



Order of Service



Second Sunday of Advent

**4 December 2022,
10 am**



**Worship led by:
Rev Dr AJ Groenewald
Musicians:
Martin Petty and choir**

Gathering of God's People

Time when we greet one another and prepare for worship.
Those who are able please stand for the entry of the Bible.
Words of welcome and announcements.

Good morning - I hope you are all well.

LIGHTING of second Advent candle..

Allow me a few announcements:

The Christmas cards are available to be collected – they are sorted according to street names – so please help us to distribute them..... please take a few bundles.....

This afternoon is the Bereavement service at 3 pm. There will be coffee, tea and cakes afterwards. Everyone is invited to come and light a candle in memory of loved ones. Is there anyone available this morning to please help to put up three tables in front of the pulpit after the service

Next week is the Gift service and we would like to ask you all to bring a monetary gift which we can donate to a charity that supplies gifts to children this Christmas. The Session members will be asked

this week by email for the approval of chosen charities.

Let us worship God ...

Worshipping God Together

Call to worship

Minister: Endow the king with your
 justice, O God,
 the royal son with your
 righteousness.

**ALL: May he judge your people in
 righteousness,
 your afflicted ones with justice.**

Beloved I greet you in the Name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen

CH4 506

All I once held dear

Opening prayer and the Lord's Prayer

God of urgency and truth,
at this darkest time of year
we thank you for your light shown in Scripture,
shown in those who seek not their own glory
but who point to you;
shown in the ways you bless us - in the

ordinariness of our lives,
and in the big moments.

You are the light that no darkness can overcome,
and we thank you for inviting us to share your
flame of love.

God of humility, we are sorry for times
when we behave as if life was all about us,
when we show off all we do and hide all that we
neglect,
when we put others down instead of building
them up,
when we dwell on what others have done wrong,
with hardly a thought to our own mistakes.

Forgive us, we pray, and grant us the will to
change,
and the courage to act in the right way,
after the example of John the Baptist
who lived out his calling with faithfulness and
courage,
always pointing to your Son Jesus,
in whom he trusted –
and in whose name we pray:

ALL: Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom
come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in
heaven. Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our debts as we forgive our
debtors. And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the
kingdom, the power, and the glory for
ever. Amen.

CH4 543

Longing for light, we wait in darkness

Reflecting on God's Word

Reading: Matthew 3.1-12, and John 1: 1-13

Reader: Bill Black

Choir sings "Baptised in water, sealed by the spirit" CH4 636 vs 1, 3

Sermon

Today is the second Sunday in Advent, the
beginning of our time of waiting... Waiting
for the light. Preparing ourselves, getting

ready, to be reminded how bright the light of God's love shines on us through Jesus.

Have you realised that even in the retelling of the Christmas story there is reference to LIGHT?

If there was not a bright STAR in the dark NIGHT leading the wise men they would not have found Jesus

The glory or in other words the LIGHT of the Lord shone around the shepherds and told them to go to Bethlehem...

This is of course just a symbol, a metaphor, to remind us how dark our lives would have been if Jesus wasn't born.

BUT let's face it – this metaphor makes so much sense because we are so dependent on LIGHT

As you know we were recently in South Africa to conduct a baptism and family wedding.

And although South Africa is renowned for it's bright sunlight, the same thing can't be said about the electrical lights... They have what they call "load shedding", planned power cuts, because there is not enough

electricity for everyone to use at the same time.

This means that for 2 hours at a time, sometimes up to 3 times a day, it was dark.

The South Africans of course are used to this happening, but we were not. So the very first time it happened to us, we were at my cousins house. It was night-time.

The grown-ups were sitting downstairs, blethering, and my 2 boys were upstairs by themselves busy entertaining themselves on their mobile phones, when all of a sudden it went pitch dark. No lights inside the house, no street-lights outside.

They boys got such a fright that they screamed – in their own words – like girls!

Because there is no sign of the South African infrastructure improving any time soon, my cousin invested in a generator.

So after a few minutes of complete darkness, the generator kicked in, and all was well again.... Except for the fact that we could not cook a kettle...

They prepared themselves to make sure that the darkness does not overcome them. Not everybody can afford generators, of course, but everybody prepares

themselves for it, because they know it's going to happen. Some have solar panels, others converters, others have battery-operated torches, or candles ready, because it's just too difficult to go about in complete darkness.

South Africans, of course, make light of this – pardon the pun! – whole situation. I think it's a coping strategy. There are so many jokes that go around on social media. Like this image where the heading reads: 'South Africa switches on Christmas lights', and then there is a picture with nothing on it, just a black background!

But it's no laughing matter, because when the power is off, the traffic lights do not work, so car accidents increase. Electric fencing, automated gates and burglar alarms do not work, so crime increases. Fridges do not work, so food goes bad. And the biggest nightmare for my boys – the wifi does not work!

And we know this is the reality of so many people living in Ukraine...I saw an image on Facebook of huge apartment buildings in Kiev, usually brightly lit by the warm light shining out to the hundreds of windows at night – now pitch dark. Here it was Russian Air strikes that brought literal darkness upon the land, a land already covered in

the 'darkness' of war... not even to mention while it is winter...

Someone told me in the week that power cuts were also happening here in the UK during the 70's

We need light.

The very first words spoken by God that we have recorded in the Bible, is: 'Let there be light...' And then, there was light.

