

spill the beans

worship and learning resources for all ages

issue 41

advent to transfiguration
28 november 2021 to 27 february 2022

sampler



A resource with a Scottish flavour for
Worship Leaders, Sunday Schools, Junior
Churches and Youth Leaders based on the
Revised Common Lectionary.

www.spillthebeans.org.uk
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introduction

Welcome to the ninth issue of a three year collection of Spill the Beans. We returned to the Revised Common Lectionary for 2019-2022 with new material as we take another tour through that lectionary.

Who Are We?

At the beginning of 2009 a conversation began amongst a couple, then a few, then a group about collaboratively creating resources that enabled us to tell the story of faith in a worship context and within age groups for younger people and teens. Spill the Beans was born as the result of that conversation and has grown and developed over the intervening years.

The ethos has remained the same, however. It is all about story. For we believe story is the lifeblood of faith. In story we can tell the truth and speak with honesty about things for which there are not yet words. Story contains mystery and is the poetry that forms faith. Stories grow as we grow and can reveal new truths at different times in our lives.

So we believe giving stories to people is one of the most important things we can do in sharing our faith. Children and adults hold stories in their being and keep coming back to them throughout life. Our culture is stored in story. The same is true for our faith.

Spill the Beans is a work of love. None of the contributors are paid for their contributions, these contributions are written and prepared with our own congregations in mind. Instead of working in isolation, we bring this work together, give it some spit and polish, and share it with others. This is how we can keep the cost so low.

In addition, we regularly pay it forward by using surplus monies to support other new ministries and projects.

Collaboration

The team is delighted that we are in creative collaborations with Fischy Music (www.fischy.com) and the Scottish Bible Society (<https://scottishbiblesociety.org>).

Archive Revised Common Lectionary and Narrative Lectionary Resources

We have two Overspill packages that provide complete sets of past issues that give a huge library of resources for both the Revised Common Lectionary and Narrative Lectionary.

The Revised Common Lectionary Overspill Pack

Issues 1-12

1,536 pages

£50

Purchase through this link: <https://pul.ly/b/108820>

The Narrative Lectionary Overspill Pack

Issues 13-27 (plus summer extra) in higher quality render

2,082 pages

£60

Purchase through this link: <https://pul.ly/b/207215>

The Road Less Travelled Overspill Pack

A lectionary created by the team and users, exploring parts of the

Scriptures less frequently travelled in either RCL or NL

Issues 28-32 in higher quality render

806 pages

£25

Purchase through this link: <https://pul.ly/b/262757>

You are downloading a compressed archive of files which need to be unpacked so we recommend downloading these to a desktop or laptop computer rather than phone or tablet. Note that depending on future years there may not be resources for some Sundays depending on the timing of Easter and changes to the readings as a result.

Using Issue 41

In this issue of Spill the Beans you will find an extensive collection of things to use each week. Because each piece is written with specific congregations in mind there may be the need to be a little creative yourselves in adapting and evolving some of the ideas to suit your own place and culture and congregation. That is entirely purposeful.

Of course, if you are creative and would like to share what you have done, then have a look at our Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/spillbeansresources> and the associated Facebook group that provides space for discussion and support. On our blog at <https://www.spillthebeans.org.uk/> you will find PowerPoint backgrounds for most weeks.

Each week we provide a selection of words, ideas and creative moments to take the theme and the passage a little further. We do not provide a ready made service or perfect prayers but ideas and pointers that hopefully scratch at your own creativity and provoke heaven's imagination within you.

Here are some tips to guide your use of the material in age groups:

1. It presumes some introduction to the story will have taken place in worship together or will play a part in the service when children join it later.
2. Depending on the make-up of your own groups of children you will need to remain flexible in how you use the material.
3. Each idea has been given a guide age range to help your planning, but this is only a guide so use your own judgement about what will work with your group.
4. Before the sit-down activities if you have a group of young children or lots of boys, you may want to add a run-around type game to expend some energy.
5. Use the gathering time exercise with the whole group to get into the story together across the ages.
6. We encourage you to retell the story together.
7. Follow that by choosing as many or as few activities your space and time allow. You could offer a number of activities each at different stations all at the same time for all ages to self-select with a teacher staffing each one, or have traditional classes.
8. During activities, ask children to retell the story to you and ask about their week, what was happy and what was sad and if this week's story reminds them of other biblical and personal stories.
9. The intention is not to complete "the tasks" brilliantly, but rather to provide opportunities to begin conversations, build relationships, retell the story of the day, and talk about what it means for us today.
10. There are many websites that provide handout-type sheets that will have images, crosswords and word searches for the story of that week. They can be helpful in an emergency, but try to be more creative as leaders, the rewards are worth it.

Information

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spill the beans resource team

