

The Parish Church of St Matthew  
Northampton

# The Third Sunday of Advent

(Gaudete Sunday)  
Year A



*Courage! The Lord is coming to save you*

## The Parish Mass

with the healing ministries

Sunday 14 December 2025

10.15 am



# Welcome to St Matthew's Parish Church



**Safeguarding** St Matthew's is committed to providing a safe environment for all who come. If you have any concerns, please speak with one of our welcomers or a churchwarden who may be identified by their lanyard. They will be happy to help you.

**Live streaming** Please note that this service is being streamed. You may sit where you wish. If, however, you prefer not to be seen online, please sit in a side aisle. The administration of Holy Communion will not be shown.

**GDPR** Some of St Matthew's services (most Sunday mornings and some special services) are live-streamed or recorded for those who cannot attend church in person. Under GDPR, the church must gain the consent of anyone whose image may be captured, as this constitutes collection of "personal data". This includes clergy, readers/intercessors, musicians and congregation. Whilst every attempt is made not to capture the faces of members of the congregation, this may occasionally happen if people turn around or move around the church during the service. The exception is communion, when the congregation is not filmed. The side aisles and back of the nave are so far as possible film-free areas not covered by the camera. Anyone whose personal data is collected must give their consent. Consent forms are available both in church and on the website. The full policy can be read on our parish website or on the noticeboards in church.

**Toilet and baby changing facilities** may be found at the base of the church tower. There is also a small servery.

**For younger children** In the north aisle (nearest to Collingwood Road), a carpeted area equipped with age-specific Christian resources is provided. Please feel free to make use of these facilities.



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## Collection – ‘Building a Generous Church’



### Our response to God’s generosity

*We believe in a generous God, who longs for us to share his generosity with others. A generous life is therefore a hallmark of our faith and a testament to it, as the more generous we are, the more we reflect the generous God we believe in. Generosity is, therefore, at the heart of our faith, and our own generosity is a sure sign of our faith in action. Generosity is a spiritual gift, and we need to encourage people to seek this gift as they grow in their faith. The ministry and mission of The Church of England is largely funded through the incredible generosity of those who give to it.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*We invite you to make a monetary offering towards the ministry and mission of St Matthew’s Church. You may do so using any of the following methods:*

**Cash, cheques, stewardship envelopes** - using the receptacle provided at the back of church. If you are a taxpayer please use the envelopes in the chairs, and fill out the details in order that our parish may also benefit from the Gift Aid (an extra 25p for every pound given) associated with your giving.

**Contactless giving** - using the terminal provided. Just press the button for the amount you wish to give - £5, £10, or £20, and then hold your bank card over the reader.

**Giving on your smart phone** - using the QR code printed below. It gives you the option of any amount, Gift Aid, and making a regular payment.

**Giving online** - click the donate button on the parish website or Facebook page and follow the instructions.

*Your generosity is gratefully received. Thank you.*



## The Third Sunday of Advent - *Gaudete Sunday*

Good morning and welcome to our Parish Mass on The Third Sunday of Advent, traditionally known as *Gaudete Sunday*. Today the Church invites us to pause amid the somber, watchful tone of Advent and to rejoice - *Gaudete!* - for the Lord is near. The rose-coloured vestments and candle of the Advent Wreath symbolize this lifting of spirit, a gentle reminder that even in seasons of waiting, joy is already breaking through.

Our readings speak beautifully to this theme of hope fulfilled. From the prophet Isaiah we hear a vision of the desert blooming, the weak strengthened, and the redeemed returning home with singing. It is an image of God's transformative promise - a world healed, renewed, and flooded with divine joy.

In the Gospel according to Matthew, John the Baptist, waiting in prison, sends his disciples to Jesus with a question: "Are you the one who is to come?" Jesus responds not with titles but with signs - the blind see, the lame walk, the poor receive good news. These are the very promises Isaiah foretold, now coming to life in Christ.

As we gather today, may this liturgy deepen our joy and strengthen our hope. Whether we come with hearts light or heavily burdened, God meets us here with the assurance that his saving work has already begun, and that his coming is near.

Let us rejoice, then, as we continue our Advent journey toward the light of Christ.

*It is our custom to spend some time in quiet preparation before the liturgy begins, and save further conversation until we meet socially for refreshments afterwards. The following prayer, based on today's themes, may be found helpful:*

### Prayer

Lord God,  
we rejoice in your coming to us  
and in the strength and joy given to us  
through the coming of Jesus Christ.  
We give you thanks for all who have revealed your salvation  
in the way they have lived  
and witnessed to your love. Amen.

