



Commission for Ecumenism & Interfaith Dialogue
Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh



The Season of Advent

Information for Clergy to help with Ecumenical Services

It's been brought to my attention that some clergy are requesting resources and materials to assist them in planning and carrying out Ecumenical services during Advent. In this document you will find a suggested Ecumenical Carol Service.



Even in the early 1960s in Scotland Christmas Day was treated by many non-Catholics as an ordinary working day. It is only in the last 40-50 years that other Christian denominations have given an increased acknowledgement of the birth of the Son of God. It is now common practise for members of churches of different denominations to gather together for:

- 1. Advent Service of Lessons and Carols**
- 2. Joint Carol Services, ie town square or streets**
- 3. Blessing of a Crib in a public place**
- 4. Community Concerts/Carols, especially where there is no Catholic school in that community**
- 5. Ecumenical Services in nursing homes and hospitals**



Paragraph 102 of the Compendium of the Catechism (CTS) states:

How did God prepare the world for the mystery of Christ?

God prepared for the coming of his Son over the centuries. He awakened in the hearts of pagans a dim expectation of this coming and he prepared for it specifically through the Old Testament, culminating with John the Baptist who was the last and greatest of the prophets. We relive this long period of expectancy in the annual liturgical celebration of the season of Advent.

Advent is a time of waiting, longing, and begging. It is a time to pray, "Come, Lord Jesus".

We look forward to celebrating the first coming of Jesus at Christmas. We look forward with hope to the second coming of Jesus in his glory. We seek out Jesus here and now in the Mass, when he comes to us in the Eucharist. We also seek out Jesus in the Divine Office, Eucharistic Adoration and in Ecumenical Services of prayer, Holy Scripture and Song. We seek out Jesus in the ordinary people and the events in our lives, when he comes to us in ordinary ways. Today, as we examine our conscience and confess our sins, we ask Jesus to come to us in his mercy. For Jesus offers us a true experience of salvation here and now through the forgiveness of our sins.

In Advent the Church prepares to celebrate the Nativity, when we recall Christ's first coming. As we remember so also, we look forward in faith to his second coming at the end of time. It is a period of joyful hope. The hope of Advent is expressed during the first part of Advent with the concentration on the Second Coming while the First Coming is recalled particularly from the 17th December onwards, when Christ is seen as the fulfilment of the hope of Israel.

Please find over a copy of a Service of Lessons and Carols that you may find helpful.

Very Reverend Jeremy Bath VE for Ecumenism and Interfaith





Suggested Ecumenical Carol Service

(also called Service of Lessons and Carols)

Hymn: Brother, Sister Let me serve you

Opening Greeting (by Priest or Minister)

Opening Prayer

Grant your faithful, we pray almighty God,
The resolve to run forth to meet Christ
With righteous deeds at his coming,
So that, gathered at his right hand,
They may be worthy to process to the heavenly Kingdom.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy spirit,
One God, for ever and ever.

Blessing of Advent Wreath + Joint Lighting of Candles

As we light our candles today, we remember that Jesus is the light of the world.
The world was full of darkness, but now the people that lived in darkness have seen a great light. And so, in the light of God's love we light these candles today as a sign of hope and peace for the World.

Amen

First Reading: Isaiah Chapter 1 vs 1-10

Hymn: O Come O Come Emmanuel

Prayer

God our Loving Father we rejoice in the message of the Prophets who prepare the World for the coming of our Saviour and the sealing of the Eternal Covenant through his sacrifice and resurrection. Amen.

Reading from the book of Judges Chapter 13 vs 2-7, verse 24

Hymn: Come O Divine Messiah

Prayer

Loving God, we recognise in faith that you communicate to us through signs and wonders beyond human reckoning. You help us to understand and appreciate the beauty of life from the moment of conception. And we acknowledge this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Reading from Galatians 3 vs 26-29

Hymn: We are one in the Spirit

Prayer

God our heavenly Father, we earnestly pray for peace and unity in the world as we approach the celebration of the birth of the Christ Child in Bethlehem. May that unity be present in our marriages, families, communities, nations and between church denominations and peoples of other Faiths. We ask this in God's name. Amen.

Let us celebrate the Sign of Peace

Gospel Reading: Luke chapter 1 Vs 26-38

Homily or address by Priest or Minister.

Hymn: Tell out my Soul

Bidding Prayers

Prayer for Scotland – We pray today for our country of Scotland, for the people of these islands and the rich Christian heritage of which we are now stewards of the present age. 'May we collectively defend, promote and celebrate the true message of Christmas, in prayer, Word, and in song. We also pray for those in Scotland who do not know Jesus and those whose lives are all the poorer for not having an active spiritual life. We pray that Scotland be strengthened by an active Church and community life.

Lord in your mercy – hear our prayer

Prayer for the Village/town – We pray at the end of another Calendar year for all those citizens who live amongst us and made their home here, in recent times. May the diversity of the population help to enrich the future community life of the village and may we look forward, with hope, to the growth and development of our Community.

Lord in your mercy – hear our prayer

The recently dead – We pray and give thanks for all their work and love in the 'vineyard of life'. There is no shame in grieving for those we love who have died. In our own faith in the resurrection may be reassured in our prayers that we shall enjoy their friendship in the Kingdom of heaven. We also pray especially for widows and widowers that they get all our help and support.

Lord in your mercy – hear our prayer

Offering / Collection for local charitable cause

Recitation of the Lord's Prayer

Concluding Prayer

Having received this pledge of eternal redemption, we pray, almighty God,
That, as the feast day of our salvation draws ever nearer,
So, we may press forward all the more eagerly
To the worthy celebration of the mystery of your Son's Nativity.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Final Blessing (could be done jointly)

Final Hymn: Like a Sea without a Shore



There are other resources you could easily use from the Holy Scriptures itself, the Hymn Book or The Magnificat Advent Companion. Redemptorist Publications publish a weekly advent missalette for children that you may also find helpful.

As the Ecumenical Commission for the Archdiocese we are always eager to share ideas and resources from other parishes that can be of benefit to us all and help promote the true meaning of of Advent and Christmas across all Churches and traditions.

The ACTS website has several useful resources - <https://www.alternativity.org.uk/>. This website encourages those of all ages who yearn for 'Just God, Simply Christmas'.