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Key to Abbreviations

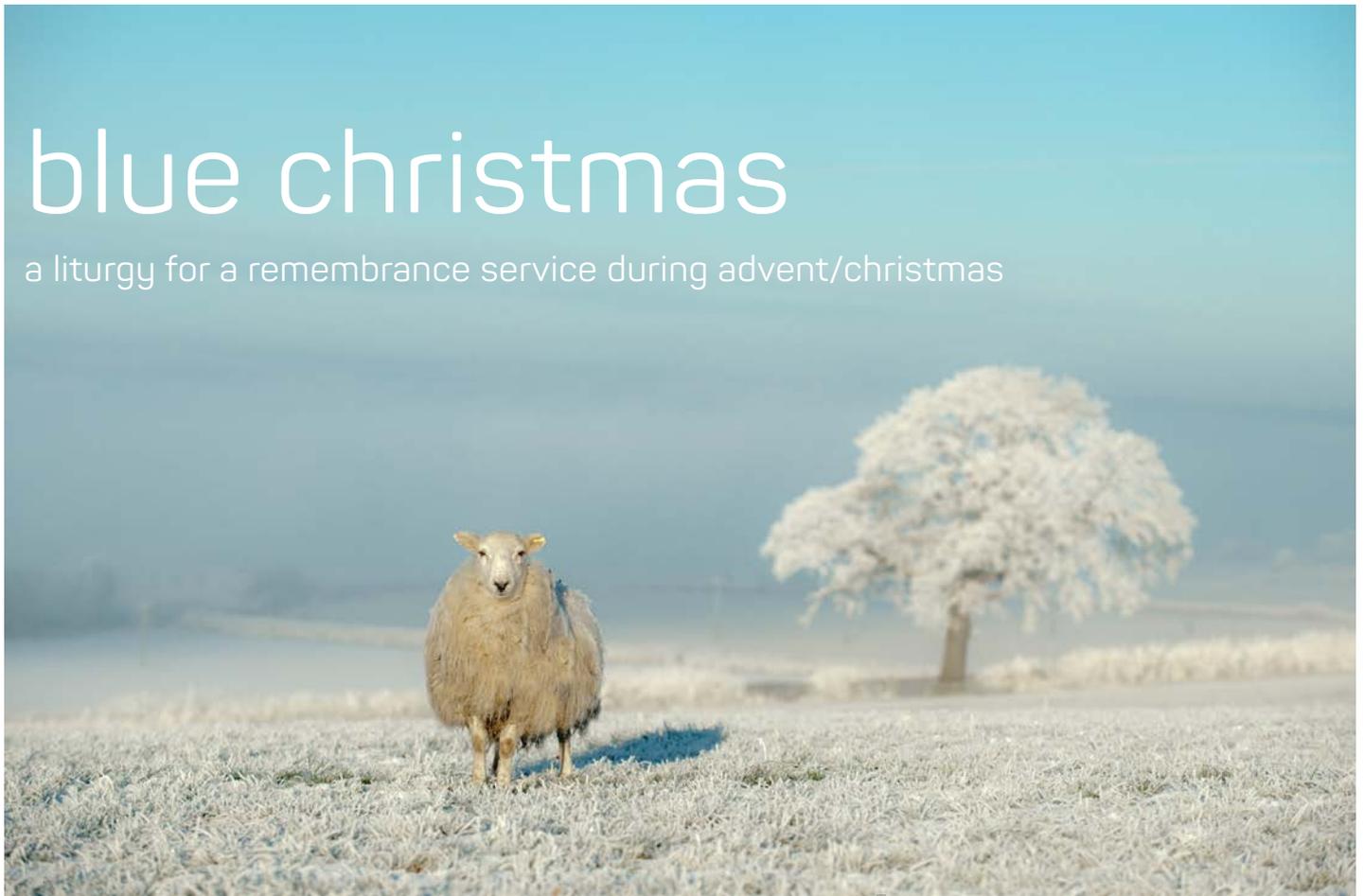
In the worship ideas section the following abbreviations may be used to indicate different sources of worship music:

ATAS	All the Assembly Songs You'll Ever Need
CG	Common Ground
CH4	Church Hymnary, 4th Edition
CH3	Church Hymnary, 3rd Edition
JP	Junior Praise
MP	Complete Mission Praise
SGP	Songs of God's People
WGP	Wild Goose Publications



blue christmas

a liturgy for a remembrance service during advent/christmas



Introduction

This is a simple liturgy for a communal time of reflection and mutual support at a time of year which can be very difficult for those who are going through challenging times, particularly grieving a loss.

In the United Kingdom in this year in particular, if the reporting at the time of writing gives us any clarity, this Christmas may be more harsh than usual. Food shortages, rising energy prices, reduced support for the most vulnerable all may take a toll this year which brings greater pressure and demand. This may be, for many, a bluer Christmas than usual.

This liturgy provides a means to name our worries and fears, losses and sorrow, and to support one another in this season.

Preparation

The liturgy focuses on the image of the shepherd using Psalm 23 and John 10:11-18 ("I am the good shepherd").

You will need some small ice cubes for the Prayer Activity, enough for everyone to take one. Some paper towels would also be useful for people.

For the Activity some lengths of wool (ideally real wool, not polyester), either natural colours or a vibrant mix of colours. You could ask the knitters in your congregation if they have any remnant lengths they would be willing to donate for this. A length of a 30-50 cm per person would be perfect. A large cross is also required for this.

If you wish, you could also prepare tea lights ready to place around the cross in the second Activity.

Liturgy

Words of Welcome

Welcome to this service as we take some time amidst the festivities of the season to approach God in honesty and humility, with our questions and our lamentations, with our sorrows and our hurts.

We come to seek peace,
to remember those we may have lost,
and to hold each other in love,
just as the Good Shepherd holds us.

Call to Worship

Shepherd of our souls,
we come together to worship,
with hearts that may be heavy,
with needs that may be pressing,
and recognising that you, Shepherd God,
are with us in it all.

Let us worship God.

Praise

Shepherd me, O God

Psalms For All Seasons 23H

Prayer Activity

Give everyone an ice cube in a small glass/cup with a paper towel.

God of all seasons,
of summer sun and springtime blossom,
of autumn leaves and winter's chill,

we gather in your presence,
and offer this time of praise and worship.

As darkness overcomes the light of day,
and warmth departs our day-to-day,
as shepherds gather in their flock
from the harsh perils of a winter's night,
may we join in remembering
all for whom this time of year
is not one of joy and merriment,
but one of struggle and anguish.

Ask everyone to take the ice cube out of the cup and hold it in their hands.

As we lift these cubes of ice
and hold them in our palms,
we feel the heat in our hands
absorbed, taken away, withdrawn.

We remember those who even this day
know the feeling of love withdrawn,
of relationships that have come to an end,
of lives that are no more,
of the very real practical challenges
that too many people and families face this day:
to heat their homes or to put food on the table.

As the ice melts and our hands become wet,
we feel the power of change and transition,
in our very palms.

