

Worship at Home—6 December 2020

Second Sunday in Advent

Worship Leader Rev Easter Smart

CALL TO WORSHIP

Prepare the way!
Deck the halls and light the candles.
Prepare the way!
Open the doors and sing a song of hope.
Prepare the way!
Make space in our hearts for a new kind of love.
Prepare the way
Clear the way for the Prince of Peace
Christ is coming.
Prepare the way!

Lighting of the Advent Candles for Hope and Peace

With a sense of wonder we light the two advent candles—one for hope and one for peace. Hope and peace are much needed in our world and we give thanks that Jesus Christ brings a real hope and deep peace. The gift of peace from God is deeper and more enduring than any human peace. We light our candle of peace, remembering our call to be peacemakers.

Candle lighting prayer

Lord at this time we often feel peace is missing in our lives. We pray for peace in our hearts and our homes. We pray for peace in our world. Heal the human family of our divisions and united us in the bonds of justice and peace. Calm our spirits as we look at the lights of wonder and help us to remember that you are the author of peace. Send your blessing of peace to us this day. Amen



Prayers of Approach—Krys Hume

Father, we come to give you honour and praise and worship and thanksgiving.

At this special time of Advent, help us to concentrate on the coming of Jesus. We praise you for the joy of his living presence in our lives. Father, we praise you that he came into this world just as we did, as a helpless baby. We thank you that his coming has left us in no doubt about your love and mercy. We praise you that he has opened the way to real life, now and for all eternity.

We praise you for the story of Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and the angels, the wise men and the star. We are so thankful that it is not just a story but a message of the birth of the Saviour of the world.

Forgive us, Father, if we spend so much time preparing to enjoy ourselves, albeit in a limited way, that we forget those who will have no joy this Christmas.

Forgive us that as we decorate our homes, we forget those who have no home.

Forgive us that as we wrap our presents, we forget that there are many people who have very little or nothing at all.

Forgive us if, as we welcome the baby in the manger, we forget he was also the man on the cross.

Forgive us our many failings, our thoughts, words and deeds, that crucify him all over again.

Father, we thank you that through the birth and death of Jesus we are saved from our sins into eternal life with you.

And now, as we come to you today, we ask you to fill our hearts with your love, compassion, wisdom and strength so that through the witness of our daily lives, others may be drawn to your truth and glory.

We make our prayer in the name of Jesus, who came to earth so long ago but still comes today, and who taught us how to pray.

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 debts as we forgive our debtors.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;
for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever.

Amen

Isaiah 40: 1-11—Comfort for God’s People

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.



A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

A voice says, “Cry out!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!”

See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.

He will feed his flock like a shepherd.

Meditation Part 1

I heard a story about a lady who had waited until the very last minute to send her Christmas Cards. Like many of us at Christmas time she was stressed and so she rushed into a shop and bought a pack of fifty cards without really looking at them. Still in a hurry to catch the post, she addressed forty-nine of them without reading the message inside. After Christmas day, when things had quietened down a bit, she finally read the message she had sent to forty-nine of her friends. It read like this: “This is just a card to say a little gift is on the way.” She realised that forty-nine of her friends were now waiting from a gift from her—a gift that wasn’t going to come!

We talk about Advent as a time of waiting. We count down our Advent Calendars as a period of expectant waiting. Sometimes when we are waiting, we can wonder, like the lady’s friends if the gift will ever come . . . In our passage from Isaiah, the people knew all about waiting with expectation.

They had been waiting a long time. This scripture was a sermon from the Prophet Isaiah to the people who were living in Exile in Babylon. The Jewish people had been held captive by the cruel Babylonian ruler—the book of Lamentations. The Israelites were not in captivity for only one year but for a whole generation . . . in 586 BC when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city wall of Jerusalem, tore down the temple and the Temple. Many priests were captured and some were blinded before being taken as captives to Babylon. The brutal Babylonian army literally marched the people up and around the river Euphrates to be slaves to the Babylonian Empire. I recently saw a map which showed that journey up and over the land they were marched—like a trail of tears. Once there, they were deeply homesick. In French homesickness is called *Mal de pays*, literally a sickness for one’s country, one’s homeland in Zion. The Israelites were aching to be home, aching for the way things were. They were longing to return to the freedom, the happiness and the joy they had known before captivity.

Much of their sadness and suffering is recorded in the poetic Old Testament book of Lamentations. I think many of you may remember their pain as recorded in Psalm 137—“By the rivers of Babylon there we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. How can we sing a song to the Lord in a strange land.’ It was made famous by the Boney M Song, by the Rivers of Babylon.

Some of us may be able to relate in some small way to their experience these days. 2020 has felt a little bit like exile—a captivity of sorts brought on by Covid. Scotland, England, here, the whole world has felt a bit like being in a strange land.

