

Advent 2025



From the Old into the New **Advent is a time for reflection, prayer and preparation.**

We, as Christians, are stepping into the season of Advent.
Here are some thoughts for you to consider about why we have Advent.

Advent is a time for reflection – on the Scriptures; a time for prayer – helping us to develop a good relationship with God; and preparation, but preparing for what? These days it is very difficult to ascertain what people are preparing for. Is it for the secular celebrations – the season that the shops have been advertising since August? Or is it preparing ourselves for a deeper reason – the celebration of the birth of Jesus? Is there another reason to prepare for? Yes, Advent is also a time for us to prepare for the second coming of Jesus. Take a moment to think about what you are preparing for – if you are preparing – and how you are using this time of preparation.

While using this leaflet please hold these thoughts in your mind:
In the days of the Old Testament God's people had trust in a God they had never seen. They had faith and trust in what he said – they believed what the prophets told them.
They talked to God in the same way that we do today, through prayer. They built up their trust in God through prayer and when God answered their prayers. When we move into the New Testament it is no different – the people we meet there put their trust in God.
Today it is no different we, as Christians, must put our trust in God – no matter what changes in our lives we face, we must put our trust in God.

The leaflet this year is divided into parts – you can either read through the leaflet as a whole, or divide the readings into weekly parts. There will be references to both parts of the Bible – the Old and the New; suggestions for you to pause and think and perhaps make notes; prayers which you might like to use during Advent.

There is no one way to use this leaflet as everyone is different. You might like to put aside a time each day; you might like to create a quiet space and play some music; you might like to have a notepad, something to write with, a Bible would be very useful as references will be made in all the sections.

Prophecies of the Messiah from the Old Testament

There are many prophecies in the Old Testament about the coming of a Messiah, this leaflet only covers a few.

You may like to find more on your own.

We first have to realise that most of the prophecies were made at a time when the people of Israel were suffering from oppression, in both secular and spiritual ways.

So the people of Israel were looking, yearning, for someone to rescue them – someone to loosen their chains of servitude to the foreign powers which had subjugated them. In short they were looking for a Saviour.

In this first prophecy King David is being reassured by the prophet Nathan that all will be well because God had said:

12 When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

2 Samuel 7: 12 – 13:

Nathan is assuring King David that God will give him descendants who will build God's house forever. We see the fulfilment of this prophecy in the New Testament where St. Matthew in chapter 1 of his gospel goes through the lineage of Jesus.

You might like to read this passage: St. Matthew 1: 1 – 17.

Also in St. Luke 3: 23 – 31 there is a list outlining his genealogy through Mary. Both these genealogy lists make a point of showing that Jesus was related to King David as prophesied by Nathan.

So we know that what Nathan said to David came to pass.

What God said happened.

Do we trust in what God says to us, through the Bible or personally?

Take some time to think about this – perhaps note down the times this has happened to you.

The next prophecy we are going to consider is the one in Isaiah –

Chapter 7 verse 14: ¹⁴ *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign:*

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Once again a prophet, this time Isaiah, is trying to reassure a ruler that God has everything in his hands – God is in control. If you have time you might like to read chapter 7 to learn more about this prophecy. Once again the prophecy is fulfilled as recorded in St. Matthew's gospel, an angel appears to Joseph to reassure him about Mary's pregnancy. You will find it in chapter 1 verses 20 – 23.

²⁰ *But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*

The role of the prophets was quite complicated. It was to declare God's truth; and to tell the people God's plans. This was so that the people knew who God was and what his plans for his people were. Many times the people didn't want to listen to the prophets and they went against what the prophets were saying. Why do think this was? What is happening today – are people listening to God? Or are they listening to the secular world? What can you do to help God's words be heard loud and clear?

The third prophecy is about where the Messiah would be born and this can be found in Micah chapter 5 verse 2: *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."* If you read on to verse 5 of this chapter you will see why it is an important prophecy as Micah talks about why the Messiah would come. He talks about how God's people will be brought together; how the Messiah will be like a shepherd to God's people; how he will bring about peace – the peace that comes when people accept God and believe in him. This prophecy is fulfilled when the Wise Men follow the star all the way to Bethlehem and find the Christ Child – see St. Matthew 2:1 – 6. This is a well-known story which has been secularised over the years. It is worth reading it from the Bible.