We remember all for whom change and transition
is difficult and costly:
for those of us coming to terms with our grief;
for those of us facing life-changing circumstances;
for those of us who fear what tomorrow might bring.

As the water drips from our hands,
we feel the life-giving potential
that resides in us all,
a gift of God,
to share and enjoy.

We remember that life continues on,
even when things seem at their worst,
even when hope feels inadequate,
and it is in our hands to offer what we can
to renew life,
to revitalise society,
to refresh those who are moribund,
and to do all of this in love.
Amen.

Reading: Psalm 23

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.*

*Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.*

*You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.*

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.*

Anthem

The Lord's my shepherd

*The Oxford Book of
Flexible Anthems*

*This anthem is written by Bob Chilcott. A virtual choir
version has been created for this service and is available
at <https://youtu.be/LW7DJPlspJ4>.*

Reading: John 10:11-18

'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.'

Activity 1

Give everyone a length of woollen yarn (ideally not man-made).

Place a wooden cross centrally, either lying down upon a table, or standing up in a space that is easily accessible.

The yarn you hold in your hands
was once the coat of a sheep,
perhaps a Blackface, Merino or Rambouillet,
Blue Faced Leicester or Corriedale;
a wonder of life
protecting them from the harsh conditions
that life itself throws at them.

Take a moment to imagine
what the wool in your yarn has been through,
wind whistling through the hills,
rain lashing down,
snow falling,
ice crystals on the edges of the fleece...
yet,
deep down,
protected from all this,
the warm body of the sheep,
kept alive by the wool you now hold.

And caring for that flock,
overseeing and tending,
watching out and seeking out,
the shepherd:
diligent,
careful,
ready.

Into the piece of yarn you hold
imbue all that pains you today,
the struggles and griefs,
the worries and concerns,
and let them be taken up into that fibre
that has already seen so much
that is harsh and difficult.

When you are ready,
bring your yarn and drape it upon the cross,
remembering the words of the Good Shepherd:
"The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

Let people come forward and place their yarn on the cross. Play some suitable music as they do so, such as "He shall feed his flock" from Handel's Messiah or the song "Good Shepherd of my soul" by Keith and Kristyn Getty.



Litany of Names

At this point in the liturgy it may be appropriate to specifically remember those who have died in the past year. You may record these in a Remembrance Book or some other memorial.

Another year has passed.

New lives have begun,
babies born,
hope come again.

Another year has passed.

Lives young and old have come to a close.
People we have loved
are no longer on the end of a phone,
jokes we used to share together fall silent,
plans we made together for the year to come lie unfulfilled.

Yet we hold them in our memories,
and they remain a precious part of who we are.

And so we remember them:

Read slowly those whose names have been added to your memorial.

Activity 2

You will need: tea lights (real or battery operated).

Once the names have been read out, invite a member of the families present (or all if you have capacity for this) to come forward, light a tea light and place it around the wool-covered cross. Use care if adopting real tea lights.

We light these candles
to remember those we have lost,
to cherish the memories we retain,
and to commit them to the Good Shepherd,
as we commit ourselves into his care.

May we never forget,
but rather live into the legacy of love
that binds us with generations
past, present, and future.

Prayer

God of compassion and care,
we give thanks to you for your love for all creation:
from hilltop to valley bottom,
from village to city centre,
from skies to the sea's depths,
all that you have made is good.

The eternal cycle of life and death,
birth and burial,
is part of this creation,
though we sometimes try to forget that.
Help us to hold both the beauty of life
and the pain that loss brings to us
in creative tension:
joyful for the lives we have known,
sorrowful for the parting that inevitably comes.

May we work for a world
in which lives can be led with dignity,
in which inequality of life expectancy is no more,

in which all people can know love,
no matter the colour of their skins,
their creed or sexual orientation,
their gender or ability.

Guide us into the future,
knowing that those who are no longer with us
are safe with you in your heavenly flock,
and may we, too, know your nurture
that we can grow as disciples
called to share good news
and hopefulness,
even amidst the turmoils
that our lives all too often experience.

In the name of Jesus,
we bring our prayer.
Amen.

Praise

The King of love my shepherd is

CH4 462 / MP 649

Blessing

We go,
surrounded by all the saints,
wrapped warmly in the love of God,
laying upon the Good Shepherd's shoulders
all that burdens us
and ready to face the world anew.

We go,
with the blessing of God,
Creator,
Shepherd,
Companion.
Amen.





christmas conversations

ideas for intergenerational conversations during christmas

Introduction

We have provided two ideas for conversations amongst all ages based around two key parts of the nativity story: Mary's conversation with the Angel Gabriel, and the birth of Jesus.

Scottish Bible Society

These intergenerational conversations have been prepared by Jen Robertson. Jen is the Children's Resource Manager for the Scottish Bible Society. You can find out more about the work of the society at:

<https://scottishbiblesociety.org>.

Christmas Journeys

A family resource has been prepared by the Scottish Bible Society for 2021 titled "Christmas Journeys". This provides resources for a seven day preparation ahead of Christmas. Each pack contains an activity card for each day, a set of star stickers and a Christmas Journeys map.

A family podcast will also be available for each day.

You can find out more at:

<https://bible.scot/christmasjourneys>.

Mary And The Angel

This resource provides an opportunity to create an all-age conversation around the story from Luke 1:26-49

A PowerPoint presentation of the story is available to download at <https://scottishbiblesociety.org/?edmc=71405>.

