



# ***The Advent Collects***

*Four Meditations on the Season of Advent*

*For unaccompanied SATB Choir*

*Words from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer*

*Music by Nigel Morgan*

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## ***The Collect***

The collect, if not the oldest, is at least a very ancient form of prayer. It seems that out of the generalised and largely extempore prayers of the early church there developed three clearly recognisable types. There was the Litany, which was a form of prayer in dialogue between minister and congregation. There was the Sursum Corda ('Lift up your hearts'), which was a liturgical thanksgiving, specially appropriate in the Eucharist. And there was the Collect. This last was a good deal shorter than the other two and was intended to 'collect', that is, gather together into one and sum up the petitions, silent or expressed, that had gone before.

The chief characteristics of the collect have been described as variety and terseness. The latter quality we shall have frequent occasions to admire. The former does not imply that any one collect dealt with a number of different themes. In fact, there is normally only one specific point to each collect. It means that owing to its peculiar form the collect could be adapted to almost any occasion.

In its essential structure the collect is threefold. Any prayer built properly on these lines must contain an address, a petition, an ascription. This can be clearly seen for instance, in the collect for Trinity XVII:  
*Lord, we pray thee - that thy grace may always prevent and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; - through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

... most of the collects in our Book of Common Prayer descend from them through the Sarum Missal, which was the most popular liturgical book in mediaeval England. They were beautifully translated by Cranmer and his helpers for the first English book of common prayer in 1549, and were often considerably adapted in translating. Where the ancient collects were not considered suitable, new ones were composed, as for instance those of Advent I and II.

... in the composition of the daily offices, the collect found a place in the Mattins and Evensong because it gave a fixed tone of prayer for the day or the week.

It seems advisable to say at least this much about the historical and literary setting of the collects, for then we are more likely to appreciate what they set out to do and shall not expect from them something that they do not attempt. If recognition of proper limitations is true of all genuine art, then we shall be prepared to find in the collects one of the finest of literary forms.

From Wand, J. W. C. (1964) *Reflections on the Collects*. Mowbray, London

## *The Advent Collects*

This work for unaccompanied SATB choir uses a simple but dramatic device to achieve a number of different ends. Each collect is prefaced by a diad which expands from a major second in Advent I to a major ninth in Advent IV. These diads may be realised in a number of different ways:

- as a continuous *piano* drone played on an organ, synthesiser, sung *bouche fermée* by a semi-chorus, or even pre-recorded;
- as an chord played by organ or synthesiser that is performed prior to and throughout the address, fading during the petition, to reappear for the ascription;
- as a chord struck on hand-chimes (ideally by members of the choir) at strategic pauses (suggestions are marked in the score) to enable singers to retune, not only musically, but spiritually to the content and progress of the prayer as it unfolds;
- similar to the above only played by organ, synthesiser or 'like' instruments (violas, tenor recorders, clarinets, muted trumpets);
- a more severe alternative is to leave out the drone diads altogether. But it is suggested that in rehearsal these diads are employed to 'centre' the choir on the material from which each collect is made. In this way the choir knows inwardly the diads but the listener remains unaware of this hidden reference.

Singers and conductor are encouraged to regard this work as a sequence of prayers and be alive to any possibility in their performance presentation that might enhance that quality. The use of silence is important, not just to retune to the drone but to allow the sound of phrases to react to the acoustics of the performance space. Performers should remember a prayer is, in this context, as much a meditation as an exhortation: they should strive to encompass both qualities within the performance . . . but only if appropriate. To this end the disposition and length of pauses, the use of the drone, tempo, dynamic and articulation markings, and suggestions for *solo*, *a2* and *a4* groupings must be seen as guide, no more.

The physical disposition of the choir in performance may improve the performers' understanding and the listeners' reception of the work. Basses and Tenors should be to the left, separated from Altos and Sopranos on the right with the drone instrument(s) occupying the centre space.

In some respects this work might be seen a companion piece to Avro Part's *Seven Advent Antiphons*, whose separate movements are often performed at Advent carol services as punctuations between carols and readings. Only in such circumstances should *The Advents Collects* be broken up into separate movements.

