

CELTIC EVENING PRAYER
IN
ADVENT



OPENING PRAYER

Together in spirit, we come before you Lord;
in shortened days of Advent darkness,
days of heavy clouds, stifling the sunlight.

**Open our eyes, Lord
to the coming of your Light,
lifting the burden of darkness from our lives.**

Chillness that seeps deep into bones;
souls wrapped up against coldness and loneliness.

**Open our souls, Lord,
to the warmth of your coming,
melting the hardness that keeps us from you
and from each other.**

Trees – branches bare against the steel skies;
last year's leaves – blackened and slippery underfoot;
nature oppressed by wintriness, yet resting – awaiting rebirth.

**Cherish our hearts, Lord,
assure us of your coming,
of your call to new life. Amen.**

WE ASK FOR FORGIVENESS



Lord God,
as we enter this season of Advent,
this season of reflection and preparation,
help us to acknowledge the darkness in our hearts.
Shine your light to reveal all that separates us from you and each other.
As we prepare to receive again the greatest gift of all,
forgive our reluctance to share it with the world.
**We confess our lack of compassion, of generosity,
our failure to reconcile and to love.**
Renew us now through your Spirit.
Remake us in your likeness.
Assure us of your forgiveness.
Make ready our hearts.
Come, Lord Jesus.
Amen.

SCRIPTURE

John 1 : 1-17

REFLECTION

The first recorded observation of Advent is by Celtic monks in Gaul (modern day northern France) in 4th century. It began in the middle of November and lasted six weeks until Christmas. It was a time of fasting, reflection and prayer – the 40 days mirroring the 40 days of Lent. Indeed, Advent is known in Celtic circles as the ‘Christmas Lent’ and the two seasons have much in common. The liturgical colour for both is purple (representing royalty and repentance) and both seasons are a time of preparation for a momentous event : the birth of our Lord and his death and resurrection. In 10th century, Pope Gregory shortened the season to the four Sundays before Christmas. However, the Eastern Orthodox Church and some Celtic communities still observe the longer season.

Advent means ‘arrival’ and it’s a time of waiting and of preparation for the coming of Jesus – both as the Christ child in the manger and, as God promises, his coming again at the end of time to heal and restore Creation. But it’s also a time to prepare ourselves to receive him **now**. The coming of Jesus isn’t locked into two events in time and space : his birth and return in glory – our Lord is the Lord of time and space – he created them - and he is constantly coming to us.

Have you ever been caught unawares by a visitor turning up unexpectedly? Have you wanted to pretend that there’s no-one at home, because the place is untidy, you’re untidy and you really don’t want anyone seeing the disarray?

Advent is a time to put our spiritual house in order. It’s a time to identify and reject everything that keeps us from living according to Jesus’ commandment to ‘love God and love one another’. Jesus says, *‘Here I am, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and*



opens the door, I will come in.’ (Revelation 3:20). Advent is the time to oil the hinges of our heart and open it wide to welcome him in.

Let’s spend a few moments in prayer asking for God’s help with our inner housekeeping....

PRAYERS FOR OUR WORLD

Let us offer to God our prayers, trusting that God hears and uses them in the mystery of healing the brokenness and pain of the world

For our family of humankind throughout the world

For the earth and all its creatures

For Christ's Body on earth, his Church

For all who are ill and in special need at this time

For all who have journeyed on into the arms of God

We hold before our gracious Lord all we carry on our hearts today

Lord, we pray for a sense of peace as we wait in darkness for the coming of your Light.

May we turn to you in times of joy and trouble.

May we be ready to receive you at all times, in all seasons and in all places.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING RESPONSES

We take the light of our prayer into the world.

To pray for those unable to pray; to offer ourselves as answers to prayer.

We take the light of our compassion into the world.

To come alongside those who are suffering anguish of heart, mind or spirit.

To be as Christ for them.

We take the light of God's power into the world.

**God's power made perfect in
powerlessness; strength made
known in weakness; life made known in
dying.**



BLESSING

May God be with us this Advent,
in our waiting and our preparation
and may he find us ready to receive him
whenever he comes.

Amen.