

Worship at Home service Sunday 10th December 2023 with Revd Ian Forsyth

Today is the second Advent Sunday, and we are following the Out of the Ordinary service. Preparing for the extraordinary. Theme 'Changing your mind'.

Opening liturgy

Our Advent journey calls us on, in preparation for what's to come. Our dusting off and getting ready. tweaking, changing what we do.

Advent God, **dust us off today.**

Because we've always done it doesn't mean we always must, as our journey makes us think again and change the way we live.

Advent God, **dust us off today.**

The challenge is to learn what old ways should be no more, to encounter and experience and be brave in stepping out.

Advent God, **dust us off today.**

The more we learn, the more we change. The more we think, the more we grow. The more we dust our old ways off, the more our faith shines out.

Advent God, **dust us off today.**

Advent God, as we light this second candle, may we accept the challenges and changes to our living and our loving that your extraordinary gift leads us all to make. May we be prepared to dust off old ways, learn new ways and become more Christlike. **Amen.**

A call to worship:

The second Advent candle could be lit. Bring your thoughts, bring your feelings, bring your busyness, bring your chaos, bring your calm, bring your worries, bring your hopes and your fears.

Bring it all here – and put it all down for a while... and let the light of God fill the space. **Amen**

A gathering prayer

Lord, we come because we want to see you today, we come because we want to hear your story, we come because we want to experience your love, we come because we want to encounter you in our lives. **Amen.**

StF 489 All I once held dear.

All I once held dear, built my life upon,
All this world reveres and wants to own,
All I once thought gain, I have counted loss
Spent and worthless now, compared to this
Knowing You, Jesus, knowing You
There is no greater thing
You're my all, you're the best
You're my joy, my righteousness
And I love You, Lord

Now my heart's desire is to know you more
To be found in you and known as yours
To possess by faith what I could not earn
All-surpassing gift of righteousness.
Chorus

Oh, to know the power of your risen life, and to know you in your sufferings. To become like you in your death, my Lord, so with you to live and never die.

Chorus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxpPla-BskY>

Bible readings

Isaiah 40 v 1 – 11, Mark 1 v 1 - 8

Prayers of intercession

We pray...

For those lost in valleys.

May they be lifted up.

For those stuck in the heights.

May they be helped down.

For those in barren places.

May they find shelter.

For those in rough places.

May they hear eternal words.

For those seeking forgiveness.

May they find it.

For those seeking apology.

May they hear it.

For those waiting for a long time.

May they find patience in your patience.

For those waiting for renewal.

May there be springs of growth.

Amen.

Time to reflect:

Every year at Advent, I have a tradition to challenge myself to look at the Christmas story again and reflect on just one part of the Nativity. The phrase from Mark's gospel that stood out for me this year was, 'everyone went to their own town to register'. Imagine the scene of people leaving their homes going on journeys to their hometown, passing each other on the road and possibly meeting people they had never spoken to before are not likely to meet again.

The theme for today is changing your mind. It is the second Sunday in Advent, and we are reflecting on Isaiah's words which we find in Handel's Messiah, a sacred oratorio. Christmas traditional music has been heard all around us as we have been shopping or travelling around visiting friends as we approach the Christmas season. Isaiah is pointing out the changes that will come, some of us look back on our lives and can say we have seen so many changes, wars, famines, floods, and earthquakes.

Isaiah points out significant changes where every valley will be lifted up and every mountain made low, rough ground made level and rough places made plain.

Mark's Gospel records people making significant changes when John was preaching in the wilderness and hearing the good news of the Messiah. Sometimes when we are in the wilderness, it's in these times we make changes in our lives.

Change sometimes takes place even when we do not expect it, and these experiences and encounters cause us to rethink. Christmas can be a difficult time for those who have lost loved ones, and many people may be lonely at Christmas.

As we draw near to the greatest celebration of the Christian calendar and celebrate Jesus born in Bethlehem, our Saviour and Lord, we remember the invitation to change our mind and follow Jesus. For some Christmas is about music, food and presents, however may we somehow take a few moments in the run up to Christmas to be courageous, and do something out of the ordinary, for others this Christmas.

Here is a challenge for us in Northampton Methodist church, after Christmas if we have excess non-perishable food or biscuits that we have not used in our cupboards, maybe we could give this extra food we have not eaten to the foodbank in Northampton. Sometimes we buy more than we need as our plans change during the holiday period, and I can remember a few years ago taking our excess food to the local foodbank for others to enjoy. As you read this worship at home, I am going to invite you to read the final prayer and then return to the opening liturgy for our second advent Sunday saying finally 'May we be prepared to dust off old ways, learn new ways and become more Christlike. Amen

StF 503 – Love divine, all love excelling.

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heav'n to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling;
all thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;

visit us with thy salvation;
enter every trembling heart.

2 Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit
into every troubled breast!
Let us all in thee inherit,
let us find the promised rest.
Take away our love of sinning;
Alpha and Omega be
end of faith, as its beginning,
set our hearts at liberty.

3 Come, Almighty to deliver;
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return and never,
nevermore thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above;
pray, and praise thee without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

4 Finish then, thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be
let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee:
changed from glory into glory,
till in heav'n we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise!
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqHIAxjrpw8>

A sending out prayer:

Lord, as we go into our week
may we look for more of you.
Help us to see more clearly,
to see further, to see what you see,
to see the whole picture –
and to live our faith each and every day.
Amen.