**Times and Seasons**

**Part 1 - Advent to the Presentation of Christ**

**Section 2**

**Advent**

**Introduction to the Season**

In the northern hemisphere, the Advent season takes us deep into the heart of winter. In past generations, of course, winter brought the risk of starvation and the very real danger of illness and sickness. Transport became difficult, sometimes impossible, with frozen tracks or waterlogged roads. There was much preparation to be made in order to win the winter battle and to arrive unscathed at the signs of spring and new life.

The decrease of daylight and the deepening darkness stirs the church to prayer: the bleakness of December can naturally cause us to yearn for signs of hope. In its scriptures, psalm, prayers and songs of Advent the church shares in much of the natural and very human yearning for light and life, for hope and salvation, for survival and well being, health and wholeness. Is it any wonder that the world outside the church cannot wait to begin their celebrations prematurely?

However, the Christian community looks above and beyond the natural world and pays close attention to the voice of the prophets, to Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist and, most importantly, Jesus who, together, announce God's reign. Good listening requires stillness, attentiveness, patience, disciplined waiting and the disposal of distractions which is reflected in the often sombre nature Advent takes and the restraint of certain signs of celebration. During Advent the Gloria is omitted on Sundays, and the liturgical space is cleared of clutter and unnecessary adornment so that our worship reflects the witness and proclamation of John the Baptist to make a straight path for the Lord, as well providing a subtle prelude to the Christmas brightness to follow. The scripture readings during Advent are filled with images of God's glory and might, his power and majesty, and we, his people, are filled with awe and wonder, trepidation and fear. 'The Lord is coming; go out to meet him.' There is a sense of urgency.

There is a penitential atmosphere during Advent but it is not to be confused or likened with that of Lent. Our need for penance during Advent comes from the message of Jesus to 'Keep Watch' and to be ready to welcome him when he comes. This distinctively eschatological character of Advent necessarily demands self examination and openness to the forgiveness, justice and peace of the Lord by which his kingdom is marked. We believe that Christ will come to judge the living and the dead: prayer and penance, then, is not an option. However, it is balanced by the call to 'Rejoice' and to look forward with expectancy and anticipation for the coming of the Lord. Penance and praise go hand in hand.

The liturgical colour of the season is purple although it is a different colour purple from that used during Lent: it is darker and deeper, not royal purple. There also seems to be historical precedent for the use of dark blue, especially in Northern Europe. On the Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudate Sunday) the optional colour, reflected in the alternative colour of the Advent candle that week, is often rose, reflecting the winter sky at dawn or dusk, the setting of the sun low in the sky, and the seeking out and promise of light: a natural image for us, perhaps, of the final day at which Christ the Morning Star at last will dawn. It marks the time when Advent, moving towards the darkest and shortest day of the year, takes a natural turn on December 17 when our attention and preparations focus more on the celebration of Christ's birth in Bethlehem as the figures of John the Baptist, Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary take precedence in the Sunday gospels. It is time to rejoice! 'The woman is with child and will give birth to a son whom she will name Emmanuel.' (Isaiah 7:16) The Advent Antiphons (which are found in the Order for Evening Prayer of the Church in Wales) are an ancient, important and profound expression of the anticipation of Christ's birth.

This dual focus of Advent is reflected in the calendar and liturgies of the Church in Wales although these times are not mutually exclusive: each informs the other. However, there is also another important aspect of this season as Advent calls us to the coming of Christ into our own lives so that we, the People of God, become the Advent of Christ for the world, the ones through whom the presence of Jesus is made known through lives of holiness, peace, love and justice. Advent is a beautiful season of the church. It is a time of anticipation and joy, waiting and longing, preparation and unfulfilled expectancy. It is a season pregnant with hope.

The liturgies and prayers provided in this section make use of the well used and often celebrated themes of light and dark but Advent is far richer than this, especially as the light theme reaches its fulfilment and climax with Christmas, Epiphany and Candlemas. Advent helps us to see the light breaking in and expresses our longing for Christ but churches are encouraged to explore and express the even richer symbolism and imagery which Advent inspires.

