents after work on Christmas Eve. But Christmas is fixed as December 25<sup>th</sup> and then it is all over and we are into Boxing Day sales. Sadly, the birth of Jesus gets obscured.

The wonderful truth of Christmas is, "The word became flesh and dwelt among us. We saw his glory as of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth". The birth of Jesus is the culmination of God's sweeping plan of salvation throughout the Old Testament to create a people and kingdom of love. The plan required a man to live and die a perfect life of love and to do it, God came himself in the form of his Son, Immanuel, God with us. Jesus' resurrection sealed the victory. But that was D-day and the battle is still raging until the End which is promised.

Advent in the readings, is not really about Christmas but about Jesus' coming again. Paul said, "Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed". Yes, and much nearer for us! If you Google Agenda 2030 or the World Economic Forum, you will find

people talking quite seriously about a one-world economy and even a one-world government. This is not conspiracy theory but world leaders openly planning for it, with the technology to be able to implement it. However, Jesus said, in the Gospel, "No-one knows the day or the hour" just as happened in the Flood. That was unexpected and devastating and Jesus underlines it with the parable of the house-owner and the thief. Of course the owner didn't know the time the thief was coming but Jesus underlines that his coming will be equally unexpected and devastating and we need to "keep watch for you know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man will come".

The context of his statement is the signs of the end of the age – famines, plagues, wars, earthquakes – and is followed by the parables of the foolish virgins who lacked oil, the master returning to inspect his servants' work with their talents and the coming of the King with the judgement of the sheep and goats. We say often, "He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead". Yes! The teaching is clear and promised all through the Bible, however improbable we find it – and many people do find it hard to believe. The key is "This gospel of the kingdom must be preached to all nations and then the end will come". Everyone needs a chance to become a child of God by repentance and faith in Jesus but there are some hundreds and more of people groups and languages who have no knowledge of Jesus and what he has done for us. We have work to do!

But how do we respond to the truth of Jesus' coming? Paul says, "Put off the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light". So you all have to stop your drunken, immoral orgies and debaucheries! (I don't think! What sort of church was Paul talking to? Not like ours...!) But then he mentions dissensions or quarrelling, and jealousies which are endemic wherever people get together. Falling out with others, either in the past or present needs to be addressed; saying sorry, forgiving, making amends needs to happen and happen quickly. My Mum and Dad had a good sixty-eight year marriage and early on they made it a rule to take Paul's advice, "not to let the sun go down on your anger". In other words, make up differences before you go to sleep, which is especially needed in a marriage or resentments and annoyances can build up into a wall that creates all sorts of distress. We need to keep short accounts with people and God. Paul continues, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ", which is to live in the power and presence of Jesus by the Holy Spirit who lives in you, and to do this daily.

I am reading "The Sacrament of the Present Moment" by an eighteenth century priest. Its original title was "Self-abandonment to Divine Providence". Yes! Make it a practice to surrender yourself, your day, life, death, past, future, money, possessions, family, health and anything else you may be holding on to, often. That is the way to trust God more fully and freely. The current title of the book, "The Sacrament of the Present Moment", is also helpful. Look for Jesus' coming in your day. Maybe there are little blessings, maybe an opportunity to show love.

I was going to a dance performance a week or so ago at the James Hay Theatre and after I parked near it, a woman stopped her car in the road, wound down her window and said, "Where is the James Hay Theatre?" and then said, "You're Moya!" I have no idea who she was or how I knew her but recognised her face. I told her where the theatre was and continued walking down the road towards it, not thinking that I could have said, "Park your car and walk with me!" Opportunity missed!

In your day, take a moment to pray for family and friends who don't believe. Listen for the prompting of the Spirit to share faith or an offer of prayer. Who knows what

effect a simple, "I will pray for you" may mean to someone in trouble? Jesus said, "My Father is working and I am working..." and note the present tense. God is I AM, ever in the present moment, and Paul said, "Now is the acceptable time, today is the day of salvation!"

And believe that the end to the sickness, sadness and evil of this world is coming, not a man-made peace, that will only last a short time, but Jesus himself, the Prince of Peace coming into his own Kingdom at last. Then, as Isaiah said, "Swords will be beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks", as we live under the loving rule and reign of Jesus Christ. This is the hope of the Gospel, promised all through the Bible and clearly told by Jesus himself. This is truth, and Christmas is just the start.