### Settings

Mass of the Altar of Life (Kyries only)

*David Halls b.1963*

Missa de Angelis

*Plainsong*

## Order of Service

### ¶ The Gathering

§ **Stand** at the sound of the bell

### The Advent Prose

1. *Choir*  
2. *All*



Drop down, ye hea-vens from a - bove, and let the skies pour down right - eous - ness.

*Choir* Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord,  
and my servant whom I have chosen;  
that ye may know me and believe me:  
I, even I, am the Lord,  
and beside me there is no Saviour:  
and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.

### Hymn

*The procession enters*

*All* **HARK the glad sound! The Saviour comes,  
The Saviour promised long!  
Let every heart prepare a throne,  
And every voice a song.**

**He comes the prisoners to release  
In Satan's bondage held;  
The gates of brass before him burst,  
The iron fetters yield.**

**He comes the broken heart to bind,  
The bleeding soul to cure,  
And with the treasures of his grace,  
Enrich the humble poor.**

**Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,  
Thy welcome shall proclaim,  
And heaven's eternal arches ring  
With thy beloved name.**

*Words Philip Doddridge 1702-1751*

*Music Bristol  
from Thomas Ravenscroft c1588-1635  
Psalms, 1621*

## Lighting of the Advent Wreath

§ *A member of the congregation lights the rose pink candle, signifying joy*

*All*      **Lord Jesus, light of the world,  
John told the people to prepare,  
for you were very near.  
As Christmas grows closer day by day,  
help us to be ready to welcome you now. Amen.**

*All*      † In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**

## The Greeting

*All*      **May the light and peace of Jesus Christ our Lord be with you.  
and also with you.**

*The service is introduced*

## Invitation to Confession

'The axe is laid at the root of the trees;  
every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down.'  
But confident in God's mercy we confess our sins.

*Silence is kept*

## Confession

*All*      **Lord our God,  
in our sin we have avoided your call.  
Our love for you is like a morning cloud,  
like the dew that goes away early.  
Have mercy on us;  
deliver us from judgement;  
bind up our wounds and revive us;  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

## Kyries

Heavenly Father, you call us to prepare for the coming of your Son:  
forgive us our unreadiness to receive him.  
Kyrie eleison.

*All*      **Kyrie eleison.**

Lord Jesus, you were proclaimed by John the Baptist:  
help us to prepare your way.  
Christe eleison.

*All*      **Christe eleison.**

Holy Spirit, you speak through the prophets:  
make us attentive to hear your word.  
Kyrie eleison.

*All*      **Kyrie eleison.**

## Absolution

May the God of love bring you back to himself,  
forgive † you your sins,  
and assure you of his eternal love  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All*      **Amen.**

## The Collect

Let us pray.

O Lord Jesus Christ,  
who at your first coming sent your messenger  
to prepare your way before you:  
grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries  
may likewise so prepare and make ready your way  
by turning the hearts of the disobedient  
to the wisdom of the just,  
that at your second coming to judge the world  
we may be found an acceptable people in your sight;  
for you are alive and reign with the Father  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

*All*      **Amen.**

§ Sit

## ¶ The Liturgy of the Word

### First Reading

*Reader*      A reading from the prophecy of Isaiah.

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,  
and rejoice with joy and singing.  
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,  
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the Lord,  
     the majesty of our God.  
 Strengthen the weak hands,  
     and make firm the feeble knees.  
 Say to those who are of a fearful heart,  
     ‘Be strong, do not fear!’  
 Here is your God.  
     He will come with vengeance,  
 with terrible recompense.  
     He will come and save you.’  
 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
     and the ears of the deaf unstopped;  
 then the lame shall leap like a deer,  
     and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.  
 For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,  
     and streams in the desert;  
 the burning sand shall become a pool,  
     and the thirsty ground springs of water;  
 the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,  
     the grass shall become reeds and rushes.  
 A highway shall be there,  
     and it shall be called the Holy Way;  
 the unclean shall not travel on it,  
     but it shall be for God’s people;  
     no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray.  
 No lion shall be there,  
     nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;  
 they shall not be found there,  
     but the redeemed shall walk there.  
 And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,  
     and come to Zion with singing;  
 everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
     they shall obtain joy and gladness,  
     and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Isaiah 35.1-10

This is the word of the Lord.

