

Mission Together

Advent Liturgy: Journeying to Christmas together



Introduction for Teachers / Leaders

The season of Advent is a time of preparation for Christmas when we remember when Jesus was born into the world and that he will come again. Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and spans four weeks. During this time the Church's daily and Sunday readings recall the Israelites' long wait for the Messiah's birth. These readings and various Advent symbols help us prepare for and understand the significance of God becoming one of us. The most recognisable of these symbols is the Advent wreath.

Every element of the Advent wreath communicates something special about a Christian's journey towards Christmas. Its circular shape represents God's never ending presence. The evergreen leaves, which do not fade in colour, signify God's constancy.

The candles that we light as we progress through the Sundays in Advent represent hope, peace, joy, and love. The white candle in the centre is lit on Christmas day as it represents Christ, the light of the world.

Liturgy Plan

These liturgies encourage children to think about the special journey we make together in Advent, as we all draw closer to the birth of Jesus – God made man – at Christmas. **Reference will be made to Biblical places noted on our Together in Jordan country poster.** This poster can be ordered via our website.

Setting the scene

Please refer to our guide 'How to Pray with Children' <https://missiontogether.org.uk/prayer-resources/>

Entrance hymn or recorded music

Our suggestions: 'Maranatha' by Estelle White.

Sign of the cross and lighting of the Advent wreath

The number of candles lit should correspond to the particular Advent week each liturgy takes place in.

Suggested accompanying song: 'Advent Candles' http://www.msgr.ca/msgr-2/ADVENTwreath_01.htm

Children's reflection and Bible reading (scriptures adapted from NJB)

Please use the reflection and reading befitting the Advent week you are in, **these can be found on page 2, 3 & 4.**

Note that our liturgies on hope, peace and joy use the scriptures for Christmastide. This allows opportunity to explain the significance of key figures and themes from the Christmas story and their significance to us today.

Closing prayer: Mission Together Prayer

Sign of the cross

Closing hymn or recorded music

Our suggestions for week one: We Three Kings. Week two: While Shepherds Watched. Week three: Hark the Herald Angels Sing or Joy to the World.





Children's reflection and Bible reading

When we light the first candle on the Advent wreath we are encouraged to think about **hope**. To help us think about **hope** today, we are going to use the example of two groups of people.

The first group we usually hear about around Christmas day. Let's see if you can guess who they are. This group had a very long journey to see Jesus. They travelled across the deserts of Jordan to Bethlehem (show on Together in Jordan map), so it was good they rode camels or they would struggle to get over the sand! Can you guess who this group of people is? It's the three wise men.

Let's hear a Bible reading about the wise men now. Listen carefully to how they felt when the star they were following finally led them to the baby Jesus. *Copy and paste the scripture and ask a pupil to read.*

'The wise men set out. And there in front of them was the star they had seen rising; it went forward and stopped over the place where the baby was. The sight of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the baby with his mother, Mary, and falling to their knees they praised him.'

The Gospel of the Lord: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Question: How did the wise men feel when they found Jesus?

The Bible says they were delighted! That's not surprising as their journey was a long, difficult and dangerous one. I'm sure that at times the wise men may have wanted to give up and go home, but they didn't.

Sometimes we might feel like giving up, if we find work hard or if we feel disappointed. But when we feel like giving up, we should remember the example of the wise men, because they teach us something very important about **hope**. The wise men hoped that if they kept following the star – if they kept trying – they would in time accomplish their mission. And their mission was to find a very special baby. A baby who would reveal God's love to the world and show us all how to live in peace.

Question: Who was this special baby? It was Jesus!

There's another group of people who can teach us about **hope**. They have also made long, difficult and dangerous journeys, some over the deserts of Jordan too! This group of people are refugees, like Sandra and the other refugee children we learnt about in our Together in Jordan campaign.

Like the wise men, refugees have great hope that eventually, after their long journeys, they will find peace. We can strengthen the hope of refugees by sharing what we have with them so that children like Sandra might feel safe, be cared for, and know that Jesus loves them.

We can also help by asking God to guide and protect all children like Sandra. Let's do that now as we join our hands and get ready to pray. *Copy and paste the prayers and ask pupils to read.*

Dear Jesus, please guide and protect all refugee children. May they never lose hope as they journey onwards, knowing that you lead us always to love. Lord hear us...

Dear Jesus, in Advent we remember the importance of hope. Help us to always have hope in you and to share this hope with others through our kindness and our joy. Lord hear us...

Let us all now say out loud our Mission Together prayer...

