



October 21, 2021

## **Greetings in the Name of the One who was, who is, and is to come.**

After a good response last year, we will try on Expanded Advent again this year. Sunday, November 7 begins the season. Advent means “coming.” We wait expectantly for the coming again of God: Come, Lord Jesus. We lean into continuing to envision new ways to regather ourselves as followers of Jesus and people of joy and hope in a world that suffers.

A seven-week Advent was the way the Church originally prepared to observe the inbreaking of God’s kingdom, culminating in the Incarnation. Sometime in the seventh century, for reasons that are obscure, a transition to a four-week Advent began.

Fast forward to the twentieth century. The season of Advent—focused broadly on the end (as in purpose) of creation; a new heaven and earth; the coming reign of God, as accomplished in the Incarnation of Jesus—was completely eclipsed by Christmas culture, which is obsessed with the coming of the baby Jesus. Secular consumer culture in turn has overpowered Christmas culture—which is why we won’t be surprised to see a stunning array of fully decorated Christmas trees sometime before Halloween.

But this new, old Advent prepares us spiritually for a time of year already notoriously bleak for many. I don’t need to remind you why the months behind and ahead compound our anxiety, even as the virus seems currently to be on the wane in many places. In addition to the personal difficulties that seem to be amplified by a time of forced frivolity, many continue to be exhausted also by the uncertain economy, cultural and political conflict, and threats to our environment. Advent helps us meet despair and spiritual fatigue head on. We use the power of our traditions to remind ourselves of God’s providential care and power, and to prepare us to perceive God’s deep compassion and blessing afresh.

What will this look like? We’ll be experimenting. In no particular order: on Sunday, November 7, we will celebrate a baptism at the 10am service; then at 5pm, we will gather together to light our outdoor Advent tree. We’ll start enjoying the stunning blue altar frontal, paraments, and vestments. We’ll begin singing verses from ‘O Come Emmanuel’. Other Advent music will appear. On December 12 at 4pm, join us for an Advent Taizé Evening Prayer in the Main Sanctuary or online, followed by festive fellowship in Upper Parish Hall. Read more about this serene Taizé service [here](#) and watch last years’ service [here](#). We’ll again see a new kind of Advent wreath, with new prayers for lighting the candles and for home devotions. Blue ribbons will grace the wreaths on the building. We may need to enjoy another outdoor Pageant. The expanded Advent sign will reappear on our front lawn. We’ll continue experimenting as we go along. Send us ideas!

Please join us for worship every Sunday at 8:15am in the Chapel or 10am in the Main Sanctuary or online on [Facebook](#) and our [website](#). You can also watch the services any time at your convenience. And let us know you’ve visited by emailing [office@ccneedham.org](mailto:office@ccneedham.org), so we can welcome you more personally.

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Experience the power of Advent, which buttresses our confidence in the power of Jesus, and his ability to lead us through whatever is before us. Come, Lord Jesus.

Faithfully yours,

Nick+

Rector at Christ Episcopal Church Needham, MA

*Pictures from last year's expanded Advent at CCN*



*2021 Taizé service*



*CCN Advent wreath*



*Aufferman Family Advent wreath*



*Advent sign on front lawn*



*Christmas Pageant 2020*



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