



Advent 2013

Coolangatta Q 4225

Monday: Luke 1.26-38 *The angel Gabriel's visit to Mary*
Tuesday: Luke 1.39-45 *Mary's visit to Elizabeth*
Wednesday: Matthew 2.1-12 *The visit of the Magi*
Thursday: Genesis 18.1-15 *A son promised to Abraham and Sarah*
Friday: Luke 2.1-14 *The arrival of the Christ child*
Saturday: Revelation 22.12-13, 16-17, 20-21 *The final coming*
Pray : • for all who will travel this Christmas to visit family
• for all who will be alone

Prayer of the week

Action : Visit someone who is lonely or sick, or extend an invitation to a stranger

Week 4 : Arriving Home

To return home from our trip we needed to cross the ocean from the other side of the world. The people of Israel crossed the Red Sea to be free from slavery, while their enemies perished. They crossed the river Jordan to enter the Promised Land. No wonder the Jordan is so significant for John's baptism. The baptism service speaks of "the deep waters of death" and "being raised to new life in triumph." God crossed the realms of heaven and earth to visit his people in Jesus and Jesus spoke of his Father's house where he was returning to prepare a place for us. It is wonderful to arrive home after a long journey. Jesus came and made his home among us, and at our death he calls us home to be with him for ever.

Sunday: Isaiah 35.1-10 *The return of the redeemed to Zion*

Monday: Exodus 14.21-29 *Crossing the Red Sea*

Tuesday: Joshua 3.14-17 *Israel crosses the Jordan into the Promised Land*

Wednesday: Hebrews 11.13-16 *Seeking a homeland*

Thursday: 2 Peter 3.8-13 *Promise of the Lord's coming*

Friday: John 14.1-6 *In my Father's house*

Saturday: Revelation 21.1-7 *The home of God is among mortals*

Pray : • for the homeless and for all who are driven from their homeland
• for love and peace in our homes this Christmas

Prayer of the week

Action : This week renew your baptism promises and/or recite the Creed under the shower. Come out of the water refreshed and renewed.

Dear Friends,

My Collins English dictionary describes Advent as "an arrival or coming, especially one that is awaited". The first Sunday of Advent this year falls on 1st December, a day that marks not only the beginning of the season of Advent but also the arrival of summer. Arrivals have been on my mind as we have been away on an overseas trip, arriving first of all in England, then in Venice for the start of a Mediterranean cruise to many different countries and finally arriving back home. We are now awaiting the arrival of overseas visitors to celebrate the baptism of my nephew's three children this coming Sunday.

By the time you read this, the arrival of Christmas will be on our minds. While many children eagerly anticipate the arrival of Santa Claus at this time, Christians begin to focus on the arrival of the Christ child. This Advent prayer leaflet will focus on arrivals. Do we welcome every new arrival? How do we prepare or fail to prepare for something new or different? Are we open or closed to change? Do we anticipate Christmas with excitement, or are we glad when it is over? For the four weeks of Advent I have included a reflection, a reading for each day of the week, a prayer and a suggested action. I hope this helps you to prepare your hearts as well as your homes for the Christmas season.

During Advent we reflect on Jesus' arrival: his birth in Bethlehem long ago, his coming to us in the present and his ultimate return in the future. May this Advent be a holy season for us, as we prepare for his coming and make ourselves open and ready to receive him.

Love and prayers, Sue

Daily Prayer for Advent

God of all hope and joy, open our hearts in welcome, that your Son Jesus Christ at his coming may find in us a dwelling prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and for ever. Amen.

[A New Zealand Prayer Book, p.554]

Week 1 : John the Baptist has arrived

John the Baptist is the prophet of Advent. He looks and sounds like an Old Testament prophet and he is the first prophetic voice in the New Testament. His words, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near", are the same words with which Jesus began his own ministry (Mark 1.14-15). For the good news to be received and to bear fruit, the way must be prepared, and preparation begins with repentance. John speaks of another who is coming, more powerful than he, and we need to be ready to receive him. St Augustine of Hippo distinguished between John and Jesus by saying that John is the voice but Jesus is the word. John is the voice for a time but the word is eternal. It is the Word that we need to welcome into our hearts. But first we need to repent.

Sunday: Mt. 3.1-12 *How do the people respond to John? How would we respond?*

Monday: John 1.6-16 *John is the witness; Jesus is the Word made flesh.*

Tuesday: Job 42.1-6 *Job repents*

Wednesday: Acts 2.37-42 *The first converts repent and are baptised.*

Thursday: Mt. 11.2-11 *John sends messengers to Jesus.*

Friday: Luke 24.44-48 *We are witnesses to the power of forgiveness*

Saturday: Matthew 14.1-12 *John pays the price for his commitment to the truth.*

Pray : • that we might welcome the word of truth – to comfort and to discomfort
• that we might bear fruit worthy of repentance

Prayer of the week

Action : **Make an act of genuine repentance, put right what you can, leave the rest in the hands of God. Know yourself forgiven, give thanks.**

Week 2 : The Kingdom of God has arrived

We arrived in England as summer was nearing its end and preparations for the new season were already being made. Fragile plants were being placed into greenhouses in anticipation of the first frost. Flood gates were being placed in doorways in houses close to the river. But when we arrived home in Australia, winter was over. Blankets and doonas were being removed from beds in anticipation of warmer nights and jumpers stored away. Each season requires its own preparation. Advent heralds a new season in the Church. With the advent of Jesus the Kingdom of God dawns on creation. Luke 16.16 says, "The law and the prophets were in effect until John came;

since then the good news of the Kingdom is proclaimed..." The good news of the Kingdom is that God has acted in Jesus Christ to save us from our sins and offer the gift of eternal life to all who will receive him as Saviour and Lord. The Kingdom has come in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, although it has not yet reached its final fulfilment, and so we live in the tension between 'already here' and 'not yet'. However, we continue to trust in God's promise of the future Kingdom.

Sunday: Isaiah 11.1-10 *The peaceful kingdom – a vision of the future*

Monday: Ecclesiastes 3.1-8 *A time for every purpose under heaven*

Tuesday: Luke 4.42-44 *Jesus said, "I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom"*

Wednesday: Matthew 6.25-34 *Seek ye first the Kingdom of God*

Thursday: Psalm 145.10-13 *God's Kingdom is an everlasting kingdom*

Friday: Matthew 13.44-50 *The kingdom of heaven is like ...*

Saturday: Luke 23.39-43 *Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom*

Pray : • Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven
• that God will rule in our hearts and minds

Prayer of the week

Action : **Give the cost of one Christmas present to a Christian charity**

Week 3 : The arrival of a visitor

At the beginning of the gospels there are many visitors. Mary and Joseph are both surprised by the visit of an angel, Mary visits Elizabeth, the shepherds and the magi visit the baby Jesus. Each arrival signifies something special. The visit of an angel confronts Joseph and Mary with a choice, and they choose in accordance with God's will. John the Baptist leaps in the womb as he recognizes the presence of the unborn Christ child. The presence of the shepherds signifies that outsiders are welcome and that God seeks out the marginalized; the gifts of the magi are prophetic of Jesus' identity and future. Visitors may not always be welcome guests, but hospitality even to strangers was paramount in Old Testament times, as seen in the visit to Abraham and Sarah. Hebrews 13.2 speaks of entertaining angels without knowing it. Even unwelcome visitors can bestow blessings upon us. During Advent we are preparing for a visitor ourselves: God comes among us in human form. As we prepare our homes for visitors this Christmas, let us also prepare our hearts for him.

Sunday: Matthew 1.18-21 and 24a *The angel's visit to Joseph*