Again the question is are we, as Christians, doing enough to tell other people about Jesus and why he is so important to us?

Well, those were some of the prophecies, what do you make of them? Have they helped to reaffirm that what God says is true and trustworthy?

We are now going to move into the New Testament, but before we do that just take a moment to read the prophecies from Nathan, Isaiah and Micah again and hold them in your mind during Advent and the Christmas period. The people who heard them trusted in God and so should we.

The second coming of Jesus as found in the New Testament.

There are several mentions of the second coming of Jesus in the New Testament, some feel like a promise but some sound more like a warning. Before we explore any further what is your immediate thoughts about this second coming? What are these thoughts based on?

In these verses Jesus is comforting his disciples just before his death. This reading can be found in St. John's gospel chapter 14 verses 1 – 3 and Jesus says: *14 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. ² My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you,*

I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. To put this into context it might be helpful to go back to chapter 13 and read this chapter where Jesus shares the Passover with his disciples. As we see Jesus is telling his disciples if they believe in him and God they will always be with him. If you read all of chapter 14 Jesus talks about the Holy Spirit coming to support and help them in the future. In verse 3 Jesus says quite clearly that he will come back for them.

Are we, as believers in Jesus, ready for the time when Jesus will come back for us? If we feel we not ready what can we do to become ready?

These next verses, taken from Acts 1: 10 – 11, are about what happened immediately after Jesus's ascension into heaven.

The disciples had gathered together with Jesus on the Mount of Olives and were talking about the future.

Then Jesus ascends into heaven and the disciples are bewildered and possibly feeling bereft but then the following happens: ¹⁰ *They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.* ¹¹ *"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."* They receive a reminder about the words Jesus had spoken to them about 'coming back'.

What do you think these disciples felt when they heard these words?

Are you reassured when you read these words?

These next verses can be found in Hebrews 9: 28 ²⁸ *so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*

We do not know who wrote Hebrews or who they were writing to, but the writer was trying to tell the early Christians that Jesus was coming again.

If you have time it might be helpful to read the whole of chapter 9 to understand what the writer was saying to their readers. But it does confirm for us what Jesus had told his disciples that he would come back for them.

Do you find this comforting?

Revelation is a difficult book to read and understand. It is thought to have been written by St. John some time after the death of Jesus when the Romans were trying to suppress Christianity. It is a book that records the vision of St. John, and at the very end in the last chapter – chapter 22 – he talks about the second coming of Jesus. The following are some of the verses: *Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.* – Revelation 22:7 and *"He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"* – Revelation 22:20

You can also find other references in the New Testament that relate to the second coming of Jesus.

A question to think about: Do you spend time thinking about when Jesus will come again? If so are you ready for that event?

The Nativity Story

Now let us turn to the Nativity Story –
the story of the Messiah's birth in Bethlehem.

Before we start this sections a couple of questions to think about.

In recent times has the Christian church made this into a children's 'fairy tale'?
Has it been so simplified and prettified that it has lost its true meaning?

When Jesus was born the people of Israel were still being oppressed.
This time it was the Roman Empire that was the oppressor and King Herod was the ruler only because the Romans allowed him to be in this position.
The ordinary people of Israel were still waiting for the Messiah,
the Saviour who would set them free of oppression.
Do you think they would recognise a baby born in Bethlehem in humble surroundings would be that saviour?

When Jesus started his ministry it must have been very difficult
for people to realise that he was the promised Messiah.

So many people today doubt that Jesus is the Son of God.
What can we do, as Christians, to persuade them that Christ is the Saviour
as promised by the prophets.

So during the season of Advent how do we go about ensuring
that the Christian voice is heard, ensuring that it is not drowned out
by all the advertising of secular things unrelated to the birth of Christ.
What can you do?

