

1st December 2020

Advent

**“Hills of the North, rejoice:
Rivers and mountain-spring,
Hark to the advent voice!
Valley and lowland, sing!”**

Charles Edward Oakley, Hills of the North, rejoice (1870)

The Season of Advent for the Church began this year on 29th November, the first of the four Sundays of Advent. However, in the social calendar, 1st December has, for many years, been seen as the first day of Advent, a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the great celebration of the Incarnation of our Lord. “Advent” comes from the Latin *adventus*, which means coming or arrival. Advent in the social and Christian calendar, therefore, heralds the approach of Christmas and the coming of Jesus.

For the four Sundays of Advent, many churches follow the practice of lighting candles on an Advent Wreath, one for each Sunday of preparation, with a fifth and central candle being lit on Christmas morning, marking the coming of Christ as the Light of the World. In days gone by, Advent would have been a time of fasting, so that the body and well as the soul was prepared for the glory of Christ’s coming. Nowadays, for most people, the preparation is confined to the use of advent calendars, with a door being opened each day through December to Christmas. Behind each door there’s a text, a picture, or an aspect of the Nativity story. Some advent calendars offer a chocolate or a sweetie each day. I came across one which had a miniature of whisky behind each door! Whatever next?

Because of Covid-19, how we celebrate Christmas this year will be different for us all. Gatherings, numbers, rituals, norms, routines are all being rethought. But the meaning hasn’t altered and the need for preparation doesn’t diminish. So today, I invite you to come with me on an Advent journey, and to open doors along the way. Behind each door you’ll find ... well, that’s part of the adventure, isn’t it? You never know what might be waiting for you! But let’s try some doors and see what we find and use this Advent Season to get ourselves properly ready.

A prayer for today

*Living God, as we take our first step on this amazing journey,
may we be excited by the adventure, and expectant of the outcome. Amen.*

An original reflection © Tom Gordon

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