All

**Thanks be to God.**

## Psalm

Response

Simon Lesley



**Choir** Happy are those who have the God of Jacob for their help,  
whose hope is in the Lord their God;  
Who made heaven and earth,  
the sea and all that is in them;  
who keeps his promise for ever; **Response**

Who gives justice to those that suffer wrong  
and bread to those who hunger.  
The Lord looses those that are bound;  
the Lord opens the eyes of the blind; **Response**

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;  
the Lord loves the righteous;  
The Lord watches over the stranger in the land;  
he upholds the orphan and widow;  
but the way of the wicked he turns upside down.  
The Lord shall reign for ever,  
your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. **Response**

Psalm 146.4-10

§ Stand

## Holy Gospel

### Acclamation

1. *Choir only*

2. *Choir and Congregation*



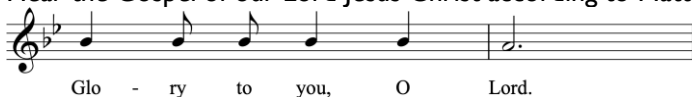
**Choir** The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me.  
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor.  
**All** **Alleluia.**

§ We turn to face the Book of the Gospels

All

The Lord be with you  
**and also with you.**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.



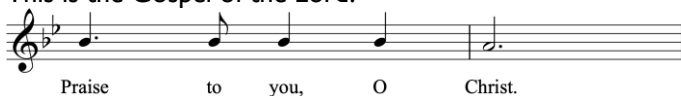
When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.’

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: ‘What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way before you.”

Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.



## Homily

*At the end, there may be a time of quiet reflection*

## Affirmation of Faith

§ *Stand*

*All* We say together in faith:  
**Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty,  
who was, and is, and is to come.**

*All* We believe in God the Father, who created all things:  
**for by his will they were created  
and have their being.**

*All* We believe in God the Son, who was slain:  
**for with his blood, he purchased us for God,  
from every tribe and language,  
from every people and nation.**

*All* We believe in God the Holy Spirit:  
**the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!'  
Even so come, Lord Jesus!  
Amen.**

## Prayers of the Faithful

*Priest* God is faithful to his word and true to his promises.  
With confidence, then, let us bring our needs before him.

§ *Kneel*

*After each petition*

*Intercessor* Come, Lord,  
*All* **for our hope is in you.**

*Priest* God of love and mercy,  
take pity on our weakness.  
May the coming of your Son confirm our faith,  
strengthen our hope, and deepen our love.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
*All* **Amen.**

# ¶ The Liturgy of the Sacrament

## Sign of Peace

§ Stand

God will speak peace to his people,  
to those who turn to him in their hearts.

All The peace of the Lord be always with you  
**and also with you.**

Let us offer one another a sign of Christ's peace.

## The Offertory

§ *The bread and wine are presented to the priest at the dais step,  
and the altar is prepared*

§ *A monetary collection is taken. Please give as you are able  
using any of the ways indicated at the front of this booklet.  
Your generosity is much appreciated. Thank you.*

## Hymn

All

**WHEN the King shall come again  
All his power revealing,  
Splendour shall announce his reign,  
Life and joy and healing:  
Earth no longer in decay,  
Hope no more frustrated;  
This is God's redemption day  
Longingly awaited.**

**In the desert trees take root  
Fresh from his creation;  
Plants and flowers and sweetest fruit  
Join the celebration:  
Rivers spring up from the earth,  
Barren lands adorning;  
Valleys, this is your new birth,  
Mountains, greet the morning!**

**Strengthen feeble hands and knees,  
Fainting hearts, be cheerful!  
God who comes for such as these  
Seeks and saves the fearful:  
Deaf ears hear the silent tongues  
Sing away their weeping;  
Blind eyes see the lifeless ones  
Walking, running, leaping.**

**There God's highway shall be seen  
Where no roaring lion,  
Nothing evil or unclean  
Walks the road to Zion:  
Ransomed people homeward bound,  
All your praises voicing,  
See your Lord with glory crowned,  
Share in his rejoicing!**

Words Christopher Idle b.1938  
based on Isaiah 35

Music St John Damascene  
Arthur Henry Brown 1830-1926

## Invitation to Prayer

Pray, my brothers and sisters,  
that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God,  
the almighty Father.

