



The Benefice of
Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme
Sunday 8 December 2024
Second Sunday of Advent



Liz has collated our Liturgy this week

Call to worship

We come together in hope and love.
With prophets, old and new, we celebrate the love of God.
In his tender mercy, God calls us to be part of the great
plan of salvation.

God of love,
guide our feet into the ways of peace;
fill our hearts with a passion to serve,
and shed the light of your acceptance
into the darkness of our insecurity.
As we listen to your Word and offer our prayers,
may we hear you calling us afresh or for the first time
to the tasks you have entrusted to each of us.
In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Confession

When the Lord comes,
he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness,
and will disclose the purposes of the heart.
Therefore, in the light of Christ let us confess our sins.

Lord our God,
in our sin we have avoided your call.
Our love for you is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes away early.

Have mercy on us;
deliver us from judgement;
bind up our wounds and revive us;
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

May the God of love
bring us back to himself,
forgive us our sins
and assure us of his eternal love
In Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen

God of the old and the new,
we praise you for the faithfulness that goes
before and behind all your people:
we celebrate your loving plan for the Church and the world.

We praise you for your compassion for all creation,
big and small, rich and poor, near and far:
we celebrate your loving plan for the Church and the world.

We praise you for this season of hope, of truth and of promise:
we celebrate your loving plan for the Church and the world.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Collect

Almighty God,
purify our hearts and minds,
that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again as
judge and saviour
we may be ready to receive him,
who is our Lord and our God.

Amen

First reading: Malachi 3: 1-4

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

Thanks be to God for the gift of His word

Second reading: Luke 3: 1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

Every valley shall be filled,

and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,

and the rough ways made smooth;
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Thanks be to God for the gift of His Holy Word

The Second Sunday of Advent invites us to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ, not only as the child in the manger but as the transformative presence in our lives and the world. The readings from Malachi 3:1-4 and Luke 3:1-6 echo this theme of preparation, calling us to reflection, repentance, and renewal.



In Malachi, the prophet declares, *“See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me...”* (Malachi 3:1). The imagery of refining and purifying dominates this passage. The Lord is compared to a refiner’s fire and a launderer’s soap, agents that cleanse and transform. This process, while often difficult, is necessary to align our lives with God’s will. It reminds us that Advent is a time to allow God’s refining work in our hearts, burning away impurities like selfishness and pride and this process is essential for preparing us to fully encounter God. Like precious metals refined by fire, our lives are shaped through challenges, trials, and acts of surrender. This purification is not punishment but an act of divine love, cleansing us of all that separates us from God so that we may offer ourselves as living sacrifices, pleasing and righteous in His sight.

In the Gospel of Luke, we hear the voice of John the Baptist crying out in the wilderness: *“Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight”* (Luke 3:4). John’s message is urgent and clear. He calls for repentance, a turning away from

sin and a turning toward God. His proclamation reminds us that Advent is not merely a time of passive waiting but an active season of preparation. We are invited to examine our hearts, seek forgiveness, and align our lives with God's will.

The call to repentance points to the coming of the Lord, who brings justice, peace, and salvation. In Malachi, the messenger prepares the way for the Lord's arrival, signalling a time when offerings will once again be made in righteousness. In Luke, the call to "make his paths straight" prepares the world for Christ, who comes to fill the valleys, level the mountains, and make the rough ways smooth.

As we reflect on these passages, we might ask ourselves: What valleys in our lives need to be filled with hope and love? What mountains of pride or fear need to be levelled to make room for Christ's presence? What refining fires might we be resisting that could transform us into vessels for the Holy Spirit? God's coming is both a gift and a call to action. It is a gift because Christ's presence is a fulfilment of God's promise to be with us. It is a call to action because encountering Christ requires us to prepare—to open our hearts, confront our shortcomings, and make space for His transformative grace.

Affirmation of Faith

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

Heavenly Father, Creator of all. Blessed are You King of the Universe and blessed is Your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, whom you sent to redeem us all. At this season of Advent as we wait in eager anticipation for His coming we humbly beseech you to hear our prayer.

Every day on our TV screens we see our world troubled and heavy with conflict. We pray for all those who are living under the fear of war violence and suffering. Our hearts are saddened when we see all the innocents and children whose lives have been ruined and are traumatised by the result of merciless weapons. Dear Father look deep into the hearts and minds of the Leaders of all the nations involved. Help them learn that nothing is ultimately gained by fighting. Guide them to lay down their arms and negotiate for Peace.

Lord in Your Mercy.

Hear our prayer.

We pray for the leaders of our nation who make difficult decisions on our behalf. Theirs is a thankless task, increasingly under the threat of violence themselves. Grant them courage and wisdom. Help them to make just decisions so that the wealth of our nation can be shared by all.

We pray also for our Royal Family, who despite many of them struggling with ill health, continue to fulfil their duty. We pray you will give them strength that they may continue their work for us and return to good health so they may share the Christmas Season with their loved ones.

Lord in Your Mercy.

Hear our prayer

As we wait patiently, as the Shepherds did for the Coming of the Baby Jesus, we pray for our Team Clergy, for Richard, Liz, Alison and Anna who work so hard throughout the year to minister to us. Give them health, strength and energy at this the most Blessed Christmastide as they prepare to spread the message of that first Christmas long ago.

At this time of Advent as we think of the birth of that Special child born in such humble circumstances we think of all new babies. Those born into loving,

supportive families who have brought joy into the world with them. We pray too for those more vulnerable babies born into difficult circumstances. We pray to You in Your mercy that they will be supported and helped to grow to their full potential.

Lord in your Mercy.

Hear our prayer

As Mary and Joseph searched for shelter to deliver their precious Son we pray for all those who are homeless and have no place to lay their heads tonight. Embrace them in Your Loving Arms and help them to find somewhere warm and safe to stay and help them to find support to rebuild their lives.

Heavenly Father, Christmas is a time for family, friends and those we love to gather together. Help us to remember all those for whom Christmas can be a very lonely, painful and sad time. As we think of those who are grieving or have lost loved ones, recently or in the past Comfort them and us Father in our sorrow. Grief which often feels sharper and more poignant at this time of year.

Lastly Dear Father we pray the Spirit of the Season, the message of love and fellowship will help us to reach out and share our happiness with our communities. Help us all to grow closer together and praise you daily for the Gift of your Beloved Son.

**Merciful Father, accept these prayers
for the sake of Your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ Amen**

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

God will speak peace to his people,
to those who turn to him in their hearts.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

Closing prayer and Blessing

Father in heaven,
who sent your Son to redeem the world
and will send him again to be our judge:
give us grace so to imitate him
in the humility and purity of his first coming
that, when he comes again,
we may be ready to greet him
with joyful love and firm faith;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

May God the Father, judge all-merciful,
make us worthy of a place in his kingdom.

Amen.

May God the Son, coming among us in power,
reveal in our midst the promise of his glory.

Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit make us steadfast in faith,
joyful in hope and constant in love.

Amen.

Sending Out

Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
in the name of Christ. Amen.