The Advent Wreath and the Jesse Tree are both customs that can be celebrated in the home and are relatively easy ways of enabling all ages to participate in the celebrations of Advent. The Revised Common Lectionary provides rich Scriptural references for our Advent celebrations and there are also Advent resources in the Order for Morning and Evening Prayer, some of which have been incorporated into the liturgies and prayers provided here.

The Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath is a custom that began in the home and is to be encouraged. However, many parishes now have a wreath in church. There is no liturgical necessity for this but the following is offered as a resource for those parishes that have adopted this practice.

The Advent Wreath may be blessed at Evening Prayer on the eve of Advent Sunday followed by the lighting of the first candle. If this is the case the Blessing may take place after the Lord’s Prayer, followed by the lighting of the first candle. Alternatively, it may be celebrated within a separate Liturgy of the Word on the eve of Advent Sunday.

If the candles are lit on each Sunday of Advent then it is appropriate to light the candles of the Advent Wreath during the Gathering rites of the Eucharist, after the greeting, or even before the Eucharist begins. The size of the wreath determines where it should be placed but it should not obscure the altar or lectern.

The wreath may remain in church through the Christmas season. If the candles are lit as part of the Gathering Rite at the Eucharist the following may be used.

**Blessing of the Advent Wreath**

***Greeting***

From the Christ who was, who is, and who is to come:

grace, light and peace be with you.

**And also with you.**

***Introduction***

Dear Friends, we begin our advent preparations to welcome the coming of Christ. Let us seek the light that he alone can bring, a light no darkness can overpower. As the days shorten and the nights draw swiftly in, let us pray that we may be alert to his glowing presence and ready to welcome him when he comes in glory.

*Blessing of the Advent Wreath*

Lord God,

your church joyfully awaits the coming of her Saviour.

who enlightens our hearts

and dispels the darkness of ignorance and sin.

Pour your blessing upon us

as we light the candles of this wreath;

may their light reflect the splendour of Christ

who is Lord, for ever and ever. Amen.

## Prayers for the Lighting of the Advent Wreath

The candles may be lit in silence, the action therefore deserving the full attention of all present or accompanied by a simple verse and response such as:

Jesus Christ is the light of the world:

**a light no darkness can overpower.**

##### There are two sets of prayers provided. The first set of prayers unites the themes of the patriarchs, prophets, John the Baptist and the Blessed Virgin Mary with the seasonal sights, sounds and rhythm of the world during the winter: short days, long nights, the winter sun low in the sky, the cold creeping in, and the seeking out of warmth. The second set are more simply written and may be more appropriate for use with children. The prayers may be preceded by the response set out above.

##### Lighting of the Candles (Set I)

# *Advent 1*

Eternal God,

as darkness settles across our ancient land

and the cold winter lays heavy upon our lives

we light a candle

to brighten the shadows

and warm our hearts,

so that he of whom the patriarchs spoke

may find us alert to his presence

and ready to welcome him, the Light of the world,

for he is Lord forever and ever. **Amen.**

# *Advent 2*

Eternal God,

as the days shorten

and the evenings draw swiftly in

we light a candle

to enlighten our minds

and stir our hearts

so that he of whom the prophets spoke

may find us watching and waiting to welcome him, the Light of the world,

for he is Lord forever and ever. **Amen.**

## Advent 3

Eternal God,

as the darkness beckons closer

and the night-time lingers on

we light a candle

to dispel the darkness of our hearts

and chase away the shadows of our minds

so that he of whom John the Baptist spoke

may find a bright and clear path

and find us ready and willing to welcome him, the Light of the world,

for he is Lord forever and ever. **Amen.**

# *Advent 4*

Eternal God,

as we seek the dawning brightness

and the lengthening of days

we light a candle

to quicken our hearts and warm our frozen lives

so that he who took flesh in the womb of Mary

may find us eager to welcome him

and ready to embrace him, the Light of the world,

for he is Lord forever and ever. **Amen.**

***Christmas Day***

Eternal God,

as we greet the birth of Christ with joy

we light a candle

to illuminate our hearts

and express our overflowing joy

so that he who is born of Mary this day,

may see us gathered to greet him

and ready to attend to him, the Light of the world,

for he is Lord for ever and ever. **Amen.**

*In the Holy Eucharist, the opening prayer: ‘Father of glory, holy and eternal’ is appropriate to use. The Eucharist then continues with the Penitential Rite.*

***Lighting of the Candles (Set II)***

***Advent 1***

Hurry, Lord Jesus,

and come to us quickly:

fill our hearts with excitement

at your coming into the world.