Let's pray: Father God, there are mysteries in your purposes which are far beyond our understanding but we pray for the courage and grace to live each day, seeking your will as best we can and trusting in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ until he comes. Amen.

### **Response Song**

### **The heavens shall declare**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hp5StCfKcL8>

### **The Affirmation of Faith** (or listen to: **This I believe (Hillsong)** –

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0mPk\\_3dXSg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0mPk_3dXSg) )

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven,  
is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

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

## Prayers of the People

Adapted from [Auckland Diocese Prayers](#) and <https://www.liturgylink.net>

God of promise,  
We come to you this day, at the start of a new season, waiting.  
Your children, O Lord, are waiting to be seen.  
We remember those among us who are feeling forgotten or alone or misunderstood.  
Grant them assurance that they are whole, and wholly yours, just the way they are.  
**May your Spirit give them hope, and inspire us to do our part in making it so.**

**For the Church** – that you will guide the Church and it's leaders to act with integrity and to walk in the path of justice.

*(Silence)* Maranatha **Come Lord Jesus.**

**For nations at war with neighbouring countries** – that they strive for peace with each other, turning 'swords to ploughshares' and 'spears to pruning hooks.'

*(Silence)* Maranatha **Come Lord Jesus.**

**For Aotearoa New Zealand** – that we be a country of peace and justice where the rights of the vulnerable are upheld, where just wages are paid, and people of minority groups and religions are safe.

*(Silence)* Maranatha **Come Lord Jesus.**

**For people addicted to drugs or alcohol** – that they will be healed, live lives of dignity and purpose, and that they receive the support they need to bring about healing changes in their lives.

*(Silence)* Maranatha **Come Lord Jesus.**

**For people who sleep on footpaths, roads or under bridges and those who have no home of their own** – that society will act with compassion, that proper housing will be available, and that they will be supported to develop the life skills needed to live with others.

*(Silence)* Maranatha **Come Lord Jesus.**

**For students who are ending their school year** – that they take time to reflect on opportunities received and on the application of their own effort, and that the coming school holidays bring a time of new vision, renewal and refreshment.

*(Silence)* Maranatha **Come Lord Jesus.**

**For our local community of ...** (An opportunity to pray for your local parish and community)

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*(Silence)* Maranatha **Come Lord Jesus.**

### **Concluding Prayer**

God of power and might, the dawning rays of your light break through the darkness. Keep us watchful for the day when the sounds of war and human anguish will be stilled, and all your children will be gathered into one. We make this prayer through the One whose day draws near and whose coming is certain ... **Amen**

O Lord, you are coming to us,  
and we wait with eager anticipation!  
We put our hope in your Word, O Lord,  
that your Word might take on flesh among us once again  
to reveal your mercy and steadfast love.  
We wait, Eternal One,  
and we cry out to you on behalf of those who have waited too long:  
those who seek your healing,  
those who seek your forgiveness,  
those who seek your presence.  
We wait for you,  
for there is redemption with you,  
and you redeem the sinful world according to your promise.

We wait for the coming Christ as we pray ...

### **Lord's Prayer** [Audio - The Lord's Prayer \(Said\)](#)

Our Father in heaven  
Holy 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  
Save us from the time of trial  
But deliver us from evil  
For the kingdom the pow'r and the glory  
Are yours now and forever. Amen

**Song: I cannot tell**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qh0RKetMB0o>

### **Final Prayer**

Blessed be God who calls us together  
**Praise to God who makes us one people.**

Blessed be God who has forgiven our sin.  
**Praise to God who gives hope and freedom.**

Blessed be God whose Word is proclaimed.  
**Praise to God who is revealed as love.**

Blessed be God who alone has called us  
**Therefore we offer all that we are and all that we shall become.**

Accept, O God, our sacrifice of praise.  
**Amen, Accept our thanks for all you have done.  
Our hands were empty, and you filled them.**

## **Blessing**

In the light of the risen Christ. all is transformed.

May we look in upon ourselves, and out upon the world, and see all in a fresh light.

May we see people, and pray with the resurrection eyes of the Lord Jesus.

And the blessing of God Almighty – Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us all ever more. **Amen.**

## **Song      O Come O Come Emmanuel**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwmNu89WKlo>

**Dismissal** Go now to love and serve the Lord. Go in peace.  
**Amen. We go in the name of Christ.**