

CHRISTMAS NOT CANCELLED!



1st Sun in Advent: 29th Nov 2020

ON THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT MAY OUR HEARTS BE MOVED AFRESH BY THE WONDER OF JESUS CHRIST, EMMANUEL- GOD WITH US

READINGS:

1 PETER CH3 V13-22

SUFFERING FOR DOING GOOD

EXODUS CH35 V4-29

TABERNACLE MATERIALS



PRAYERS

Nativity Prayer

'Let the just rejoice, for their Justifier is born.

Let the sick and infirm rejoice, for their Saviour is born.

Let the captives rejoice, for their Redeemer is born.

Let slaves rejoice, for their Master is born.

Let free men rejoice, for their Liberator is born.

Let all Christians rejoice, for Jesus Christ is born.

Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-440)

Take a moment to pray for all those affected by coronavirus in whatever way, the world and church near and far- lift to God the people and places that lie heavy upon your heart

"...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ"

Ephesians ch3 v17-18

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY

Advent Candle

Usually at this time of the year we enjoy lighting the Advent Candle in church each Sunday. While we had a bit of a preview on Sunday past we won't get lighting the candles again for another two Sundays. So now it is your turn to make your own! Have a look around the house, all you need is five candles, maybe you have some birthday candles in the drawer or perhaps tea lights or nice smelly ones. You can set them on anything, use

your imagination, and starting from today light one each Sunday and the last on Christmas Day. If you don't have any candles about why not draw an advent candle and colour in a wick each Sunday. Ask someone at home to take a photo of your handiwork and I can send it out with next week's update so everyone can see your masterpiece! Remember what the advent candles teaches us-

1. Hope: That Jesus coming into the world means we don't have to be afraid that evil and sin will win because he came to defeat them **2. Love:** That God loves us so much that he would give his most precious thing, his only Son, to die on the cross for us **3. Joy:** That we can find comfort in the knowledge that Jesus is always with us, Emmanuel 'God with us', even when we are happy or sad we can trust that Jesus is always there **4. Peace:** The hope, love and joy that Jesus gives means we can have peace in our hearts and know strength to live for God now and forever.

Pray: 'Jesus, you are light even in the darkest places. Help us to trust in you when we are lost or lonely. We pray that you would shine hope into our hearts, pour out your love, fill us with joy and give us peace now and always. Amen.'



DEVOTIONAL

A heart for God

Augustine of Hippo grew up in North Africa, in the remote part of the Roman Empire that is now Algeria. His mother Monica was a Christian. His father, Patricius, a pagan.

Augustine had a restless and troubled youth and from his late teens spent many fruitless years searching for truth, happiness, and fulfilment. When he was about thirty-three, after much mental torment and uncertainty, he made the life-changing discovery that what he was seeking could be found by looking within himself.

What we need to guide us, he realised, is to be found when we look truly at the state of our own hearts. There, in the depths of our being, we see our great need, that by our own attempts to be good and holy we fall short, for our hearts are empty. However when we come to know Jesus and respond to his call to trust and follow him, the Holy Spirit fills our hearts and gives us a new experience when we look inward at them.

Through faith in the Lord Jesus we see within our renewed and reinvigorated hearts truth, goodness, and love, these are to be found there because the source of all life now lives within us, God has made his home in us, because of the coming, death and resurrection of Jesus we can truly say, ***Emmanuel- God with us.***

Augustine records this breakthrough in his Confessions, when he came to understand the wonder of God living within him through the Spirit of Christ, he lamented at how he had previously missed that glorious truth ***“You were there before my eyes,”*** he proclaims, ***“but I had deserted even my own self, and I did not find the God of my own heart”***

And so we get the great lament: the lament that Augustine had taken so long to discover that God would make his home in him; that he had spent half a lifetime searching in the wrong places for what he needed most. And when he did come to desire God he searched and searched before realising that God was right before him and through grace and faith even within him, he writes:

“Late have I loved you, beauty ever old yet ever new! Late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside. There I sought you, as I rushed about among the beautiful things you had made. You were with me, but I was not with you. The beautiful things of this world kept me far from you. You called. You cried. You burst through my deafness. You scattered my blindness. I breathed your fragrance, and now I pine for you. I tasted you, and I hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I burn with desire for your peace.”