May your ancient promises

fulfil the hopes of everyone on earth.

**Amen.** (*Or* **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus**)

***Advent 2***

Hurry, Lord Jesus,

and come to us quickly:

fill our hearts with praise

at your coming into the world.

May the message of the prophets

reach the ears of everyone on earth.

**Amen.** (*Or* **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus**)

***Advent 3***

Hurry, Lord Jesus

and come to us quickly:

fill our hearts with joy

at your coming into the world.

May the words of John the Baptist

open the hearts of everyone on earth.

**Amen.** (*Or* **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus**)

***Advent 4***

Hurry, Lord Jesus,

and come to us quickly:

fill our hearts with awe

at your coming into the world.

May the joy of Mary

fill the lives of everyone on earth.

**Amen.** (*Or* **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus**)

***Christmas Day***

Lord Jesus,

you have born into this world

and we welcome you into our hearts.

May the light of your love

bring shining peace and brilliant joy

to everyone on earth,

for you are Lord, for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

Additional Material for the Eucharist

during Advent

*The following may be used.*

***Greeting***

## To December 16

From the Christ who was, who is, and who is to come:

Grace and peace be with you all.

# And also with you.

## From December 17

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

who is coming into the world, be with you.

**And also with you.**

***Penitential Rite***

*To December 16*

My brothers and sisters,

let us be alert to the advent of God

and prepare the Lord’s way by turning from sin,

embracing justice and truth,

and finding comfort in the Christ who promises peace.

*Either, the Penitential Sentences from the Holy Eucharist (2004):*

Lord, Jesus, you came to gather the nations into your kingdom of peace.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you come in word and sacrament to strengthen us in holiness.

Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you will come in glory to judge the living and the dead.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

*Or:*

Lord Jesus, you came as our Redeemer to announce glad tidings of salvation.

Lord, have mercy.  **Lord have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you come as shepherd to gather and feed us.

Christ have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you will come as Judge to establish a new heaven and a new earth.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

#### *From December 17*

My brothers and sisters,

as the dawn of Christ’s coming breaks into our lives,

let us turn away from the darkness of sin

that the radiance of God’s love will shine upon us.

*Either:*

O Wisdom of the Most High,

you set all things in order with your strong and gentle hand:

teach us the path of true judgement.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

O Prince of Israel,

you appeared to Moses in the burning bush:

come and deliver us with outstretched hand.

Christ have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

O Root of Jesse,

standing like a banner before all nations:

come and set us free, do not delay.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

*Or:*

O Key of David,

with power to open and seal:

come and lead us from darkness and the shadow of death.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

O Morning Star,

you are the radiance of the everlasting light:

come and shed your light on those who live in darkness.

Christ, have mercy.  **Christ, have mercy.**

O King of the nations,

the Lord for whom they long:

come and save all whom you have moulded from the earth.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

***Intercessions I***

*Introduction*

As we wait for the Lord's coming

let us pray for the church and the whole world

that justice will flourish and peace until the moon fails.

*Petitions*

May the church be filled with a spirit of wisdom and insight,

and live with true integrity and deep love.

*Either: Or:*

Lord, in your mercy. Let your justice flourish, Lord.

**Hear our prayer. And peace till the moon fails.**

May the nations of the world and all leaders seek justice and peace

and have compassion for the weak and the poor.

May our parish community, living as people of the Light

prepare a way for the Lord's coming.

May those who dwell in the darkness of war and violence

see the dawning brightness of the Lord,

May those who are sick know the presence of the Lord,

who raises up all who are bowed down.