Let us start with what you know about the 'Nativity Story'.
Take a moment to think about all the people involved.
Write a list and against each name put what they did and why they are important.

Now we are going to look at some of them, and through them also look
at one of the themes that the Church of England uses during Advent –
that of Peace, Hope, Joy and Love.

Have you made your own list of people?

Quite a few people are involved this story – you can find some of it in St. Luke's gospel chapter 1 and in most of chapter 2; St. Matthew chapters 1 and 2.
St. John's gospel doesn't actually touch on the birth of Jesus as a story but it is interesting to read the opening chapter.
Read these passages of Scripture through and see what the Bible actually says.

So who were the leading people and what did they do?

We have Zechariah and his wife Elisabeth. Zechariah was a priest and when God spoke to him through an angel about Elisabeth having a child he didn't believe God. This son of theirs was to be called John and he would tell God's people about Jesus: *'you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord, St. Luke 1: 14 + 15. and verse 16: He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God.*

(Elisabeth and Mary were cousins and Mary turned to Elisabeth during her pregnancy). At first Zechariah did not trust God but God gave him a sign by making him unable to speak. But God kept his word and they had their son.

In St. Luke's gospel chapter 1 verse 26 onwards Mary was visited by the Angel Gabriel. We know from the Bible that Mary was favoured by God and that the angel told her that she would bear a son. She must have trusted the angel (and God) because her words were: *'Here I am, the servant of the Lord. Let it be with me according to your word'.*

She goes to visit her cousin Elisabeth and they share their news together.

Please take the time to read Mary's Magnificat.

She thanks God for all that he has done for her and the previous generations.

If you have read any previous Advent leaflets you might remember that you were asked to write your own Magnificat. This is something to do every year as lives change and there are different things to be thankful for. At this time of year life can be so busy that we forget to thank God for his trustworthiness.

It doesn't have to be a long piece of writing but it should come from your heart – like Mary's did.

Joseph too was visited by an angel and he was told how Mary was fulfilling the prophecy: St. Matthew 1: 22 – 23: *'²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").*

They both trusted in God and listened to the angel and did as they were told.

Both their families must have had thoughts about all this.

Perhaps they even disapproved.

Has there ever been a time on your Christian journey that you have encountered disapproval?

Do you know of anyone who has suffered disapproval about becoming a Christian – if so what can you do to support them?

We now move to the actual birth of Jesus. We know from the Bible that Mary and Joseph travelled to Bethlehem and tried to find lodgings but the town was very busy. It doesn't say in the Bible exactly where they were staying when Jesus was born – it just says that she 'laid him in a manger'.

Perhaps someone, a woman maybe, came to her help – we do not know this but it would have been the custom at that time.

What help can you offer to others in their time of need?

We then meet the shepherds who *'were keeping watch over their flock by night'*. They too had an angel to tell them the good news of the birth of Jesus....*'to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour who is the Messiah, the Lord'*.

Read the passage from St. Luke's gospel – chapter 2 verses 8 – 20.

Take a moment to put yourself into the picture and imagine how you would feel. How would you respond?

The shepherds trusted in the message from God and went to find the baby.

If they hadn't trusted that the angel's message was true would they have rushed off as they did?

Would they have returned glorifying and praising God if they hadn't thought it was true?

Now some time passes, and we turn back to St. Matthew's gospel chapter 2 to meet the Wise Men. The Bible does not mention the number of Wise Men it only mentions the three gifts – gold, frankincense and myrrh.

They had faith in the unusual star and followed it and trusted that it would lead them to *'a child who has been born king of the Jews'*. Unfortunately they went via Jerusalem and King Herod heard about their visit and consulted his chief priests and scribes before telling the Wise Men where to go.

They found Jesus and gave them their gifts.

Pause here and think about yourself – what gifts do you have which you can offer to Jesus at this time?

Do take the time to read the story from the Bible – St. Matthew 2: 1 – 12.

You can read on to the end of the chapter but this part is not really part of the Nativity story. So we have come to the end of the Nativity story but what about the love, joy, peace and hope?