*All* **May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands  
for the praise and glory of his name,  
for our good, and the good of all his Church.**

## Prayer over the Gifts

Lord, may the sacrifice of our worship  
be offered to you unceasingly,  
to complete what was begun in sacred mystery  
and powerfully accomplish for us your saving work;  
with ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

# The Eucharistic Prayer

*All*        The Lord be with you  
              **and also with you.**

*All*        Lift up your hearts.  
              **We lift them to the Lord.**

*All*        Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
              **It is right to give thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right and good to give you thanks and praise,  
almighty God and everlasting Father,  
through Jesus Christ your Son.

For when he humbled himself to come among us in human flesh,  
he fulfilled the plan you formed before the foundation of the world  
to open for us the way of salvation.  
Confident that your promise will be fulfilled,  
we now watch for the day  
when Christ our Lord will come again in glory.

And so we join our voices with angels and archangels  
and with all the company of heaven  
to proclaim your glory,  
for ever praising you and singing:

*Choir*    *Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
              God of power and might,  
              heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
              Hosanna in the highest.*

*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.*

§    *Remain standing*

Accept our praises, heavenly Father,  
through your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
and as we follow his example and obey his command,  
grant that by the power of your Holy Spirit  
these gifts of bread and wine  
may be to us his body and his blood;

who, in the same night that he was betrayed,  
took bread and gave you thanks;  
he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:

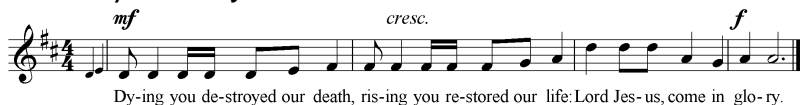
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;  
do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way,  
after supper he took the cup and gave you thanks;  
he gave it to them, saying:

Drink this, all of you;  
this is my blood of the new covenant,  
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus:

All



Therefore, heavenly Father,  
we remember his offering of himself  
made once for all upon the cross;  
we proclaim his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension;  
we look for the coming of your kingdom,  
and with this bread and this cup  
we make the memorial of Christ your Son our Lord.

Accept through him, our great high priest,  
 this our sacrifice of thanks and praise,  
 and as we eat and drink these holy gifts  
 in the presence of your divine majesty,  
 renew us by your Spirit,  
 inspire us with your love  
 and unite us in the body of your Son,  
 Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through him, and with him, and in him,  
 in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
 with all who stand before you in earth and heaven,  
 we worship you, Father almighty,  
 in songs of everlasting praise:

All



Bless-ing and hon-our and glo-ry and pow'r be yours for ev-er and ev-er. A - men.

*The Blessed Sacrament is elevated and bells are rung*

§ Kneel

## The Lord's Prayer

God is the source of our strength and our hope.  
 Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour Christ has taught us:

All

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
 hallowed be thy name;  
 thy kingdom come;  
 thy will be done;  
 on earth as it is in heaven.  
 Give us this day our daily bread.  
 And forgive us our trespasses,  
 as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
 And lead us not into temptation;  
 but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,  
 the power, and the glory,  
 for ever and ever.  
 Amen.**

## Breaking of the Bread

*All*      Every time we eat this bread and drink this cup,  
**we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

## Agnus Dei

*Choir*      *Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.*

*Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.*

*Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
grant us peace.*

## Invitation to Communion

*All*      God's holy gifts for God's holy people.  
**Jesus Christ is holy, Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.**

*The clergy receive Holy Communion*

## Giving of Communion

Say to those who are fearful in heart, 'Be strong, do not fear!  
Here is your God. He will come and save you.'

§ *Baptized persons who are communicant members of other Churches  
are warmly invited to receive Holy Communion.*

*Alternatively, if you wish to receive a blessing, please bring this booklet  
with you as a sign.*

# Spiritual Communion – *for those at home*

## Act of Reception

All        In union, blessed Jesus,  
              with the faithful gathered at every altar of your Church  
              where your blessed Body and Blood are offered this day,

*(and remembering particularly my own parish ...)*

I long to offer you praise and thanksgiving,  
for creation and all the blessings of this life,  
for the redemption won for us by your life, death,  
              and resurrection,  
for the means of grace and the hope of glory.

*(and particularly for the blessings given me ...)*

I believe that you are truly present in the Holy Sacrament,  
and, since I cannot at this time receive communion,  
I pray you to come into my heart.  
I unite myself with you and embrace you with all my heart,  
              my soul, and my mind.  
Let nothing separate me from you;  
let me serve you in this life until, by your grace,  
I come to your glorious kingdom and unending peace.  
Amen.