May the poor and oppressed see faithfulness spring up from the earth

and justice look down from heaven.

May those who are sent out to proclaim the Lord is near

know his saving help and speak words of peace and joy.

May we and all Christians dare to hear the voice of the prophets

and seek out and listen to the prophets among us.

*Concluding Prayer*

The dawning brightenss of your love

begins to break upon us, Lord God,

for in the coming of Jesus your Son,

peace is proclaimed, justice rains down

and our hearts are filled with hope.

May all people know the awe and wonder of your saving love.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***Intercessions II***

*Introduction*

The Day of the Lord is at hand.

Let us stand upright and wait eagerly for his coming,

praying constantly for the church and the world.

*Petitions*

That the church may be moved

by the urgency of the prophet’s message.

*Either: Or:*

Lord, in your mercy. Lord, show us your mercy.

**Hear our prayer. Grant us your saving help.**

That those who deliver justice in the world

will do so with gentleness and compassion.

That the wars and conflicts of the world

will be transformed by the justice and peace of the Lord.

That those who harbour hatred or resentment

will be given hearts of flesh for hearts of stone.

That all people will value the beauty of God's creation

and walk gently upon the earth.

That all who are weakened by sickness and pain

will find healing in the Lord.

That, with all who have gone before us in faith,

We may know the joy and peace of your eternal kingdom.

*Concluding Prayer*

God our Father,

as we await the coming of your Son

help us to prepare his way

with humble hearts and lives of faithfulness and love.

We make our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord.  **Amen.**

**Prefaces**

*To December 16*

***I***

Who humbled himself to live among us,

taking human flesh,

fulfilling the plan you formed long ago

and opening to us the way to salvation.

We watch and wait for that day

when our Lord Jesus Christ will be revealed,

when justice shall march before him

and peace shall follow his steps,

that when he comes in glory, with healing in his wings

we may inherit the promised salvation

in which we dare to hope.

***II***

In many and various ways

you have spoken to us through the prophets.

In these days you have spoken to us through your Son,

our merciful and faithful high priest,

the heir of all things

through whom you made the world.

He is the brightness of your glory

and sits at your right hand in majesty

from where he will come to judge the living and the dead

*From December 17*

**I**

The prophets prepared us for his coming,

the Blessed Virgin Mary longed for him with love beyond all telling.

At the presence of Jesus, John the Baptist danced in his mother’s womb

and proclaimed his advent when at last he came.

Already we rejoice in his birth,

for he has given us the gift of grace,

that he may find us watchful and waiting,

our hearts filled with wonder and praise**.**

**II**

In this season of hope, his light dawns in our hearts

for he is the Morning Star, the Dayspring from on High,

whose light destroys the shadow of death

and scatters the darkness of sin.

The Word through whom you made the world

is close at hand,

establishing a new creation

when all will be made manifest.

And now we watch for the day

when Christ will come again

with justice flowing like a river,

and raining down peace upon the world,

to raise us up to live with you for ever.

**III**

His presence was revealed by an angel’s message

and the joyful response of Mary his mother,

whose song resounds in every generation,

proclaiming peace and justice at the advent of her son and Lord.

He casts the mighty from their thrones,

raises up the weak and powerless,

fills the hungry with good things

and promises a new world for the poor.

***Lord's Prayer***

*Either:*

Let us pray for the coming of the Kingdom as Jesus taught us:

*Or:*

God so loved the world that he sent his only Son to be our Saviour

and from this we take courage to pray:

***Dismissal***

*To December 16*

Go in peace to prepare the way of the Lord.

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

*From December 17*

The Lord's coming is close at hand.

Go in peace to prepare the way of the Lord.

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

Advent Carol Service

*An Advent Carol Service or Service of Light may be combined with a celebration of Evening Prayer or the following may be used. Advent hymns, songs, anthems and music such as the Matins and Vespers responsory should be used as well as appropriate silence.*

*This service may be celebrated in candlelight and the people may be given lighted candles.*

*This liturgy may also involve movement and procession through the church, either of the whole people, if it is practical and possible, or by a representative group of ministers and people.*

*The liturgy may begin with the Opening Versicles and Responses from Evening Prayer*

O, Lord open our lips.