Get Going

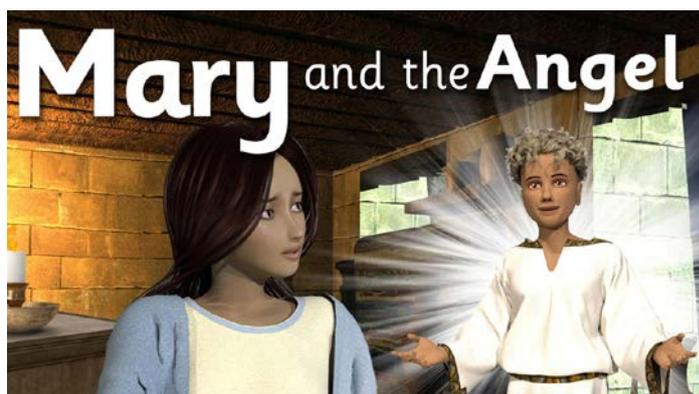
Before the event invite everyone to bring an object from their home that is very special to them (if it is too special to be brought, ask them to bring a photo of the object).

Chat about what people have brought and why they chose that special object.

The story is about how God chose one specific person to do a very special job.

Listen and watch carefully to what happened to this person and what God asked her to do.

Listen and watch the story together from slide 1 to 12 in the PowerPoint presentation.



Think Deeper

God never forces anyone to do the special things he has planned for them. God loves us and wants us to choose to follow his ways. Mary said "Yes" to what God asked her to do.

Pray together using the prayer below with everyone joining in with a loud YES!

Leader: Father God, thank you that Mary said

All: **YES!**

Leader: Help us to say

All: **YES!**

Leader: When you ask us to follow you, we want to say

All: **YES!**

Leader: When you ask us to love you, we want to say

All: **YES!**

Leader: When you ask us to love other people, we want to say

All: **YES!**

Leader: When you tell us not to be afraid, we want to say

All: **YES!**

Leader: Thank you that when we say

All: **YES!**

Leader: You promise to stick with us forever.
Amen.

Listen and watch the story together from slide 13 to 19 in the PowerPoint presentation.



Take Time

Mary sang a song to God.

Chat together about the song she sang...

- What does it tell us about Mary, God and us?

Write a song to God.

- What will the lyrics be?
- What tune goes with your words?

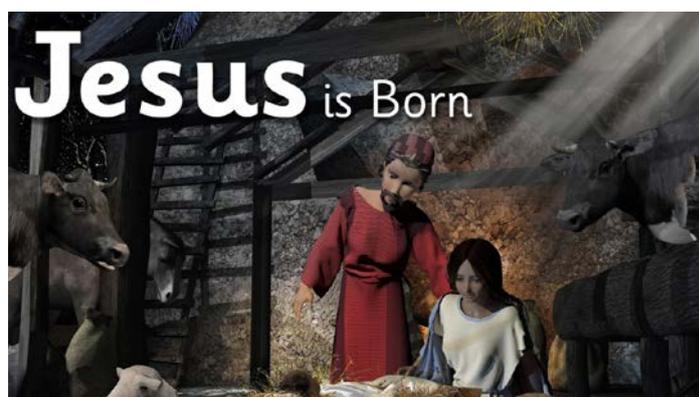
Read or sing your song together.

Take your song home and use it over Christmas to talk to God.

Jesus Is Born

This resource provides an opportunity to create an all-age conversation around the story from Luke 2:1-21.

A PowerPoint presentation of the story is available to download at <https://scottishbiblesociety.org/?edmc=71404>.



Get Going

Play a game that involves making lists. Everyone will need pen and paper. Choose a theme and then everyone (or in small groups) must try and make a list of 10 things that fit into the category of the given theme. Set a time limit for writing each list.

Here are some suggested themes/categories:

1. Things you put on your head
2. Things you eat at Christmas
3. Things that are orange
4. Things you find in a kitchen
5. Things that use electricity
6. Things that fly
7. Christmas songs
8. Football teams
9. Things that live in the ocean

When the time is up ask everyone:

- Who got ten items?
- Who had the most unique item?

Play it for as long as want!

The story from the Bible starts with Mary and Joseph travelling to Bethlehem to have their names put on a list.

Listen and watch the story together from slide 1 to 17 in the PowerPoint presentation.



Think Deeper

Imagine that you are one of the shepherds in the story. Chat together about the story.

- What would the message have been that they told everyone about?
- How do you think they would have summed up and described what the angels told them?

Once everyone has had a chance to chat, write or draw all the things that were in the shepherds' message on a sheet of paper.

Listen and watch the story together using slides 16 to 18 in the PowerPoint presentation.



Take Time

Mary treasured all the things that had happened in her heart.

Draw the outline of a love heart on a piece of paper and choose one thing that the angels said about Jesus that you want to remember this Christmas, perhaps related to joy, good news, peace. Write that on the heart and decorate it. Take it home and stick it somewhere at home where you will see it often.

Let's say the words of the angels together and we will use actions to help us all take part and help each other remember the great good news of Christmas.

You might want to practice this a few times and then do it all together.

Do not be afraid,

Move one index finger from left to right in front of your body

I bring you

hold your hands out as if giving someone a gift

good news

thumbs up

that will cause great joy

clap your hands together

for all the people.

put your hands together and then move them apart in welcome

Today in the town of David

make the shape of a roof with your hands

a Saviour has been born to you.

mime holding a baby

He is the Messiah, the Lord.

hold up one index finger

This will be a sign to you:

point one finger to the side of your head

you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

mime lying a baby carefully down

Glory to God in the highest heaven!

wave your hands from side to side

And on earth peace

touch your index finger and thumb together on both hands while holding them close together, then move both hands away from each other keeping your thumb and index finger touching

to those on whom his favour rests.

cross your hands across your chest



through the season

Introduction

Advent and Christmas are the seasons when our senses are overwhelmed with wonderful sights and sounds, smells, tastes and textures. During this festive season let us savour some of these and use them to help us engage with and remember the stories each week.

Each week an image is offered which can be displayed physically in your worship space or shown on PowerPoint. Note that these ideas are closely related to the Gathering Activity for each service which you will find in the full notes for each week. These are written to encourage using a sense to help people engage with the story for that day.