Well, Joy and Hope are wrapped up together:

Hope – the Christian hope is about knowing that Jesus will come again – we know this because he, himself, told us so;

Joy is in knowing the Lord as a friend as well as our Saviour and knowing that God keeps his promises – just look back at the prophecies and the Nativity story.

Love and Peace are also wrapped up together – Jesus spoke of these when he was talking to his disciples and the people who followed him:

St. John 14: 27 *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you.*

All through the gospels we can hear Jesus using the phrase 'Peace be with you'.

So as we move towards Christmas we need to find this peace that knowing Jesus can give us – peace towards others, perhaps spending time praying for peace in our troubled world.

Love is joined with peace because if you do not love others and yourself you will find it hard to find peace. Again Jesus spoke often about the love of God and how much he loves each one of us.

But also Jesus challenges us to love one another – He said *'that you love one another as I have loved you'* St. John 15: 12. If you have time read on to verse 17.

Prayers which you might like to use during Advent

As some of these prayers use we and us, and as these are for you to use in your personal prayer time, you might like to change the pronouns.

Advent Collect:

Almighty God, as your kingdom dawns, turn us from the darkness of sin to the light of holiness, that we may be ready to meet you in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

O Lord our God, make us watchful and keep us faithful as we await the coming of your Son our Lord; that, when he shall appear, he may not find us sleeping in sin but active in his service and joyful in his praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The following prayers have been taken (and adapted) from a book by John Birch.

God of hope and mystery, anticipation, preparation, we wait for a kingdom of this world and the next and a king appearing when we least expect. Heaven touches earth.

Footsteps of the divine walk dusty roads as once they did in Eden and a people, searching for a saviour, walk straight past the stable. Open our eyes and hearts that this might be an Advent of hope for the world, where those that seek will find the Christ – child born for them. Amen.

Two prayers for our Team:

In this Advent of expectation draw us together in unity that our praise and thanksgiving might echo from these walls and also through our lives God of Advent, draw near we pray.

In this Advent of expectation draw us together in mission. Let the gratitude in our hearts be the song that we sing and the melody of our lives.

God of Advent, draw near we pray.

In this Advent of expectation draw us together in service, that the path we follow might lead from the stable to a glimpse of eternity. God of Advent, draw near we pray.

God of hope who brought love into this world, thank you for the love that dwells between us.

God of hope who brought peace into this world, thank you for the peace that dwells between us.

God of hope who brought joy into this world, thank you for the joy between us,

God of hope, the rock upon which we stand, thank you for the vision that unites us this day and throughout this Advent time. Amen.

Prayers for ourselves:

Spirit of wisdom rest upon us: grant us understanding and an increase in our faith.

Spirit of knowledge rest upon us: grant us discernment in decision we must make.

Spirit of power rest upon us: grant us faithfulness when we are spiritually weak.

Spirit of God, present in Jesus, Saviour, rest upon us this Advent time we pray.

Amen.

*In the streets we walk and the places we go, with the people we meet
and the decisions we make, thank you, Lord, for being there.*

*Lord, take us to places where you would go; give us words that you would say;
so that in this Advent season of promise and preparation, we might point the way
to the one who takes away the sins of the world. Amen.*

Words of a hymn you might like to use to think about:

1 *Peace is flowing like a river, flowing out through you and me;
Flowing out into the desert, setting all the captives free.*

2 *Joy is flowing like a river etc. etc.*

3 *Faith is flowing like a river etc. etc.*

4 *Hope is flowing like a river etc. etc.*

5 *Love is flowing like a river etc. etc.*

Hymn words you may like to use as a blessing:

*May the grace of Christ our Saviour and the Father's boundless love,
with the Holy Spirit's favour, rest upon us from above.*

*Thus may we abide in union with each other and the Lord,
and possess in sweet communion joys which earth cannot afford. Amen.*

This has been left blank for your notes



As you open your gifts on Christmas morning think about how much God has given you this year and say a heartfelt thank you to him.

May your Christmas be filled with God's love, joy peace and hope.