**And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.**

O God, make speed to save us.

**O, Lord make haste to help us.**

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son,**

**and to the Holy Spirit;**

**as it was in the beginning, is now,**

**and shall be for ever. Amen.**

***Introduction***

Dear friends, we celebrate the joyful season of Advent: a time of expectancy, a season pregnant with hope and anticipation. Raising our hearts to heaven, may we be alert to the coming of Christ in glory to judge the living and the dead. Let us welcome his coming into the world, and prepare ourselves for the completion of all things when Christ will come in glory to judge the living and the dead..

In song and silence, in prayer and the reading of Scripture, we seek the purposes of God. Let us listen attentively to his word that he may teach us his ways and we may we walk in his paths: holy, and blameless, ready for the Day of Christ.

May we turn away from sin and prepare a path for the Lord: the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world; the promised one of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords who brings justice, peace and love.

The King is coming. Let us go out to meet him. May we seek his kingdom of glory and walk in the light of the Lord and proclaim to the people of the earth, 'Here is your God!'

Let us pray.

*Either:*

Almighty God,

give us grace to cast away the works of darkness

and to put on the armour of light,

now in the time of this mortal life,

in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;

that on the last day,

when he shall come again in his glorious majesty

to judge the living and the dead,

we may rise to the life immortal;

through him who is alive and reigns with you

and the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

*Or:*

Father in heaven,

the Day is drawing near

when Christ will come in glory

to illuminate the darkness of the waiting world.

Dispel the shadows of ignorance

and remove the clouds of sorrow

that we may be filled with overwhelming joy.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord

Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God forever and ever. **Amen.**

Or:

Father in heaven,

in David's royal city a humble lodging, ill prepared,

becomes the home where Christ your Son

takes up his place to live among us.

May we, your royal people, provide a worthy welcome,

and prepare the way for celebrations that fill our hearts with joy.

Liberate our tired minds and warm our frozen hearts

so that we may proclaim to people everywhere

the peace that Jesus Christ alone can bring,

for he is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit

one God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

As we look for the coming of the kingdom, Lord, teach us to pray:

**Our Father...**

*A suitable selection of the following readings (including at least one from the Old Testament and one from the gospels) and prayers may be used along with suitable Advent hymns and carols, songs and chants.*

***Reading***

*Isaiah 6:1-8 'I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne'*

***Prayer***

O God of Power and Might,

your holiness fills the sanctuary of heaven

and your glory fills the whole earth.

Touch our lives with your love,

heal our hearts from all that defiles us

and free our tongues to proclaim your glory,

that Christ your Son,

who is coming into the world,

will find a holy people

eager to do your will.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***Reading***

*Isaiah 7:10-16 'The Lord will give you a sign: the young woman is with child*

*and will give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel'*

***Prayer***

Good and Faithful God,

patient and forgiving,

as our doubt and faithlessness pervades our hearts

give us faith to see the Christ child

cradled in his mother's arms,

through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***Reading***

*Isaiah 11:1–5 (6-9) 'A shoot will spring from the stock of Jesse.'*

***Prayer***

God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ,

whose Son is born of David's line

to bring peace and justice, wisdom and power.

May the waiting world recognise Jesus in its midst,

and bow down in awe and wonder at the promise of your Word.

We ask this through the same Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***Reading***

*Isaiah 40:1-11 A voice cries, 'Clear a road in the wilderness.'*

***Prayer***

Give us grace, Lord God,

to announce the coming of your Son

and to prepare his way

May our lives resound with your love

and our hearts rejoice at his coming.

We make our prayer through the same Jesus Christ our Lord,

who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God forever and ever. **Amen.**

***Reading***

*Malachi 3: 1-4 'Who will be able to resist the day of his coming?'*

All praise to you, Lord, God of power and might

when we falter in your presence,

and stumble as we glimpse your glory,

soften our stubborn hearts

that Jesus Christ, the one for whom we wait

will refine us and revive us,

and make us worthy to lift our hearts and hands to you in worship,

an acceptable offering, as in the days of old.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, who was and is and is to come,

and who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

***Reading***

*Malachi 3: 6 – 12 'See if I do not open the floodgates of heaven for you*

*and pour abundant blessing on you.'*

***Prayer***

Accept, O God, the work of our hands:

the gifts we gather,

the good things we your children have been given.

