



Advent and Christmas Resources 2020

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Introduction

This advent and Christmas season is likely to be like none we have experienced before. Who knew when we were preparing the Lent and Easter at home resources that we would be doing the same for Advent and Christmas? Well, here we are, still with uncertainty about the future, but still serving and worshipping an unchangeable and faithful God.

People have said that Christmas is cancelled this year, but this could not be further from the truth. Advent is the time of waiting and hoping and longing for the promises of God to be fulfilled, and Christmas is the time when we remember that God came down, to a broken and hurting world, and stepped in to the mess with love, hope, light and peace. If anything, there is no year in the lifetimes of most of us when these messages have been

more needed and need to be more central to our lives.

The resources have no particular set way to use them. There are reflections and prayers that you can use at any time, along with some activities that you might find useful. Use them however is helpful for you, but we would encourage you to try to set some time aside to use this season to focus on God and his promises and the coming of Jesus.

We hope, if restrictions allow, to also to be able to join together and worship in the church building over this time. (Details will be made available as soon as we know what is possible.) But whether we can or not, we know that God is active, present and working wherever we are, and the love of God binds us together, even when we have to be apart

Advent

In the tender mercy of our God,
the dayspring from on high shall break upon us,
to give light to all who dwell in darkness and the shadow of
death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace

Luke 1:78,79



An Advent Poem

By Rev Caroline Beckett, shared with permission

Jesus the light of the world comes.

A light for the ancestors whose story
Showed us God's power and goodness and glory
Who passed on to us every promise God gave
That God would come near us to help and to
save...

When Jesus the light of the world comes

Jesus the light of the world comes.

A light for the prophets so brave and so bold
Speaking God's truth when it had to be told
And shouting God's warnings to do what is right,
Do justly, love mercy and look for the light...

When Jesus the light of the world comes

Jesus the light of the world comes.

A light for the Baptist, preparing the way,
Wild man of the wilderness, day after day
Crying out, crying loudly to all who would hear:
Change your ways and be ready, soon God will
come near...

When Jesus the light of the world comes

Jesus the light of the world comes.

A light for his mother, so brave and so young,
Obedient, rebellious, in speech and in song
She welcomed a kingdom far greater than Rome
And offered her body and heart as God's home.
When Jesus the light of the world comes

Jesus the light of the world comes.

A light for the baby who lies in the manger
God in our helplessness, God as a stranger,
God who entrusted himself to our care
To fit us for heaven to live with him there...
When Jesus the light of the world comes

Jesus the light of the world comes.

Advent Bible Reading Plan

If you have time, perhaps read a small passage of the bible each day as we head towards Christmas. You could review Luke (which helpfully has 24 chapters) and think about some of the things we have learned in our services over the last year. Or you could try this reading plan suggested by www.adventusproject.wordpress.com

1 st	Isaiah 2:2-5	13 th	2 Peter 3:3-13
2 nd	Isaiah 9:1-7	14 th	Mark 14:60-45
3 rd	Isaiah 11:1-9	15 th	Jeremiah 33:14-17
4 th	Isaiah 11:10-16	16 th	Micah 5:2-5
5 th	Isaiah 39:5-40:11	17 th	Ezekiel 34:11-31
6 th	Isaiah 51:1-12	18 th	Zechariah 8:1-8
7 th	Isaiah 61:1-4	19 th	Zephaniah 3:14-17
8 th	Galatians 4:4-6	20 th	Isaiah 7:10-17
9 th	1 Thess 4:13-18	21 st	Matthew 1:11-17
10 th	1 Thess 5:1-11	22 nd	Luke 1:26-38
11 th	1 Cor 15:20-28	23 rd	Luke 1:39-56
12 th	Colossians 1:15-20	24 th	Matthew 1:18-25

A Prayer if you are struggling

I call you God.

Are you my God?

I speak!

Do you hear?

Are my words of any worth to you?

Do they make a difference?

