

Sunday 30th November 2025 - Advent Sunday. Benefice
Holy Communion Oswaldkirk

In this service, we will shortly say and hear the four proclamations, “*Great is the mystery of faith.*” To which we will reply: “*Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.*”

The middle two parts probably are straightforward for most of us and for those who believe, but what about the first and last parts, especially part four - ‘Christ will come again?’ In fact, the first and last parts are joined together and encompass the middle two parts.

These words are especially meaningful as today we start our new church year on Advent Sunday, traditionally a time of waiting, of longing, and of expectation, but the word Advent literally means “coming”. It is a season that reminds us that belief is not simply about what can be seen or proven but about living with the mystery of God’s presence among us. Advent begins with faith - a faith that cannot be seen, touched, or practically proven but can only be felt in the heart as well as the mind. In our modern age, with Artificial Intelligence and advanced technology offering answers at the touch of a button, it might seem entirely reasonable to expect faith to now be explained in a more cut-and-dried way. But faith has always carried with it a sense of mystery. It cannot reduce it to formulas or neat explanations, and the mystery of faith is not something to be solved, but something to be lived – a light we receive and carry, even when we do not fully understand it.

To help comprehend the mystery, this since 2000 we have had a new term - ‘spiritual intelligence’ and I will be

looking at this will be my Advent Course starting on Wednesday at the Vicarage.

The mystery of Advent is that it is a time not only that we live in but is also a season speaking of the 'already' and the 'not yet'. It is often referred to as the 'overlapping of the ages' because one age is fading away, and a new age is drawing ever closer. The mystery transcends space and time and is beyond our understanding completely, but we are gifted glimpses of it. Events occur that being past present and future together in a moment such as the momentous sharing of service commemorate the anniversary of 1700 year of the Nicene Creed earlier this week by Pope Leo and the Patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox church.

In our proclamation we say: 'Christ has died' that past event, is already accomplished, 'Christ is risen'; in the present, Christ is alive and among us now, 'Christ will come again'; that the future, the not yet, that we live in hope of, will come to us. These words are the heartbeat of Advent.

By proclaiming those words we affirm that through Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection, we understand the Kingdom of God has already broken through into our world – and so we can experience forgiveness, peace, and joy today, but also that the fullness of that Kingdom is still not yet here completely; because we still wait for Christ to return and make all things new.

With these few words, we proclaim this sacred truth and the faith we have in Jesus Christ. We express our wonder at what he has already accomplished, and what sustains us. We confirm our belief that he will return to this earth and

his Kingdom will reign for ever. Advent reminds us of this each year of this and is why it is a season of both celebration and expectation of his coming.

The challenge for Christians today is to alert others to these ancient truths and the rapidly advancing fulfilment of them, either by words, example, or any other way that feels right to us individually and we are called to do.

As we commence our new year in the church, may we to help others to see and experience, in a world that is hurting, all the benefits from living by Christ's simple truths as we look to celebrating His birth and the coming again of His reign. Thanks be to God. Amen.