

Advent and Christmas

Prayers and worship resources on the theme of 'Advent and Christmas' – updated November 2013



Advent Candle Readings

Sunday 1 December: Week 1, The Patriarchs

Genesis 12:1-3

Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'

As we light this first candle, we think of all the promises of God, spoken over thousands of years, including promises to Abraham and Sarah and all the patriarchs. Thank you that you keep your promises, and please help us to keep waiting on them, even when like Abraham and Sarah we find it hard to see how they might come true. Thank you that you always want to bless, and for the greatest blessing we will celebrate soon, the coming of Jesus.

Sunday 8 December: Week 2, The Prophets

Isaiah 2:2-4

In days to come

*the mountain of the LORD's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.*

*Many peoples shall come and say,
'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.'*

*For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

*He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning-hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.*

As we light this second candle, we remember the prophets who spoke of the coming Messiah. Thank you for the hope which we still cling onto, the promise that he will rule the world wisely and bless the nations. We pray that communities everywhere would come to know this peace, and especially for situations of conflict, that the time will come very soon when people no longer bear arms against each other.

Sunday 15 December: Week 3, John the Baptist

Isaiah 6:8-9

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I; send me!' And he said, 'Go and say to the people:

*"Keep listening, but do not comprehend;
keep looking, but do not understand."*

As we light this third candle, we think of John the Baptist, who bravely answered your call, who gave up his comforts and went to the desert, and who was prepared to die for his belief in you. As Christmas draws close, please help us not to cling to our own comforts; help us to be willing to follow with faith and speak your truth, even when people do not seem to be listening.

Sunday 22 December: Week 4, Mary

Isaiah 7:14

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.

As we light this fourth candle, we remember the faith of Mary, who when she was confronted with the great call you made on her life said, 'Let it be to me, according to your will.' Please give us the courage to be a people who say 'yes' to you, at this Christmas time and through the whole year.

Christmas Day

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Lord, on this Christmas morning, we thank you again that you keep all your promises. We thank you that you came, just like you said you would! We thank you that the coming of the tiny, fragile baby Jesus means not just the birth of one more child, but the birth of your new kingdom of justice and peace.

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Advent God

Advent God, who was and is and is to come, we pray for the world in which Jesus walked and to which he will return. Our world has never overcome the injustices and oppression, hatred and bitterness, violence and war. As we picture the innocent victims we would rather not see, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come, come into our world and make all things new.

We praise you for all the good things in our churches that truly reflect your character, but we know there is much in us that needs to change. If we have been taken captive by the spirit of the age, if we have failed to listen to you, and lost our prophetic voice, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come, come into our church and make all things new.

We thank you for the joys and the fulfilment that accompany your gift of life, but we pray for those who know no joy, and only despair – especially as we face Christmas. Make us a people of grace, a people whose lives are truly a gift to others. Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come, come into our lives and make all things new.

Advent God, transform this world we pray, and start with me.

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Christmas Eve

Loving God, giver of life and creator of love, we pray for those who have no gifts to open this Christmas, for parents who will struggle even to feed their children, for children who will have little reason to smile. May we who celebrate Christmas become agents of Good News for them.

We pray for those who do not look forward to this time of year, because of family circumstances, difficult memories and loneliness. Lord Jesus, who came into our world, be close to them. May we who celebrate Christmas, truly represent you to those on our own doorstep.

We thank you for the reminders of Christmas, for the truth that you have made yourself thoroughly at home in our midst, that we may call you Emmanuel, God with us. Keep us conscious of your loving and living presence, and make us channels of your grace, not just on Christmas Day, but every day. May we and the church in which we worship become ever more truly God's gift to the world.

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Christmas Day

Lord Jesus Christ,
On this Day we thank you for coming to earth, to live as one of us.
We thank you for all the presents we have unwrapped.

We thank you for the gifts we have been able to send.
We thank you for the happiness this day brings,
And for all the good food we are ready to tuck into.
But we pray for those who are less happy about today,
For those who are hungry or lonely, away from home or sad, ill or unhappy.
Be near to them, and show us how to be as loving and caring,
As the Jesus whose birth we celebrate today.

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The Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) is changing its legal status from a charitable unincorporated association to a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO). From 1 January 2020, BUGB will operate as a CIO with registered charity number 1181392.

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