I have accepted the invitation to pray

And so here I am.

The world feels a mess.

The pandemic instils fear and anxiety.

It causes sickness and death.

It strikes our NHS.

It causes division among family and friends.

It's wrecking our economy.

It's driving the poorest into the dust.

Please hear me.

Please come to our help.

Give us what we need to see this through.

And at its ending,

may it mark a new beginning

Of friendship,

Peace and kindness;

Of generosity, hope and faith.

Amen.

Some Advent Prayers

Christmas is coming, Lord,
Yet little cause for cheer.
Is there any point in tinsel and glitter?
Will there be any coming together?
What of the funny foibles and quirks
that drive us to distraction;
the silly jokes and games;
the overspend, overfeed, over-indulged
that have made Christmas, Christmas.

With so much stripped away,
bring us back to the heart of Christmas
when love became incarnate.
May the flame of the Christmas lantern
illuminate my mind;
And the love that came down at Christmas,
fill my heart;
May the angels' song of peace and goodwill
Bless again the earth.
Give to each one cup of kindness,
One measure of joy
and stir up in us good Christmas cheer
For the love of the him who gave Christmas its name:
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Holy God, just as we are we come to you,
and ask for your kingdom to come in us
and in our homes and our hearts,
increase our faith and love for you,
so that we may become the lights in the darkness
that we are called to be.

Amen

Living Stones, Prayers of Intercession. Susan Sayers

Lord

I pray that I will have faith
and trust in you my God,
Even when I think there is no
hope
because you are our true God
and you never let us down.

Amen

Prayers from the Edge. Catherine Von Ruhland

God of Hope,
we come to you in the darkness
and uncertainty of our lives;
transform our doubt
heal our brokenness
strengthen our weakness
for you are faithful
and our hope rests in you.

Amen

Rev Petra Shakeshaft

Loving God,
your Son Jesus Christ came
that we might have life
and have it abundantly;
pour out your blessing upon our nation;
where there is illness,
bring your healing touch;
where there is fear,
strengthen us with the knowledge of your presence;
where there is uncertainty,
build us up in faith;
where there is dishonesty,
lead us into truth; where there is discord,
may we know the harmony of your love;
this we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Prayer for the Nation, Church of England

Holy God, we bring to you in love
those who are weary with ongoing pain and weakness,
those for whom this time is filled with fear and doubt,
those who struggle as we face uncertainty,
Pour your living strength into each of our lives
and fill us with your peace.

Amen

Living Stones, Prayers of Intercession. Susan Sayers

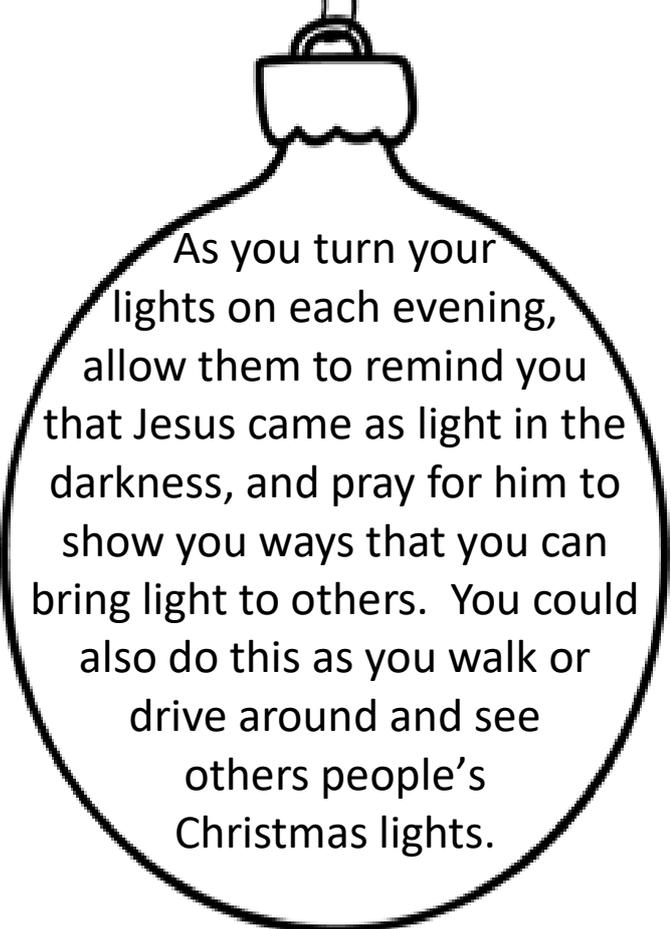
Come, Lord, come down
come in, come among us.
Enter into our darkness with your light.
Come fill our emptiness with your presence.
Dispel the clouds and reveal your glory.
Come refresh, renew and restore us.
Come, Lord, come down,
come in, come among us.
Amen

