

Worship Sheet for Sunday 4 December Fit for purpose? Advent 2

What's the point? Life (and even faith) can get us down. We look to John the Baptist (and Isaiah) to give us encouragement to play our part in preparing the way for Jesus. We all have a part to play, and God even provides us with what we need. Peace is our advent word for today. Jesus is the way to real peace.

Call: Come from all that is familiar and meet the unexpected. Come with all your traditions and prepare to be surprised. Come with all your cosiness to be confronted by the stark reality of God. Open your hearts to preparing the way for Jesus.

Pray God forgive us when we see you as 'our God' as though we had exclusive rights to your comfort and your blessing. Forgive us when we look on others as not worthy of your care. Forgive us when our self righteousness puffs us up with pride and makes us think that nothing can ever harm us, because you are on our side. Keep on confronting us with our need to let you be God, beyond our control, beyond our measure, beyond our understanding. And then, when we've given up even trying to fathom you out, give us a wee glimpse of your divine smile lighting up our darkness. Open our hearts to your love, to your purposes not just for the world, but for us too – so that we may be open to play our part in preparing your way, shining something of the light of your love into our needy world. May we be bringers of your peace to a world full of conflict. In all our busyness in the run up to Christmas, help us not to lose sight of real significance of the season – Jesus! Hear us as together we pray as he taught saying Our Father...

Reading Mark 1:1-8.

Thought "What's the point?" That can quite often be the thought that comes to our minds when we consider all the things that we're being buffeted with – from the huge world problems – climate, conflicts, energy security and recession – to the multitude of issues that we have to deal with in our personal lives – the steep rise in the cost of living, not least fuel bills and the cost of food, all on top of the everyday pressures that seem to get no easier – and inevitably, personal or family crises that we somehow have to try to cope with too. Most of us try to dig deep into our hidden strength but sometimes there is very little of that left and we just wonder "what next?" Our passages this morning remind us that there is a point and purpose. Both point to the breaking in of God's love into a dark and needy world. John the Baptist points to Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, who would come to bring light in the darkness, hope, peace and love. It wasn't that the people's problems would simply disappear, they wouldn't, but he came preparing the way for Jesus the Saviour and his love and salvation. But that is something we have a part in too. On a smaller scale, not tot he whole world, but to people we know, our neighbours, our community, perhaps people no one else can reach. We have a purpose in life over and above all the other duties and responsibilities that are ours – to help prepare the way, get people ready to meet with Jesus. And God promises us his help and encouragement to do our bit. Things may well be bleak, humanly speaking, but there is a point to our lives, a real purpose. As we prepare for Christmas, let's be open to God bringing us his peace, and equipping us to play our part in preparing the way for the Saviour.

Praise CH4 290 The race that long in darkness pined.

Pray God you loved the world so much that you sent your Son to be born in poverty and to die in agony. We pray for all those who know poverty today: poverty of mind, body or spirit; and for those who live daily with agony: agony of mind, body or spirit. Restore your children, O God, in mind, body and spirit. Before Jesus, came John to prepare the way. We pray for all people today who are messengers: messengers of hope, messengers of light, messengers of love. We pray too for those who, like John, bring messages that folk don't want to hear: police officers bringing bad news, medical staff confirming worst fears, employers caught up in the demands of recession. God, whether our lives are filled with things we're happy to hear or things we dreaded ever being told, may we know your presence through it all: healing bruised minds, bodies and spirits, bringing your own brand of hope, light and love. Keep on confronting us with the harsh demands of the gospel until we too become harbingers of light in all the dark corners of your world and our world. May we always stand out and stand up for hope, light and love. As the pace of activity increases in the run up to Christmas, in our busyness help us to remember our role as preparers of the way for Jesus. In our prayer walk this week we remember all the staff and students at Montrose Academy. SILENCE. Advent God, draw near to us and all for whom we have prayed, open our hearts and minds to your peace that passes all understanding, for Jesus' sake, Amen.

Blessing May the Lord bless you. Amen.

Notices

- Picture and Prayer Calendar for Advent now online. We'll project photos on Sundays for those without internet access.
- Christmas Fair and Gift Day on Saturday, 3rd. Do come along if you can. Usual stalls. Donations welcome.
- Messy Church Sunday 11th
- Carol Concert with Montrose Town Band and Song Shop Sunday 11th 6.30pm
- Carols around the Sheltered Housing Monday 12th meet at St Mary's and St Peter's by 6.55pm.

We are having some difficulties with the website – working to resolve them. Remember the phone line or you can access the material directly from YouTube

YouTube links for Sunday 4 December 2022

Mini Service Video <https://youtu.be/HsC5DZ04mpY>

Sermon Video <https://youtu.be/jYPRoWMNuFU>

To assist those unable to access material via the internet we have established a phone line where people can phone in to hear the mini service or sermon.

01674 902624.

To hear the mini service people just need to dial in and wait. To hear the sermon, after dialling you need to press 1 then #. In either case there is a few seconds delay while the message loads so tell folk not to hang up! If folk press 1 for the sermon before the intro finishes the system doesn't pick up on it and it defaults to the mini service. The message now says wait until after the tone before pressing 1 but give it a few seconds after that and do press # after pressing 1.

Sermon, prayers and news (or links to them) will be uploaded to our website www.oldandstandrews.com and the Old and St Andrew's Facebook page. Feel free to copy this and pass it on to Church members or friends who might not use the web or social media

Please continue to pray for one another and support where you can and remember that the congregation is united in love wherever we are and however we are worshipping.

Stay safe! May the Lord bless you!

Ian

Rev Dr Ian A McLean