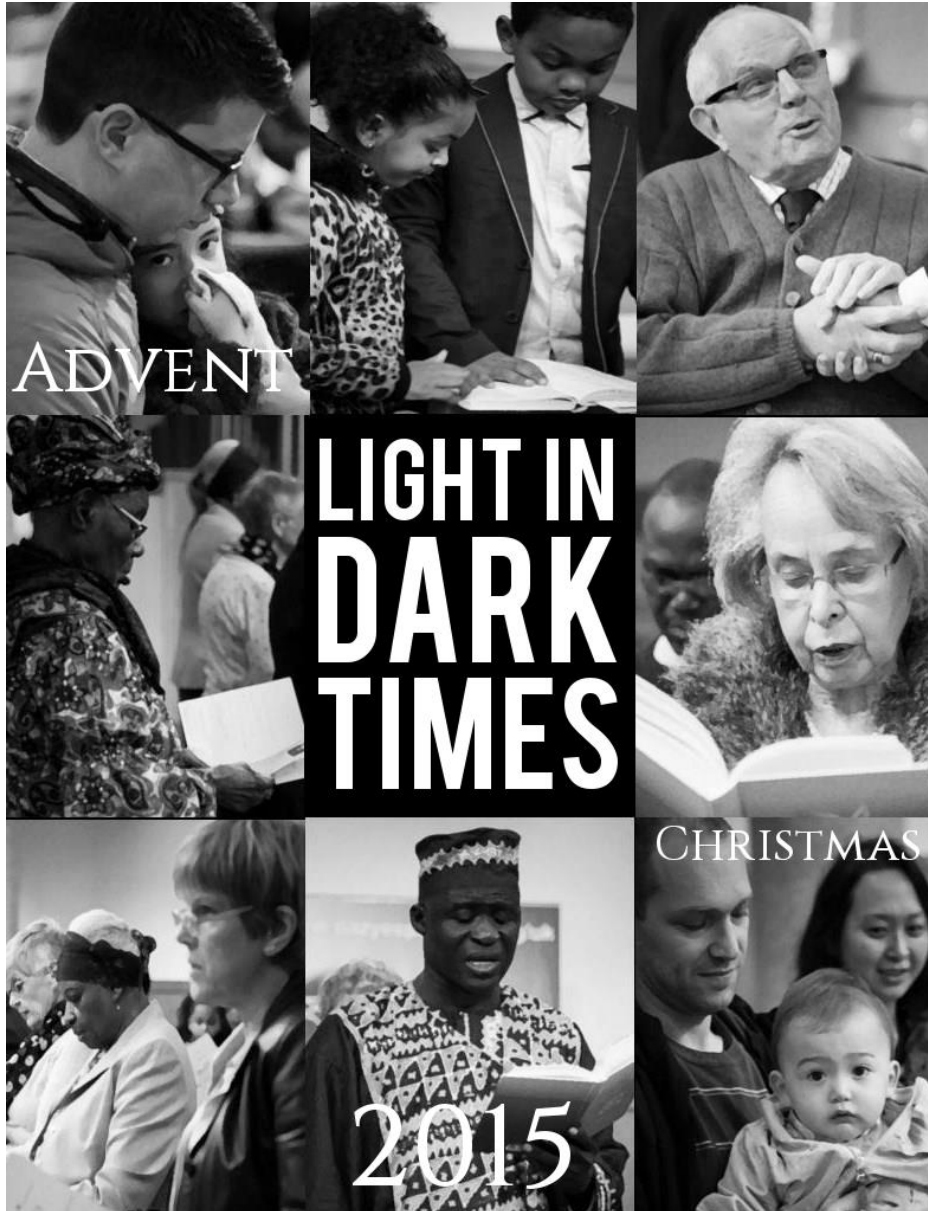




THE CHURCH OF CHRIST THE CORNERSTONE



Reflections for Advent

ADVENT II

The hope of light

Malachi 3:1-4

'I am about to send my messenger to clear a path before me. Suddenly the Lord, whom you seek, will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight is here, here already, says the Lord of Hosts. Who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand firm when he appears? He is like a refiners fire, like a fuller's soap; he will take his seat, testing and purifying; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver, and so they will be fit to bring offerings to the Lord. Thus the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as they were in former days, in years long past'.

- Who Malachi was and when he was writing are uncertain, but placed after Israel has returned from exile in Babylon. The prophet's purpose was to assure his people that Yahweh still loved them.
- BUT the people and priests were not honouring Yahweh in their worship, their lifestyle, their social injustice.
- The call is to repentance- to turn back to God's ways and the promise of one who will not just make that clear, but make that possible.

Luke 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea, when Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip prince of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanius prince of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God

came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. And he went all over the Jordan valley proclaiming a baptism in token of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

A voice cries in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord; clear a straight path for him. Every ravine shall be filled in, and every mountain and hill levelled; winding paths shall be straightened, and rough ways made smooth; and all mankind shall see God's deliverance.'

- Have you noticed the detail at the beginning of this chapter, to locate that these events took place and exactly when. In contrast to Malachi, this is located very clearly in the history not just of God's people, but of the known world.
- John's message is also about deliverance and the need to ready for the coming of one who brings hope, but not without disturbing the status quo.
- John uses the words of the prophets to make it clear that this is not a new message. It has always been God's message through the prophets.

FOR REFLECTION

(or discussion if you are in a group)

- Why do you think the message needs to keep on being repeated? And does it change or is it always the same?
- Is it important the gospel writer is so specific about the historical context of John's preaching?
- Both these prophets are speaking at times of uncertainty and change for God's people. Their political context is changing. They are lacking confidence as God's people. Their leaders do not

seem to be giving them clear direction. How do you see this echoed in today's world, including, maybe, the church?

- Where do you find the hope of light today?
- How does our worship I church help us with all or any of this?

You might also like to read

Luke 1:68-79; Philippians 1:3-11.

ADVENT II

Prayer of the week

This journey can be rough in the dark time:
without lamp or compass but accompanied by guilt.
John said to fill up the valleys, level the mountains,
become smooth and straight and ready for rescue.

Lord of Salvation, save us from darkness.

Come live in my heart, be my beacon, my light.

AMEN

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