



A LETTER FROM
ALISTAIR BEGG
DECEMBER 2023

Are you getting ready for Christmas? And if so, what's involved? Making preparations for food, presents, travel, and festive gatherings are expected and familiar. The joy of family reunions combined with the sights and sounds that bring good cheer provide moments of reflection and wonder. Perhaps, like me, you have to admit just how easy it is to be distracted by what is good and even miss out on what is best. It is one thing to sing, "Let every heart prepare Him room," while personally failing to make the necessary preparations.

This is where I am slightly envious of and simultaneously helped by my friends in the

Anglican Church, who are guided by the *Book of Common Prayer* and its collects for Advent. (Collects are short prayers within the *Book of Common Prayer* that comprise an invocation, petition, and conclusion.)

Here for our help is the collect for the first Sunday in Advent:

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

Based on the Epistle and Gospel readings for that day (Rom. 13:8-14 and Matt. 21:1-13), this collect looks forward to the entry of a King who will one day come to consummate His kingdom. It serves to remind us that our lives are set between the two comings (or advents) of Christ. He came and lived among us, facing temptation and sorrow, bearing pain, ridicule, and death. But He will come again as Lord and judge all of mankind, and “every eye will

see him” (Rev. 1:7), “not in that poor, lowly stable with the oxen standing by ... but in heaven, set at God’s right hand on high!” The Christian finds both comfort and challenge in John’s reminder: “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

Traditions differ from family to family and from country to country, but in Christ we are united in salvation—“a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel” (Luke 2:32).

“For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11:36).

Joy to the world, and all my love in Christ!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Alvina". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial letter.