Mission Together

Advent Celebration of the Word: Week One

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.

Celebration of the Word Plan

GATHER: Setting the scene
Please refer to our guide: *How to Pray with Children*
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 C): Jeremiah 33:14-16 GNT
Print the reading on page 2 and ask pupils to read.

Bible reflection
See page 3. We suggest this is delivered by an adult.

RESPOND: Bidding Prayers
Print the bidding prayers on page 4 and ask pupils to read.

SENT: Mission Together prayer

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.

Download these and other activities from our Advent Webpage.

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.**

Mission Together is the children's branch of Missio, the Pope's charity for world mission.
23 Eccleston Square London SW1V 1NU 020 7821 9755 missiontogether.org.uk
missio.org.uk Registered in England and Wales Charity No. 1056651

Advent Celebration of the Word: Week One

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. Let's light our candle now and join in our opening prayer.

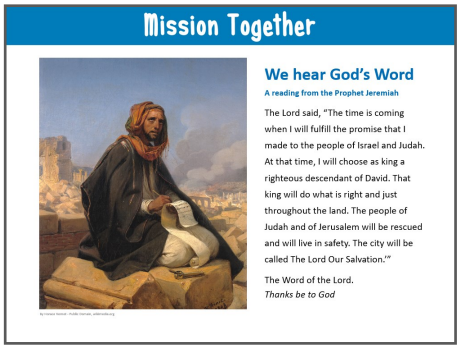
Sign of the cross, lighting of the Advent wreath, and opening prayer

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.**

Reader: Hundreds of years before that first Christmas Day, people also waited patiently for the birth of God's Saviour. Over these years, God would send prophets to give the people hope and remind them of a promise made long ago. This promise was that, in time, God would send a saviour who would lead people from fear and sorrow into God's Kingdom of mercy and love.

Reader: One of the prophets sent by God was called Jeremiah. Jeremiah lived 600 years before Jesus, during a time of unfairness and fighting. God asked Jeremiah to guide and encourage the people. Lets hear how Jeremiah did this in our Bible reading now. Listen carefully as Jeremiah tells the people what God's saviour will be like.

Bible reading: A reading from the Prophet Jeremiah 33:14-16



Reader: The Lord said, 'The time is coming when I will fulfil the promise that I made to the people of Israel and Judah. At that time, I will choose as king a righteous branch of David. That king will do what is right and just throughout the land. The people of Judah and of Jerusalem will be rescued and will live in safety. The city will be called "The Lord Our Salvation."'

The Word of the Lord
R/ Thanks be to God.

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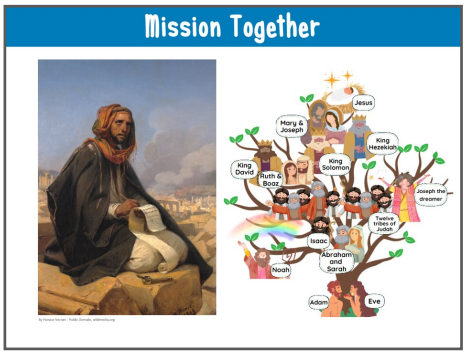
Bible Reflection (We suggest this is delivered by a teacher / chaplain)



Today's reading includes an unusual line. Jeremiah tells the people that God 'will choose as a king a righteous branch of David'. Let's start by thinking about the word *righteous.*

The word *righteous* is used to describe a person who does what is right and avoids what is wrong. A righteous person acts with respect and kindness. They are courageous, honest, and fair.

As we heard in our introduction, the times in which Jeremiah lived were very hard. The leaders of the people were not righteous. They cared little about the people they had been chosen to lead and spent their days warring against each other. This warring caused great destruction in the lands of Israel and Judah. We can see buildings destroyed in our painting and a thoughtful Jeremiah looking to God for guidance.

I wonder how the people felt? Sad? Frightened? Uncared for? The people needed a righteous king to lead them, and God told Jeremiah this king would come from David's branch. This is another unusual expression. I wonder what *David's branch* means? Maybe the image of the family tree will help. A family tree is a diagram that shows how every member of a family is related to each other. Family trees can go back many generations.

Like all of us, Jesus was part of a family tree. Through his adoptive father, Joseph, Jesus belonged to a family that included names that some of you may recognise - like David, Abraham, and Isaac.

God reassured Jeremiah that he would send a righteous leader from Abraham's family to save His people. If we look at the tree we can see that King David is descended from Abraham. Abraham lived hundreds of years before King David. This means that by the time Jesus was born, God's people had waited almost 2,000 years for God's promise to be fulfilled!

Imagine how patient those ancient people had to be! We wait four weeks to celebrate the birth of Jesus, but they had to wait hundreds of years! Waiting can be very difficult. It can make us feel frustrated or hopeless. We might feel like giving up on the thing we're looking forward to. But if we try, we can learn to be patient and not lose hope. Jeremiah helped the people not to lose hope. I wonder what might help us to wait well for Christmas?

We could use the weeks of Advent to think about how the birth of Jesus is such a precious gift for the world and the fulfilment of a very ancient promise. We could follow the example of Jeremiah and encourage each other to wait patiently. We can pray too. Through prayer, the Holy Spirit brings peace and helps us to be hopeful and patient. Let's learn to wait prayerfully now as we listen to our bidding prayers together.

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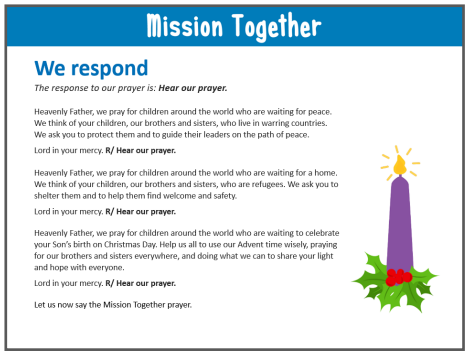
Bidding Prayers

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



Reader: Heavenly Father, we pray for children around the world who are waiting for peace. We think of your children, our brothers and sisters, who live in warring countries. We ask you to protect them and to guide their leaders on the path of peace. Lord, in your mercy.

Reader: Heavenly Father, we pray for children around the world who are waiting for a home. We think of your children, our brothers and sisters, who are refugees. We ask you to shelter them and to help them find welcome and safety.
Lord, in your mercy.

Reader: Heavenly Father, we pray for children around the world who are 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.