Traces of Glory. David Adam

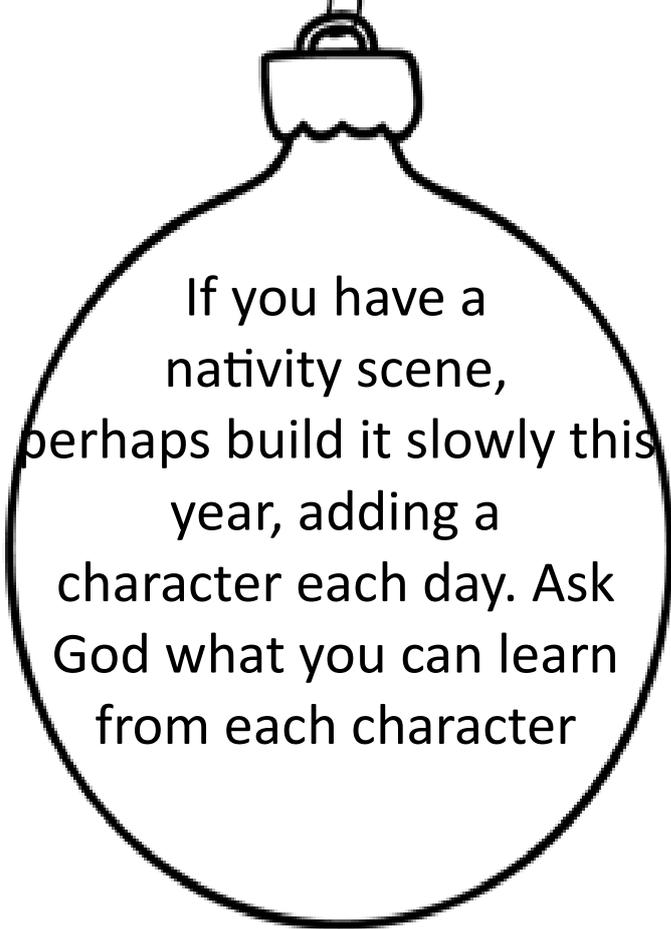
God of all joy,
we come before you in praise and thanksgiving
for all who have brought us joy.
Lead us from the darkness
and uncertainty of this world
into an Advent of expectation
that the light will come,
the light has come
and will not be overcome.
We pray that through prayer and reflection
and through your grace
the Christ-child may be born in us anew this Christmas.
Amen

