

**The Journey to the Nativity**  
**Some Advent**  
**and Christmas Resources**  
**2020**

Adapted by Rev. Wendy Tucker from material compiled  
by Rev. Laura Faturoti



The Road to Bethlehem, by Joseph Brickey, © 2000 Joseph Brickey

Dear Friends,

As we journey towards Christmas again this year nothing has changed about the story, despite all else that is going on in our world, but the lense through which we view it is definitely different. I offer you some poems, prayers and things to think about as you journey once more to that stable. Perhaps you could look at something every day as you open your Advent calendar (mine is Toblerone) or light your Advent candle. What new perspectives might we have on the journey, on each of the characters, on the very Incarnation itself, God choosing to come to God's people as one of us. For whatever is happening, and whatever the future holds God is with us!

God bless you during this Advent.

Wendy <><

PS I would love to hear your reflections, please feel free to ring me or email me



## **Introduction**

This advent and Christmas season is likely to be like none we have experienced before. Who knew when we were having to celebrate Lent and Easter at home that we would be doing the same for Advent and Christmas? Well, here we are, still with uncertainty about the future, but still serving and worshipping an unchangeable and faithful God.

People have said that Christmas is cancelled this year, but this could not be further from the truth. Advent is the time of waiting and hoping and longing for the promises of God to be fulfilled, and Christmas is the time when we remember that God came down, to a broken and hurting world, and stepped in to the mess with love, hope, light and peace. If anything, there is no year in the lifetimes of most of us when these messages have been more needed or need to be more central to our lives.

There's no particular set way to use these resources. There are reflections and prayers that you can use at any time, along with some activities that you might find useful. Use them however is helpful for you, but we would encourage you to try to set some time aside to use this season to focus on God and his promises and the coming of Jesus.

We may or may not be able to join together and worship in the church buildings over this time, but whether we can or not, we know that God is active, present and working wherever we are, and the love of God binds us together, even when we have to be apart

## Advent

In the tender mercy of our God,  
the dayspring from on high shall break upon us,  
to give light to all who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace

Luke 1:78,79



**An Advent Poem**  
**By Rev Caroline Beckett, shared with permission**  
**say or read it to the rhythm of 'The House that Jack built'.**

Jesus the light of the world comes.  
A light for the ancestors whose story  
Showed us God's power and goodness and glory  
Who passed on to us every promise God gave  
That God would come near us to help and to save...  
When Jesus the light of the world comes

Jesus the light of the world comes.  
A light for the prophets so brave and so bold  
Speaking God's truth when it had to be told  
And shouting God's warnings to do what is right,  
Do justly, love mercy and look for the light...  
When Jesus the light of the world comes

Jesus the light of the world comes.  
A light for the Baptist, preparing the way,  
Wild man of the wilderness, day after day  
Crying out, loudly to all who would hear:  
Change your ways and be ready, soon God will come near...  
When Jesus the light of the world comes  
Jesus the light of the world comes.

A light for his mother, so brave and so young,  
Obedient, rebellious, in speech and in song  
She welcomed a kingdom far greater than Rome  
And offered her body and heart as God's home.  
When Jesus the light of the world comes

Jesus the light of the world comes.  
A light for the baby who lies in the manger  
God in our helplessness, God as a stranger,  
God who entrusted himself to our care  
To fit us for heaven to live with him there...  
When Jesus the light of the world comes

***Jesus the light of the world comes.***

### Advent Bible Reading Plan

If you have time, perhaps read a small passage of the bible each day as we head towards Christmas. You could review Luke (which helpfully has 24 chapters) and think about some of the things we have learned in our services over the last year. Or you could try this reading plan suggested by [www.adventusproject.wordpress.com](http://www.adventusproject.wordpress.com)

|                  |                    |                  |                   |
|------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup>  | Isaiah 2:2-5       | 13 <sup>th</sup> | 2 Peter 3:3-13    |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup>  | Isaiah 9:1-7       | 14 <sup>th</sup> | Mark 14:60-45     |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup>  | Isaiah 11:1-9      | 15 <sup>th</sup> | Jeremiah 33:14-17 |
| 4 <sup>th</sup>  | Isaiah 11:10-16    | 16 <sup>th</sup> | Micah 5:2-5       |
| 5 <sup>th</sup>  | Isaiah 39:5-40:11  | 17 <sup>th</sup> | Ezekiel 34:11-31  |
| 6 <sup>th</sup>  | Isaiah 51:1-12     | 18 <sup>th</sup> | Zechariah 8:1-8   |
| 7 <sup>th</sup>  | Isaiah 61:1-4      | 19 <sup>th</sup> | Zephaniah 3:14-17 |
| 8 <sup>th</sup>  | Galatians 4:4-6    | 20 <sup>th</sup> | Isaiah 7:10-17    |
| 9 <sup>th</sup>  | 1 Thess 4:13-18    | 21 <sup>st</sup> | Matthew 1:11-17   |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> | 1 Thess 5:1-11     | 22 <sup>nd</sup> | Luke 1:26-38      |
| 11 <sup>th</sup> | 1 Cor 15:20-28     | 23 <sup>rd</sup> | Luke 1:39-56      |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> | Colossians 1:15-20 | 24 <sup>th</sup> | Matthew 1:18-25   |

### **A Prayer if you are struggling**

I call you God.  
Are you my God?  
I speak!  
Do you hear?  
Are my words of any worth to you?  
Do they make a difference?