The Gathering Activities are reflective to allow people a few moments to pause and reflect on where they are and the sense suggestion for that day. If people are participating at home they can still take part. The offer to talk to others is optional.

Week By Week

Advent

28 Nov Advent 1

Scripture: Jeremiah 33:14-16
Luke 21:25-36

Title: There Will Be Signs

Image: Star

5 Dec Advent 2

Scripture: Malachi 3:1-4
Luke 1:68-79

Title: Bringing Light

Image: Candle

12 Dec Advent 3

Scripture: Zephaniah 3:14-20
Luke 3:7-18

Title: Good News Is Here

Image: Wrapped Present/Gift

19 Dec Advent 4

Scripture: Micah 5:2-5a
Luke 1:39-45,(46-55)

Title: Leaping For Joy

Image: Mary, mother of Jesus

Christmas

24 & 25 Dec Christmas Eve/Day

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2-7
Luke 2:1-14,(15-20)

Title: Jesus Is Here

Image: Spotlight or torch

26 Dec Christmas 1

Scripture: Luke 2:41-52

Title: Jesus At Home

Image: Shoe box decorated with the words "Memory Box" on the side.

2 Jan Christmas 2

Scripture: John 1:(1-9),10-18

Title: God Revealed In Word

Image: Bible, books, newspapers

Epiphany

9 Jan Baptism of the Lord

Scripture: Luke 3:15-17,21-22

Title: God Revealed In Spirit

Image: Dove

16 Jan Epiphany 2

Scripture: John 2:1-11

Title: God Revealed In Extravagance

Image: Wine bottles/jugs

23 Jan Epiphany 3

Scripture: Luke 4:14-21

Title: God Revealed As Good News

Image: Scroll

30 Jan Epiphany 4

Scripture: Luke 4:21-30

Title: God Revealed As Stirrer

Image: Exit sign

6 Feb Epiphany 5

Scripture: Luke 5:1-11

Title: God Revealed In Community

Image: Fishing net and fish

13 Feb Epiphany 6

Scripture: Luke 6:17-26

Title: God Revealed As Topsy-Turvy

Image: Set of scales ("blessing" in one pan, "woe" in the other)

20 Feb Epiphany 7

Scripture: Luke 6:27-38

Title: God Revealed In Relationship

Image: Coat(s)

27 Feb Transfiguration

Scripture: Luke 9:28-36,(37-43a)

Title: God Revealed In The Sacred

Image: Mountain top



Sadvent 1
sunday 28 november 2021

there will be signs

bible notes

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Psalm 25:1-10

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Luke 21:25-36

Finding Hope In The Long-Term

There is a strength to Advent that is necessary to counter the path of the world at the moment. People of faith, and that includes all faiths, spiritual and otherwise, need seasons such as this to move the world from focussing on existential crises to living in hope. It is easy to see signs of disaster, but can we see signs of hope?

Both Jeremiah and Luke want us to face that positive direction, and as we enter Advent, we are more ready to hear words of hope, but more than just hearing them, both passages invite us to ground them in our behaviour and relationships with the world and with each other.

Yet, the first hearers of Jesus words, could not have come away feeling positive. Surely they would have felt overwhelmed, exhausted, even terrified. Many have felt these emotions strongly over the last two years. But how do we now turn to seek hope as we move through the effects of the pandemic, withdrawing from Afghanistan, and Climate Crisis now COP26 is over?

Recently, we have been trained to look for immediate hope. There is an urgency about the climate which has to be responded to within half a generation and we seek good news now about green technology, CO₂ reduction, new planting schemes and other local ventures: immediate hope. We look towards the economic figures, almost weekly, to seek hope that a global economy is sustainably growing after the pandemic: immediate hope. Governments see only a single term of office.

Our Bible passages do not speak in this way. The tradition of the 'second coming' in this season is not about an imminent return, though Jesus does suggest within a generation he would return, but that has not been the case. People of faith are tenacious visionaries, and we have learned to speak about hope in the long-term. It is a skill to be able to see

beyond the next week, the next cycle, the next government, the next generation (as both Abraham and Moses found!). It is why we are still here after many thousands of years: hope is in the long-term.

Seeking signs of hope, Jesus turns us towards creation: the seasons and cycles. There is a pattern there, a long-term pattern. We live within that pattern, that seasonal approach that reminds us of the return of hope.

But, after hearing Jesus words, do you think the people just shook their heads and went back to their 'normal' routines? Is that how we find hope after the pandemic, or global financial crisis: the hope is simply getting back to normal?

Faithful thinking, visionary thinking, long-term hope is vital for our faith for it prevents us falling into such cynicism. Hope inspires our imagination. It gives energy to possibilities and alternative outcomes.

Jeremiah speaks of this hope-filled imagination: not something the Almighty imposes on us without us being involved. Quite the opposite. Such hope is found in what God does through us and within us; what God will do in relationship with us and the world.

Advent is the invitation to reimagine the world as just, as righteous, as forgiven, as renewed. These are gifts for the world which faith brings in this season. The signs of disaster are everyday almost. We feel low and tired, Jesus words feel very real and 'today'.

Where, as people of faith, shall we look for signs of hope?

We are not called to speculate about that future, but to live in relationship with it. There lies hope: our choice to be part of the future, reimagined, as God reimagined everything through incarnation.

the story

What's Going On?

What's going on?
 What's going on with the weather?
 What's going on with the pandemic?
 What's going on with climate change?
 What's going on?

We are puzzled.
 We are disturbed.
 We are full of questions.
 We are afraid.

The first disciples had questions too,
 and Jesus told them stories and gave them signs;
 stories about the trees,
 signs in the seas and the sky.

And he told them
 to keep their eyes open
 and to pray.

And in this time of Advent,
 of waiting,
 of Winter in the North,
 we wait too.
 We watch for the signs of God's activity,
 We look for love and life and wonder,
 and we pray.



