

## First Sunday in Advent - Year B

**Hymn:** O come, O come, Immanuel or In this time's anticipation

In this time's anticipation  
at the darkest time of year,  
still we pray for love among us,  
bringing peace to cast out fear.  
God we ask for revelation,  
something certain we can share.  
God among us this we hope for  
so we'll know that you are there.

Generations sought this promise,  
back in depths of human time,  
needed God to solve their problems,  
bring harmony and rhyme.  
Yet it seems you are illusive  
no loud thunder or small voice,  
nothing in this present moment  
brings a reason to rejoice.

Yet within this present moment  
you are living with us still,  
in the face of child or elder,  
in compassion and good-will.  
We will need to look no further  
than the ones with whom we stand,  
Christ in child, in sister, brother,  
known in this and every land.

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Tune: LEWIS FOLK MELODY; ODE TO JOY

**Prayer:** Oh God, isn't it time

Oh God, isn't it time you came down  
to sort out the mess we're in?

Once upon a time you would have shown yourself  
by rattling the mountains  
and making the whole earth tremble.  
You would have caused such a sensation  
that the nations would have shaken with fear  
and every enemy would have known who you were –  
and how powerful!  
For centuries your name was known and feared  
by all who knew that you dealt graciously  
with those who behaved themselves.  
But they also knew that you would be very angry  
with those who should have acted justly and fairly,  
but who decided not to do so.

And we were among those people.  
We knew what you were asking of us,  
but chose to take our own path instead.



What do we need to do to put things right?  
At the moment we feel contaminated by our own wilful ways  
and we get the impression that you are keeping your distance from us,  
because we are hopeless cases.  
We don't pray.  
We don't ask for your help.  
So we can't find you.  
Have you abandoned us altogether?

But you made us.  
You moulded us.  
We are part of your creation.  
We even call you Father.  
Please don't be too angry with us.  
Can't you forget the past and let us start again?  
We are your people.  
We need your forgiveness.  
And we need you.

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**Hymn:** The Church of Christ in every age or Bread of tears and bitter weeping

Bread of tears and bitter weeping:  
we have known both grief and loss,  
so we cry to you in sorrow,  
God you know both pain and cross.

Will you leave us and forsake us?  
God please listen to each prayer,  
come with comfort and protection,  
let us know that you are there.

We have known abuse of neighbours  
and the ridicule of friends,  
sometimes darkness shrouds our daylight  
and it seems pain never ends.

Come to us, restore and save us,  
may we look into your face,  
see again your love-light shining,  
know again your boundless grace.

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Tune: SERVANT SONG (Gillard)

**Poem:** Restoration - based on Psalm 80: 1-7, 17-19

Restoring a church –  
a community of people  
worn down by worries over money  
and tensions in relationships  
and the lack of interest from others –  
is almost like restoring a painting.

First the accumulated dust and grime  
of years of neglect  
must be gently brushed away



to reveal the long-forgotten details  
first created by the artist.  
Then cracks in paint  
and scratched surfaces  
and worn patches  
need to be renewed  
and made whole again  
and the picture must be deeply cleaned  
so that the true colours can sing through  
and the name of the artist be made clear.

If we put our church life  
and personal beliefs  
through the same process,  
surely God would restore us  
and make us new and whole,  
so that people may see  
a true picture of our Maker again  
revealed by the restoration of our faith.

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**Reading:** Isaiah 64:1-9

**Hymn:** Come, Lord, to our souls come down or Mountains quake and people tremble

Mountains quake and people tremble  
at the moment of the Lord,  
at the presence of God's Spirit,  
sharper than a two-edged sword.

Yet such language seems archaic,  
out of fashion, out of time;  
talk of God just seems discordant,  
lacking reason cannot chime.

Is there really any wonder  
why our God seems so remote,  
when our language and our culture  
make the words so hard to quote.

Rend the heavens, quench your anger,  
cast your grace upon the earth,  
God return to your creation,  
show again your people's worth.

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Tune: ST OSWALD

**Reading:** 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 Mark 13:24-37

**Sermon idea:** Poem: When that great day comes  
(This item could be used with two voices or with a leader and a response)

Should we be afraid  
when that great day comes?  
Will we be ready  
when that great day comes?



Will we be working  
when that great day comes?  
Will it be a great surprise  
when that great day comes?

What will Jesus look like,  
when that great day comes?  
Will he come with angels,  
when that great day comes?  
Will the clouds be glorious  
when that great day comes?  
Will all heaven be open  
when that great day comes?

We can never know the timing,  
when that great day comes.  
We shall have no early warning  
when that great day comes.  
So we must be watching, waiting,  
working well at reinstating  
life and hope for all creation,  
when that great day comes.

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**Hymn:** Go forth and tell! O church of God awake or God's faithfulness calls us to follow, to follow

God's faithfulness calls us to follow, to follow,  
go on to the end of God's way, of our lives;  
to pray for each other, to share, beg or borrow  
the love, grace and mercy through which life survives.  
Then strengthened in spirit and one with each other  
we live as Christ's body in this time and place;  
a witness to Jesus in word and through action  
to all those we meet of each nation or race.

We offer through living God's love in creation,  
the warmth of the Spirit to lift and inspire,  
the grace of the Christ-child to offer forgiveness,  
in speech and in knowledge, our heart and desire.  
Then strengthened in spirit and one with each other  
we live as Christ's body in this time and place;  
a witness to Jesus in word and through action  
to all those we meet of each nation or race

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Tune: THE ASH GROVE

**Prayer:** God of enlightenment

God of enlightenment,  
we thank you for the way that you have brought light into our lives  
through the message and life of Jesus.  
We are amazed  
at how much that message makes sense of life,  
giving real meaning and purpose to our existence.  
The Good News that Jesus embodied  
is the best news we could possibly have.



But we confess that there are so many times  
when we fail to reach others with that same message.  
We do try, in all kinds of different ways,  
but people seem to be deaf to our words  
and blind to your enlightening truth..  
That is nothing new,  
but we cannot afford to stop trying  
just because things have always been like that.

Please, God,  
teach us how to be more effective messengers.  
For there are so many distractions  
that can turn people away from your truth.  
There are so many people happy in their belief  
that our faith is an unnecessary part of life.  
There are so many lost and lonely ones  
wandering in darkness  
and having no idea where to find your light.

Help us as we keep on trying to bring the light of your love  
into empty and misguided lives.  
Guide us, God of love,  
as we seek to interpret your Good News  
in ways that are relevant for these days and for this time.

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**Hymn:** There's a light upon the mountains or All light will be eclipsed,

All light will be eclipsed,  
the ancient prophet claimed,  
about the time we are not sure,  
the moment was not named.

Christ echoed that same word,  
the time was drawing near,  
a time of judgment, yet of grace,  
a mix of love and fear.

We never know ahead  
the moment of our death,  
when life will end, our striving cease,  
we'll gasp our final breath.

And neither do we know  
the time that God will test,  
each word and action judged and marked,  
for worse, perhaps for best.

But this we trust for now,  
the God who judges still,  
is seen within the face of Christ,  
his love, his grace, his will.

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Tune: CARLISLE



**Blessing:**

We go out with God's message.  
We go out with Christ's love.  
We go out with the Spirit's power.  
We go out to change the world  
as we go out in Christian service.