For pupils, school life has changed with masks and social distancing. Students at University have no human interaction with lecturers—other than on a screen. Many of you or your loved ones have had to adapt to working from home—sometimes while home-schooling children . . . and many have experienced such deep losses. Losses of loved ones to the illness itself. Loss of holidays or important family get-togethers and celebrations. Loss of contact with all the imposed isolation, and other restrictions.

We can relate deeply to that sense of longing in Lamentations and Isaiah—longing for the freedom we used to enjoy. Longing to do all the old things like curling or going to the theatre, hoping again for the day to see our teams play when they can be cheered on by fans. Longing for the anxiety and worry to be over. Longing to be able to be together as we used to be.

We’ve had to adapt to try to still be the Church within so many restrictions but it is hard! The Christian life at its heart is a relational life. Whilst privately we hope to use this time to deepen our personal prayer life. Outwardly the visible signs of our faith are revealed and lived out in community and through the care we give to one another—that is tough to do when we can’t visit or meet or spend time other than on a screen, if that. And although I am glad to visit you on screen like this, boy I would rather see us all sitting in the Kirk or enjoying our Snack Lunches.

The Israelites were captive for decades . . . we have only had a year of exile. Yet, here now in Advent of 2020 maybe we can sense some of the sentiments of Isaiah’s words anew.

Isaiah is giving the people a message of real hope—much longed for hope. When he tells them this proclamation of Good News from God. God is going to do a new thing. God is going to answer their longings and gather his people tenderly like a loving shepherd leading them home.

These words “Comfort, Comfort my people” offered the great sense of assurance that God had not abandoned them, that they were not being punished for their sins, that God loved them and would come to them and save them—leading them home.

The Old Testament Professor, Norman Porteous routinely taught his students that these verses in Isaiah 40 lie at the heart of the whole Hebrew Bible.

This word Comfort comes from Latin roots. We often think of the word comfort to mean soft, soothing like a comfy sofa or a sweet song. However, this word is actually a strong word. The prefix com means “with” . . . as in the root of the words community, communion. The second part of the word fort means “strong” like the French word Forte, and such words as fortitude, fortress, fortification.

And so Isaiah’s exhortation to Comfort the people of God literally means to take strength, to be emboldened by the promises of God. And so it did come to pass, in 538 BC that a Persian King named Cyrus conquered Babylon and decreed that the Jewish People could return home and rebuild their beloved temple.

Even though in our time, sometimes the waiting can feel long—God is faithful. God promises to be with us. Unlike the lady with her Christmas Cards, when God promises his people that the gift will come, we can take great comfort.

We are now going to hear the words of an ancient hymn O Come O Come Emmanuel which means O Come God with us.



O Come O Come Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

O come, O come, thou Lord of might,
Who to thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud and majesty and awe:

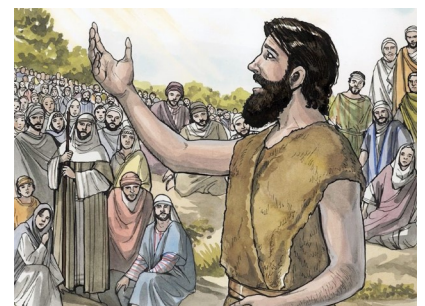
O come, thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.

O come, thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery:

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

Mark 1: 1-8—The Preaching of John the Baptist

The beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" John the baptiser appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptised by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.



Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals.

I have baptised you with water; but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

Meditation Part 2

The prophet Isaiah's sermon would have been remembered in the hearts of every Jewish boy or girl for generations after—the people told of how God saved them, how God fulfilled his promises to restore the temple, to forgive them and call them home. And so in our Gospel lesson Mark links the ministry of John the Baptist to the prophecy of Isaiah. The people recognised these words:

the voice of one crying out in the wilderness says:
“Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight”

John the Baptist has been called to prepare people to receive the Messiah. John was attracting huge crowds from all around the country of Judea. People were flocking to hear him preach. He called to them to confess their sins, to be washed in the waters of baptism so that they might be ready.

John makes it clear that he is not the Messiah, but he wants them to open their hearts to prepare for the Saviour when he comes.

John proclaims, “One more powerful than me is coming after me. I am not even worthy to stoop down and untie the thongs of his sandals. I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Spirit.”

The description of John the Baptist, with his crazy hairy physique and with his coat of camel hair might remind us of those folk we've seen on city streets with giant placards and leaflets proclaiming doom and gloom. We normally run from such zealous types.

So we wonder why so many people were drawn to John and why so many people wanted to be baptised by him.

For one thing, his clothing and apparel were the same as prophets before him. For another, his message was something they longed to hear. They knew that things were not right.

At the time of John's ministry, people were also living in a time of oppression. They endured life under Roman occupation. Anyone might be captured, imprisoned or crucified at any time.

