Dear friend
I enclose this week's virtual service for the beginning of the season of Advent. To start with, a couple of traditional hymns…

'O come, O come, Emmanuel', sung by the choir of Clare College, Cambridge:
https://youtu.be/xPV8PEBTAQ0

Here's Enya's characteristically echo-chamber take on it:
https://youtu.be/01BcaggibDw

'Lo, he comes with clouds descending', Charles Wesley's dramatic words sung to Helmsley by First-Plymouth church, Lincoln, Nebraska; the best version I can find with lyrics, although a rather lacklustre rendition of this energetic tune:
https://youtu.be/p1Rn-9j2NQw

Herbert Howells' setting of 'A spotless rose' is a choral classic with a gorgeous last few bars; here sung by The Sixteen with Simon Birchall as soloist; rolling score provided for choristers:
https://youtu.be/uzHIo4c3ukM

Here's the One Voice Children's choir singing 'Mary did you know':
https://youtu.be/F1H1-scfD1s

Rather a long clip, but worth it. JS Bach's advent cantata 'Wachet Auf' (Sleepers wake) performed by the Netherlands Bach Society:
https://youtu.be/DqZE54i-muE

Finally, from Martin, 'Holy Spirit You Are Welcome Here' - Heavens Mutambira & Amplified Praise. A lovely, gentle, Jazzy, Taize-style-chant version of the worship song:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2q7hMfmVL3I

Happy Advent!
Chris

VIRTUAL SERVICE 28.11.21
THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Heavenly Father, as once again we prepare for Christmas, help us to find time in our busy lives for quiet and thought and prayer, that we may reflect upon the wonder of your love and allow the story of the Saviour's birth to penetrate our hearts and minds. So may our joy be deeper, our worship more real, and our lives worthier of all that you have done for us through the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (*Harehills Lane Baptist Church).*

CONFESSION Forgive us, Lord, when we are frantically busy with preparations for Christmas, but find little time to prepare our hearts for your coming among us.
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 Jeremiah 33.14-16, Psalm 25.1-9, 1Thessalonians 3.9-end, Luke 21.25-36.

REFLECTION At the beginning of the church's year we prepare for the arrival of Jesus as a tiny, vulnerable, baby (the Latin "adventus" literally means coming towards). This Sunday we focus on his return as King when the turmoil of this world comes to an end. Writing at a time of hopelessness, when the people were exiled in Babylon, Jeremiah tells of a future when God will fulfil his promise and restore the fortunes of Israel and Judah.
In today's Gospel reading, Jesus warns of troubling signs on earth and in the heavens; today we see a world damaged by man's inhumanity and greed. However, he offers in addition signs of hope when the Son of Man will return in glory, using the analogy of new life in a budding fig tree, which will eventually bear fruit. We should avoid "dissipation", not just indulgence in extravagant pleasure but also wasting energy on useless self-worry. Again, "drunkenness" may not refer only to alcohol excess but intoxication from worldly power and ambition. Advent is an opportunity for each of us to spring-clean our lives from distractions, to allow Christ to enter our door.

PRAYERS



Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation, for you I wait all day long. *(Psalm 29.4-5)*
We pray for the nations of the world where there is injustice, violence and hatred, for those people who are threatened or made homeless by authoritarian regimes. We pray for the coming of your kingdom of love and justice here on earth.
Comfort and heal all who are sick in mind, body or spirit, those in physical or mental pain, for all who live in fear or foreboding, the lonely, the destitute and the refugee.
Especially we pray for…….
Christ our advent hope, bare brown trees etched dark across a winter sky, leaves falling, rustling, ground hard and cold, remind us to prepare for your coming, to prepare for the time when the soles of your feet will touch the ground, when you will become one of us to be at one with us. *(Kate McIlhagga, Iona)*
We say the **LORD'S PRAYER**
We share **THE GRACE**
FINAL PRAYER O Lord our God, make us watchful and keep us faithful, as we await the coming of your Son our Lord, that when he shall appear, he may not find us sleeping in sin, but active in his service and joyful in his praise, for the glory of your holy name.
(Gelasian Sacramentary 8th. C)