

Advent Service



The Advent season is, like Lent, a period of preparation before a major festival in the Church year. It provides an opportunity to consider the biblical tradition leading to the birth of Jesus and to look forward to the coming of God's kingdom on earth.

This focus tends to be lost in the preparations for Christmas itself, surrounded as we are with festive items long before December has even arrived.

At Holy Cross the themes of Advent are presented in the Advent Ring with its purple colouring to denote penitence with its four candles representing those who prepared for the coming of Christ – the Patriarchs like Abraham, the Prophets like Isaiah, John the Baptist, and Mary – and in a special service held on the evening of the first Sunday in Advent.

This service has no set format providing an opportunity for any interested members of the congregation to contribute ideas but usually includes readings [Biblical and non-Biblical] and music reflecting one of the Advent themes such as *The Four Last Things* or *Watching and Waiting*.

This year we thought about how we could encourage participation in the service, particularly by families, and also suggest a way to develop a link between Advent in the church and at home.

The theme of the Jesse Tree, which represents the biblical genealogy of Jesus with symbols for Adam, Moses, David, Joseph etc seemed to offer this possibility and enable us to combine active participation with the traditional readings and music.

The Jesse Tree has been depicted in a variety of art forms including stained glass, illuminated manuscripts, wood and stone carving and painting but we can use the same idea with simple craft materials.

The sequence of events for the evening is:

4 pm. Family workshop making symbols for the Jesse Tree to be used in the service and also give a start for people to continue making one for their home.

5 pm. Tea interval to link with those who might wish to just come for the service.

5.30 pm Service in which the symbols made earlier are added to the Jesse Tree between the readings and music.

So come along on the 27th November, find out more about the Jesse Tree and take part by making, reading or singing or all three!!

Frances Hounsell