

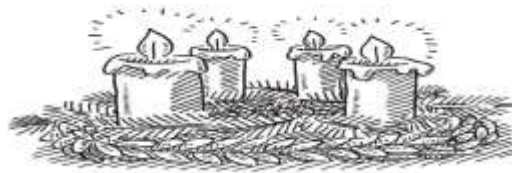
Reflection

Are you ready for Christmas? I'm not, even though every year, I promise myself I'll be ready in November! Advent is almost at its end, and on this 4th Sunday, we are invited to reflect on Emmanuel – God with us. Words that reveal the absolute love that God has for each one of us. As we await the coming of Emmanuel on Thursday, we remember that God is not only present in moments of joy, but also in times of confusion and pain. Those of you watching the news will doubtless feel shocked by the recent events in Sydney and our prayers are with all those in the Jewish community in eastern Australia who have been injured or bereaved.

Like Joseph whose story we hear this morning who wrestled with fear, uncertainty and a lack of understanding, we are also invited to trust that God is at work even when the path ahead is unclear and painful. Emmanuel assures us that we are never abandoned; God walks with us through every trial and difficulty, through every joy and disappointment.

And so as we prepare to celebrate Christmas, this final week of Advent calls us to open our hearts more fully to God's presence. Emmanuel often comes quietly, sometimes unnoticed, asking only for our faith and acceptance. May we recognize God in the stillness of prayer, in acts of love, and in those who need compassion. And in these final days of Advent, may we truly know and live into the promise that God is with us always.

Revd Sarah



NEXT SUNDAY 28.12.25 First Sunday of Christmas

10.30am in the Hall

READINGS: OT Isaiah 63: 7-9



NT Hebrews 2: 10-end

GOSPEL Matthew 2: 13-end

CONTACT US

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St Thomas, Exeter

21st December 2025

Fourth Sunday of Advent

10.30am in the Hall

Today

Sung Eucharist

Hymn Numbers

358 *O come, O come, Emmanuel*

552 *When our God came to earth*

136 *For Mary, mother of our Lord*

467 *Tell out, my soul.*

3pm Christingle Messier Church

Wednesday 24th December

4pm Family Crib Service in the Hall

11pm Midnight Mass in the Church

Thursday 25th December

9.30am Family Service in the Hall



Collect

God our redeemer, who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son: grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour, so we may be ready to greet him when he comes again as our judge; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Isaiah 63: 7-9

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. Then Isaiah said: 'Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

Romans 1: 1-7

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, To

all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew 1: 18-end

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel' which means, 'God is with us.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Post Communion

Heavenly Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of the promised saviour: fill us your servants with your grace, that in all things we may embrace your holy will and with her rejoice in your salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Notices

The House Group Advent Course The last meeting is this Tuesday, 16th December. We

start again on Tuesday 6th January, weekly, until 27th January. See Ian for details.

Do come along to our Christmas services as advertised on this sheet, and please pray for all those who will be attending, some of whom may be new to church.

From January, we'll be trialling an all-age service once a month on the first Sunday of the month. The service will still follow the usual format, but there will be adapted liturgy that is more accessible for younger people. Do let us know what you think! Our first All-age service will be on 4 January when we celebrate Epiphany.

Rev Sarah will be taking some time off after Christmas, returning on 3 January. If during that time you need a priest, Father Terry will be available. His contact details are on the front of this pew sheet. Wishing all our St Thomas family a very merry Christmas and a healthy and happy 2026.

January dates for your diary

Tuesday, 27th January 2026. Church Family Bowling. 6.30pm. Please speak to Liz or Sarah for details. All welcome.

Thursday 29th January 2026 Church Community Lunch. Meeting outside the Church at 12.30pm then on to a local hostelry.

