

21 <sup>st</sup>	Ps 33	Zephaniah 3.14-18	Luke 1.39-45
22 <sup>nd</sup>	Ps 89.1-18	2 Samuel 7.1-16	Luke 1.46-56
23 <sup>rd</sup>	Ps 25	Malachi 3.1-4,23-24	Luke 1.57-66
24 <sup>th</sup>	Ps 89. 19-37	Acts 13. 16-26	Luke 1.67-79
25 <sup>th</sup>	Ps 97	Isaiah 62. 6-12	Luke 2.1-20

## Words for reflection in Advent

My soul waits for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;  
my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning.

*Psalm 130: 5-6*

By the tender mercy of our God,  
the dawn from on high will break upon us,  
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the way of peace.'

*Luke 1. 78-79*

God, our hope and our desire,  
we wait for your coming as a woman longs for the birth,  
the exile for her home,  
the lover for the touch of his beloved,  
and the humble poor for justice.

*Janet Morley, Christian Aid/SPCK 1992 "Bread of Tomorrow"*

God did not send into our tormented world technical aid, Gabriel with a group of experts. He did not send food, not discarded clothes of angels. Even less did he extend long term loans. Rather he came himself, born in a stable, starved in the desert, naked on a cross, and sharing with us he became our bread and suffering with us he became our joy.

*Anon. in "A Word in Season" Donald Hilton NCEC 1984*

Come to us, Lord Jesus Christ,  
come as we search the Scriptures and see God's hidden purpose,  
come as we walk the lonely road, needing a companion,  
come when life mystifies and perplexes us,  
come into our disappointments and unease,  
come at table where we share our food and hopes,  
and, coming, open our eyes to recognise you.

*Donald Hilton, in "Shine on, star of Bethlehem" (Christian Aid)*



## Praying through Advent

Advent is the season of preparation for Christmas. It is a time for looking steadily at the world and at ourselves, becoming aware of our need and looking to God to "be born in us today", in the words of the carol *O little Town of Bethlehem*.

Amid the pressures of the shopping, cooking, and partying which mark the run up to Christmas, it is good to make time – even if just a few minutes a day – to be still and remember the "reason for the season"

This sheet offers some suggestions to help you do this creatively, as well as Bible readings for each day in Advent. Use these suggestions as you wish – pray as you can and not as you can't! The important thing is to make yourself open to God – prayer is you as you are meeting God as God is. Just as a mother cannot know until her child is born what it is really like, so we cannot predict what God will do in us.

## Advent Traditions and Prayer

The "count down" to Christmas has been marked in many ways, and these can be used as aids to prayer.

### Advent candle

Advent candles – marked with the 24 days leading up to Christmas – can be bought in the shops (Oxfam usually have them in stock). Alternatively you could make your own, taking an ordinary (fairly thin) candle and marking it into sections. Simply light the candle each day and use the time that it takes to burn through that day's section to read, pray or be still.



### Christmas Crib

You don't need an expensive crib set to bring home the significance of Christmas. A home-made set can be just as meaningful. It can be 2-d or 3-d,

made of cardboard, plasticine, salt dough, fabric... it's up to you. Put it somewhere prominent in your house, remembering not to add the Christ Child till Christmas Day! The manger, standing empty through Advent, is a reminder that Christ comes to us now, if we leave space for him, just as he did 2000 years ago. (The kings shouldn't arrive until Jan 6<sup>th</sup> – Epiphany. You can have them “approach” gradually from some outlying part of the house if you like!)

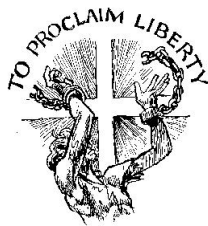
## Advent ring

Advent in church is marked by the lighting of the Advent candles. In Seal we use three purple and one pink candles for the Sundays in Advent and a white candle which is lit on Christmas Day. Some churches have red candles for Advent instead and gold for Christmas Day.

A similar Advent candle arrangement is easy to make at home. I use a cake board as a base, and place four candles around the edge and a gold candle in the middle. If you use broad candles, rather than long thin ones, they will stand up by themselves, though I often use a bit of blu-tak to hold them securely. Then decorate around them as you like – baubles, tinsel, artificial greenery etc. BE CAREFUL that whatever you use is not dangerously close to the flame!

I light a candle each Sunday at meal times, and the gold one during Christmas dinner. You could accompany the lighting of the candles with a simple prayer if that would be helpful in your family.

## Praying with the Bible in Advent



The Bible is one of the ways in which God speaks to us. It is meant to be read prayerfully, with our ears open for God's voice. In Advent we particularly reflect on our need for God, and his love for us, expressed in Jesus. Many of the readings set for this time are from the prophet Isaiah, who spoke at a time when the people of Israel were in exile in Babylon and felt hopeless and alone. God promised that he would rescue them. "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I

have called you by name, you are mine." The following suggestions may help you to hear God call **you** by name this Advent, and to respond to that call as you meet him in prayer and reflection.

There are suggested Bible readings for use on each day in Advent opposite.

Here are some easy ways to help you read the Bible prayerfully.

1. Read the passage slowly and be aware of any words or phrases that stick out for you. Repeat them quietly to yourself and carry them on with you through the day.
2. If you are reading a story, imagine you are there. Visualise the scene and allow imagine how you react as the story unfolds. What do you want to say and do?
3. Read with your head, heart and hands. Ask yourself; What do I think about this? What do I feel about this? What should I do about this?

## Readings for Advent

### December

1 <sup>st</sup>	Ps 80	Isaiah 64.1-9	Mark 13.24-37
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Ps 122	Isaiah 2.1-5	Matthew 8.5-11
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Ps 72	Isaiah 11.1-10	Luke 10.21-24
4 <sup>th</sup>	Ps 23	Isaiah 25.6-10a	Matthew 15.29-37
5 <sup>th</sup>	Ps 118	Isaiah 26.1-6	Matthew 7.21,24-27
6 <sup>th</sup>	(St Nicholas)		
	Ps 27	Isaiah 29.17-24	Matthew 9.27-31
7 <sup>th</sup>	Ps 146	Isaiah 30.19-26	Matthew 9.35-10.1,6-8
8 <sup>th</sup>	Ps 85.1-13	2 Peter 3.8-15a	Mark 1.1-8
9 <sup>th</sup>	Ps 85.7-21	Isaiah 35.1-10	Luke 5. 17-26
10 <sup>th</sup>	Ps 96	Isaiah 40.1-11	Matthew 18.12-14
11 <sup>th</sup>	Ps 103	Isaiah 40.25-31	Matthew 11.28-30
12 <sup>th</sup>	Ps 145	Isaiah 41.13-20	Matthew 11.11-15
13 <sup>th</sup>	(St. Lucy)		
	Ps 1	Isaiah 48.17-19	Matthew 11.16-19
14 <sup>th</sup>	Ps 9	2 Kings 2.9-12	Matthew 17.10-13
15 <sup>th</sup>	Ps 126	Isaiah 61. 1-4,8-11	John 1.6-8,19-28
16 <sup>th</sup>	Ps 25	Numbers 24.2-7,15-17	Matthew 21.23-27
17 <sup>th</sup>	Ps 72	Genesis 49.2,8-10	Matthew 1.1-17
18 <sup>th</sup>	Ps 114	Jeremiah 23.5-8	Matthew 1.18-24
19 <sup>th</sup>	Ps 71	Judges 13.2-7,24-25	Luke 1.5-25
20 <sup>th</sup>	Ps 24	Isaiah 7.10-14	Luke 1.26-38