

St Nicholas Church, Sighthill

First Sunday of Advent

29th November 2020

(Prayers and thoughts from
Christian Aid Scotland Staff)

God is good, all the time

Call to Worship: O Come Emmanuel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHhau0B1a7o>

O come Thou key of David come
And open wide our heavenly home
Make safe the way that leads on high
And close the paths to misery

Hymn: Come thou fount of every blessing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qG5Q7le5PkQ>

Opening Prayer

Even if we cannot gather in person
Emmanuel, God with us
Even if some Christmas traditions have had to go
Emmanuel, God with us
Even if we might not get to hug family and friends
Emmanuel, God with us
Even if we cannot sing carols beside each other
Emmanuel, God with us
Even if Christmas cheer is harder this year
Emmanuel, God with us

Thanksgiving

Holy Father, someday the burden of today's toil – the goings and comings, the successes and failures, the hopes and near despairs – will all be transformed into blessed reality! Hope will be no more... I reach to point of near absurdity: of thanking You that I live during the difficult phase in which hope is still the beginning of the beginning of the day! Day is still struggling, and has many struggles ahead, to be born. From the mingled light and shadow of hope I greet You, Lord God.

(From a basic Christian Community in the Philippines –
Bread of Tomorrow, edited by Janet Morley)

Confession: 'Our place in the world'

Leader: The world turns and we find our space in it. The sun and the moon brighten short days and the long nights. Light in the darkness. Hope for the world. We turn to

the North, to our home spread before us. Where the pandemic divides us into haves and have-nots, where deep loneliness sits alongside community, where poverty rises: seen and unseen.

All: We are part of this

Leader: We turn to the West, to the structures of power. Where the currency of climate is too high a price for 'progress', where belonging means gender and skin colour and borders, where wagers of war sneer at brokers of peace.

All: We are part of this

Leader: We turn to the South, to the home of the poorest. Where healthcare and water and schooling are denied, where communities flee homelands threatened by climate and conflict, where locusts plague harvests and households and hope.

All: We are part of this

Leader: We turn to the East, to the child in the stable. Where an outcast young mother carried hope for the world, where light shone in the darkness for those weary of waiting, where God came among us, before us, behind us.

All: We are part of this

Leader: In the here and the now, in the when and not-yet, we are one with our neighbours nearby and afar. We are holders of hope, bearers of the promise the Kingdom of God, incarnate through us.

May the God of the whole world, North, South, East and West forgive us our sins and renew us in extravagant love, radical hope and abundant joy.

All: Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Matthew 6: 9-13 (NKJV)

Bible Reading: Isaiah 9:2-3, 6-7

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over His kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

Advent poem 'Isaiah 9:2-6'

For unto us a child is born
And unto us a son is giv'n;
A world of gloom, so dark, forlorn,
Now sees a dawn, new light has ris'n.

He has a name, it's Wonderful;
He makes us more than we have been;
In truth and grace Christ makes us whole;
In Him we find our lives redeemed.

As Counsellor Christ leads and guides;
He shepherds us, our lives restores;
In darkest days He's at our side;
From lowest depths our spirit soars.

As Mighty God, Christ oversees
The ways we go, the paths we take;
He gives us strength and hope-filled peace;
He helps and guides for His name's sake.

With Father-love Christ helps us stand;
We often slip and sometimes fall;
He gives us aid by His strong hand;
He does what's best to lift us all.

Our Prince of Peace comes now to bless
Our lives and needs with daily grace;
To calm our fears and grant us rest -
Christ with us in all we face.

This little one grew up to show
The heart of God in man enfleshed;
In Christ we see, by Him we know,
The love of God by which we're blessed.

So let us praise God more and more
For Christ in us, who loves and frees:
He's Wonderful, our Counsellor,
The Mighty God and Prince of peace.

by Jack Brown Olivet

A Christmas conversation with the Moderator

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUEFMCvXQj4&feature=emb_logo

Prayer for others; 'Hope for what is not seen'

Listening God, We thank You that You are God with us, that we can glimpse Your Kingdom around us, that we can see signs of You in our world that we can be part of Your story. God, we wait and we listen; we hope for what is not seen. Shine the light of Your kingdom into the darkness of our world.

Listening God, Will You come into the darkness of today's world? To the places where once You walked among us. But are now places of despair, conflict and occupation. Be with those whose stories we have heard and the countless others whose voices are silenced. Help us to be a voice of peace, to speak out against oppression To share the real Bethlehem with others this Advent. Bring Your wisdom to a situation which seems to have no end. God, we wait and we listen; we hope for what is not seen Shine the light of Your kingdom Into the darkness of our world.

Listening God, will You come into the darkness of our community? To the people living with fear and worry, to the people whose Advent is not full of joy, to the people needing support, open our eyes to the situations all around us that we do not see and open our minds to the ways we can respond. God, we wait and we listen; we hope for what is not seen Shine the light of Your kingdom into the darkness of our world.

Listening God, will You come into the darkness of our lives? Come to our human doubts and failings, to the times we do not live out our faith, and to the situations we have not used our power to change. Help us to be as open to you as You were to us, when You were as vulnerable as a baby - trusting in the world for Your safety. Show us glimpses of Your Kingdom. Help us to hear Your story. Reveal to us our part in Your advent hope. God, we wait and we listen We hope for what is not seen. Shine the light of Your kingdom into the darkness of our world. Amen

Hymn: Come thou long expected Jesus

<https://youtu.be/0dmO8UPIWoo>

*Come, Thou long expected Jesus
Born to set Thy people free*

Final blessing

We close our time together with a blessing for hope. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. May you abound in the love that builds hope this day and evermore and may you have a hopeful Advent and a comforting Christmas. Amen