



This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use while you are unable to attend worship in a church building. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

**Call to worship**

God of all light, Creator,  
Light of the World,  
we approach You  
with joy in community,  
with gratitude for love,  
and with prayerful stillness  
revealing the love and light  
at the heart of all creation

**Hymn StF: 706 Longing for Light**

Longing for light, we wait in darkness  
Longing for truth, we turn to You.  
Make us Your own, Your holy people  
Light for the world to see.

*Christ, be our light!*

*Shine in our hearts.*

*Shine through the darkness.*

*Christ, be our light!*

*Shine in Your church gathered today.*

Longing for peace, our world is troubled  
Longing for hope, many despair.  
Your word alone has power to save us.  
Make us your living voice.

Longing for food, many are hungry  
Longing for water, many still thirst.  
Make us Your bread, broken for others  
Shared until all are fed.

Longing for shelter, many are homeless  
Longing for warmth, many are cold.  
Make us Your building, sheltering others  
Walls made of living stone.

Many the gift, many the people  
Many the hearts that yearn to belong.  
Let us be servants to one another  
Making Your kingdom come.

*Hymn@ StBernadette Farrell*

**Opening prayer:**

Open our eyes, Lord,  
especially if they are half-shut  
because we are tired of looking,  
or half-open because we fear to see too  
much,  
or bleared with tears  
because yesterday and today and tomorrow  
are filled with the same pain,  
or contracted because we only look at what  
we want to see.

Open our eyes, Lord  
to gently scan the life we lead,  
the home we have  
the world we inhabit,  
and so to find amongst the gremlins and  
greyness,  
signs of hope we can fasten on and  
encourage.

Give us, whose eyes are dimmed by  
familiarity,  
a bigger vision of what you can do  
even with hopeless cases and lost causes  
and people of limited ability.

Show us the world as in your sight,  
riddled by debt, deceit and disbelief,  
yet also shot through with possibility  
for recovery, renewal, redemption.

And lest we fail to distinguish vision from  
fantasy,  
today, tomorrow, this week,  
open our eyes to one person  
or one place,  
where we – being even for a moment  
prophetic –  
might identify and wean a potential in the  
waiting.

And with all this,

open our eyes,  
in the yearning, for Jesus. Amen

### **Advent liturgy**

*You are invited to read through the following liturgy and either safely light a candle at home, or to picture your mind's eye a candle being lit*

### **Advent 1 – the Advent hope**

Jesus said, 'Keep awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.'

**Amen. Come soon, Lord Jesus!**

*The first candle is lit and this response is used*

Jesus is the light of the world.

**A light no darkness can ever put out.**

### **Verse 1 of StF: 165**

Advent candles tell their story  
as we watch and pray,  
longing for the Day of Glory,  
'Come, Lord, soon,' we say.  
Pain and sorrow,  
tears and sadness,  
changed for gladness on that Day

*Do not leave candles unattended*

### **Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16**

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'

### **Reflection**

Jeremiah gives us a picture of what assurance looks like in the midst of chaos. He's writing from prison – in verse 1 of chapter 33 we are told he was confined in the court of the guard, and around him violence and political machinations are causing unrest. There is racism, and fear mongering, and like any time

of conflict, truth is the first casualty. Politicians and rulers are deaf to advice and make the wrong decisions for the wrong reasons. The people are hurting as a consequence. Jeremiah has been unrelenting in his message, warning of disaster, but now in prison, there is a change of tone and we receive hope.

And this is the first reading of our Advent journey. The perfect reading for Advent to begin. Advent encourages us to look ahead, but also reminds us we need to be deeply grounded in the present. And the end of our journey, which takes us through to Christmas Day, isn't of course the end. We mark the birth of Christ, remembering back to that story, which is an event in history. But Advent carries us beyond that story, that nativity, much further into the future, where the Christ-child who gave hope, continues to give hope. We pray, 'Come, Lord Jesus', not simply because we are thinking of his birth, but of his presence we are seeking today. The days are surely coming – well, we might think that the days of Christmas are surely coming and maybe we think that is what this reading is pointing to, but the hope of Christmas takes us into a much greater hope. A hope when all suffering will cease.