Mission Together Prayer

May all children
In the world
Share love
Share friendship and live
In the peace
Of God's love.
Now and forever. Amen



Children's reflection and Bible reading

When we light the second candle on the Advent wreath we are encouraged to think about **peace**. To help us think about **peace** today, we are going to use the example of Bethlehem's shepherds (point out Bethlehem on the Together in Jordan country map).

Shepherds in Jesus' day had very hard lives. They lived far up in the hillside with their sheep so they could care for their flock all the time. This meant shepherds rarely came down from the hills to visit towns. When they did, the townspeople saw the shepherds as strangers and not trustworthy. This made shepherds feel upset and afraid, and when people feel upset and afraid it is difficult to feel at **peace** and be happy.

Let's hear a Bible reading about the shepherds now. Listen carefully to how the shepherds felt when they saw God's angel and what the angel said to help them. *Copy and paste the scripture and ask a pupil to read.*

'In the countryside close by there were shepherds who lived in the fields and took it in turns to watch their flocks by night. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.'

The Gospel of the Lord: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Question: How did the shepherds feel when they saw God's angel?

The Bible says they were terrified! That's not surprising. We can all feel afraid when we experience something new. Hands up if you felt a little scared when you started a new class or a new club? But when we feel afraid we should remember the words that the angel spoke to the shepherds.

Question: Can you remember what the angel said?

The angel told the shepherds not to be afraid because Jesus was very close to them. Jesus is very close to us too and, just like the shepherds, this gives us a sense of **peace** when we feel afraid. Similarly, Jesus brings **peace** to children like Sandra (whom we learnt about in our Together in Jordan campaign), a pupil at the Marka School for Refugees. Every day Sandra and all the pupils at the Marka school join together to pray. In their prayers they are reminded that God loves us so much that he came down from heaven to live among us. That is what we are waiting to celebrate at Christmas; the birth of Jesus who would show us how to love others just as God loves us.

We can love others as Jesus asked us to by sharing what we have so that Sandra and other children who need our help might feel safe, be cared for, and know that Jesus loves them. We can also help by asking Jesus to guide and protect all refugee children. Let's do that now as we join our hands and get ready to pray.

Copy and paste the prayers and ask pupils to read.

Dear Jesus, please guide and protect all refugee children. May their journey lead to peace and help them to know God's love for all His children. Lord hear us...

Dear Jesus, in Advent we remember the importance of peace. When we feel afraid may we know you are close, giving us peace that we can share with others.

Lord hear us...

Let us all now say out loud our Mission Together prayer...

Mission Together Prayer

May all children
In the world
Share love
Share friendship and live
In the peace
Of God's love.
Now and forever. Amen



Children's reflection and Bible reading

When we light the third candle on the Advent wreath we are encouraged to think about **joy**. To help us think about **joy** today, we are going to use the example of some heavenly angels.

When we read or listen to the Bible we learn that God often gives angels an important job. Can anyone guess what that job is? God sends angels from heaven to deliver special messages to the world. In the Bible reading we will hear today, the message delivered by the angels is very special and **joyful**. Listen carefully to discover what that message is. *Copy and paste the scripture and ask a pupil to read.*

'The angel said to the shepherds... "Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And all at once with the angel there was a host of heavenly angels praising God with the words: Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace for those he favours.'

The Gospel of the Lord: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Question: What was the message the angel delivered to the shepherds?

The angel announced the birth of Jesus, saviour of the world.

Question: How did the host of angels react when this message was shared with the shepherds?

The crowd of angels gathered together and praised God, singing "Glory to God and peace on earth!"

The angels were so happy because they knew that the birth of Jesus would bring God's love and peace into the world. This was something to sing about!

Hands up if you like to sing when you feel **joyful**? The children at Marka School for Refugees like to sing too. They sing because at their school they feel safe, are able to learn, are surrounded by friends, and know that God is very close to them. For a long time the pupils lived in a country where there was much fighting. This was very dangerous and frightening, so the children and their families had to leave their homes and find somewhere safe to live. They became refugees.

Now Marka pupils sing each day, just as the angels did, because the children know that Jesus continues to bring his love and peace to the world – by being close to us in prayer and through the kindness and mercy of others. We can also bring Jesus' love, peace and **joy** to the world by being kind, forgiving, sharing what we have and praying for children who need our help, like the pupils at Marka School for Refugees.

Let's join our hands and pray for those children now. *Copy and paste the prayers and ask pupils to read.*

Dear Jesus, watch over the children at Marka School for Refugees. Help them to be healthy and happy and may their joyful songs tell of your love for all people. Lord hear us...

Dear Jesus, in Advent and at Christmas we learn what it means to be joyful! Help us to always remember that real joy is not found in presents but in the love you bring into our lives. Lord hear us...

Let us all now say out loud our Mission Together prayer...

Mission Together Prayer

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In the world
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