

SUNDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2021
WORSHIP AT HOME by John Hinton

A gathering prayer: As churches across the country light their first Advent candle, may their flames be for us a sign of hope; may their warmth be a symbol of God's love for us; and may they inspire us to be hope bearers – people of compassion and integrity, as we gather in the name of Jesus who is the light of the world. Amen.

Our first Hymn is an advent hymn that tells of the promised Christ

Hymn: StF 169/H&P81: Come thou long expected Jesus

Prayer: Eternal God, hope of the world, we cannot grasp the immensity of your being, and yet all around us we catch glimpses of your power.

You speak to us in nature's blessings. You speak to us through science and creativity.

You reveal yourself in the love and the care and the support of those around us.

You show yourself when we most need to see you.

When we least expect it, we see your hand at work. We read your Word, time and time again, and suddenly, we are amazed by seeing something new. Eternal God, we adore you. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Message:

Today's appointed gospel reading contains dark and threatening images. Signs and portents of danger. But it also contains words of hope, hope of a spring and the hope of new life.

Luke 21:25-36

In the days of the COP26 conference our newspapers and television screens were full of signs and portents of danger. Melting icebergs, destructive fires, droughts and floods. For too many people those dangers have moved from worries and threats of future climate change to a life changing present reality - and our hearts go out to all who are impacted. When we hear experts telling us of the huge task facing us to address the damage that we have already done to the planet, when politicians speak of the clock being at 1 minute to midnight, it is easy to become despondent.

However, a key characteristic that we are called to display as followers of Jesus is to show faith in times of despair. To show faith in a resurrection when we are surrounded by the darkness of a Good Friday. To have confidence that we will see the new leaves of spring, and that they will point to the promise of summer.

That is not a call to deny reality, to ignore the challenge or to minimise the difficulties, but is a call not to be ground down by that reality.

It is to stand alongside Martin Luther who once wrote *"Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree."*

The climate crisis invites us to show faith in a time of despair.

Faith that the world may unite and act in a way that addresses the damage that we are doing, and have done, to God's world. Faith that we will pass on a safe and sustainable world to our children and grandchildren and to their children and grandchildren.

Prayer:

Loving God,

We praise your name along with all that you have created.

You are present in the enormity of the universe, and in the smallest of creatures.

We acknowledge the responsibilities you have placed upon us as stewards of your creation.

May the Holy Spirit inspire all political leaders to fulfil and exceed the commitments that they made at COP26 as they seek to embrace the changes needed to foster a more sustainable society.

Instill in them the courage and gentleness needed to implement fairer solutions for the poorest and the most vulnerable, and commit their nations to the care of our common home. Amen

Hymn: StF 727/H&P343: God in his love for us lent us this planet

Blessing: May the peace of God enfold us, the love of God uphold us and the wisdom of God direct us. Amen.