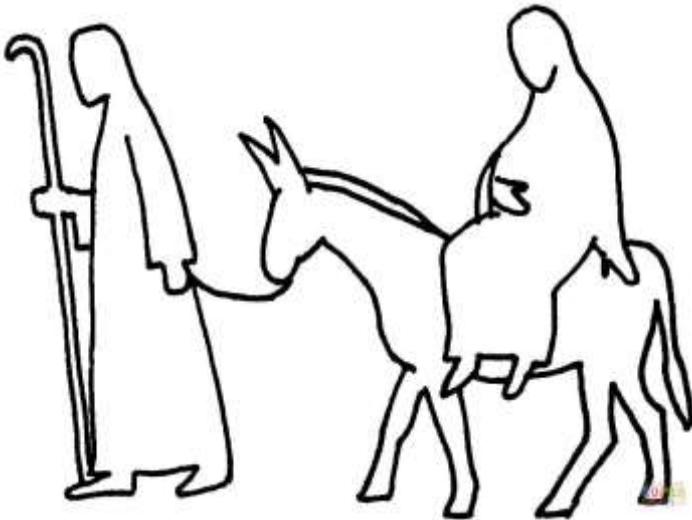




prayers for advent 2017



This year a group has collected a series of prayers and poems to help us reflect on Advent. We hope you find them useful, and that you can take some time each day to read the day's selection, and light one of the advent candles we have been handing out in church.

Reading a poem is a self-consciously reflective activity. There's no point in reading poem in a rush, or whilst doing something else. It's the opposite of a rolling news headline or a Facebook status update. You have to take the time to read it. It might be a short poem, so you only really need a minute—but it's a minute you're dedicating to reading a poem.

For some people reading a poem is an inherently prayerful activity, because, like praying, it has this deliberate quality. For others of us, praying can always feel a bit rushed, a bit of a contingency, a bit *fitted in*. If that's you then reading a poem can be a useful way into a different type of praying.

Taking the time—even a moment—to deliberately step out of daily life and into a different space, a deliberate space, can be very powerful. This isn't about busyness but about intention.

We hope these prayers and poems will form a space for you in Advent. It can be a busy time, so take some time, make it your own. Give it the prayerful intention of being a time of preparation.

We are preparing for not just the homely, heart-warming, genteel-poverty of the Bethlehem stable, but the birth of a baby whose birth blood will never be washed cleanly away. We are preparing, too, for the time of permanent reckoning, the final balancing of the scales to which all of life and death inexorably draws us.

A moment out of time each day to prepare for the timeless moment of eternity.

Sunday, December 3rd

I lit candles and the room was bathed in warm light.
The outside remained dark and cold.
There was this moth - thirsty for a fix of light.
Desperate to throw herself at the light without considered
consequence.
She drummed relentlessly on the window pane...
Time and time again.
Time and time again.
Time and time again.
Exhausted.
I opened the window.
In she came, she drew near, waited and rested...
Don't give up searching and longing for the light...
Advent is near.

*Ron Cole, taken from "Creative Ideas for Sacramental Worship"
(Canterbury Press, 2010)*

Monday, December 4th

God of Love,
Your son, Jesus, is your greatest gift to us.
He is a sign of your love.
Help us walk in that love during the weeks of Advent,
As we wait and prepare for his coming.
We pray in the name of Jesus, our Saviour.
Amen.

Tuesday, December 5th

At Advent we should try the key to our heart's door. It may have gathered rust. If so, this is the time to oil it, in order that the heart's door may open more easily when the Lord Jesus wants to enter at Christmas time!

Lord, oil the hinges of our hearts' doors that they may swing gently and easily to welcome your coming.

Prayer of a New Guinea Christian, taken from "The Lion Prayer Collection"

Wednesday, December 6th

You who are over us,
You who are one of us,
You who are also within us,
May all see you-in me also.
May I prepare the way for you,
May I thank you for all
that shall fall to my lot,
May I also not forget the needs of others.
Give me a pure heart-that I may see you.
A humble heart-that I may hear you,
A heart of love-that I may serve you,
A heart of faith-that I may abide in you. Amen.

Dag Hammarskjöld

Thursday, December 7th

Jesus, only you can see into my heart and know that under all the busy-ness of my world, there is a deep longing to make this Advent one that welcomes you more deeply into my life. My heart

desires the warmth of your love and my mind searches for your light in the midst of the darkness. This Advent, let my prayers not only be about matters close to home but also be ones of concern for refugees, the dispossessed, the sick and dying, the homeless and the frightened. Let your light and love shine into those dark places in our world.



Friday, December 8th

Come and Change Us

Come, Lord, come

Come and change us

Convince

Convert

Consecrate

Come, Lord, come
Come and change us
Return, Lord, return
Return and revive us
Renew
Refresh
Restore
Return, lord, return
Return and revive us.

David Adam

Saturday, December 9th

God of hope
be with us in our Advent journey
to the stable and beyond,
be with us in our meeting
and in our travelling together,
be with us in our worship
and our praying together,
be with us in our Advent journey
to the stable and beyond,
our God of hope. Amen.