I have accepted the invitation to pray  
And so here I am.  
The world feels a mess.  
The pandemic instils fear and anxiety.  
It causes sickness and death.  
It strikes our NHS.  
It causes division among family and friends.

It's wrecking our economy.  
It's driving the poorest into the dust.  
  
Please hear me.  
Please come to our help.  
Give us what we need to see this through.  
And at its ending,  
may it mark a new beginning  
Of friendship,  
Peace and kindness;  
Of generosity, hope and faith.  
Amen.  
Bishop Bev Mason, *Prayers for Our Nation*.

### **Some Advent Prayers**

Christmas is coming, Lord,  
Yet little cause for cheer.  
Is there any point in tinsel and glitter?  
Will there be any coming together?  
What of the funny foibles and quiriness  
that drive us to distraction;  
the silly jokes and games;  
the overspend, overfeed, over-indulged  
that have made Christmas, Christmas.

With so much stripped away,  
bring us back to the heart of Christmas  
when love became incarnate.  
May the flame of the Christmas lantern  
illuminate my mind;  
And the love that came down at Christmas,  
fill my heart;  
May the angels' song of peace and goodwill  
Bless again the earth.  
Give to each one cup of kindness,  
One measure of joy  
and stir up in us good Christmas cheer  
For the love of the him who gave Christmas its name:  
Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.  
Bishop Bev Mason, *Prayers for Our Nation*,

Holy God, just as we are we come to you,  
and ask for your kingdom to come in us  
and in our homes and our hearts,  
increase our faith and love for you,  
so that we may become the lights in the darkness  
that we are called to be.

Amen                      Living Stones, Prayers of Intercession. Susan Sayers

Lord

I pray that I will have faith  
and trust in you my God,  
Even when I think there is no hope  
because you are our true God  
and you never let us down.

Amen                      Prayers from the Edge. Catherine Von Ruhland

God of Hope,  
we come to you in the darkness  
and uncertainty of our lives;  
transform our doubt  
heal our brokenness  
strengthen our weakness  
for you are faithful  
and our hope rests in you. Amen.      Rev Petra Shakeshaft

Loving God,  
your Son Jesus Christ came  
that we might have life  
and have it abundantly;  
pour out your blessing upon our nation;  
where there is illness,  
bring your healing touch;  
where there is fear,  
strengthen us with the knowledge of your presence;  
where there is uncertainty,  
build us up in faith;  
where there is dishonesty,

lead us into truth; where there is discord,  
may we know the harmony of your love;  
this we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Prayer for the Nation, Church of England

Holy God, we bring to you in love  
those who are weary with ongoing pain and weakness,  
those for whom this time is filled with fear and doubt,  
those who struggle as we face uncertainty,  
Pour your living strength into each of our lives  
and fill us with your peace.

Amen

Living Stones, Prayers of Intercession. Susan Sayers

Come, Lord, come down  
come in, come among us.  
Enter into our darkness with your light.  
Come fill our emptiness with your presence.  
Dispel the clouds and reveal your glory.  
Come refresh, renew and restore us.  
Come, Lord, come down,  
come in, come among us.

Amen

Traces of Glory. David Adam

God of all joy,  
we come before you in praise and thanksgiving  
for all who have brought us joy.  
Lead us from the darkness  
and uncertainty of this world  
into an Advent of expectation  
that the light will come,  
the light has come  
and will not be overcome.  
We pray that through prayer and reflection  
and through your grace  
the Christ-child may be born in us anew this Christmas.

Amen

Rev Petra Shakeshaft

### **Creative Advent Prayer**

As you turn your  
lights on each evening,  
allow them to remind you  
that Jesus came as light in the darkness, and pray for him to show you ways that you can bring  
light to others. You could also do this as you walk or drive around and see  
other people's  
Christmas lights.

If you have a nativity scene, perhaps build it slowly this year, adding a character each day.  
Ask God what you can learn from each character in the nativity story.  
Look at pictures if the nativity you may have on Christmas cards you've received as you look at  
the different ones meditate on the story and try to see something new in it.