§    *The **healing ministries** of the laying on of hands and the sacrament of anointing are being offered in the Lady Chapel having been to the communion rail.*

# Motet

*Choir*

Peace be to you and grace from him  
Who freed us from our sins,  
Who loved us all and shed his blood  
That we might saved be.

Sing holy, holy to our Lord,  
The Lord, Almighty God,  
Who was and is and is to come;  
Sing holy, holy, Lord!  
Rejoice in heaven, all ye that dwell therein,  
Rejoice on earth, ye saints below,  
For Christ is coming, is coming soon,  
For Christ is coming soon!

E'en so, Lord Jesus, quickly come,  
And night shall be no more;  
They need no light nor lamp nor sun,  
For Christ will be their All!

*Music Paul Manz 1919-2009*

# Hymn

*All*

**COME, thou long-expected Jesus,  
Born to set thy people free,  
From our fears and sins release us,  
Let us find our rest in thee.**

**Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth thou art,  
Dear desire of every nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.**

**Born thy people to deliver,  
Born a child and yet a king,  
Born to reign in us for ever,  
Now thy gracious kingdom bring.**

**By thine own eternal Spirit,  
Rule in all our hearts alone;  
By thine all-sufficient merit  
Raise us to thy glorious throne.**

Words Charles Wesley 1707-1788

Music Halton Holgate  
version of a melody by William Boyce 1711-1779  
in Samuel Sebastian Wesley 1810-1876 *European Psalmist*, 1872

§ *All sit for a time of personal reflection and thanksgiving*

## Prayer after Communion

Let us pray:

§ *Stand*

We give you thanks, O Lord for these heavenly gifts;  
kindle in us the fire of your Spirit  
that when Christ comes again  
we may shine as lights before his face;  
who is alive and reigns now and for ever.

*All*

**Amen.**

**Generous God,  
you have fed us at your heavenly table.  
Set us on fire with your Spirit  
that when Christ comes again  
we may shine like lights before his face;  
who with you and the Spirit lives for ever.  
Amen.**

## Hymn

*All*

**THY kingdom come, O God,  
Thy rule, O Christ, begin;  
Break with thy iron rod  
The tyrannies of sin.**

**Where is thy reign of peace  
And purity and love?  
When shall all hatred cease,  
As in the realms above?**

**When comes the promised time  
That war shall be no more,  
And lust, oppression, crime,  
Shall flee thy face before?**

**We pray thee Lord, arise,  
And come in thy great might;  
Revive our longing eyes,  
Which languish for thy sight.**

**O'er lands both near and far  
Thick darkness broodeth yet:  
Arise, O morning star,  
Arise, and never set.**

Words Lewis Hensley 1824-1905

Music St Cecilia  
Leighton George Hayne 1836-1883

## Notices for the Community

§ *Sit*

## ¶ Sending Out

*All*      The Lord be with you  
**and also with you.**

### Solemn Blessing

*All*      May you be brave in times of trial.  
**Amen.**

*All*      May you never lose faith in God's love for you.  
**Amen.**

*All*      And may you be good witnesses for the Gospel  
by the love and joy your radiate.  
**Amen.**

*All*      And the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son †, and the Holy Spirit,  
be upon you and remain with you always.  
**Amen.**

### The Dismissal

*All*      As we await our coming Saviour,  
go in the peace of Christ.  
**Thanks be to God.**

### Organ Voluntary

Toccata on Veni Emmanuel

*Andrew Carter b.1939*

§ *Please remain standing until the procession has departed*

§ *Those leaving immediately are asked to be aware of those who wish to listen to the organ voluntary*

- § *Refreshments are being served in the parish centre, adjacent to the carpark.  
Do please join us.*
- § *If you are a newcomer to the parish, please introduce yourself to the  
clergy or speak to a member of our Welcome Team.*

This afternoon at 5.30 pm

## Congregational Evensong

Our thanks are due to Anonymous Donor 20  
who has generously financed  
the production of this week's service booklet.

**Please take this booklet home  
as an aid to prayer and reflection during the week,  
and then re-cycle it.**

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# Christmas Services

## The Fourth Sunday of Advent

21 December

### The Parish Mass

at 10.15 am

### A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

at 4.00 pm

## Christmas Eve

### Crib and Christingle Service

at 4.00 pm

### Midnight Mass of the Nativity

and Blessing of the Crib

at 11.30 pm

## Christmas Day

### The Parish Mass of the Nativity

at 10.15 am