The Roman tax collectors were corrupt—you may remember Zacchaeus. The Jewish people were also ruled locally by a puppet ruler—the corrupt and cruel King Herod—who eventually beheaded John.

These were times when the Jewish Priests also took whatever money they could for temple taxes. The Pharisees and Levites abused their authority to impose rule upon rule, restriction upon restriction and exclusion upon exclusion over the people.

People flocked to hear John because finally there was a message of truth and hope. John was offering the people a chance to come clean, to stop pretending. God was going to fulfil his promise to them and they should let go of their fear.

What was more remarkable about John's ministry is that no one was excluded.

While women and children, poor or lame were excluded from the Synagogue, John baptised everyone—women, children, slave, free, sinner or saint, everyone was invited to be baptised, no one was unworthy to receive the good news should they open their hearts to God.

People yearned to hear his message of hope. They sensed that his message had true meaning and relevance to their lives. His was a message that embraced the despair and gloom of the time and offered fresh assurance and comfort. Now they could make sense of the suffering and dismay around and renew their hope in the faithfulness of God.

We can imagine that the people were tired of being afraid. If there was ever an Advent Season in our lifetime, well in my lifetime, to revisit the real meaning and purpose and gift of Christ's birth, I think it is this Advent 2020.

Like the Israelites we also live in scary times. We are fearful for loved ones. Many are worried about whether or not they will have a job or if the business will go under. Kids who have missed so much education wonder if exams will be cancelled or if they will have poorer grades due to inaccurate estimates.

And just as in John the Baptist's time we look for people who tell the truth, people whom we may trust. Here in the United States many journalists are brave to point out how much misinformation and disinformation is going on at so many levels.

Around the world, oppression and war still ravage so many places.

So many people are desperately crying out for a home, for food, for shelter, for justice, for peace. We see the news, and all we can conclude is that this world still needs God—and deep down we realise that each one of us has a deep longing for a Saviour.

We long to know the meaning of real comfort. In these Covid times, we are ever aware inwardly of our human need for hope and healing, our need for light in our darkness, the need for truth and trust—the need for comfort!

Christmas will not be the same this year. We will not be gathering as much, shopping as much or singing as much. But we can still use this time to prepare ourselves and to open our hearts to the gifts God wants to give.

Let us read John's message afresh this year. God is faithful. God is with us and we are not alone. It is not necessary to live in fear or fatigue when the one bearing God's truth and light is coming. Let us take a little more time to get ready, to prepare the way.

Pastoral Prayer for Ourselves and Others

Glory be to you, Almighty and Everlasting God.
We praise You because at the world's creation,
when there was darkness everywhere, You commanded light to appear.
We praise you because when the human race was in the dark,
You sent your Son Jesus Christ, whose life is the light of humankind.
Prepare a way O Lord, for His coming at this time.
Make ready our hearts to receive Him
and grant us grace to welcome Him.

We praise you that you are always with us in the bad times as well as the good,
The difficult as well as the easy,
The sad as well as the happy.

We thank you that though we have sometimes been unsure of the way ahead,
you have been there to guide us
Though we have felt discouraged, You have offered us fresh inspiration
Though we may feel in despair, Yet you give us hope.

We pray today for all who are lonely,
who feel isolated or afraid
Give to each one the knowledge that you are with them
And enrich their lives with companionship and friendship.

We pray for the sick and suffering
All those wracked with physical pain
Or coming to terms with a diagnosis
Reach out afresh bringing your touch of love to all whose hearts are aching

We pray for those who work to bring wholeness and healing
We remember doctors, nurses, ambulance drivers and all health-workers
Especially those who may be overwhelmed at this time due to Covid
Support them O God and strengthen them
Draw them close and be with them in each and every situation

We pray that the church, invigorated by the Holy Spirit,
may preach the gospel and may work for a fairer world and a more just society. Help us to condemn hatred,
violence and every form of oppression.
Help us to show that we belong to one family with you as our Father

We pray for parents and families and for all our loved ones
As Christmas approaches help us to receive your blessings
To see your gifts to our lives with fresh eyes.

Glory to You, our God, for Christ's coming as a little child,
speechless as any baby, yet the eternal Word made flesh; born in a stable, yet the Prince of Glory. For Your
great mercy to us, and for Your love to all people everywhere, we praise your Holy Name, world without
end.

Amen

THE BLESSING

May the blessing of God almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be upon you and those dear to you,
this day and every day that remains to us

Amen



Congratulations to Sarah and Richard Blaikie who celebrated their Diamond Wedding on 3 December 2020.

Currie Kirk Guild



We had another successful meeting this Tuesday with 20 members joining together on zoom. Our speaker was Conor Moran who told us about the origins and aims of “The Boys’ Brigade” which is our chosen charity this session. In turn we told him of the achievements of many of our Boys including Peter as well as the fact that the Anchor Boys and the Juniors had donated 35 Advent Calendars to the foodbank.

