



-Praying Together



First Sunday in Advent
Hope
November 2020

Dear Friends,

Welcome to Advent! Advent marks the beginning of the Church Year. The Church of England tells us that Advent is a time for reflection in darkness, for renewal of hope and for a movement towards a beginning. The name comes from the Latin for 'coming' or 'arrival' and during this season we look forward to Christ's coming and the celebration of his birth on Christmas morning. This is a season of wonder and waiting and witness.

I should imagine that this is the first time we have been unable to be in church to watch the first candle on our Advent wreath being lit. At St Michaels, we traditionally have four red candles with a central white candle which is lit on Christmas day. There are several traditions about the meaning or theme of each candle, however, for the purposes of this letter, I have chosen Hope, Peace, Joy and Love to be the themes for our candles this year.

Our first candle that is lit represents Hope. We have touched on the subject of hope in a previous letter. I think it was July. We were all feeling a bit weary and hoping for something bright on the horizon to help us to cope with all the change and uncertainty we were going through. One of those things was hope of a vaccine, and it seems that there will be one on the way soon! So, let us continue to have hope in this time of uncertainty, and pray that this Christmas will be one of great blessing for us all, despite the circumstances. Hope in the future, hope in God's promises to us and hope that we can safely all gather together again soon.

From the Bible:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life". (John 3:16)

"For in this hope we are saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently". (Romans 8:24-25)

Hope. A poem by Emma Major

When anxiety builds When I start to despair I
Remember that God Is here, everywhere He stilled
the storms He calmed the seas He felt our pain He
knows our needs So when I fear When I cry in pain I
turn to Jesus I hope again

The one who is present everywhere and fills everything is coming. He is coming to fulfil among you the salvation offered to all. Welcome him who welcomed everything that pertains to our human nature.

St Andrew of Crete (c. 660-740)

Let us Pray:

*God of hope, who brought love into this world,
be the love that dwells between us.*

*God of hope, who brought peace into this world,
be the peace that dwells between us.*

*God of hope, who brought joy into this world,
be the joy that dwells between us.*

*God of hope, the rock we stand upon,
be the centre, the focus of our lives
always, and particularly this Advent time.*

(from faithandworship.com)

Loving God, as we approach this time of Advent, we ask that you would help us to come into your presence with Hope. As the nights draw in and the darkness comes, help us to look for your light in the world.

You may wish to visit <https://adventonline.faith/> a wonderful site offering further prayers, poetry, music, art and meditations for this Advent.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit”. (Romans 15:13)

Ali, on behalf of St Michael’s Church, Marbury