

How does knowledge of the future change the way we live in the present?

*Pray together:*

What do you need from God today?  
The joy of knowing him?  
Faith to believe in this future?  
Strength to stay the course?  
Ask God to provide what you need.

*Light the Candle.*

As you light the candle, one of you might like to read these words:  
“**Joy** is like a light shining in a dark place.  
As we look at the light of this candle, we celebrate the joy we find in Jesus.”

St. Michael's Anglican Church

# Advent 2015

## Readings and Reflections

The days of December leading up to Christmas are traditionally known as Advent. Advent means ‘coming,’ and the season is used to prepare for the coming of Christmas, where we remember the coming of Jesus. During Advent Christians remember the coming of Jesus as a baby, but also look forward to the return of Jesus at the end of history.

The Advent wreath is a Christian tradition that symbolizes the passage of the four weeks of Advent. It is a circular candle holder that typically holds five candles. During the season of Advent one candle on the wreath is lit each Sunday until all of the candles, including the fifth candle, are lit on Christmas Day. Each candle represents an aspect of the spiritual preparation for the celebration of the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Most Advent wreaths use three colours of candles – purple, pink, and white. However, really, any candles will do!

This booklet provides a reading plan for every day in Advent, as well as readings and a guided reflection/discussion for use with an advent wreath on Sundays.



## 2015 Advent Reading-Plan

### Sunday November 29: Advent Candle #1 – Jesus is the Light of the World

Isaiah 9:2-4; John 1:1-13; Luke 1:67-79

Monday November 30: Isaiah 52:7-10  
Tuesday December 1: Isaiah 40:9-11  
Wednesday December 2: Genesis 3:8-15  
Thursday December 3: Genesis 15:1-6  
Friday December 4: Deuteronomy 18:15-19  
Saturday December 5: Psalm 89:1-4

### Sunday December 6: Advent Candle #2 – Jesus is the Promised King

Isaiah 9:6-7; John 1:19-31; Matthew 2:1-12

Monday December 7: Zechariah 6:12-13  
Tuesday December 8: Micah 5:2-4  
Wednesday December 9: Malachi 3:1-6  
Thursday December 10: John 1:1-18  
Friday December 11: Isaiah 7:1-14  
Saturday December 12: Mark 1:1-3

### Sunday December 13: Advent Candle #3 – Jesus is God With Us

Isaiah 7:1-14; John 1:14-18; Matthew 1:18-23

Monday December 14: Luke 1:5-17  
Tuesday December 15: Luke 1:18-25  
Wednesday December 16: Isaiah 40:1-11  
Thursday December 17: Luke 1:39-56  
Friday December 18: Luke 1:57-66  
Saturday December 19: Luke 1:67-80

### Sunday December 20: Advent Candle #4 – Jesus is Good News for Everyone

Isaiah 11:1-10; John 1:35-51; Luke 2:8-14

Monday December 21: Luke 1:26-38  
Tuesday December 22: Isaiah 9:2-7  
Wednesday December 23: Matthew 1:18-25  
Thursday December 24: Luke 2:1-20

## Jesus is Good News for Everyone

Sunday December 20

Read Luke 2:8:14. Good news of great joy for all people! That was the message announced by the angels to the unsuspecting shepherds that night. Makes a nice change from the news we hear most days. And it's so...complete.

Good news!  
Good news of great joy!  
Good news of great joy for all people!

The birth of a baby is a life-changing event for new parents, and most births are joyful occasions. But generally, they're not announced by a choir of angels! Heavenly beings got involved at this birth because this was not just a life-changing, but a world-changing event. A cosmic event. Hear the description of the future reign of Jesus from the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 11:1-9).

Through Jesus, God invites us into a new creation, that is not only eternal, but will also be whole - unbroken. A life beyond death in which all things will be made new.

It's GOOD NEWS because it's what we need.  
It's JOYFUL news because it's what our hearts yearn for. It's what our world yearns for.  
It's what we were made for.  
And it is offered to ALL.

Good news for those who need justice.  
Good news for those who need peace.  
Good news for those who need safety.  
Good news for those who need rest.  
Good news for those who need.  
Great joy awaits.

*listen:*

*Isaiah 11*, by Rain for Roots.

*Reflect and discuss:*

How do you respond to this passage from Isaiah?  
Do you believe in such a future?  
Does the message of Jesus seem like good news to you?  
Where do you find joy?

Do you believe these things about God?

Do you believe that God is 'on your side', 'on your team', that God is 'for' you?

What difference does it make that God joins in our humanity - both good and bad, joy and pain, celebration and suffering?

### *Pray together:*

Where do you need God 'on your side' at the moment?