Angela has asked that we collect cartons of custard as well as canned vegetables and toiletries. Usual system—deliver to me at 13 Dolphin Gardens West or phone 466-3472.

Our next meeting is our virtual Christmas party on Tuesday 15th December at 1pm.

Meanwhile stay safe—the vaccine appears to be on its way.

Louise Lamont Guild President

Christmas Fair

As you may be aware we have been busy selling goods on FaceBook as part of the virtual Christmas Fair. If you have anything you’d like to sell can you please contact Shona Moyes, Nina at the Kirk office or me for collection as soon as possible. A brochure is included/attached to this pdf file or copies can be picked up at the Gibson Craig Hall in the box which is situated on the railings.

Search CK Fair on Facebook for a list of items for sale.

Michael’s Christmas Carols

It’s a long time since we were in the Church enjoying the music played by Michael. The MOF Committee has asked him to compile a CD of Christmas Carols playing in the Church. The CD will cost £5 with all profits going to Currie Kirk. Order yours today from Nina at the Kirk Office.

Nativity Drawings

To help decorate the Church Doors we are looking for your children’s drawings. Let’s brighten up Currie with a sparkle!! Please contact Heather familyworker_jvp@outlook.com or post through the letter box at the Gibson Craig Hall.

Fiona Pigott

CHRISTMAS CARD

Thank you to all the volunteers who delivered the Christmas Cards. You took up the challenge and every home in Currie has now received Christmas Greetings from Currie Kirk.

Good News

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and enjoy spending time with each other and with God.

Prepare yourself...

Today is the second Sunday of Advent. This second candle represents peace. You may want to light a candle in your home as you say this prayer together, then leave it lit as you do the rest of the activities together. (Remember to blow it out at the end!)

Lord Jesus,
call us to a quiet place,
an open space within our hearts
to be with you.
Amen.



Question...

If someone was coming to your home, how would you prepare? How would you welcome them and make them comfortable?



Read the Bible...

Today's verses are found in Mark 1:1-8 and Isaiah 40:1-11. You can read them in a Bible or find them here: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3A1-8%3B+Isaiah+40%3A1-11&version=GNT>

You could try reading the verses in different versions to see if it adds to your understanding of the passage.

You can watch a video of the story [here](#):





Talk together...

What would it be like to live in a desert?

Do you think you'd like to wear clothes made of camel's hair and eat locusts and honey?

Why do you think so many people responded to John and came to see him?

What do you think it would have been like to be baptised by John?

John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus and his good news. Think about people who prepared the way for you to hear the good news of Jesus, who are they, and what did they do?

How can we show or tell people who Jesus is?

Play together...

Is it time yet? Have one person be timekeeper. On the word "go", everyone should close their eyes and begin counting in their head then stand up when they think it's been 12 seconds.

Who's the closest to the correct time? Try again with longer times.

Praise together...

"Adore" by Chris Tomlin: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pa-kaUWSbvo>

Pray together...

Dear God, thank you for the story of John who came to prepare the way for Jesus. Thank you for the people who tell us about Jesus. Would you help us to be your messengers on earth, sharing your love and kindness with those we meet. Help us to speak to others about Jesus. As we enter into the Christmas season, let us not forget that Jesus came to the earth as part of your big plan to save and forgive us all.

Amen.

Make together...

Message in a bottle. How does a good message make you feel? When was the last time you received one?

Think of someone you could encourage and write them a "good news" message.

Put the message in a bottle and decorate the bottle with stickers or other decorations.

During the next week pass your bottle onto the person it's for.

Eat together...

John had a strange diet. This week make a snack of honey sandwiches. You could also buy some gummy or chocolate bugs or worms to eat alongside them. As you eat re-read the story of John.

Nina is working from home but can be contacted:
Telephone 451 5141; email: currie_kirk@btconnect.com
And the link to the website: [//www.curriekirk.org](http://www.curriekirk.org)
You Tube search Currie Kirk for all the Sunday Services



Easter would like you to send in photos with your Christmas Jumpers, or lighting your Christmas Tree. In fact, anything festive—for publication in our Christmas Sermon sheet.

Please send to Nina by **15 December**.



Christmas Quiz

Read the sentence and complete it with the correct word. The picture is the answer.

			
People put it on top of the tree.....	It pulls the sleigh	We put them on the tree.....	Santa Claus lives there
			
Children hang them near the fireplace.	People are supposed to kiss under it.	We give them to friends and family	Santa enters the houses through it.
			
They are Santa's helpers.....	A special candy for Christmas.....	A special flower for Christmas.	Children love them
			
Santa's favorite transport.....	Most people put one in their house.....	Children send it to Santa Claus.	They sing Christmas songs.
			
They come January 6	They make the tree colorful.	A special dessert.	People put it 4 weeks before Christmas.....