

The Gathering – first video

Welcome - [AUDREY]

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

I want to welcome you here today to Saint Mary's Scottish Episcopal Cathedral in the City of Glasgow. My name is the Reverend Canon Audrey O'Brien Stewart, and I'm the Canon Missioner for our diocese. I am so excited to be here with you this first Sunday of Advent as we begin a new church year, and we begin this season of hope and expectation in our lives.

As we prepare for our service this morning, we prepare to be transformed—to be led into a gospel that will remind us to keep alert and stay awake—to prepare ourselves to walk along all of the disciples, as they prepare themselves. We are with them.

Collect for Purity - [KELVIN]

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Confession

[OLIVER] God is love and we are God's children.
There is no room for fear in love.
We love because God loved us first.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith.

[Silence]

God our Father, we confess to you and to our fellow members in the Body of Christ that we have sinned in thought, word and deed, and in what we have failed to do. We are truly sorry. Forgive us our sins, and deliver us from the power of evil, for the sake of your Son who died for us, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[AUDREY] God, who is both power and love, forgive you and free you from your sins, heal and strengthen you by the Holy Spirit, and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Kyrie - [MORVEN]

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect - [AUDREY]

Rend the heavens and come down, O God of all the ages! Rouse us from sleep, deliver us from our heedless ways, and form us into a watchful people, that, at the advent of your Son, he may find us doing what is right, mindful of all you command. Grant this through him whose coming is certain, whose day draws near: your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.

Amen.

The Ministry of the Word – second video

GOSPEL: Mark 13:24-37 – [ZOE]

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.
Glory to Christ our Saviour.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'But in those days, after that suffering,

the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

Then they will see “the Son of Man coming in clouds” with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

‘From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

‘But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.’

Give thanks to the Lord for his glorious Gospel.

Praise to Christ our Lord.

Sermon [OLIVER]

Over the recent period of lockdown, Joe and I watched the political satire mockumentary series *Parks and Recreation*. It’s become one of my favourite television shows of all time. The sitcom takes a look at small-town government, following the career of Leslie Knope, a politician trying to do the right thing in the face of a lot of pressure to do the opposite.

Leslie's nemesis is Councilman and local dentist Jeremy Jamm. In Series 6, Jamm puts forward a bill called the 'Clean Water Bill', which, by its name, you'd assume was something good. The measure he proposed would prohibit adding anything to the city's water supply, including fluoride. (How convenient for a dentist!) Jamm's bill came on the heels of another bill proposed by Leslie, which would merge two water authorities and give the city fluoride in its water for the first time in its history. Councilman Jamm appeared on a local television talk-show to persuade people of his bill.

'Councilwoman Leslie Knope wants to put fluoride, which is a chemical, into your drinking water. You know what else is a chemical? Strychnine and cyanide ... and dirt and rust and even broken glass. Exactly. You definitely understand what chemicals are, Perd.'

Leslie frets, wondering how she'll counteract Jamm's fearmongering. She's sure whatever she does won't make a difference.

'It's not gonna make a difference. I can't beat them. All I have on my side is facts and science, and people hate facts and science.'

I found myself laughing at this uncomfortably. The scene hit a little too close to home. For, in the real world at the same time, a lot of people are rejecting facts and science. Instead, folk are navigating this pandemic by their feelings.

In the past few months, I've watched people on social media post about the Coronavirus pandemic as if it were some joke or a stunt. They say, 'I don't doubt there's a virus out there. I just don't think it's as big of a deal as people are saying.' Something doesn't 'feel right' about what they're seeing and hearing on the news. It doesn't match what they've come into contact with and seen themselves. Their instincts tell them, 'It can't be that bad.'

Elected officials' whitewashing and outright lying about the threat of COVID-19 has fostered doubt, too. Politicians have designed misinformation to elicit certain emotions—to make people feel things are under control, to believe others' response is a big overreaction. And that's a relief! It's what we want to hear, even though 'facts and science' might tell us otherwise. We want to believe what makes us feel better.

People hold their gut instincts in high regard. We often trust our intuition as some sort of native intelligence—deeply connected, as if someone or some force is trying to tell us something. In some cases, our instincts trump conscious reasoning. We believe we 'know' things innately, and, for people of faith, maybe that we know something about God. But here's where we must be careful.