From the moment Augustine realised that God was not outside, one of the great adventures of life for him became the journey inward discovering that there was nothing in him that could save him, but with coming to know and love Jesus, within him would come to dwell the fullness of good, holiness and purpose. His discovery led him to fresh understanding of Christ and his gospel, and for the rest of his life he loved God passionately. He ceaselessly urged all those to whom he later preached or wrote to return to their hearts and seek that God would live there. Not to listen to the old sinful desires that the heart still clings to but to live for the Christ who prompts us to live in a new and holy way, knowing God. Only then, he told them, would they find rest and peace for their unquiet souls. ***“Come back to your heart,”*** he implored. ***“In your inner self Christ has made his home. In your inner self you will be renewed in God’s image. And in his image you will recognise your creator.”***

This Advent, by remembering this Jesus, let us pray that our hearts would be moved as we experience a similar desire to that of the Israelites, as they brought the best of what they had to see the Tabernacle built, may we strive to give the best to God in our service so that we would see his beautiful kingdom built, a kingdom that outshines the darkness for it is of him who is the light of the world, the kingdom of our faithful friend ***Emmanuel- God with us-*** who has made his home in our hearts.

***What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb***

***If I were a wise man, I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him? Give Him my heart.***

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MODERATOR'S WEEKEND OF PRAYER

The Moderator of the General Assembly, The Rt. Rev. Dr. David Bruce, is calling the church to a time of prayer over the course of this weekend, reflecting on the theme of *'At Home for Christmas'*. Information and various resources can be found via the PCI website or accessed by the following web address:

<https://www.presbyterianireland.org/resources/congregational-life/at-home-for-christmas/at-home-for-christmas.aspx>

FOODBANK

Over the course of the next two months we are hoping to have another collection for the foodbank, if you would be willing to donate long life foods or household supplies, they can be dropped off at the church on weekday mornings or brought along on Sundays when we open for public worship again .

CHRISTMAS OFFERINGS AND WORLD DEVELOPMENT APPEAL

Normally we at Cregagh hold our special festive offering for the building fund; however we are aware that many of the mission projects that we are committed to supporting have not had the opportunity to fundraise as they normally would. To that end the Christmas offering this year will go towards those Mission projects including Emmanuel Ministries Calcutta and PW. Envelopes are available in the pews alongside World Development Appeal envelopes which this year will support the Moderator's Christmas Appeal.

OPEN CHURCH

The church building is open for private prayer on Fridays 10am-12noon. There is also the facility to drop off offering envelopes.

MORNING WATCH

Morning Watch will resume on Tuesday 15th December at 10:45am

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

13th Dec: 12noon KidZone Christmas Service, 7pm Candlelight Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

20th Dec: 12noon KidZone Christmas Service, 7pm Candlelight Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

***Sunday 13th and 20th will have the same services repeated, we would encourage folk to attend one 12noon service and one 7pm service, so that they will only be coming to church once each Sunday.

Please make sure to register, especially for the Carol Service, by contacting Michael Graham on michaelgraham112@gmail.com or 07548635075, as we cannot guarantee a seat, in the church, for those who turn up unregistered***

Fri 25th Dec: 9am Christmas morning service ***Please be sure to register***

27th Dec: Last services of 2020 10am and 12noon

ZOOM BIBLE STUDY

The zoom bible study continues on Monday evenings at 7pm, all are welcome

DECORATION OF THE CHURCH

Decoration of the church for the Christmas season will take place on Friday 11th December from 12noon. Gifts of holly, ivy, greenery, suppresses etc. for the decoration would be welcomed and may be left at the church any morning from Mon 7th to Fri 11th (9:30-11:30am)

GET IN TOUCH

Please do not hesitate to get in touch

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