God gave us light, because he knew that we cannot live in darkness – literally and spiritually.

But unfortunately, so often things happen that drain the light out of our lives completely. Be this war, a poor infrastructure, illness, worries, grief, loneliness... And when that happens, life is hard.

Advent is a time set apart specially to prepare us for the light, it is our time to make sure that there is diesel in our generators and batteries in our torches, so to speak.

Because God's first words in the Bible is linked to our reading of John's Gospel today, where we heard that 'in the beginning was the Word', Word with a

capital letter... 'And in him was life, and that life was the light of the world. That light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.'

And in Psalm 119 we read that 'God's Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.'

In other words, God gave us light in so many ways. He created light, so that we do not have to live in darkness, then he gave us his Word, the Scriptures, to illuminate our way through life, and then he sent his Son, to *be* the LIGHT of the world.

Light equals life.

During the world wars, there were planned blackouts which made it impossible for enemy pilots to see where people were HIDING during air raids, and that saved their lives.

In the same way, a lighthouse warns ships when they are coming close to land, and this saves people's lives.

Jesus came to the world, to be the light, and to save our lives.

We cannot *live* without light.

We cannot *grow* without light. If tomato-plants, for instance, were planted and then

left in the dark, no [photo syn thi sis] would be able to take place, and they won't grow. The same is true for us.

Light *protects* us. Like the pillar of fire protected the Israelites when they were travelling through the wilderness, light often prevents us from falling over things or standing on things that could hurt us.

No wonder children are afraid of the dark – because if you start thinking of all the things can go wrong if you can't see what you are doing or what is going on around you, it can be quite terrifying! Like if you hear a noise and you cannot see what it is, or, if you feel

something crawling up your arm, and you cannot see what it is...

Thank goodness Jesus came to take the darkness away!

But how can we make sure that the light of his love will always shine in our lives?

That's very simple: We need to follow him just LIKE when you switch on the LIGHTS - you need to actually to DO your part as well....

Because He is light. And if we follow him, we will NEVER have to live in darkness.

Because where there is light, the darkness cannot exist. That is a scientific fact.

And just like that, light cannot be hidden. We can say that light witnesses to itself; it reveals its presence. It shines clearly through the darkness.

So when your life feels pretty dark, when circumstances completely out of your control, or other people, or even your own wrong choices, drain the light out of your life, just remember that the light God gave us in Jesus, is connected to a power source that will never run out, a power source that cannot ever be destroyed, because this power source is God himself.

Even when it's dark **around** you, it can never be dark inside you. Because God is there.

And if you are in a place at the moment where you cannot see the light, where you cannot feel the light, just wait...

Take a minute to *think* about what it means to belong to God, that even in your darkest moments HIS light won't ever stop shining, and then *believe*.

Believe like a child that God WILL give you oil in your lamp when your supply is running low. Amen

472 Come Thou Long Expected Jesus (Stuttgart) 4v

Responding to God's word

Prayer of thanksgiving: David Booth

CH4 334

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry

Benediction Receive the blessing of God and go in peace:

Lord, lead us and help us to follow you.

Lord, lead us and help us to keep our eyes on you.

Lord, be at the centre of our lives, our thinking and our actions.

Make us useful in your service,
and show us how we can live
so that our lives point towards Jesus our
LIGHT.

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son
and Holy Spirit, be with you all and with all
whom you love. On this day, and forever more.

Sung Amen, Amen, Amen

PRAYER

Loving God,
we pray for all those people
whose lives feel like a wilderness:
For the lonely, the lost,
the searching, the sick,
the broken and bereaved.
We pray that they will find their way to you.
Amen

You are invited to stay for tea and coffee which are served in the hall.



BALERNO PARISH CHURCH Intimations Sunday, 4 December 2022

WORSHIP SERVICES

Bereavement service this afternoon at 3pm

Third Advent 11 December at 10am Gift service (Monetary donations would be very much appreciated)

Fourth Advent 18 December at 10am Lessons and Carols

24 December at 6pm Christingle service

24 December at 11:30pm Watchnight service

25 December at 10am Christmas day service

The **Church Guild** will meet on Wednesday 07/12 at 7.30pm in the Ogston Hall to learn about a Christian charity entitled "Home for Good", which facilitates the fostering and adoption of children. All are welcome.

"André's Hour": The Rev André Groenewald is available in the Shepherd Room on Wednesday's between 10:30 am and 11:30 am, (if/when he does not perform a funeral or attend to an urgent Pastoral matter). Pop in to say hello. Alternatively get in touch with the Church Office to arrange a pastoral visit or to make an appointment with the Minister. He will be unavailable on Wednesday the 14th of December due to having a surgical procedure on his face.

The **Church Office** will close at 12.30pm on Thursday 22 December and will re-open at 8.30am on Wednesday 4 January 2023. Visitors are welcome to visit the Church Office on the morning of the 22nd of December 2022.



THE MILL CAFÉ

Open Tuesday – Friday, 9.30am – 2pm

Serving teas/coffees, home baking, snack lunches.

We are a friendly group and are *always delighted to welcome new volunteers to our team*. Pop in and see what we are all about.

THANKS TO YOU...

Thank you for all your generous contributions towards the ministry and mission of the Church. Gift Aid envelopes are available in the wallets at the end of each row.

Sort code 83 - 19 - 15
Account 00119731
Balerno Church of Scotland