Mission Together

Advent Liturgy Week One: Hope

Introduction for teachers / leaders

The season of Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas and spans four weeks. It is a time of preparation for Christmas 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, which do not fade in colour, signify God's constancy. The four candles lit as we progress through the weeks of Advent and the central white candle lit on Christmas day all represent Christ, the light of the world.

Liturgy plan

This liturgy encourages children to think about the Advent theme of Hope. Please note that the liturgy uses scripture from Christmastide rather than Advent. This gives pupils the opportunity to discover key figures from the Christmas story and their significance to us today.

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 suggestion: '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*

Bible reading and Children's reflection

As an alternative to the scripture reading overleaf, and for a more in - depth study of scripture, you may wish to use the interactive interpretation of the reading in Appendix 1: An Interactive Retelling.

Before you begin you will need to copy and paste the scripture and ask four pupils to read.

Closing prayer: prayers of intercession and the Mission Together prayer

Copy and paste the prayers of intercession and ask two pupils to read them.

Sign of the cross

Closing hymn or recorded music

Our suggestions for week one: 'We Three Kings' or 'Little Drummer Boy'

Follow up craft activity: Star of Hope, available at *missiontogether.org.uk/advent/*

Follow up scripture exploration: See Appendix 2: Scripture Exploration Ideas for older children.

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.
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Matthew 2: 9-11 (adapted from NJB)

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. Let's see if you can guess who they are. This group had a very long journey to see Jesus. They travelled hundreds of miles across the desert to reach Bethlehem, so it was good they rode camels or they would have struggled over the sand! Can you guess who they are? **The wise men.**

Let's hear a Bible reading about the wise men now. **Listen** carefully to **discover** how they felt when the star they followed finally led them to the baby Jesus. **Imagine** you'd been with the wise men during their long journey.

'The wise men from the East 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 and offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.'

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 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 eventually accomplish their mission. Their mission was to find a special baby. A baby who would reveal God's love to the world and show us how to live in peace. They were so happy to find the baby, the Bible says they fell to their knees in praise!

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

There's another group of people who can teach us about **hope** too. They also make long and difficult journeys in search of something special – a life of peace. This group of people are called refugees. Through *Missio's* children's charity *Mission Together*, pupils in schools like ours are able to help refugee children* who have to leave their homes because of fighting and war.

Like the wise men who shared gifts with the baby Jesus, *Mission Together* asks us to **share what we have** so that children who need our help feel safe, are cared for, and know that Jesus loves them.

Mission Together also asks us to help **through our prayers**, so that we might work with God to build a better world for everyone. Let's do that now as we join our hands to pray.

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 prayers. Lord hear us…

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

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

** Learn about our project to support refugee children at missiontogether.org.uk/our-work-overseas/jordan/*

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Appendix 1:
An interactive retelling

Advent 2019 begins ***The Year of the Word: The God Who Speaks***, an initiative of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. As scripture is foundational to the life of the Catholic Church, *The Year of the Word's* vision is to celebrate, share and live out our faith through deeper scriptural engagement. This resource is designed to support schools as they journey through Advent and *The Year of the Word.*

The retelling below of Matthew 2:1-12 provides context to help children explore the scripture and encourages pupils to engage with the reading through imagination and interaction.

First, ask the readers to read the whole story. Then split the reading to allow time to answer the suggested questions.

Reader 1:
After Jesus had been born in Bethlehem and during the reign of king Herod, some wise men came all the way to Jerusalem from the East. After their long journey, following the star for days and nights, over deserts and mountains, the wise men asked the people of Jerusalem, 'Where is the infant king of the Jews? We've been following his star and have come to worship him.'

Ask the children what they think the wise men's journey was like.
How might the wise men have felt when they reached Jerusalem?

Reader 2:
Herod was worried when he heard that the wise men were looking for a new king and ordered them to see him so he could find out more. After Herod had questioned the wise men, he sent them on to Bethlehem. He ordered the wise men to report back once they had found the new king, as he wanted to visit too.

Ask the children why Herod was worried about the birth of a new king.
Do they think the wise men should trust Herod? Why?

Reader 3:
Having listened to what Herod had to say, 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.

Ask the children why the wise men felt delighted.
What other emotions might they have felt? E.g. nervous

Reader 4:
Going into the house the wise men saw baby Jesus with his mother, Mary, and falling to their knees they praised him and offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. The wise men were then warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, so they returned to their own country by a different way.

Ask the children why the wise men fell to their knees.
If you had been there, how might you have greeted Jesus?

Appendix 2:
Scripture exploration ideas

Advent 2019 begins ***The Year of the Word: The God Who Speaks,*** an initiative of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. As scripture is foundational to the life of the Catholic Church, *The Year of the Word's* vision is to celebrate, share and live out our faith through deeper scriptural engagement. This resource is designed to support schools as they journey through Advent and *The Year of the Word.*

- Provide older pupils with the scripture reference Matthew 2:1-12 and, working in small groups, ask them to locate the passage in a Bible.

  Pupils are to read the text together then answer the following questions:

  1 Where did the wise men first see the star appear, in the North, South, East or West? **East.**

  2 Who did Herod call together to find out where Jesus would be born? **Chief priests and scribes.**

  3 According to the prophet, in which land is Bethlehem in? **The land of Judah.**

  4 Did the wise men find the baby Jesus in a cave, a barn or a house? **A house.**

- Copy and paste this scripture (Matthew 2:1-12) and ask pupils to annotate the text, looking out for words that help: picture the scene, capture emotion and feelings, relay important messages.
- Invite the pupils to retell the scripture as a story, using their own words and as vividly as they can.
- For younger pupils, read the shorter scripture below, then invite the children to retell the story in their own words. Provide crib figures or paper puppets as props.

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

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

- During class prayer time, invite pupils to listen carefully as you reread the scripture used in the liturgy.

  After the reading remind the children that God speaks to us through the words of scripture.

  Then ask if any words stood out from the scripture today.

  What might God be saying to us through these words?

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