Light a candle each evening  
and whilst it burns pray for those who are in darkness  
and who need to know God's light, love and peace this  
advent season.

### **Some Questions as we prepare for Christmas**

Perhaps you could consider these questions with a friend or relative on the phone or video chat  
If you are able to meet with others, maybe you could take some time, over a meal or a coffee or  
whilst taking your exercise perhaps, to think about these questions.

(Taken from Together at Home – Church Resources)

What is your favourite part of Christmas day?

What is your favourite thing we usually do at church for Christmas?

How is Christmas going to be different this year?

What is the best present you have ever given?

Christmas reminds us that God's love is a free gift for everyone – how can we share that this  
Christmas?

How many sources of light can you find in the Christmas story?

How can we be a light in the world at Christmas?

### **Christmas Eve**

On the hillsides,  
hope was heard singing unexpected Hallelujahs.  
In a Bethlehem backwater,  
Hope hovered,  
and love was born.  
And now,  
as the Wise journey and the powerful start to pace  
the floor  
and mumble into sleepless nights,  
we gather -  
the Light of the World is here.  
The job now is to keep it burning.  
*Sally Foster-Fulton from 'Hope was Heard Singing',  
the Iona Community*

### **A Christmas Blessing**

May the news of the angels fill your life and your heart with great joy.  
May the star that guided the wise lead you to the truth of understanding.  
May the witness of the shepherds affirm you in the message of the Gospel.  
May the sound of the incarnate Word bring you peace and hope.  
May the presence of the sacred baby remind you of your own holiness.  
And may this Christmas gift you, bless you, comfort you, inspire you as you journey into another year.  
Amen

PeterSiney from Winter, WildGoose Publishing

### **Christmas Day**

For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6

The birth of Jesus. Since probably before you knew what you were hearing, you've heard this story. Hopefully its done what all good stories do – its gone deep, past your ears and your head, lodged firmly in your heart and maybe even deeper – embedded itself somewhere in the core of your being – that's where changes come from...

A Native American storyteller begins all his stories with the phrase "I don't know if it happened exactly this way, but I know this story to be true." We people of the post-modern age have an important hurdle to get over if we are to understand the power of this gift we have been given – because this most sacred of stories is a gift, make no mistake. It has the power to make people lay down their weapons, if only for a day...It has the power to change preconceived notions and stubborn hearts, to open pockets and hearts long closed. There is a profound truth in the story of Jesus' coming, a message of peace on earth, good will to all. But we have to remember that being factual and being true don't mean the same thing. So let us consider what we might hear and understand if we began our story with "I don't know if it happened exactly this way, but I know this story to be true."

What might we make of Mary? A frightened, insignificant girl who had the audacity to believe '*nothing would be impossible with God*' – that the whole world might be delivered through her 'Yes'; someone who was willing to risk her reputation, her future, her everything because God asked her to.

What might we understand of her virginity? Not some essential divine attribute because human beings are somehow unworthy; the virgin birth not some unbelievable happening that we must

accept without question if we are to remain in the faith – but a beautiful metaphorical expression by the authors of these stories “We have seen the face of God in this man Jesus.

What could we glean from the star and the wise men, if we were not so tied to trying to explain this phenomenon rationally; a star that freely roams across the sky , actually turning left and stopping over an exact spot – as if directed by some ancient form of GPS or satnav. What if the story tells us about a light in the deepest darkness, leading us to a love so pure that it sends us home by another path – changed forever by what we experienced, unable to go back to what we saw before as powerful, because everything we used to understand about power has been turned on its head?

And what of the shepherds and angels? Maybe God comes to the poorest first – good news for them at last? The wise travel and journey to God, but God finds the poor where they are and whispers first to them that justice is coming.

‘I don’t know if it happened exactly this way, but I know this story to be true’. So what do you make of this ancient story? The one you’ve probably heard before you knew what you were hearing, the one that’s hopefully its done what all good stories do – gone deep, past your ears and your head, lodged firmly in your heart and maybe even deeper – embedded itself somewhere in the core of your being – that’s where changes come from.

What kind of impact could this kind of understanding and seeing make on us listening today? Well, when we are asked to say ‘Yes’ in the face of daunting odds and big risk, will the story speak its wisdom? When we think we glimpse the face of God in the face of a stranger, will we take a close look? When money and power and staying safe and secure seem like the sensible focus for our lives, will we be able to see light in our darkness, and turn and walk another way? The story is a gift, to make of what we will. So what will you make of it this year? (Particularly this strangest of years)

Quoted in ‘Reading the Bible again for the First Time: Taking the Bible Seriously but not Literally’ by Marcus J.Borg, Harper Collins 2001



May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of Joseph and Mary and the peace of the Christ-child be yours this Christmas; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**