Our wandering ways wound your loving heart.

When you call us back to you,

open the floodgates of heaven

and pour your blessings upon us,

that we may shine with your presence

and draw all nations to your dawning brightness.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***Reading***

*Micah 4 verses 1–4 'They will hammer their swords in ploughshares.*

*Nations will not lift sword against nation.'*

***Prayer***

Your peaceful ways, O Loving God,

are resisted by the nations,

and the hearts of many, turned away from love,

are plunged into the ways of war.

May all nations lay aside their thoughts of bloodshed

and mould their instruments of death into tools to till the earth

Shaded by the beauty of your creation,

may we sit untroubled and live in the peace that Christ your Son has brought,

for he is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God forever and ever. **Amen.**

**Reading**

Jeremiah 23: 5-6 'Look, the days are coming,' says the Lord.

**Prayer**

Raise our eyes to heaven, Lord,

to see your Son, who comes with saving justice

to rule our hearts with love.

Gather into one family all who call you Father

to dwell in your love for ever.

We make our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Reading**

Zechariah 9: 9-10 'Rejoice, heart and soul, daughter of Zion. Look, your King is coming.'

**Prayer**

Fill our hearts with joy, Lord God,

at the coming of your Son:

the King for whom we have longed,

the ruler for whom we have waited.

May he bless us with humility and love,

and fill us with peace and joy,

that we, your Church, may be ready to welcome him

We ask this through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***Reading***

*Haggai 2:6-9 'A little while now and I shall shake the heavens and the earth...'*

***Prayer***

As the glory of the days of old, Lord God,

are surpassed by the glory of the new things you are doing,

Shake the foundations of heaven and earth

and fill the world with your glory,

for you are the God of all creation:

We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***Reading***

*Ephesians 5:1-14 Awake, sleeper! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'*

***Prayer***

God our Father,

may the sweet aroma of Christ's obedient offering

enable us to live as children of the light.

raise us from our bed of sin,

wake us from our slumber

and fill us with your Holy Spirit.

Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***Reading***

*1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 'The Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.'*

***Prayer***

Your Day is coming, Lord God,

at a time we do not know, like a thief in the night.

Watchful and waiting

armoured with faith and love

may we strengthen and encourage one another

to be strong and alert to the advent of your Son,

for he is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

***Reading***

*Revelation 21:1-7 'I saw a new heaven and a new earth.'*

***Prayer***

Lord God,

in a world of sadness and pain you are doing something new.

Wipe away the tears of all who mourn,

and comfort all who are afflicted and in pain,

that we may rejoice in the coming of your Son,

the Alpha and the Omega,

the beginning and the end,

for he is Lord for ever and ever. **Amen.**

***Reading***

*Revelation 21:22-22:5 'By its light shall the nations walk,*

*and to it the kings of the earth shall bring their splendour.'*

***Prayer***

Praise to you, Sovereign Lord, God of all,

your splendour surpasses the brightness of the sun,

your glory is a guide for the nations.

Illuminated by your love,

may our names may be inscribed in the Lamb's book of life

that we may praise and worship you for ever,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***Reading***

*Luke 1: 39–56 'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.'*

***Prayer***

Glory and praise to you, Lord God:

may the song of Mary resound in our hearts:

as we rejoice in the good things you have done for the world.

May her son and Saviour find in us a worthy place to dwell

that, bearing Christ for others,

we may proclaim your love and mercy in every generation.

We make our prayer through the same Jesus Christ our Lord who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. **Amen.**

***Reading***

*Luke 4:14–21 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me'*

***Prayer***

Loving Father,

pour your Spirit upon us

and fix our eyes on Jesus your Son,

who comes to liberate all who are captive:

give sight to those who cannot see the glories of your kingdom.

