Mission Together

Advent week one, celebration of the Word

Introduction for teachers / leaders: The season of Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas and spans four weeks. It is a time of preparation, when we recall the Israelites' long wait for the Messiah's birth and remember that Jesus was born into the world and will come again. 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. Its circular shape represents God's never-ending presence. The evergreen leaves signify God's constancy. The four candles are lit as we journey through the weeks of Advent; the central white candle is lit on Christmas day. All the candles represent Christ, light of the world.

Liturgy plan

The liturgy and activities focus on waiting with patience and hope for God's promised Saviour.

GATHER: Setting the scene

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

Opening hymn or recorded music

Suggested hymn: *We are Waiting* by Claud Fullwood.
missiontogether.org.uk/sing-with-mission-together

Introduction

Print the introduction on page 2 and ask pupils to read.

Sign of the cross, Opening prayer and lighting of the Advent wreath

Print the opening prayer on page 2 and ask pupils to read.

WORD: Bible reading (Year B): Mark 13:33-37 ICB

Print the reading on page 2 and ask pupils to read.

Bible reflection

See page 3. We suggest this is delivered by a teacher / chaplain.

RESPOND: Prayers of intercession

Print the prayers of intercession on page 4 and ask pupils to read.

SENT: Mission Together prayer

See to the right.

Sign of the cross

Closing hymn or recorded music

Our suggestions: *Maranatha*

Follow up activities, found on our Advent webpage

Handy Advent wreath (EYS) and Jesse Tree KS1/2.

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.**

Introduction

Reader: Today we light the first candle on our Advent wreath. Each week we will light an extra candle and watch as the light from the wreath grows brighter. The growing light is a sign of our growing hope as we wait for the birth of our Saviour, Jesus.

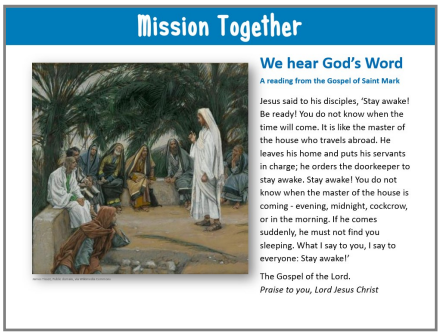
Reader: Advent is a holy time of preparation. During the first two weeks of Advent, we don't just prepare for the birth of Jesus on Christmas day; the Bible also encourages us to prepare for the day when Jesus will come again. Let's listen carefully to today's Bible reading and its instruction to be ready for Jesus' return. But let's begin by lighting the first candle on our Advent wreath and joining with our opening prayer.

Sign of the cross, lighting of the Advent wreath & opening prayer

Invite a pupil to light the candle

Reader: God our Father, as we light our first Advent candle,
Help us to wait patiently for the birth of your Son, Jesus,
Show us ways we can share Christ's light during Advent,
So that the world might know the hope and love that your Son brings.
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Bible reading: A reading from the Gospel of St Mark 13:33-37



Reader: Jesus said to his disciples... 'be careful! Always be ready! You don't know when that time will be. It is like a man who goes on a trip. He leaves his house and lets his servants take care of it. He gives each servant a special job to do. One servant has the work of guarding the door. The man tells this servant always to be watchful. This is what I am now telling you. You must always be ready. You don't know when the owner of the house will come back. He might come in the evening, or at midnight, or in the early morning, or when the sun rises. He might come back quickly. If you are always ready, then he will not find you sleeping. I tell you this, and I say this to everyone: be ready!'

The Gospel of the Lord
R/ Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Bible Reflection (We suggest this is delivered by a teacher / chaplain)

In our reading today we hear Jesus teaching his disciples an important lesson: 'be ready'! In the painting on screen we can see that the disciples understood how important this lesson was. The painter has captured them leaning in, with their eyes fixed on Jesus. I'm going to ask you a question, I don't want an answer, but I'd like you to think about it in your head. What was Jesus asking them to get ready for?

In Advent we get ready for two things. We get ready for the birth of Jesus on Christmas day. We also get ready for the day when Jesus will come again. It is this second coming that Jesus is telling his disciples to get ready for. Jesus knew that he would die on the cross, rise again, ascend to heaven, and one day return to bring everlasting life, justice and goodness to the world. But he tells his disciples and us today, that nobody knows when this return will happen. That's why Jesus tells us all to be ready; just as the servant in today's parable was instructed to watch out for his masters unexpected return.

