

## Advent

Advent is the season four weeks before Christmas in which we prepare for the birth of Jesus. Its name comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means "coming". The season also celebrates Christ's anticipated coming again in the fullness of time to rule triumphantly. For this reason Advent is much more than just a time to get ready for Christmas. It is a penitential season, Advent reminds us that the question is not whether Jesus will return to judge the earth, but when.

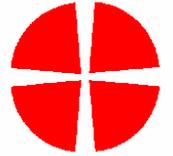
The season of Advent came into being toward the middle of the sixth century. At first, the Advent Season was determined as the six Sundays leading up to Christmas. This was then reduced to four Sundays by Pope St. Gregory the Great (591-604). Before the seventh century, Christmas was a secondary feast, especially in Rome, but as it came to take on more and more importance, so the season of Advent evolved in a similar manner. Advent became more solemn and its orientation changed. From just being a time to prepare for Christmas, it became a time to look to the glorious return of the Lord and now the Sunday's of Advent reflect this double perspective of waiting for the Second Coming of Jesus (First and Second Sundays) and the immediate preparation for the feast of Christmas (Third and Fourth Sundays).

When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present the ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for, by sharing in the long preparation for the Saviour's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for His Second Coming.

There is much about Advent to enjoy, the Advent wreaths found in our churches where they have four candles to be lit each Sunday and one for Christmas Day. But in the midst of our church we know that just as we prepare for Christmas, so we have to make ready to welcome Jesus in our lives. Are you ready for the coming of Jesus?



## St. Mark's Church Bedford



A Partnership of the Church of England and the Methodist Church

## Advent Family Worship

### Welcome and Notices

### Verse of Scripture

### Opening Prayer

- Minister Wait for the Lord; praise his name  
be strong and brave and put your hope in the Lord
- All We will praise the name of the Lord  
we will trust in him  
and keep the faith of Christ Jesus**
- Minister The tender compassion of our God  
the dawn from heaven shall break upon us  
to shine on those who dwell in darkness  
and the shadow of death  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.
- All Lord Jesus, may your grace draw us ever closer to  
you that we might know your presence in our lives  
this Christmas time.**

### The Lighting of the Advent Candle

## Hymn

### Confession

The angel said, you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Let us confess our sins to God, seeking his mercy and forgiveness.

**Holy and forgiving God, we have sinned against you and each other, in thought and word and deed. We have turned from your life-giving word, and ignored the message of those you sent. We are unprepared for the advent of your Son. Have mercy upon us and forgive us, that strengthened by your love we may serve you more faithfully through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

### The Offering

Thank you to those people who have already made their offering by standing order through the bank. Thank you also to those people who covenant their giving or help the church by using envelopes for their gift. If you are a tax payer please do use one of the envelopes provided in the church this morning. By signing your name we can claim back lots more money directly from the Inland Revenue.

**Yours Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendour, and the majesty; for everything in heaven and on earth is yours. All things come from you, and of your own do we give you.**

## Hymn

### The Bible Readings

*(These readings may be followed in Partnership News)*

Reader: This is the word of the Lord  
All: **Thanks be to God**



## Hymn

### The Address

## Hymn

### Prayers

#### Lord's Prayer:

**Our Father who 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 trespasses.  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil  
for thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

## Hymn

### Blessing

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you  
and scatter the darkness from before you  
And may the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Minister: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord  
All: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**