We don't comprehend the ways of God because we feel like God does. We feel like ourselves. Just as we don't understand things about microorganisms or, indeed, any other organism, through a sixth sense, we don't know the things of God that way either. We could have feelings about phenomena, but they, of course, will be shaped by our own experience and habits.

Jesus tells his disciples to learn a lesson from the fig tree. He directs them to look outside themselves. 'As soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.' Nature's designs and displays, when studied, reveal something worth knowing, he says. We needn't be clairvoyant; we need not rely on others to tell us. We can see for ourselves the signs of the times.

During Advent, the Church urges folk towards self-examination—an interior journey of discovery. And, yes, I plan to look inward into my own life this season, but I also plan to look somewhere else. I'm going to strive to listen to the voice unknown and elsewhere, beyond my own understanding and comfort.

We might 'feel' we know what's happening, where God is and what the future holds. But Jesus told his disciples, no one knows—no one, not even the angels in heaven, not even the Son. The

knowledge of God's appearance is not embedded into our human psyche. It isn't something we can intuit. Instead, Jesus tells us to wake up, keep alert, to observe what's going on outside ourselves.

Intercessions [TAYLOR]

O Lord, whose Advent draws near, we look to you as we begin this season of watching and waiting, in this year that for so many of us has already been so full of watching and waiting. Hear our prayers for the world, the church, and ourselves, and keep us in the hope of the coming of your Son.

We pray for all throughout the world still affected by Coronavirus. Be with all healthcare workers, researchers developing and testing vaccines, and all whose safety is compromised due to lack of income or support. Give clarity and wisdom to those making decisions on public health, and grant that we may have grace for each other in the uncertainty of this time.

We pray for all those affected by Cyclone Nivar in India, and by all natural disasters and effects of climate change worldwide. Remind us always of our duty of care for your creation.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

As we enter into this season of Advent, we pray for the Church. Strengthen its leaders with your wisdom as they continue to care for the needs of their congregations, and seek different ways to await and celebrate your coming this year. We pray this week especially for the Lusitanian Church in Portugal, for Bishop Kevin and all those preparing for next week's General Synod in our own diocese, and for this cathedral, as we adjust once more to gathering virtually for worship. We bring before you also those in our community who are getting married, asking that you would bless the commitments they are making to one another, and surround them with love and community as they prepare to make their vows in less than ideal circumstances.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our own community of Glasgow as it endures another period of lockdown restrictions. As the days draw in and we settle in for winter, we pray that your light and warmth may be made known in our lives, and that you would reveal to us ways we may be light and warmth to one another. We bring before you the work of scientists and scientific researchers in our community. Give them the discernment to direct their work toward the public good, and to use their knowledge and resources justly and sustainably.

We name before you now, in the silence of our own hearts, the people and situations near to us in need of our prayers, and those whose needs are known only to you.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We commend to your loving care all those who have died recently. Be with their loved ones who grieve and remember them. We remember especially Adelaide Oliphant Dewar, whose year's mind is today.

May all the departed rest in peace **and rise in glory.**

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Communion – third video

Offertory - [AUDREY]

At the cathedral, we see giving as one way of preparing our hearts and our lives for the love that God has in store for each and every one of us. In this season of Advent, that love is coming in the form of the newborn baby Christ. Christ will come at Christmas, regardless of all else that is happening in this world, and one way of recognising and thanking God for that gift is to give back to God.

If you feel called and able to contribute financially to the Cathedral at this time, I welcome you to go to www.thecathedral.org.uk and

look for the button that says 'Donate to St Mary's Cathedral'. We thank you in advance for the generosity of your hearts and for sharing all of the blessings that God has given to you with this place, so we can continue to share those forward with all whom we encounter.

Let us present our offerings to the Lord.

**Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory,
the splendour, and the majesty; for everything in
heaven and on earth is yours.**

All things come from you, and of your own we give you.

Eucharistic Prayer - [AUDREY]

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Worship and praise belong to you, God our maker.

Out of nothing, you called all worlds to be,
and still you draw the universe to its fulfilment.

Dawn and evening celebrate your glory
till time shall be no more.

In Christ your Son

the life of heaven and earth were joined,
sealing the promise of a new creation,
given, yet still to come.