The days are surely coming. The days are surely coming when COVID-19 will be over. The days are surely coming when racism will cease. The days are surely coming when no girl or women is afraid to go out at night alone. The days are surely coming when no one sleeps on cold streets. The days are surely coming when there will be no more cancer. The days are surely coming when the climate emergency will be solved. The days are surely coming when there will be no more war. The days are surely coming when no child will die because of starvation. The days are surely coming when no family has to flee their home, taking risks to try and keep their children safe, putting themselves and their loved ones into the hands of unscrupulous gangs who give them flimsy promises of reaching safety, knowing politicians have made statements about turning them away from sanctuary and back

to peril, stepping into inadequate boats on choppy waters in the busiest shipping lane in the world, where waves overlap and overcome and precious lives are lost to the waters. The days are surely coming.

And we pray, How long O Lord? How long?

And we pray, Come Lord Jesus.

### **Hymn: StF 517 Eternal Father, strong to save**

Eternal Father, strong to save,  
whose arm doth bind the restless wave,  
who bids the mighty ocean deep  
its own appointed limits keep;  
*O hear us when we cry to thee  
for those in peril on the sea.*

O Saviour, whose almighty word  
the winds and waves submissive heard,  
who walked upon the foaming deep,  
and calm amid the rage did sleep;  
*O hear us when we cry to thee  
for those in peril on the sea.*

O sacred Spirit, who didst brood  
upon the waters dark and rude,  
who made its angry tumult cease,  
and gavest light and life and peace;  
*O hear us when we cry to thee  
for those in peril on the sea.*

O Trinity of love and power,  
shield all who sail in danger's hour;  
from rock and tempest, fire, and foe,  
protect them where-so-e'er they go;  
*and ever let there rise to thee  
glad hymns of praise from land and sea.*

*William Whiting*

### **Intercessions**

We're going to have a short time of meditation – don't be frightened by that word, it's just about sitting quietly and being open to the possibilities of God. You can keep your eyes open, but you may prefer to have them closed.

Take a moment to get comfortable.

Imagine that where you are sitting right now is the hand of God. You're in a very safe place.

Take a few deep steady breaths. Feel your heart slow down. Feel yourself relax.

When we are sad or frightened, none of us wants to be alone. We want someone to be with us to give us strength, courage, and hope.

We think about the coming of Jesus, the Emmanuel, God with us. During Advent, we pray in a special way for God to be with us. Knowing that God will be with us gives us strength, courage, and hope to face the future, especially if our present is sad or frightening and if our future seems hopeless.

Take a moment to thank Jesus – Emmanuel – for being with us, for being with you.

Tell Jesus about anything in your life that is making you feel alone, sad, frightened, or confused.

Listen to Jesus as he tells you that he is with you and that you don't need to be afraid.

Ask Jesus for the courage, strength, and hope to face the present and the future, knowing that you're not alone.

Tell Jesus where you need him most in your life now and in the future.

Listen to what Jesus has to say to you.

### **Hymn: StF 405 Great is the darkness**

Great is the darkness  
That covers the earth  
Oppression, injustice and pain  
Nations are slipping  
In hopeless despair  
Though many have come in Your name  
Watching while sanity dies  
Touched by the madness and lies

*Come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus  
Pour out Your spirit we pray  
Come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus  
Pour out Your spirit on us today*

May now Your church rise  
With power and love  
This glorious gospel proclaim  
In every nation  
Salvation will come  
To those who believe in Your name  
Help us bring light to this world  
That we might speed Your return

Great celebrations  
On that final day  
When out of the heavens You come  
Darkness will vanish  
All sorrow will end  
And rulers will bow at Your throne  
Our great commission complete  
Then face to face we shall meet

*Gerald Coates & Noël Richards  
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### **Blessing**

darkness still grows  
(but the light is gathering)

bread has been broken  
(but justice is slipping through)

economists are today's oracles  
(but the word is now ready to speak)

blood has been spilled  
(but the moment is turning)

the journey is lonely  
(but the angels stir)

the handmaid labours  
(but the child waits)

go into advent  
with expectation  
the headlines are being rewritten

*This act of worship has been prepared by  
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*Roddy Hamilton Re:Worship*

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