Retelling For Young People

Signs That Christmas Is Coming

- Can you think of ten things you saw this week that told you it was Winter?

These could be things in nature, in the shops, on the streets, at home, clothes, keeping warm...

- Can you think of ten things that you will see next month that will tell you that Christmas is coming soon?

These might be at school, in church, in the post, on the television.

Jesus once told his disciples that a way to work out when Summer was coming was to look at trees...

- What do you think he told them to look for?
- Do you know the difference between a deciduous and an evergreen tree?

Clare, Peter and Andrew were discussing what had happened in their churches that morning.

"Mrs Jones lit a candle in the Advent wreath," said Clare. "It was a red one."

"In our church," said Peter, "Mr McKay lit a candle. It was a purple one."

"I wonder why the candles are different colours?" pondered Andrew.

"In our church we have four red candles and one white one," said Clare.

"And we have three purple candles, one pink one and a white one," said Peter.

"When do you light the white one?" asked Andrew.

"On Christmas day," said Clare.

"For us too," said Peter.

"Why do you have a pink candle?" Clare asked Peter.

"That's the third candle we light" said Peter. "We light it to remember Mary and the song she sang, when she visited Elizabeth."

"I don't know why we use red candles," said Clare. "I'll have to ask my mum and dad."

"I think an Advent wreath is a good idea," said Andrew. "It helps you to see that Christmas day is getting nearer."

"I think I might make a little one at home," said Clare.

"I might do that too," said Peter. "We've got lots of green branches in our garden and mum might have some coloured candles."

"If you need to go shopping for candles," said Clare, "I'll come too."

worship ideas

Weekly Imagery And Gathering Activity

The image for this week is a star.

As we gather take a moment to notice the lights in the building, or in your own home.

Think about the lights appearing around your community, in homes and streets.

In this darkest of months for the northern hemisphere we are making more and more use of lights in this season. In the southern hemisphere people are enjoying long summer days of natural light.

You may wish to share your thoughts with those around you.

Call To Worship

You could light the first Advent Candle as the first response is spoken.

Leader: From a branch sprouting

All: hope is coming.

Leader: The heavens are shifting,

All: hope is coming.

Leader: A troubled world waits.

All: Hope is coming.

Leader: Lord, we, your people,
wait patiently,
hanging on with Advent hope.
Lord, we bring you ourselves,

All: we bring you our worship.

Advent Candle Lighting

The first of our candles, lit today,
the first week of Advent on the way.

Stories of old once more are retold
as we gather to hear of signs made clear:

Jesus is coming, light shines in the dark,
stars in the night sky are leaving their mark.

All-Age Prayer

Tick tock, tick tock,
Christmas is coming,
Christmas is near.

Tick tock, tick tock,
Advent is passing,
Advent is here.

As we light the candles,
and open the doors,
may we remember the story
of Jesus come to earth.
Help us get ready
and to see the signs
of love coming to earth
in this holy time.
Amen.

Prayer Of Adoration And Confession

God of the cosmos,
of earth, moon, and sun,
God of the distant,
of galaxies and big bangs,
God of the past,
of history's story passed down to us,
God of the future,
still to be written, still to be cast,
may we approach afresh
the old, old story of incarnation:
God with us.

Give us the enthusiasm and excitement
of a child opening the first door
of their new Advent calendar.
May we see beyond the story
to the timeless hope and expectation
that you are with us,
always,
no matter what.

May we see in the signs around us
glimmers of you at work,
and may we never cease in anticipating
that your kingdom will come
and your will be done.
Where clouds darken the skies
may we never give up hope
but look to the coming of the Son,
in this day and every day.

Lift our souls and spirits
as we bring our praise to you.
Check our hearts and minds
as we acknowledge how much
we still have to grow into your likeness:
that day by day we have opportunities
to reveal your care and love for all creation
and yet we take advantage of it,
abuse it,
and treat what is precious and valuable
as if it has no intrinsic worth.
Forgive us, Creative One,
and help us see the signs all around us
calling us to do better,
to be better.
Amen.

Prayers For Others And Ourselves

Advent God,
bringing hope and expectation
into a world crying out for justice,
for honesty,
and for healing and restoration,
we bring our prayers to you.

Save us from short-term thinking
and short-term planning
that never takes into account
the full ramifications of decisions,
but rather is driven by
what is popular in the moment,
by what will get a positive newspaper headline.
Help us to see the world
with a different perspective,
to see the signs around us
and to read them well,
to be honest with ourselves
about what is happening and why,
and to seek solutions and choices
that bring long-term benefits for all.

When the world is crying out to us
may we hear the groans
that climate change stirs,
may we hear the anguish
of those whose homes and livelihoods,
whose present and future
are threatened by the effects of climate change,
and recommit ourselves to action.

When words are cheap,
and real commit is costly,
may we hold our policy makers to account,
ensuring that they share a vision
that seeks the well-being of the planet,
and the place of all creatures upon it.

In a time of darkness for many people
threatened by rising inflation,
their costs going up even as their wages stagnate,
where choices from scant resources
have to be made day to day:
feeding the children, or heating the home,
buying new clothes, or paying the council tax,
we pray for all those people and families
who live with the stress this brings:
unable to plan for the long-term
because today has more than enough worry.

In the season of Advent hope
may we uphold all who strive
to bring wellbeing to others,
knowing that in so doing
they also bring wellbeing to themselves.
Encourage us to be your kingdom workers,
bringing hope and joy,
compassion and care.
Amen.

Reflective Prayer

All good things come to those who wait...
Do they, Lord God,
or is that just something we tell
those who are forced to live in anticipation
of a better future,
when those who already live in splendour
wait for nothing?

What does Advent hope mean to us
in a time of broken relationships,
of division and distrust,
of a future already scarred
by the actions of the past
and the inaction of the present?

What is our expectation of the Son of Man
coming in a cloud and great glory?
Too little, too late?
Too much, too soon?
And why do we always feel the need
to force creation to our will?

