Dear friend
I enclose the virtual service for Advent Sunday.

One of the great advent hymns is Charles Wesley's, 'Lo, he comes with clouds descending', here sung to Helmsley in a Songs of Praise recording, with words, so you can join in:

https://youtu.be/0cHmPHCljY8

Here it is again, sung by Richard Jensen with some breathtaking US mountain scenery, illustrating the majesty and beauty of God's creation:

https://youtu.be/en0sv1jeDws

The ancient Latin text for advent, Rorate caeli (Pour down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies rain down righteousness), has been set by various renaissance and baroque composers. Here it is in a setting by Heinrich Schutz, with a rolling score for singers who fancy a sight-reading challenge at breakneck speed:

https://youtu.be/gpmRZUxhhwE

and by the earlier German composer, Heinrich Isaac, who intersperses plainchant with harmony:

https://youtu.be/_VAiQRP3080

The Merbecke choir of Southwark Cathedral sing Francisco Guerrero's version:

https://youtu.be/xJtpHY-FdqA

William Byrd's motet Ne irascaris Domine (turn your anger from us, O Lord) is one of his most moving pieces. The second part (Civitas sancti) meditates on the destruction of the temple and translates roughly as, "your holy cities have become a desert, Jerusalem a desolation, our holy and beautiful house where our fathers praised you". Byrd, a Roman Catholic, wrote this at a time when they faced persecution and even the death penalty for their faith. I once had the privilege of singing this in a small group in the Jewish Holocaust Museum in Krakow, surrounded by pictures of Auschwitz – very poignant. Here is a sensitive recording by Voces 8:

https://youtu.be/Wo8qfyK9c3c

On a different tack, this lyrical worship song from Martin talks of God's enduring love, even in difficult times – 'You Will Remain' by All Sons & Daughters:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHNAtpp0LhY

Advent blessings!
Chris

VIRTUAL SERVICE. ADVENT SUNDAY 29.11.20

Christ has died, Christ is risen,
Christ will come again! *(Common Worship)*

**CONFESSION** Forgive, Father, all within us that is unprepared for Christ's coming, our neglect of other people's need, our involvement in what is trivial, our idleness in prayer and our lack of attention to your word. (*Michael Walker)*
*May the God of all healing and forgiveness draw us to himself, and cleanse us from all our sins that we may behold the glory of his Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord. (Common Worship)*

**COLLECT** Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever, Amen.

**READINGS** Isaiah 64.1-9, Psalm 19.1-6, Romans 10.12-18, Mark 13.24-end.

**REFLECTION** Happy New Year! The Church's liturgical year starts today, Advent Sunday, a period during which we wait for the coming of Christ, in two different senses. The first two weeks focus on the so-called "Second Coming", when he will come in glory to judge, and to heal, a broken world. In parallel with this, the latter half of advent focuses on his first arrival as a vulnerable baby at Christmas. In today's passage from Mark's gospel, Jesus paints a bleak picture of desolation, but then offers a message of hope. Just as the dormant fig tree appears lifeless and new shoots denote the return of summer, so the scene of devastation is a sign that the Son of Man is "at the gates". Mark's gospel was probably written around AD 60, not long before the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jewish people were stateless for nearly two millennia. Around the world, peoples are being dispossessed by wars and natural disasters. The whole earth will eventually "pass away", we do not know when, but Jesus' love for us will not pass away. Christmas celebrations this year will be a rather muted affair in some ways, but this may give us more time to watch, wait and prepare to welcome Jesus, both as a tiny baby and as the returning "master of the house". We can be watchful in prayer, humility and trying to serve the needs of others.




**PRAYERS**

Lord, together with the patriarchs, our ancestors, the prophets and apostles, we wait in quiet hope and joyful expectation of your coming, both as a little child and as our King. Make us watchful and active in your service. We pray for our fractured world, for areas where nation rises against nation. We hold in our prayers the peoples of the Middle East, Tigray province in Ethiopia and other areas of conflict. We pray that we, who have so much, may not falter in aiding those in great need.

We give you thanks for the gift of science, for the collaborative approach around the world in finding effective vaccines for Covid-19, and we pray for those who will distribute and administer them wherever there is need. Lord, hold in your loving arms the sick, those affected by Covid-19, the lonely, the desolate, the bereaved, for those known to us…….

We say the **LORD'S PRAYER**
We share **THE GRACE**

**FINAL PRAYER** At Advent, we should try the key to our heart's door. It may have gathered rust. If so, this is the time to oil it, in order that the heart's door may open more easily when the Lord Jesus wants to enter at Christmas time.
Lord, oil the hinges of our hearts' doors that they may swing gently and easily to welcome your coming. (*Anon, New Guinea)*