Rev Petra Shakeshaft

Creative Advent Prayer



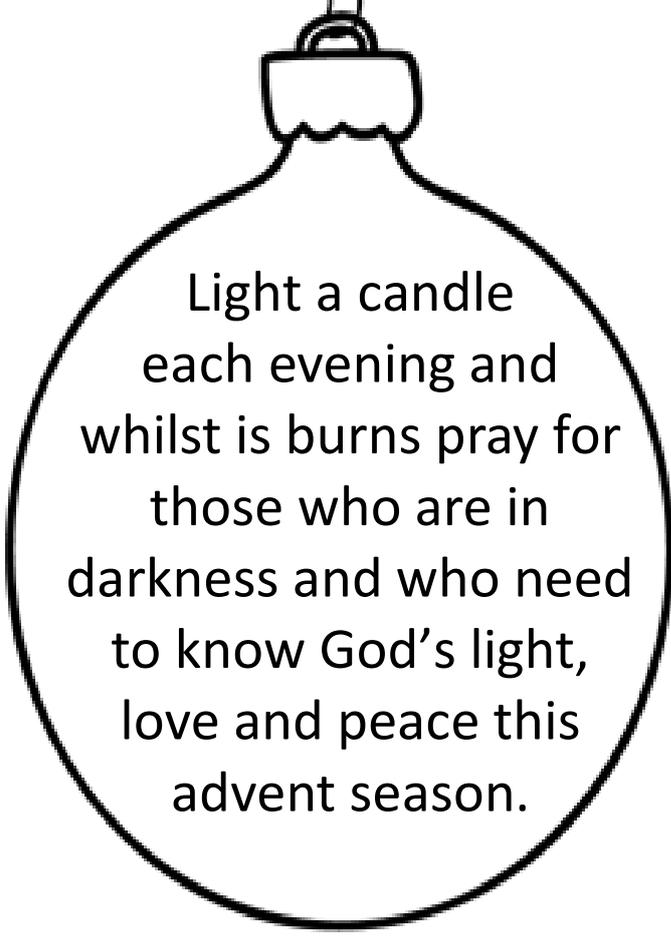
As you turn your lights on each evening, allow them to remind you that Jesus came as light in the darkness, and pray for him to show you ways that you can bring light to others. You could also do this as you walk or drive around and see others people's Christmas lights.



If you have a nativity scene, perhaps build it slowly this year, adding a character each day. Ask God what you can learn from each character



Colour in the nativity scene that we sent out to put in your window. As you colour allow your mind to meditate on the story and try to see something new in it.



Light a candle each evening and whilst it burns pray for those who are in darkness and who need to know God's light, love and peace this advent season.

Some Questions as we prepare for Christmas

If you are able to meet with others, maybe you could take some time, over a meal or a coffee or whilst taking your exercise perhaps, to think about these questions.

(Taken from Together at Home – Church Resources)

- What is your favourite part of Christmas day?
- What is your favourite thing we usually do at church for Christmas?
- How is Christmas going to be different this year?
- What is the best present you have ever given?
- Christmas reminds us that God's love is a free gift for everyone – how can we share that this Christmas?
- How many sources of light can you find in the Christmas story?
- How can we be a light in the world at Christmas?

Midnight Prayers

For many of us, as Christmas Eve turns to Christmas Day we would usually be in church, celebrating and remembering together. If you are still awake, these are some prayers that you can use as Christmas Day begins.

Welcome all wonders of the night
Eternity shut in a span.
Summer in winter; day in night,
Heaven in earth and God in man
Great little one whose all embracing birth
Brings earth to heaven and heaven to earth

“Do I not fill heaven and earth?” says the Lord.
Now the word is made flesh and laid in a narrow manger.
From eternity to eternity you are God
And now we see you in a newborn child.

Eternal God, who made this most holy night
To shine with the brightness of your one true light;
Bring each of us,
who have known the revelation of that light on earth,
To see the radiance of your heavenly glory;
Through Jesus Christ you Son our Lord
Who is alive and reigns with you,
one God, now and forever
Amen#

Church of England , Times and Seasons

A Christmas Reflection

Christmas Day comes, as it has for hundreds of years and we remember a tiny baby, born in obscurity to young parents, far from home, in less than ideal circumstances. But in those less than ideal circumstances God's eternal plan was being revealed. Worked out through ordinary people who made space to listen and to respond to the words of God.

That tiny, naked, vulnerable baby was the pinnacle of the salvation plan of God. God, come to earth to save us all. Angels watched with wonder as God humbled himself and became human to save a rebellious humanity.