Heal the world, broken by sin,

and make us messengers of good news

that, anointed with your Spirit,

our lives may be a living witness to your Son

Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

***Reading***

*John 3:1–12 'No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born again.'*

***Prayer***

Father of heaven and earth,

may we who have been born again in Baptism

be filled with your Spirit and glimpse the kingdom of your love.

Guide our lives

and lead us closer to your Son

that alive in the Spirit

we may grow in grace

and daily be conformed to his image.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***Reading***

*Matthew 3:1-12 'The Kingdom of Heaven is upon you!'*

***Prayer***

Heavenly Father,

your kingdom is upon us:

heaven's light is dawning,

dispelling the shadow of sin.

As your witness in the wilderness boldly declared the advent of your Son

remove from us the love of sin

and fill us with the fire of your Holy Spirit

that we may bear the fruit of Jesus' love

and be a harvest of plenty when he comes again,

for he is Lord for ever and ever. **Amen.**

***Collect***

*One of the Advent Collects may be used.*

***Blessing***

*The service may end with one of the following blessings:*

*Either:*

Christ the sun of righteousness shine upon you, scatter the darkness from before you...

*Or:*

May God the Father

who loved the world so much he sent his only Son,

give you grace to prepare for eternal life. **Amen.**

May God the Son,

who comes to us as redeemer and Judge,

show you the path from darkness to light. **Amen.**

May God the Holy Spirit,

by whom the Virgin Mary conceived the Christ,

help you to bear the fruits of holiness.  **Amen.**

And the blessing...

The Jesse Tree

*The Jesse Tree takes its name from a passage in the book of the prophet Isaiah 11:1: "A shoot will spring forth from the stump of Jesse, a branch out of his roots." It is, in short and simple terms, the family tree of Jesus illustrating his descent from Jesse of Bethlehem, the father of David.*

*In the New Testament the lineage of Jesus is illustrated by two of the Gospel writers: Matthew and Luke. Luke describes the ‘generations of Christ’ in Chapter 3, beginning with Jesus and tracing backwards through his ‘earthly father’ Joseph all the way to Adam. The Gospel according to Matthew opens with the words, ‘The genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham. (1:1). Jesus is explicitly represented as being from God’s holy people, descending from Jesse and even farther back to Abraham. The Jesse Tree has often been represented in art, particularly during the Medieval period (many of which may be found in churches in Wales) although there are also many modern examples. They show a symbolic tree or vine with spreading branches to represent the genealogy. The most typical form which the Jesse Tree takes is to show the figure of Jesse, often larger than all the rest, reclining or sleeping. From his side or navel springs the trunk of a tree or vine, with branches on either side. On the branches are figures representing the ancestors of Christ. The trunk of the tree ascends to Mary and then to Christ. Alternatively, there may be an image of Christ in the arms of his mother.*

*The number of figures depicted varies greatly, depending on the amount of room available for the design. If the longer ancestry from Luke is used, there are 43 generations between Jesse and Jesus. The prophecy of Isaiah 11 illustrated in the Jesse Tree has also come to include the Prophets, and their foretelling of Christ. The Jesse Tree windows of St Denis and Chartres Cathedral both include columns of prophets.*

*The Jesse Tree may be incorporated into the Sunday Eucharist throughout Advent and each week the symbols added to the tree and/or the following liturgy may be used.*

*Some or all of the following figures or events may be incorporated: The Creation of the World, Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Samuel, David, Elijah, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Habbakuk, Nehemiah, Zechariah, Elizabeth, John the Baptist, Mary, Joseph, Jesus.*

**A Jesse Tree Liturgy**

*An unadorned evergreen (‘Christmas’) tree is placed sensitively in position so that is does not dominate the liturgical space. The tree should not be illuminated: this act should be reserved for Christmas. The Jesse Tree symbols may be distributed to various representatives before the liturgy begins or placed on a table at the rear of the church or hall. The liturgy may be led by a priest or any other minister or by the children and young people themselves, with the words adapted according to the age group and ability of those involved. A Penitential Rite may be included after the Introduction using the Advent Sentences from the Holy Eucharist of the Church in Wales.*

*A suitable hymn or song may be sung.*

***The Gathering***

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is coming into the world.

