

ADVENT CONVERSATIONS 2020

Hello, I hope this message finds you well and coping with the ongoing restrictions brought about by the coronavirus pandemic. On behalf of all the Churches, in the Edinburgh Presbytery West Forth Cluster, I welcome you to this series of 'Advent Conversations'. Advent is a time of waiting and a time of preparation. It is not only a time when we prepare our houses and our families for celebrating Christmas but a time when when we prepare ourselves, individually, for the coming of Christ Jesus.

Our hope is that these Advent Conversations will assist you to re-visit the story of Jesus birth and explore, in a relaxed and welcoming environment, what His coming means for each one of us today.

Immediately below this note are the various zoom invitations to the different groups that are being held. Please feel free to join any group that suits you. Below the zoom invitations is the material that we will be looking at in the forthcoming weeks. It is there for your convenience. There is no requirement to have studied or even thought about any of the questions prior to joining a meeting.

Best wishes and God's blessings at this time.

N.B. following incidents at other churches, if this meeting is 'zombombbed' (non church members join and disrupt the meeting), then attempts will be made to remove the disruptive attendee, however, if this is not successful people should leave the meeting immediately and it will be shut down.

Zoom Invitations

The Old Kirk & Muirhouse will host Advent Conversations on **Sunday evenings at 1800hrs**. The first meeting will be on Sunday 29th November 2020. Their zoom invitation is below:

Nov 29, 2020 06:00 PM

Dec 6, 2020 06:00 PM

Dec 13, 2020 06:00 PM

Dec 20, 2020 06:00 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89457589696?pwd=M2ZpSm82TVIxditNSWROd2NJdU9rUT09>

Meeting ID: 894 5758 9696

Passcode: 771867

Blackhall St Columba's Parish Church will host Advent Conversations on **Wednesday evenings at 1930hrs**. The first meeting will be on Wednesday 2 December 2020. Their zoom invitation is below:

Dec 2, 2020 07:30 PM

Dec 9, 2020 07:30 PM

Dec 16, 2020 07:30 PM

Dec 23, 2020 07:30 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/98049969999?pwd=UDRjK0NJY1Q4RTE0MTJ4UjM3YjQ2QT09>

Meeting ID: 980 4996 9999

Passcode: 058048

The Cramond Kirk will host Advent Conversations on **Thursday afternoons at 1400hrs**. The first meeting will be on Thursday 3 December 2020. Their zoom invitation is below:

Dec 3, 2020 02:00 PM

Dec 10, 2020 02:00 PM

Dec 17, 2020 02:00 PM

Dec 24, 2020 02:00 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87371322972?pwd=V1gxQlAyZGsxcmZlZSgRORmNiTStXZz09>

Meeting ID: 873 7132 2972

Passcode: 254217

Drylaw Parish Church will host Advent Conversations primarily on **Thursday evenings at 1900hrs**. Please note to avoid having the 4th meeting on Christmas Eve the final meeting will be on **Tuesday 22nd December, still at 1900hrs**. The first meeting will be on Thursday 3 December 2020. Their zoom invitation is below:

Dec 3, 2020 07:00 PM

Dec 10, 2020 07:00 PM

Dec 17, 2020 07:00 PM

Dec 22, 2020 07:00 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88451706454?pwd=VkNUVEdQYjJTaDhQZVVVSbll0VUJaUT09>

Meeting ID: 884 5170 6454

Passcode: 001445

Conversation Notes & Questions to ponder

Advent Study week 1

What is Advent? It is a season observed in many Christian churches as a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus at Christmas as well as the return of Jesus at the second coming. The term is a version of the Latin word meaning "coming".

Read Isaiah 9:1-7

The Righteous Reign of the Coming King

But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.
You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

What are your immediate thoughts on hearing this passage?

Have you heard any of the names or places elsewhere in the Bible?

Read Matthew 4:12-15

Jesus Begins His Ministry in Galilee

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali,

Read Judges 6:12-15

The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, “The LORD is with you, you mighty warrior.” Gideon answered him, “But sir, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our ancestors recounted to us, saying, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the LORD has cast us off, and given us into the hand of Midian.” Then the LORD turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian; I hereby commission you.” He responded, “But sir, how can I deliver Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.”

The coming Messiah is referred to by 4 different names. What are they and what does each name mean?

Wonderful Counsellor –

Mighty God –

Everlasting Father –

Prince of Peace –

In what way did Jesus fulfil the description given?

What relevance is this passage to us today?

What positive things do you take out of this reading and how might it influence you today?

Advent Study week 2

Marks Gospel

Read Mark 1:1-8

The Proclamation of John the Baptist

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

**“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,’”**

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

What are your immediate thoughts on hearing this passage?

What do you think the role of the prophet is in scripture?

What impression of John do you form by his description?

There is a distinction between John's baptism and Jesus' what is it?

Do you think there are modern day prophets and how might you recognise one?

Where or how do you hear the voice of the Holy Spirit being spoken today?

How might our preparations make for a more meaningful celebration of Christ's coming this year?

What relevance is this passage to us today?

Advent Study week 3

Matthews Gospel

Read Matthew 1:18-25

The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do 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 as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

What are your immediate thoughts on hearing this passage?

What is the significance of the engagement / betrothal?

What are the differences between Matthew and Luke?

The name Emanuel means 'God with us'. What might the message 'God with us' mean for us today a) emotionally b) practically?

Both birth narratives mention a virgin birth. Is that significant for us today?

What relevance is this passage to us today?