Pray that you would know his presence, his strength, and his grace.

### *Light the Candle.*

As you light the candle, one of you might like to read these words:

"**Love** is like a light shining in a dark place.

As we look at the light of this candle, we celebrate the love we find in Jesus."

## *Jesus is the Promised King*

Sunday December 6

800 years before Jesus was born, when God's people (Israel) were divided, threatened, and losing their way, God spoke to them through a prophet named Isaiah. God promised that he would save his people and restore their kingdom through a leader who was to come (see Isaiah 9: 6-7).

Isaiah spoke of a child to be born, who would grow up to be a King, and who would establish an eternal kingdom that was peaceful and just. Christians believe that Jesus is this child that God promised - the child who would grow up to be deliverer, and King. The Magi (what we might call astronomers!) recognised Jesus' birth as the fulfilment of this prophecy (see Matthew 2:1-12).

What is it like to receive something that you've hoped or waited for for a long time? How do you recognise it when it comes? (Is it always what you expect?)

In the birth of Jesus we see the beginning of the fulfilment of all of God's promises to Israel. Jesus' work is finished, but the results of that work are still unfolding, and much that we hope for still remains in the future for us. That's why in the season of Advent we have this 'double-horizon.' We look forward to Christmas and remember all that Jesus has *already* brought us, *and* we remember that we still *wait* for more. It's 'now', and 'not yet.'

Can we trust that God is in control  
when things feel out of control?

Can we live with God's peace in our hearts  
all the while longing for a world at peace?

Can we find joy in the good things we have  
and still allow space for sorrow for things lost, denied or broken?

Can we uphold goodness and justice  
while practicing forgiveness and radical love?

The language of those first verses of Isaiah always strikes me. The government will be on his shoulders, and yet he is only a child. Hope so sure, and yet so fragile.

### *Listen:*

*Come Thou Long Expected Jesus*, by Rain for Roots

Come Thou long expected Jesus  
Born to set Thy people free  
From our fears and sins release us

Let us find our rest in Thee  
Israel's strength and consolation  
Hope of all the earth Thou art  
Dear desire of every nation  
Joy of every longing heart

Born Thy people to deliver  
Born a child and yet a King  
Born to reign in us forever  
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring  
By Thine own eternal Spirit  
Rule in all our hearts alone  
By Thine all sufficient merit  
Raise us to Thy glorious throne

We are waiting, we are waiting  
We are waiting for You.

### *Reflect and discuss:*

What does it mean for Jesus to be King?

What kind of a King is Jesus?

What are you waiting for? What do you hope for?

Do you see God as faithful? Why/why not?

What are you asking God for?

Which one of these titles stands out most to you today (and why?):

Wonderful Counsellor

Mighty God

Everlasting Father

Prince of Peace

### *-Pray together:*

Where do you need some of God's peace, justice, righteousness, or caring shepherding in your life? Say a prayer asking God for his help.

### *Light the Candle.*

As you light the candle one of you might like to say these words:

**"Hope** is like a light shining in a dark place.

As we look at the light of this candle, we celebrate the hope we have in Jesus."

## *Jesus is God With Us*

**Sunday December 13**

The name "Immanuel," applied to Jesus by the writer of the gospel of Matthew, reveals one of the most distinctive and powerful beliefs of the Christian faith. Jesus is God With Us (see Matthew 1:18-23).

Jesus is God.

The strange and confronting claim of Christmas is that Jesus was not just a human baby, but God come in human form. This is fundamental to everything about who he is, what he does, and why he does it.

It also means that if we want to know what God is like, we just need to look at Jesus.

God doesn't remain distant - he comes near.

And God is not unknowable - he has shown himself to us!

For many people, Jesus looks quite different to how we have always imagined or thought of God. But in Jesus we see God's radical love, mercy, kindness, goodness and sacrifice. But we also see something else (see John 1:14-18).

Jesus is with us.

When he was a human, Jesus was 'with us' in the sense that he was 'spatially located' with us. But this name means much more than that!

Jesus is not just 'with' us, he's with us. Meaning... he's on our side.

He's joined the human race. He has known the human experience. He has felt human emotions. He is 'in it' with us.

He is *for* us.

When God became a human, born to a poor couple, a teenage mother from a dead-end town - he aligned himself with the poor, the vulnerable, and the marginalised of this world. When he faced temptation, when he suffered and died - Jesus joined himself to the suffering and broken of this world. He knows and understands us. He loves and accepts us. Immanuel. God with us.

### *Listen:*

*The Weight of the World*, by Rain for Roots.

### *Reflect and discuss:*

If God looks like Jesus, what is God like?

What do you like or admire about Jesus?