

**Sunday December 12<sup>th</sup> 2021:** The third Sunday in Advent  
*For use by the Central Norfolk Circuit at 10.30 am or other suitable time.*



*As we sing (or say) this first song, we light the third of our Advent candles:*

**Hymn StF 166**

*'Christmas is coming!' / The Church is glad to sing,  
and let the advent candles / brightly burn in a ring.*

The third is for the Baptist / who cried 'Prepare the way.  
Be ready for Jesus / today and every day'.



John L Bell (b 1949) CCL no. 5365402

*The themes of Advent (which means 'coming') are 'waiting' and 'being alert'. As the Old Testament prophets looked forward to the coming of the Messiah (Advent 2), as Mary waited for her special baby to be born (Advent 4), as John the Baptist announced the imminent coming of God's Holy One (Advent 3), as we await Christ's coming again and the final putting right of all things (Advent 1) – so we must stay watchful and alert and ready for what God is doing, all the time. And, of course, we are on the journey towards Christmas and, as we await the annual celebration of the wonder of almighty God coming into the world as a tiny, vulnerable baby, we continue to prepare ourselves, we continue to open ourselves to the God who joins us in the mess and the muddle, the worry and the pain, the joy and the blessings.*

**Old Testament Reading set for today:** Zephaniah 3 v 14 – 20

**Hymn StF 188 H&P 246**

There's a light upon the mountains / and the day is at the spring,  
when our eyes shall see the beauty and the glory of the King;  
weary was our heart with waiting, and the night-watch seemed so long;  
but his triumph-day is breaking, and we hail it with a song.

There's a hush of expectation, and a quiet in the air;  
and the breath of God is moving in the fervent breath of prayer:  
for the suffering, dying Jesus is the Christ upon the throne,  
and the travail of our spirit is the travail of his own.

Hark! We hear a distant music, and it comes with fuller swell;  
'tis the triumph-song of Jesus, of our King, Immanuel:  
Zion, go now forth to meet him; and , my soul, be swift to bring  
all your finest and your noblest for the triumph of our King!

Henry Burton (1840 – 1930)

*So, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent, which is traditionally dedicated to John the Baptist, we hear about the message that he started giving in the desert – and the people's response (some surprising people as well!):*

**Gospel Reading set for today:** Luke 3 v 7 – 18

**To think about**

Is this the sort of message that you would have expected John to give? Why isn't his message more encouraging and comforting? And why do the people respond even though his message to them is quite harsh, condemnatory of their behaviour, and challenging?

## **Hymn StF 182 H&P 84**

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry / announces that the Lord is nigh;  
awake and hearken, for he brings / glad tidings from the King of kings!

Then cleansed be every life from sin / make straight the way for God within,  
and let us all our hearts prepare / for Christ to come and enter there.

To heal the sick stretch out your hand / and bid the fallen sinner stand;  
shine forth, and let your light restore / earth's own true loveliness once more.

To God the Son all glory be / whose advent sets his people free,  
whom, with the Father, we adore / and Holy Spirit, evermore.

John Chandler (1806 – 1876)

## **Prayers of Intercession**

In joyful expectation of his coming to reign, we pray to our Lord, saying: **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come to your world as King to the nations. Before you rulers will stand in silence. **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come to your church as Lord and Judge. Help us to live in the light of your coming. and give us a longing to do your will. **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come to your people as Saviour and bearer of pain. Enfold us all in your love and mercy, wipe away the tears of failure, fear and distress, and set free to serve you for ever. **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come to us from heaven, Lord Jesus, with power and great glory, and lift us up to meet you, where with all your saints and angels, we will live with you for ever. **Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.**

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

## **Hymn StF 171 H&P 82**

Hark the glad sound! The Saviour comes / the Saviour promised long;  
let every heart prepare a throne / and every voice a song.

He comes the prisoners to release / in Satan's bondage held;  
the gates of brass before him burst / the iron fetters yield.

He comes the broken heart to bind / the bleeding soul to cure,  
and with the treasures of his grace / to enrich the humble poor.

Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace / your welcome shall proclaim,  
and heaven's eternal arches ring / with your beloved name.

Philip Doddridge (1702 – 1751)

**May the blessing of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us, and all those we love, this day and always, Amen.**

## **Extra Handout**

The third handout with short readings from Luke 1 and 2, and something to think about each day, is available for this coming week. There are six readings for each week – one for each day except Sunday.

## **Circuit News**

Churches throughout the Circuit have been voting in their Autumn Councils on contributing to the national Reserve Pension Fund as well as whether to allow same-sex marriages on church premises. Some churches have been able to make generous gifts to the former, others do not have spare reserves or would rather wait to see if a levy is applied. Regarding the latter, of the 19 churches that have discussed voting, 3 have chosen not to take a vote; 10 churches have voted in favour and 6 churches have voted against. For further details, please consult a member of staff (Jacqui Horton, Cliff Shanganya, Jen Woodfin, Anne Richardson, Sam Parfitt) or one of the Circuit Stewards (Aileen Fox, John Hull, Pippa Cook, Jill Skinner, Geraldine Allen). Your prayers for our Circuit Leadership Team (which also includes Lew Pearson as Treasurer and Mandy Etherington as Administrator) is appreciated.