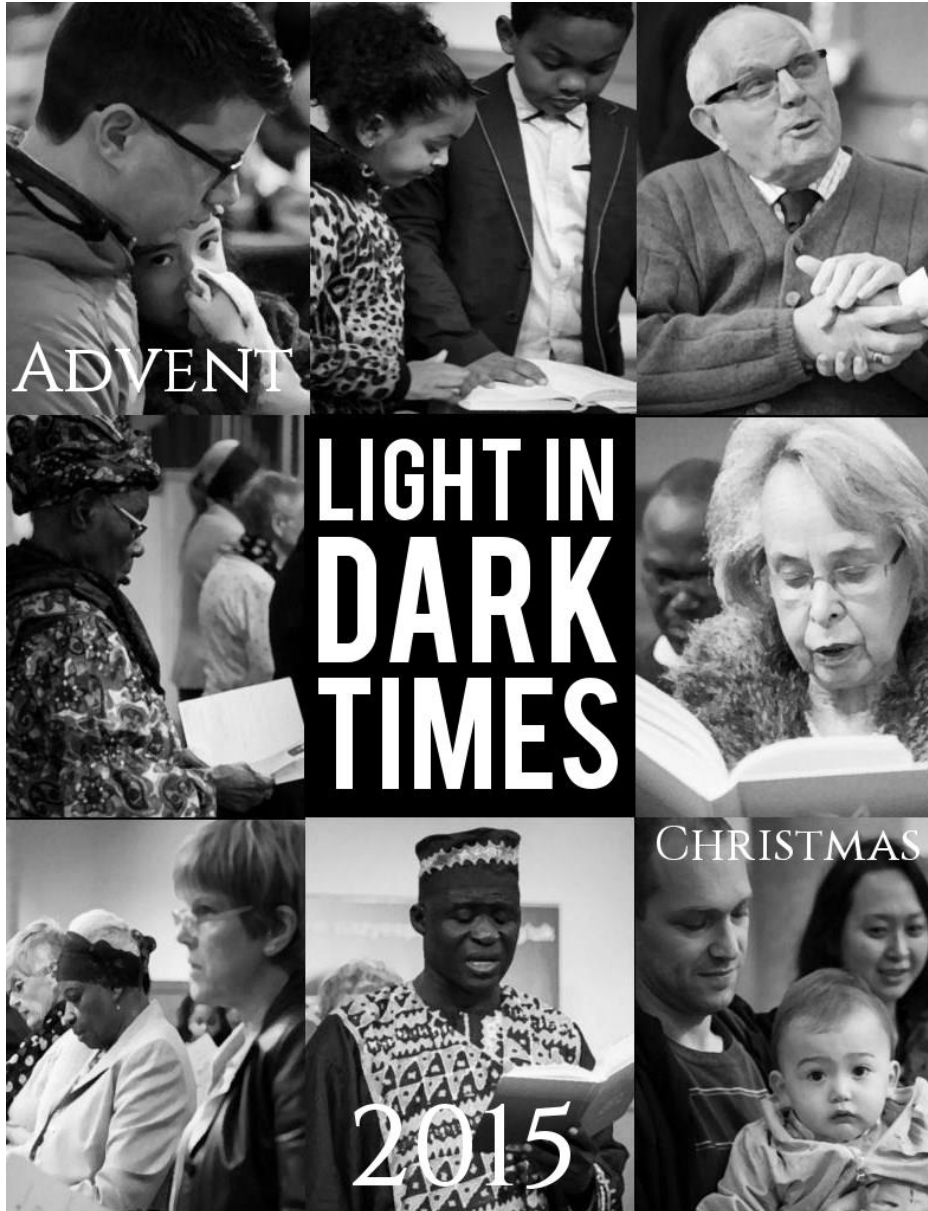




THE CHURCH OF CHRIST THE CORNERSTONE



Reflections for Advent

ADVENT III

# Glimpses of Light

## Philippians 4:4-8

“I wish you joy in the Lord always. Again I say, all joy be yours. Be known to everyone for your consideration of others. The Lord is near; do not be anxious, but in everything make your requests known to God in prayer and petition with thanksgiving. Then the peace of God which is beyond all understanding, will, guard your hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus. And now my friends, all that is true, all that is noble, all that is just and pure, all that is lovable and attractive, whatever is excellent and admirable – fill your thoughts with these things”.

- In this letter Paul writes from prison encouraging the new Christians in their lifestyle – that they should ‘shine like stars in the world’ in the midst of so much that is corrupt and unjust.(ch2:15)
- He writes of how we should recognise the ‘self emptying’ of Christ in being born in the world, and in this he encourages Christ’s followers to have the mind of Christ.
- In all of this he still emphasises that they should not be pulled back into the old traditional ways which may feel more secure, but have courage to live in the new ways that challenge both the Jewish and the secular establishment

## Luke 3:7-18

“Crowds of people came out to be baptized by John, and he said to them: ‘Vipers’ brood! Who warned you to escape from the wrath that is to come? Prove your repentance by the fruit you bear; and do not begin saying to yourselves, “We have Abraham for our father.” I tell you that God can make children for Abraham out of these stones. Already the axe is laid to the roots of the trees and every tree that fails to produce good fruit is cut down and thrown on the fire.’

The people asked him, 'Then what are we to do?' He replied, 'Whoever has two shirts must share with him who has none, and whoever has food must do the same.' Among those who came to be baptized were tax collectors, and they said to him, 'Teacher, what are we to do?' he said to them, 'Exact no more than the assessment.' Some soldiers also asked him, 'And what of us?' To them he said, 'No bullying; no blackmail; make do with your pay!'

The people were all agog, wondering about John, whether perhaps he was the Messiah, but he spoke out loud and said to them all, 'I baptize you with water; but there is one coming who is mightier than I am. I am not worthy to unfasten the straps of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing shovel is ready in his hand to clear his threshing floor and gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn on a fire that can never be put out.' In this and many other ways he made his appeal to the people and announced the good news."

- Note that crowds came out to see John. I wonder what was going on that made such a challenging message compelling.
- Clearly just holding on to traditional religious practices was not going to be enough. Just belonging to a religious community didn't cut it with John.
- John's message was specific to the groups who asked- not a general message for everyone. Note the detail of the way he suggests people might change their behaviour.

## **FOR REFLECTION**

**(or discussion if you are in a group)**

- Both readings focus on our lifestyle as being important. Think about yourself and the focus of your day to day life- whatever that might be. If you asked John 'What about me, what do you think he might say?'

- Paul refers to ‘shining like stars in the world’. When you look at the night sky, how does it feel when you first catch a glimpse of a star through the clouds? What about when you are out in the countryside and the sky is simply bursting with stars?
- When you look at all the news, both international and more local, where do you see glimpses of light?
- The wise men in the Christmas story caught a glimpse of a star and followed it all the way until they found the child who had been born. We don’t know what their journey might have been like despite the poems that have speculated. Where are the glimpses of light for those who are on journeys where, as with those travellers, they don’ know for sure where they will end.

## You might also like to read

Isaiah 12: 2-6; Zephaniah 3:14-20

### **ADVENT III** **Prayer of the week**


The refugee road is filling up now with outcasts and exiles, stumblers and foreigners, trailing the Spirit who promises light.

God help us deliver the fruits of repentance:  
a candle for welcome instead of disaster, to live with  
enough and our spares to be shared.

Lord of Salvation who quashed my conviction  
help us live like one people who are guilty no more..

AMEN

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