Our circumstances today may be less than ideal. We may be missing people and traditions that usually make Christmas day special for us. But if the Christmas story teaches us anything it is that God continues to work and to act, even when we can't quite see it. Even when all around looks like chaos and no one is where they want to be due to following the rules (remember that census that sent everyone far from home?) God works and shows his amazing love for us.

Today try to look for signs of God's love. Remember his greatest gift, Jesus, and remember that nothing can separate us from his love.

Christmas Prayers

If you have time today, try to find some quiet, maybe light a candle and pray one of these prayers.

Holy Jesus,
By being born one of us
And lying humbly in a manger
You show us how much God loves the world.
Let the light of your love always shine in our hearts,
Until we reach our home in heaven
And see you on your throne of glory.
Amen.

Church of England, Times and Seasons.

Lord, by the song of the angels
You disclosed your birth to your own people
And by the leading of star
Your revealed your glory to strangers
Teach us to know you now
And to make you known to all.
Amen

Church of England, Times and Seasons

Child of Bethlehem, weak and helpless, have pity on
my weakness.
Child of Bethlehem, peaceful in a manger, calm my
restlessness.
Great son of God made flesh, hold me in your strong
arms.

Stations of the Nativity, Raymond Chapman

The New Year

2020 has been a strange and difficult year, and yet it has also been a year when the promises of God have remained true and God has remained, as always, present amongst the chaos. As we move into 2021 these are just some suggested words that you might like to pray if they are helpful.

Holy and ever present God

2020 is a year that we are pleased to say farewell to,
Yet even this year,

You have been present and active.

Help us to remember the moments of peace and joy,
And to leave at your feet the moments of fear and
grief.

As we look to 2021,

We pray for more glimpses of your kingdom,

We pray that we will start this year with hope,

And with an expectation that you will work

And we pray that we will continue to seek connection

As we long for the day we can all be together.

Amen.

Let us look for Christ wherever we go

Let us never stop seeking

Believing that there is a light that shines in the darkness

Which the darkness shall not overcome

And may the love of the Creator

The joy of the Spirit

And the peace of the Christ-child

Be with us this New Year, and evermore

Amen

Worshipwords.co.uk

We pray for God's faithfulness to be known in our world.
In a world of change and hope,
of fear and adventure,
faithful God glorify your name.

In human rebellion and obedience,
in our seeking and our finding,
faithful God glorify your name.

In the common life of our society,
in prosperity and need,
faithful God glorify your name.

As your Church proclaims your goodness
in words and action,
faithful God glorify your name.

Among our friends
and in our homes,
faithful God glorify your name.

In our times of joy,
in our days of sorrow,
faithful God
glorify your name.

In our strengths and triumphs,
in our weakness and at our death,
faithful God glorify your name.

In your saints in glory
and on the day of Christ's coming,
faithful God glorify your name.

Amen

Church of England , Times and Seasons

A Blessing

May God bless you with discomfort,
At easy answers, half-truths,
And superficial relationships
So that you may live
Deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger
At injustice, oppression,
And exploitation of people,
So that you may work for
Justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears,
To shed for those who suffer pain,
Rejection, hunger and war,
So that you may reach out your hand
To comfort them and
To turn their pain to joy

And may God bless you
With enough foolishness
To believe that you can
Make a difference in the world,
So that you can do
What others claim cannot be done
To bring justice and kindness
To all our children and the poor.

And the Blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you,
be among those you love
and those you find it difficult to love,
now, at the turning of the year, and always. Amen

All of our services will continue to be posted on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. Please search for Christ Church Dartford on any of these platforms, or go to christchurchdartford.com.

Our phone service will continue at 11am each Sunday phone 0333 011 0616, access code 1038685#

If you need any additional help or support then please do call us on 01322 221589 (leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as possible) or email us on christchurchdartford@hotmail.co.uk

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With additional huge thanks to colleagues who have made their work freely available to be used by others at this time.