May we learn from the fig tree,
following the cycle of the seasons,
and match our expectations
with what is possible and natural,
aligning our way of life
to the rhythm of creation.

May we learn what it is to be fruitful
in our lives and through our lives,
seeking the seasons in which to sow,
to tend and nurture,
to harvest and store up,
and find our part
in the bigger story
of creative grace.
Amen.

Prayer Of Dedication

So many signs,
so easily ignored,
open our eyes and hearts
to your work, God of all good gifts,
that we might commit ourselves
to joining you
in the creation of your commonwealth
where all find their place,
and all know they are loved.

We offer to you ourselves,
who we are
and what we have,
that through your Way
we might bring goodness
into our communities and world.

Accept us and our gifts,
in the name of Jesus.
Amen.

worship ideas

Reflection

The Hope In Waiting

Thinking of the future.
Looking to tomorrow.
Will it get any better?
Global pandemic,
climate crisis,
history shaping our lives,
creating fear and uncertainty.

Thinking of the present.
Looking to here and now.
And I am waiting...

Waiting for what?
The signs of coming out of the troubled times?
The light at the end of the tunnel?

Still uncertain.
Still seeking.
Deep within my soul
I cannot help wondering
is there hope in waiting?
Is there hope to come?

Spending days searching for hope
surrounded by the silence in waiting.
We do not have to be alone.
We do not have to wonder endlessly.
Our hope comes when we remember the One.
Our hope comes when we seek the One.
Our hope comes in the presence of the One.

Lord God, the One.
Only you are our hope.
You are our hope in waiting.

Take Home Ideas

During the Advent period as a Take Home Idea for the season, consider creating your own Advent ring or display adding a candle each week to it that you can light for a period each day.

Add your first candle this week and take a few moments each day to think about what you long to see change in the world. Write some of those thoughts down on slips of paper and leave them scattered around your candle.

Sending

Leader: In the sun and moon and stars
All: we look for God.

Leader: In the seasons and in the trees
All: we look for God.

Leader: In the places where we live and work
All: we look for God.

Leader: We look and long and hope.

Praise/Hymns

Christmas is coming	CH4 282
Give me joy in my heart	ATAS 70
Hope is a candle	CH4 284
Lo, he comes	CH4 477 / MP 424
O come, O come, Emmanuel	CH4 273 / MP 493
O God, with holy righteousness	<i>Known Unknowns</i> , WGP 54
People look East	CH4 281
Prayer is the soul's sincere desire	CH4 546 / MP 567
Seasons spinning in a circle	ATAS 211
Stay with me	CH4 793
The day soon will come	<i>Known Unknowns</i> , WGP 68
Wait for the Lord, his day is near	CH4 276
You ride on the wings of the wind	ATAS 288



age group ideas

gathering

Spotting The Signs Of Advent

all age

Ask the children which month we are in. Note that we are still in November but then follow up by asking if they have noticed any changes in what they see around them. Discuss what they have noticed in shops, at school, in church. We are nearly in December and the season of Advent begins. Link to Advent Calendar activity below or to today's story.

crafts

Advent Crown

age 3-5

You will need: green card (strips of about 4 cm width, taped together), card in colour of your church's Advent candles (may be red or purple, cut into strips of about 2 cm width and 10 cm length, make 4 strips for each child), scraps of card, yellow, orange and red crayons or felt tip pens, scissors, sticky tape, small sticky stars, glue sticks.

Give each child a long strip of green card. This should be fitted around the child's head, sitting just above the ears, so that it forms the base of the Advent crown. Secure ends together with sticky tape. Give the children four candles each and ask them to decorate the candles with sticky stars. Give the children some scraps of card and ask them to colour them in with 'flame' colours. Ask the children to cut out flame shapes and to stick these to the top of the candles with glue. Help the children to attach the candles to the outside of the crown base with sticky tape. You should put the candles quite near the bottom edge of the crown so that the candles stay upright, rather than just flopping over. The children can wear their Advent crowns.

Talk with the children about Advent and the importance of getting ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Talk with the children about things they can do to help get ready, such as small practical things they could do at home or church and by being patient and kind.

Advent Signposts

age 6-8

You will need: card cut into small circles, triangles and squares, felt tip pens, small sticky stars, glue sticks, paperclips, craft sticks (lollipop sticks).

Give the children a few craft sticks each and ask them to choose some card shapes. Ask the children to colour and decorate their shapes with signs that Christmas is coming (stars, candles, holly, snowflakes). Ask the children to attach the card shapes to the craft sticks with glue (use paperclips to keep the card in place while the glue is drying).

Talk with the children about road signs and how they give advice and warnings. Ask the children to describe any road signs they know. You might want to have pictures of a few road signs to show to the children. Talk about the signs that Christmas is coming and discuss with the children ways they can be signs of God's love and promise.

Branch Candle Holder

age 9-12

You will need: branches (about 5-7 cm in diameter, cut into lengths of about 15 cm, try to make sure each piece has fairly smooth ends so that the branch can stand up), sandpaper, battery tea lights, Christmas ribbon, PVA glue, glue spreaders, double sided sticky tape, adhesive dots, scissors, Christmas embellishments (such as small stars, berries).

Give each child a piece of branch and some sandpaper. Ask the children to finish off smoothing off the top and bottom of the branch so that the branch can stand up. Ask the children to choose Christmas ribbon they like and to wrap ribbon round the branch to decorate it. Rather than cover the whole branch with ribbon, encourage the children to make stripes with ribbon and then bark of branch showing then another piece of ribbon. The ribbon can be attached to the branch by spreading PVA glue onto the ribbon and then leaving to dry or by using double sided tape or using adhesive dots. Experiment to see which way you find easiest. The ribbon can also be made in to bows and other Christmas embellishments could be added. Give each child a battery tea light which will sit on the top of their branch candlestick.