Taught by your Spirit,

we who bear your threefold likeness
look for the City of Peace
in whose light we are transfigured
and the earth transformed.

As children of your redeeming purpose
who await the coming of your Son,
we offer you our praise,
with angels and archangels
and the whole company of heaven
singing the hymn of your unending glory:

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord,
God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Glory and thanksgiving be to you,
most loving Father.
In Jesus you showed us yourself.
Our hope is built on him,
the first, the last, the living one.
Obedient, even to accepting death,
He opened the gate of glory
and calls us now to share the life of heaven.

Before he was given up to suffering and death,
alight with the vision of a feast
that heralded a kingdom yet to come,
at supper with his disciples
he took bread and offered you thanks.
He broke the bread,
and gave it to them, saying:
"Take, eat.
This is my Body: it is broken for you."
After supper, he took the cup,
he offered you thanks,
and gave it to them saying:
"Drink this, all of you.
This is my Blood of the new covenant;
it is poured out for you, and for all,

that sins may be forgiven.
Do this in remembrance of me.”

**We now obey your Son's command.
We recall his blessed passion and death,
his glorious resurrection and ascension;
and we look for the coming of his Kingdom.
Made one with him, we offer you these gifts
and with them ourselves,
a single, holy, living sacrifice.**

Hear us, most merciful Father,
and send your Holy Spirit upon us
and upon this bread and this wine,
that, overshadowed by his life-giving power,
they may be the Body and Blood of your Son,
and we may be kindled with the fire of your love
and renewed for the service of your Kingdom.

**Help us, who are baptised into the fellowship of Christ's Body
to live and work to your praise and glory;
may we grow together in unity and love
until at last, in your new creation,
we enter into our heritage
in the company of the Virgin Mary,
the apostles, and prophets,
and of all our brothers and sisters living and departed.**

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
with whom, and in whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory be to you,
Lord of all ages,
world without end.

Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

The living bread is broken for the life of the world.
Lord, unite us in this sign.

Lord's Prayer - [OLIVER]

As our Saviour has taught us,
so we pray:

**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.
Do not bring us
to the time of trial
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Communion - [AUDREY]

God is with us wherever we are.

As we gaze in adoration we feed on God in our hearts and minds
that we may in turn feed the world.

O God, even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and
was gathered together and became one, so let Your Church be
gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for
yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever.

Amen.

Music at Communion - [MORVEN]

O Light of Life!
O pure Light Divine!
Thou art in us;
Our ember is Thine.
Kindle our faith,
Give hope when we fear,
Deepen our love—
Thy fire appear!
Light of our souls,
Thou spark at our birth—
Grow bright in us,
Shine in all the earth!

O Light of Life!
O true Light of Peace!
Storms will arise,
Let Thy light increase.
Pierce through dark clouds,
Give pause to the proud,
Let Thy shafts fall,
Lift humble heads bowed.
Answer our pleas,
Melt hearts in Thy flame.
Make us as one—
As one in Thy name.

O Light of Life!
O sweet Light of Grace!
Thou bids us come,
We follow apace.
See the bright Tree!
Behold the white fruit!
Feasting we weep,
We witness the root!

O Light of Life!
O dear Light of Love!
Come, wash us clean,

Send forth Thy white Dove!
Fill us with Fire,
Enlighten our eyes;
Help us to love—
'Tis price of the prize.
Then let us come,
Enrobe us in white.
Cleaving to Thee,
Light unto Thy Light.

Light unto Light,
O Light of Life!
Amen.

Post Communion Prayer - [KELVIN]

God for whom we wait, you have fed us with the bread of eternal life. Keep us ever watchful, that we may be ready to stand before the Son of man. We ask this in the name of Christ the Lord.

Amen.

Blessing - [AUDREY]

I want to thank you for taking time out of your day to worship with us here—to welcome the season of Advent and hope and preparation into your lives with our community. You are a part of us. I especially want to thank all of those whose work and dedication went into preparing this service for you.

And now, take a moment and prepare your heart for the blessing of God.

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you and scatter the darkness from before your path; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Music

‘Wachet Auf’ – Johann Walter

A hymn and materials for Young Church are available on the online worship page at www.thecathedral.org.uk/worship.