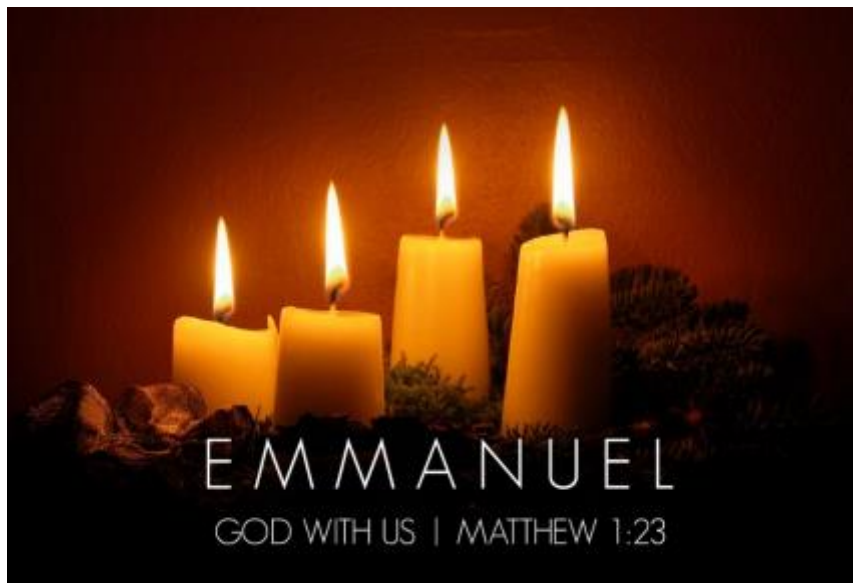


The Fourth Week of Advent

**Week Commencing
19th December 2016**



“God is with us”

Matthew 1:18-24

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel" (which means "God with us").

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

What we hear in the Gospel is about the family of Jesus. We see his parents: they have a problem, a big problem. Mary stands helpless, because she is conceived by the Holy Spirit, before her marriage

The Gospel calls Joseph as a faithful man. It suits him very well, because he does not make any quick decision. He acts not for his right, but has a human concern.

God comes to help Joseph in vision, "Joseph, son of David! Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife!" Joseph heard the voice of God after which everything in his life Changed. The baby and Mary are no longer a "problem" for him.

He sees everything differently. The angel tells him that the child is God's son. Now he gets a great and important task, he must protect the baby Jesus and he is happy to do so.

Our world is in a hurry. Everything must be done quickly. Everything that is slow may not fit into our world!

A slow car or a computer. Joseph reminds us, there is always a solution for every problem. We have to take time for ourselves, to think, and to sometimes ask for advice and help from God and people around us.

Joseph is a role model for many of us. He gave God an important place in his life.

Prayer

The light of God surrounds us,
The love of God enfolds us,
The power of God protects us,
The presence of God watches over us,
Wherever we are, God is,
And where God is, all is well.

Monday

Scripture

Lift up your heads and see; your redemption is near at hand.
Luke 21:28

Image

A pair of glasses

Theme

God is with us – Seeing things differently

Action

Try to think before you speak

Reflection

Sometimes we are too quick to jump to conclusions and as a result we make the wrong decision. St Joseph reminds us that even when we find ourselves in difficult situations we need to simply invite God into our lives to guide and direct us and so enable us to see things differently.

Prayer

Loving Father, help me to welcome your Son Jesus into our world this Christmas
Amen

Tuesday

Scripture

For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.
Psalm 69

Image

Child holding his Father's hands

Theme

God is with us – Being close to God

Action

Close your eyes for just a minute and thank God for sending his Son Jesus into the world.

Reflection

We do not worship a God who is far away, unapproachable, too busy to notice us, or a God who abandons us to our own devices. Christmas speaks of a totally different story. Christmas is all about God's loving desire to be with us personally, to accompany us on our journey, and to continually invite us into his wonderful life.

Prayer

Jesus, the Light of the World, as we celebrate your birth, may we begin to see the world in the light of the understanding you give us.
Amen

Wednesday

Scripture

I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide. A Saviour has been born in David's town, a Saviour who is Messiah and Master. *Luke 2:10-12*

Image New born baby

Theme

God is with us- Celebrating Christmas

Action

Pray for our community as Christmas begins

Reflection

*Like a candle flame, flick'ring small in our darkness,
uncreated light shines through infant eyes.
Stars and angels sing, yet the earth sleeps in shadows;
can this tiny spark set a world on fire?
Yet this light shall shine from our lives, spirit blazing,
as we touch the flame of his holy fire.
God is with us, alleluia!
Come to save us, alleluia!
(from the hymn by Graham Kendrick)*

And so with the end of term we get even closer to Christmas – a real time to celebrate! Through these days of Advent we've thought about who we are waiting for, who we are celebrating at this special time of year. The different images, names and descriptions of God have shown us that he is peaceful, gentle, compassionate and forgiving. God is generous, loving and caring. And all of this is focussed on a tiny child, born in a manger under the star of Bethlehem.

As we finish for the holidays, we pray for all the members of our community, praying that God will watch over us and bless us, keeping us safe through these coming weeks. And we pray, too, that we'll be able to remember and celebrate the true meaning of Christmas, so that God's light will indeed shine from our lives as Jesus shines on us.

Prayer

God of light, our Saviour and Lord, we thank you for the work of this term, and for all the experiences we have shared.

As our Christmas holidays begin, watch over your family, we pray.
Show us the real meaning of these days as we celebrate your birth.
Bathe us in your light and let your light shine in us.
Amen

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift. Jesus is here!



2 Corinthians 9:15