**And also with you.**

***Introduction***

We gather with an empty tree and, beautiful and perfect, the handiwork of God. We will soon adorn it further with signs and symbols which speak powerfully of Jesus’ the Messiah's coming into the world. As we prepare to celebrate his birth in Bethlehem, the city of David, let us pray that we will recognise him in our lives.

***Prayer***

God our Father,

you prepared the world for the coming of your Son

through patriarchs and prophets

and holy men and women

who were alert to your presence

and rejoiced in your love.

May we, your family, receive Christ with joy

and readily proclaim his coming to all whom we meet.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***Reading:*** Isaiah 11:1-4 (6-9)

*Other readings may be incorporated, including a suitable Gospel reading, for example:*

*Matthew 1:18-24 Jesus is born of Mary who was betrothed to Joseph, son of David*

*Luke 1:26-38 Mary is told that she will conceive and bear a son*

*Luke 3:1-6 ‘And all people shall see the salvation of God’*

*Luke 3:23—38 Genealogy of Jesus*

*Matthew 1:1-17. Genealogy of Jesus*

*Psalm 1 'They are like trees planted by streams of water'*

***Homily or a brief Explanation of the Jesse Tree***

***Jesse Tree Symbols***

*The following or similar words are used:*

Here on the branches of this Jesse Tree we will see, in sign and symbol, the story of our salvation. Here we will see how God has prepared the world for the coming of Jesus. May the holy men and women who have listened to God’s word and spoken to others of his love, inspire us to welcome Jesus into our lives and to share the story of salvation.

*The following or another hymn is sung, during which the symbols are presented and hung on the branches of the tree. If this is used during a whole school assembly, perhaps a representative of each class could present a symbol.*

***Hymn***

*Metre 65 65 D (At the Name of Jesus, etc)*

**Hanging on the branches**

**of this Jesse Tree**

**see the love of Jesus**

**and his family.**

**Here we see his goodness**

**and his light and power**

**shining through the darkness**

**‘til the final hour.**

**Prophets, men and women,**

**all received his word:**

**promise of the coming**

**of the mighty Lord.**

**Born into his fam’ly,**

**in the church of God**

**may we share the faith of**

**God in flesh and blood.**

**So, in sign and symbol,**

**So, in branch and tree,**

**may we tell the story**

**of the One yet Three.**

**Through the Holy Spirit**

**Christ is in our sight:**

**Promise of the Father**

**full of grace and light.**

*(Note of copyright, Dean Atkins, Society of Our Lady of Penrhys)*

***Prayer***

*The following or other Intercessions and prayers may be offered.*

Let us pray together, opening our hearts and lives to God.

God of every generation:

**Hear our prayer.**

The prophets proclaimed the coming of Jesus:

may we too share the good news of Jesus with joy and wonder. ***R.***

Jesus was born into a human family,

may all families know his presence in their lives. ***R.***

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the city of David:

through our lives, may Jesus’ presence be known in our own communities. ***R.***

Jesus' coming was anticipated by his ancestors:

may we leave a good and holy inheritance for generations to come. ***R.***

Jesus was brought up by Mary and Joseph with love and dedication:

may all parents be inspired and strengthened in their calling. ***R.***

As we prepare to celebrate Jesus’ birth,

may we be filled with eagerness to do his will and share his love. ***R.***

***Lord’s Prayer***

As we raise our hands and hearts and voices to the heavens let us

pray for the coming of God’s Kingdom.

**Our Father…**

***Blessing***

*The liturgy may end with a blessing or by saying the Grace together.*

*Either:*

The Lord be with you

**And also with you.**

May Jesus, born from the line of Jesse and of the House of David, fill you with all joy at his coming, and the blessing of Almighty God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

*Or:*

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ**

**and the love of God**

**and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit**

**be with us all evermore. Amen.**

*[SOURCE: Jesse Tree Liturgy © copyright Society of Our Lady of Penrhys]*