## Advent I

*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.*

## Advent II

*Blessed Lord,  
who hast caused all Holy Scriptures  
to be written for our learning:  
Grant that we may in such wise hear them,  
read, mark, learn,  
and inwardly digest them,  
that by patience,  
and comfort of thy holy Word,  
we may embrace,  
and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life,  
which thou has given us  
in our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

## Advent III

*O Lord Jesu Christ,  
who at thy first coming didst send  
thy messenger to prepare thy way before thee:  
Grant that the ministers and stewards  
of thy mysteries may likewise  
so prepare and make ready thy way,  
by turning the hearts of the disobedient  
to the wisdom of the just,  
that at thy second coming to judge the world  
we may be found an acceptable people in thy sight,  
who livest and reignest  
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
ever one God,  
world without end.*

## Advent IV

*O Lord,  
raise up (we pray thee) thy power,  
and come among us,  
and with great might succour us;  
that whereas, through our sins and wickedness,  
we are sore let and hindered  
in running the race that is set before us,  
thy bountiful grace and mercy  
may speedily help and deliver us;  
through the satisfaction of thy Son our Lord,  
to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost  
be honour and glory,  
world without end.*

# Advent I - Challenge & Response

*risoluto* ♩ = 70 \* ◇

**Soprano**  
(see note below) *f* **A** ◇  
Al-migh - ty God

**Alto**  
(drone ad lib) *f* *p* (*sostenuto*)  
Al-migh - ty God give us

**Tenor**  
*f* *p* (*sostenuto*)  
Al - - migh - ty God give us

**Bass**  
*f*  
Al-migh - ty God

*mp*  
and put u-pon us

*mp*  
and put u-pon us

*mp*  
grace that we may cast a-way the works of dark - ness

*mp*  
that we may cast a-way the works of dark - ness

5

*crescendo* *f*  
the ar - mour of light,

*crescendo* *f*  
the ar - mour of light,

*poco meno mosso*  
now, in the time of this mor - tal life

*poco meno mosso*  
now, in the time of this mor - tal life

9

\* ◇ indicates a 'possible' ensemble pause and iteration of the drone

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*en dehors* *poco ritardando* **B** *mf*

Je - sus Christ came to vi - sit us when he shall

Je - sus Christ came to vi - sit us that in the last day,

in great hu - mi - li - ty; when he shall

12 in great hu - mi - li - ty;

*co - me a - gain in his glo - ri - ous Ma - je - sty* *allargando* *f*

co - me a - gain in his glo - ri - ous Ma - je - sty

when he shall co - me a - gain to judge

co - me a - gain in his glo - ri - ous Ma - je - sty

16 when he shall co - me a - gain to judge

*tempo primo* *mf* *f*  $\text{♩} = 65$

both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life I - mmor - tal,

we may rise

we may rise to the life I - mmor - tal,

19 we may rise to the life

*sostenuto* ***p*** C ♩ = 60

*I - mmor - tal*

*I - mmor - tal*

*I - mmor - tal*

*I - - mortal*

*and reig - neth with*

*through him who li - veth*

*and reig - neth with*

23

*molto ritardando* ◇ *risoluto* ♩ = 70 ***mf*** ***mp*** ◇

*quasi parlando*

*thee and the Ho - ly Ghost, now*

*thee and the Ho - ly Ghost, now*

*thee and the Ho - ly Ghost, now*

*now and ev - er.*

*now and ev - er.*

*now and ev - er.*

*now and ev - er.*

26

## Advent II - The Scriptures

*supplichevolmente* ♩ = 60

*p*

Ble - ssed Lord, Ble - - - - ssed Lord,

*p*

(drone) Ble - ssed Lord, Ble - - - - ssed Lord,

8

31

**D**

*mf*

who has caused all Ho - ly Scrip - tures to be wri - tten for our lear - ning;

*mf*

who has caused all Ho - ly Scrip - tures to be wri - tten for our lear - ning;

*f*

Grant that we may in such wise hear them,

8

35 Grant that we may in such wise hear them,

*con moto*

learn, learn,

learn, learn,

mark, mark, mark, and in - ward - ly

8

39 read, read, read, and in - ward - ly



**E**  $\text{♩} = 70$   $\text{◇}$  *p*

*f* all Ho - ly Scrip - tures that by pa - tience,

*f* all Ho - ly Scrip - tures that by pa - tience,

*p* di - gest them, that by pa - tience, *mf* we may em -

43 di - gest them, that by pa - tience, *mf* we may em -

*mf* and com - fort of thy Ho - ly Word,

*mf* and com - fort of thy Ho - ly Word,

brace, and e - ver hold fast the ble ssed hope

47 brace, and e - ver hold fast the ble ssed hope

**F**  $\text{◇}$  *mp* *poco a poco staccato*

which thou has gi - ven us in our Sa - viour

*mp* which thou has gi - ven us in our Sa - viour

of e - ver la - - - sting life,

50 of e - ver la - - - sting life,

$mf$   $mp$   
 Je - sus Christ.  
 Je - sus Christ.  
 (fade in drone)

## Advent III - The Ministry

*spirituale* ♩ = 65 **G** *animato* ♩ = 70

O Lord Je-su Christ

who at thy first co-ming

55

*mf* *mp*

to pre-pare thy way,

to pre-pare thy way,

didst send thy me-ssen-ger be-fore thee:

59

to pre-pare thy way,

to pre-pare thy way,

Grant that the mi-ni-sters and ste-wards of the my-ste-ries

63

to pre - pare thy way so  
 to pre - pare thy way so  
 may like wise make rea - dy so  
 may like wise make rea - dy so

68

pre - pare thy way in thy sight,  
 pre - pare thy way  
 pre - pare by tur - ning the hearts of the di - so - be - di - ent to the wis - dom  
 pre - pare thy way

71

that at thy se - cond co - ming to judge the world  
 to judge the world  
 of the just, that at thy se - cond co - ming to judge the world  
 to judge the world

75

**H**  $\text{♩} = 85$  *allargando . . . molto*

*mp* *mf*

in thy sight an

*mp* *mf*

we may be found an

*mp* *f*

we may be found an ac - cep - ta - ble peo - ple

*mp*

78 we may be found an ac - cep - ta - ble peo - ple

*molto ritardando* **I** *tempo primo* *poco a poco accelerando*

*f* *p* *mf*

ac - cep - ta - ble peo - ple O Lord Je - su Christ who li - vest

*p* *mf*

ac - cep - ta - ble peo - ple O Lord Je - su Christ who li - vest and reig - nest

*p* *p*

O Lord Je - su Christ who li - vest

*f*

81 O Lord Je - su Christ

$\text{♩} = 60$

*mf* *f*

with the Fa - ther world with - out end.

*mp* *mp* *f* (drone)

and reig - nest with - out with - out end.

*mf* *mp* *mp*

e - ver one God, and reig - nest with - out with - out end.

*mf* *f*

85 and the Ho - ly Spi - rit, world with - out end.

# Advent IV - Succour

*maestoso* ♩ = 50

**J**

*f* *mf solo* *f tutti* *mp a2* *intimo*

O Lord, raise up (we pray thee) thy po-wer, and come a-mong

(drone) *f* *mf solo* *f tutti* *mp a2*

O Lord, raise up (we pray thee) thy po-wer, and come a-mong

*f* *mf solo* *f tutti* *mp a2*

O Lord, raise up (we pray thee) thy po-wer, and come a

*f* *mf solo* *f tutti* *mp a2*

O Lord, raise up (we pray thee) thy po-wer, and come a -

90

*poco intimo*

*f tutti* *mp a4*

us, and with great mi-ght su-ccour us;

*f tutti* *mp a4*

us, and with great mi-ght su-ccour us;

*f tutti* *mp a4*

- mong us, and with great mi-ght su-ccour us;

*f tutti* *mp a4*

- mong us, and with great mi-ght su-ccour us;

96

**K** *animato* ♩ = 100

*mf tutti*

that where - as, that where - as,

*mf tutti*

that where - as, that where - as,

*mp tutti* *f*

through our sins and wi-cked - ness, we are sore

*mp tutti* *f*

through our sins and wi-cked - ness, we are sore

100

*rallentando*

through our sins and wi-cked - ness, that where - as,

*mf* through our sins and wi-cked - ness, that where - as,

let and hin-dered in ru-ning that is set be - fore us,

104 let and hin-dered the race that is set be - fore us,

*meno mosso* *mp a2* *tutti* *mf ten.*

thy boun - ti - ful grace and mer - cy spee - di - ly help

*p a2* *tutti* *mf*

may spee - di - ly help

*mp a2* *tutti* *mf*

thy boun - ti - ful grace and mer - cy spee - di - ly help

*p a2* *tutti* *mf*

may spee - di - ly help

108

*allargando*  $\text{♩} = 60$  *mp* *mp semplice*

and de - li - ver us; through the

*mp* *pp lontano*

and de - li - ver us; through

*mp* *mp semplice*

and de - li - ver us; through

*mp* *pp lontano*

and de - li - ver us; through

112

*poco cresc.* *mf*

sa - tis - fac - tion of thy Son our Lord,

*mf*

the sa - tis - fac - tion of thy Son our Lord,

*poco cresc.* *mf*

the sa - tis - fac - tion of thy Son our Lord,

*mf*

the sa - tis - fac - tion of thy Son our Lord,

116

*p a4* *mp* *mf tutti* *f*

to whom with thee and the Ho - ly Ghost be ho - nour and Glo - ry,

*p a4* *mp* *mf tutti* *f*

to whom with thee and the Ho - ly Ghost be ho - nour and Glo - ry,

*p a4* *mp* *mf tutti* *f*

to whom with thee and the Ho - ly Ghost be ho - nour and Glo - ry,

*p a4* *mp* *mf tutti* *f*

to whom with thee and the Ho - ly Ghost be ho - nour and Glo - ry,

120

*p*

end.

*mp* *p*

out end.

*mp* *p*

with end.

*mp* *p*

world end.

124

In memory of Janet Owen Thomas