Link the branch and the candle with the season of Advent: the branch links the imagery in Jeremiah, with Christmas trees and with the idea of a family tree and the candle with the light of Christ. Talk about how these are all signs of God's promise. Discuss with the children what signs of God's promise of love and light they can see and be.

Advent Tree

all age

You will need: Christmas tree, with items which will be added to the tree each week. You might want to have a few small trees and divide the children into groups with a small tree for each group or you might want to have a larger tree that they can all work on together, newspapers, magazines, scissors, sticky tape.

Ask the children to make a paper chain for your Advent tree using the newspapers and magazines. The dimensions of your strips for the paper chain will depend on the size of your Advent tree. You want the paper chain to be in proportion to the tree and not to drown it as other decorations will be added to the tree in the coming weeks.

Talk about the season of Advent. Discuss with the children ways they can tell good news to others.

age group ideas

games

Patience

age 9-12

You will need: a deck of cards for each child or a deck between two.

Note that for younger children you could try pass the parcel or make a no-cook treat. You can emphasise that patience is required as the parcel goes around with each layer being pulled off. For the no-bake treat you can emphasise the patience needed in measuring out ingredients and waiting for the item to set.

Most of the children will already know how to play patience (or Solitaire) on their phones or on a computer where the device does all the hard work. It takes patience to set out all the cards in the right order and then to play the game and then to re-set the game. You could try showing them how to play clock patience. Play a few games of patience. To make it more interesting you might want to time them.

Patience, it seems, may be exactly what is at issue for all people not just children as we await the day of the Lord. We need to be patient as Christmas approaches, patient with each other.

Stay Alert

all age

You will need: a ball, balloons, stop sign (and any other items you may choose).

Play Hot Potato where the ball is passed around and when you shout "stop" the person holding the hot potato is out.

Put three balloons into the group of children which they cannot let touch the floor. You can do this randomly so that during your story or craft the balloons appear suddenly and they need to be alert and react.

Or you could play Who Is Missing? Ask someone to leave the room and then a few minutes later ask the children if anyone is missing. See if they noticed who is not there any more. Were they alert to what is going on in their room?

We need to be on alert, we are told, for the signs of Jesus coming. What other things do we need to be alert for? At school? On the roads and streets?

activities

An Approaching Storm

age 6-12

You will need: copies of the images found on [page 142](#), a barometer (or image of one).

Ask the children to identify the barometer and then ask them if they know what it does and how to read it. Then give the work sheet out to the children and ask them to match the various types of clouds, wind and temperature images that show an approaching storm to the description of them.

Ask if the children have ever been caught in a storm and what it was like. Did they see it coming, with clouds gathering, temperature change, humidity, wind speed change and so on. As we approach Christmas, a storm is gathering, a baby that will change the world and no one was prepared for it. A change that would bring hope to the people then and now. What gives the children hope today?

Coming Soon

age 9-12

You will need: adverts or images that are announcing something coming soon (a new TV programme, a new computer, a shop sale, new computer game, new film and so on), information about what is happening in your area and in your church in the coming weeks, large cardboard sheets, pens.

Discuss with the children if they have seen or heard about any of the announcement you have shown them. Are they interested in it? Why? If they had not seen the notices are they interested now? Delve into what is happening in your church in the coming weeks and ask the children to design a poster with the COMING SOON headline and then show what it is and then place these around your church building or anywhere else they get them into, such as the local library.

Talk with the children about the big event coming soon in the church: the birthday of Jesus. How are people today to know about this if they do not come to church or have no connection to church? How can we spread the word about the coming of Jesus?

Advent Calendar

all age

You will need: an advent calendar that the children will open or buy one for each child, a real advent calendar with images of the nativity story, tinsel, baubles, Christmas music.

What do all the items have in common: Christmas is coming! Ask the children to open your advent calendar one door at a time and talk about what is behind the door. Who normally gets chocolate calendars, toy calendars, home-made calendars? Each door we open is a sign Christmas is getting closer. We are counting down the days. That is what Advent was about. Talk about signs of something coming. Talk about the signs at church and school for Christmas, Easter, Harvest and so on.

discussion starters for teens

be on guard



Preparation

For the Opening Activity it would be helpful for everyone to have access to the internet (via phones or a computer for anyone without a phone). The Activity/Discussion will need some thought depending on your own particular group as to how they might want to go about creating a message: poster making equipment, phone camera for creating a short video, or some other material?

Opening Activity

Spotting The Signs

Take some time exploring together some situations that are well known or can easily be researched.

The purpose is to create lists of the signs that point to what is happening or is likely to happen.

For example you could use these situations:

- climate change;
- a Covid-19 infection;
- the onset of a big storm;
- being diagnosed with cancer;
- a traffic jam.

Let the young people think about what are the early signs to look out for, and what might be the conditions which make these situations more likely.

- How easy do people find it to identify these early signs?
- How well do you think people act on these early signs?
- How are those who speak up early to identify the warning signs usually treated (by media, public, politicians)?

The Word

Read Luke 21:25-36 together.

Imagine yourself as one of the disciples of Jesus listening to him speak about things to come.

- How would his message make you feel?
- What would you respond to that message?
- How did Jesus' followers respond?
- What is the Church's response today?

Activity/Discussion

Following on from the Opening Activity, collectively pick an issue that is of concern to the young people. If a different situation to one of the ones discussed earlier, go through the same steps of identifying the signs that point to that situation.

Then ask:

- How would you go about making people more aware of how to identify these signs?
- What message would you use?
- What media would you use to get that message across?
- How would you share your concerns with the wider Church?

Then go about enabling the young people to put their thoughts into action, finding a way to help them create a message to share with the rest of the Church or their peers.

Living It Out

Be vigilant and alert to the signs around you of things happening and to what they might lead. Think about the conversations you have with others and how you can encourage greater awareness amongst your friends and families.

sampler

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