Jesus knows that waiting isn't easy. He knows that when we have to wait for something special, even if it's just waiting four weeks for Christmas, it's easy to get impatient, bored, or distracted. With all the parties and exciting things that are happening in the weeks before Christmas, we can get so distracted that sometimes we can even forget about Jesus and his commandment to look out for and love others.

I'm going to ask you a question, I don't want an answer, but I'd like you to think about it in your head. If Jesus returned today, how would you want him to see you behaving? Would you want Jesus to see you caring for others, or ignoring them? Would you want Jesus to see you welcoming others, or turning them away? Would you want Jesus to see you sharing with others, or keeping things to yourself? Would you want Jesus to see you forgiving others, or holding grudges?

Because Jesus loves us and asks us to love each other, we know that he would want to find us caring, welcoming, sharing, and forgiving others. These are the ways we show we are God's children, and the ways we show we are ready to celebrate Jesus' birth on Christmas day and welcome his return when Jesus comes again.

Prayer is another way we show we are ready for Jesus. Prayer brings us closer to God and closer to others. Through prayer we express our love for the world and its people. Let's do that now as we join with our **prayers of intercession.**

Prayers of intercession

Reader: The response to our prayer is: **Hear our prayer.**

Reader: Heavenly Father, hear our prayer and help us to be ready for the arrival of your Son, Jesus. Through our words and actions may we care, welcome, share, and forgive others, so that your Son might find us ready to celebrate his birth and welcome his return.
Lord, in your mercy...

Reader: Heavenly Father, we pray for our home, school, and parish families. Help us to journey through Advent together, keeping Jesus at the centre of all our events and activities, so that when Christmas day comes, we are all ready to welcome the birth of your Son.
Lord, in your mercy...

Reader: Heavenly Father, we pray for children around the world who are also waiting to celebrate your Son's birth on Christmas Day. Help us all to use our Advent time wisely, praying for our brothers and sisters everywhere, and doing what we can to share your light and hope with everyone. Lord, in your mercy...

Reader: Let us now say the 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.

Sign of the cross

Closing hymn (we suggest *Maranatha*).

Fundraising ideas

Mission Together is the children's branch of Missio – the Catholic Church's official children's charity for overseas mission. Thanks to children in England and Wales, we can provide life-changing aid around the world in whatever form it's needed. That could be a new school, feeding programme, or a generator for a children's home. Mission Together helps all children, regardless of background or beliefs. That's how we show the all-embracing nature of the Catholic Church and the true meaning of 'mission'.

Fundraising is a brilliant way to involve everyone in raising money for Mission Together. Below are a few seasonal ideas but you can find other ways to get involved throughout the year by visiting our webpage https://missiontogether.org.uk/fundraising-ideas/

Please ***share your fundraising events*** with us @MissioUK, adding the hashtag #missiontogether

Ideas for Autumn term

Rake-a-Thon: With autumn leaves falling, children can ask family members or caregivers for suggested donations to clear up the garden, yard or driveway. Challenge pupils to clear as many of these spaces as possible. Make sure children have strong gloves and bags if they take up the Rake-a-Thon challenge.

Torch-lit hikes: get sponsored to brave the elements and hold a torch-lit hike or winter walk to raise money. Make sure you have plenty of adults to supervise and assist when organising outdoor events with children. Better still, get whole families involved!

Winter disco: why not donate the proceeds from your school disco to Mission Together this year? Or if that's not possible, hold a sweetie stall or prize stall at the event to raise money for children around the world.

Christmas crafts: get the whole school involved in making and selling ornaments, wreaths, biscuits, and any other Christmassy gifts and treats you can think of. Donate the proceeds to Mission Together

Helping angels: encourage children to take on extra chores at home, for a donation to Mission Together or a contribution to the Little Red Box.

Manger on a Mission: This is a great way to remind people of the true meaning of Christmas and a novel way to raise funds. Ask pupils to dress as characters from the nativity (remember that the scriptures don't mention just how many shepherds and magi were present). Aim to create a complete crib set. Then take your manger on a mission tour around your school grounds, town or city. Remember to take a Mission Together Little Red Box to collect donations on the way.

N.B. To add a prayerful focus to this fundraising task, download our interactive Christmas Crib Liturgy & Blessing.