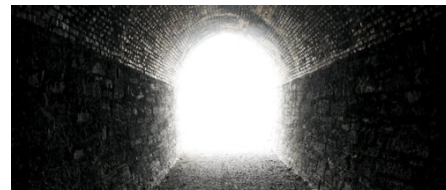


Sunday 8th December 2024: Second Sunday in Advent

For use by the Central Norfolk Circuit at 10.30 am or some other suitable time.



Theme for today is “Prepare the way for the Lord”

Our call to worship:

Deck the halls and light the candles. Prepare the way!

Open the doors and sing a song of hope. Prepare the way!

Make space in our hearts for a new kind of love. Christ is coming. Prepare the way!

Hymn: StF 188 H&P 246 There’s a light upon the mountains

Prayers

Advent God, we meet preparing to greet you. Turn us around to find your way. Guide us into a lifestyle appropriate to your coming kingdom, so that we may prepare the way for others and lead them in the path of peace. Be with us, Immanuel, the God who comes close. Amen

Creator God, not a day goes by when you do not invite us to be peacemakers and advocates, listeners and Good Samaritans. Not a day goes by when we are not asked to be a friend to a stranger, and a neighbour to those in need. Not a day goes by when we are not asked to be the people you call us to be, and yet, day after day, we lose sight of your hope for this world. Forgive us for walking a different path and grant us the strength to prepare a new way, your way – here. Gratefully we pray. Amen.

Introduction:

Advent is a season when we consider what it means to prepare the way for the Lord. In a little over a fortnight’s time we will mark again the incarnation, that moment when remember how the might of God came into the world in the form of a human being and lived, worked and ministered among us. The Prophecy of Malachi calls for the people to prepare for the arrival of the Messiah, John the Baptist prepares the people through the baptism for the forgiveness of sins and St Paul calls the Philippians to live their lives in preparation for the Day of the Lord.

Hymn: StF 168 Come, Lord Jesus come

Bible readings: Malachi 3: 1-4, Philippians 1: 3-11, Luke 3: 1-6

A message from a Circuit Friend

Have you ever imagined Advent as a political season?

A shopping season before we get to Christmas certainly. Decorations in the town, home and church, and time to spend with family and friends. Even a time of spiritual preparation! But a political season?

Luke tells us of the politics of the time - all the great and the good are mentioned- but then we get a surprise.

“...the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness”

John calls for repentance, a deep and lasting change. John was concerned that so much in his society was wrong, but the answer was not to fix the practical but to start with the spiritual. Yet there is hope here. With our repentance, God builds a better kingdom than any we can make. God starts in the heart but that is only the beginning of the new campaign.

John declares a new regime, a new reign. The way in is only when we completely change our direction of travel. He invited people to show their dedication by taking the step of public baptism. It was radical. It said put God first as your King - put your whole life at his disposal - and then go and do what God leads you to do. When prophets demand repentance, it is a call to life, an invitation to the politics of the reign of God.

The difficulty, of course, is that we cannot live life always at this level of intensity. Normal life must continue - we have to come back from the wilderness and back to the everyday. Don’t we?

- How do we prepare the way of the Lord - here and now, in our own churches, communities and lives?
- Perhaps we should be looking where we least expect to find it!

From Rev Anne Richardson – circuit Minister.

Hymn: StF 180 H&P 85 O come, O come, Immanuel

Prayers of Intercession

For those who can find no peace in their heart through grief, anxiety or fear, we pray. For those who can find no repentance in their heart through bitterness, guilt or anger we pray. For those who can find no peace in their lives through hunger, homelessness or loneliness, we pray. For those who can find no repentance in their lives through abuse, neglect or cruelty, we pray. Hear our prayers and bring healing light into those hearts and lives of darkness. Amen.

Offer to God your offertory for the week, and say the Lord's Prayer...

Hymn: StF 620 H&P 374 Thou God of truth and love

Closing blessing –

Go out to celebrate in love and laughter. Go as lights for the world! Shine in the darkness, act justly, and walk humbly with your God, in whose name we pray. Amen