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Advent Greetings from Rev. Matt Sheard

A Prayer to Begin

God of light and promise, as we enter this season of Advent, open our hearts to your coming among us. In a world of fear and division, kindle in us the flame of your hope. May your light shine through us so that others may see your love and find peace in your presence. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Dear Friends,

As Advent begins, we find ourselves again longing for light in the midst of darkness.

Our world feels troubled and uncertain; conflicts rage, communities are divided, and many live with anxiety about the future. Yet it is precisely into such a world that God chooses to come.

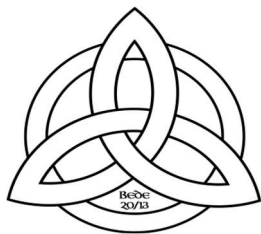
Advent is not a season of denial or escape; it is a season of hope — the kind of hope that stands firm amid struggles.

The hope we celebrate is not wishful thinking but the living reality of Emmanuel — God with us.

When the world feels fragile, our faith calls us to stand steady; when our nation feels divided, we are called to be people who build bridges of grace; when many are weighed down, we are called to lift others with kindness and prayer.

This Advent may our hope be visible — in our words, in our welcome, and in the way we care for those in need. Let us be a church that dares to hope, not because we ignore the world's pain, but because we believe that Christ is already at work redeeming it.

A Bible Reading – Romans 15:12–13 (NRSV)



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“The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Paul reminds us here that hope is not something we generate ourselves; it is God’s gift, poured into us through the Holy Spirit. That gift enables us to look at our world — even in its brokenness — and still proclaim that God’s kingdom is coming.

A Hymn to Reflect On: “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (StF 178 / H&P 85)

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, thou Rod of Jesse, free thine own from Satan’s tyranny; from depths of hell thy people save and give them victory o’er the grave.

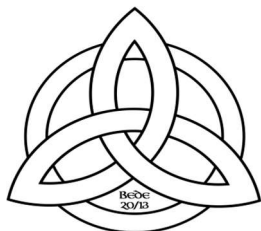
O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here; disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death’s dark shadows put to flight.

This ancient hymn reminds us that hope is born out of longing. It is sung by people who wait in faith trusting that God’s promises are true. Even in exile, even in uncertainty, God’s people are told to rejoice. That is the hope of Advent: joy that defies despair.

Our communities may have felt torn apart this year by politics, by prejudice, by fear. But we, the people of God, are called to stand as signs of another way: to listen where others shout, to welcome where others exclude, to serve where others ignore, to love where others hate.

Something to reflect on: how can you embody these signs of God’s hope?

This Advent, may we be known not only for what we believe, but for the hope we embody. Hope that feeds the hungry, visits the lonely, comforts the grieving, stands with the marginalised, says no to division, loves instead of hating and speaks peace to those who despair.



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Friends, our hope in God is not naïve; it is courageous. It looks at the cross and still proclaims resurrection. It faces division and still chooses reconciliation. It stands in the darkness and offers the light of an inextinguishable flame.

May this Advent be a season where hope is rekindled — in our church, our community, and our nation.

And may the God of hope fill each of us with joy and peace in believing, in the one who comes to redeem and change the world through his coming.

A Closing Prayer

God of hope and promise, as we journey through Advent, keep us watchful and faithful. When the world seems dark, shine your light through us. When the world feels divided, make us instruments of your peace. Fill us with joy in believing, and hope that does not fade, through Jesus Christ our coming Lord. Amen.

With best wishes for the Advent and Christmas seasons,

Rev Matt Sheard

On behalf of the Bede Methodist Circuit Staff Team