Sunday, December 10th

O Lord, make haste and illumine the night. Say to my soul that nothing happens without You permitting it, and that nothing of what You permit is without comfort. O Jesus, Son of God, You Who were silent in the presence of Your accusers, restrain my tongue until I find what should say and how to say it. Show me the way and make me ready to follow it. It is dangerous to delay, yet

perilous to go forward. Answer my petition and show me the way.
As the wounded go to the doctor in search of aid, so do I come to
You. O Lord, give Your peace to my heart. Amen.

St Bridget of Sweden

Monday, December 11th

Keep us, O Lord,
while we tarry on this earth,
in a serious seeking after you,
and in an affectionate walking with you,
every day of our lives;
that when you come,
we may be found not hiding our talent,
nor serving the flesh,
nor yet asleep with our lamp unfurnished,
but waiting and longing for our Lord,
our glorious God for ever. Amen.

SSF Office Richard Baxter (1691)

Tuesday, December 12th

God of the seasons,
God of the years,
God of the eons,
 Alpha and Omega,
 before us and after us.

You promise and we wait:
 we wait with eager longing,
 we wait amid doubt and anxiety,
 we wait with patience thin

and then doubt,
and then we take life into our own hands.

We wait because you are the one and the only one,
We wait for your peace and your mercy,
for your justice and and your good rule.

Give us your spirit that we may wait
obediently and with discernment,
daringly and without passivity,
trustingly and without cynicism,
honestly and without utopianism.

Grant that our wait may be appropriate to your coming
soon and very soon,
soon and not late,
late but not too late.

We wait while the world groans in eager longing.

Walter Brueggemann, Prayers for a Privileged People



Wednesday, December 13th

We give you our thanks, O God our Father, for the gift of your Son Jesus Christ, whose coming to this world was proclaimed by prophets of old and who was born for us in lowliness and poverty at Bethlehem.

As we make ready once again to celebrate his birth, fill our hearts with your own joy and peace, and enable us to welcome him as our Saviour; so that when he comes again in his glory and majesty he may find in us a people prepared for him-self; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Frank Colquhoun, "Contemporary Parish Prayers"

Thursday, December 14th

¹ I waited patiently for the Lord to help me,
and he turned to me and heard my cry.

² He lifted me out of the pit of despair,
out of the mud and the mire.

He set my feet on solid ground
and steadied me as I walked along.

³ He has given me a new song to sing,
a hymn of praise to our God.

Many will see what he has done and be amazed.
They will put their trust in the Lord.

⁴ Oh, the joys of those who trust the Lord,
who have no confidence in the proud
or in those who worship idols.

⁵ O Lord my God, you have performed many wonders for us.
Your plans for us are too numerous to list.
You have no equal.

If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds,
I would never come to the end of them.

⁶ You take no delight in sacrifices or offerings.
Now that you have made me listen, I finally understand[a]—
you don't require burnt offerings or sin offerings.

⁷ Then I said, "Look, I have come.
As is written about me in the Scriptures:

⁸ I take joy in doing your will, my God,
for your instructions are written on my heart.”

⁹ I have told all your people about your justice.
I have not been afraid to speak out,
as you, O Lord, well know.

¹⁰ I have not kept the good news of your justice hidden in my
heart;

I have talked about your faithfulness and saving power.
I have told everyone in the great assembly
of your unfailing love and faithfulness.

Psalm 40 New Living Translation



Friday, December 15th

O shepherd of Israel, hearken,
O guide of the flock of Joseph!
Rouse your power, and come to save us.
O Lord of hosts, restore us,
if your face shine upon us, then we shall be safe. Amen.

Saturday, December 16th

The God we Hardly Knew

No one can celebrate
a genuine Christmas
without being truly poor.
The self-sufficient, the proud,
those who, because they have
everything, look down on others,
those who have no need
even of God- for them there
will be no Christmas.
Only the poor, the hungry,
those who need someone
to come on their behalf,
will have that someone.
That someone is God.
Emmanuel. God-with-us.
Without poverty of spirit
there can be no abundance of God.

Óscar Romero

Sunday, December 17th

An Anxious Note to Baby Jesus

Dear Lord,
I feel tired before it's even started.
The cards (should I bother?)
The presents (who to buy for?)
The decorations (real or artificial?)
The family... (enough said)
The crowds, the hassle, the weather -

Wake me up when it's all over.
I know I shouldn't feel this way
but if I'm honest,
Advent -
it makes me weary just thinking about it.



Which makes me wonder,
how was it for you?
Were you weary too?
Just thinking about it?
The call, the life-long challenge, to
hear God,
listen to God,
follow God?
For those with ears to hear
and eyes to see,

to be God?

All begun in makeshift circumstances.

(Sorry, Lord, we were not better prepared -
some things don't change.)

A sign of things to come,
of an uphill struggle

to make your voice heard.

Uphill towards Jerusalem.

Uphill to the Mount of Olives.

Uphill to the hill of execution.

Hoping we would follow.

Hoping we would understand you,

respond to you,

welcome you then,

welcome you now.

Lord, were you tired before it even started?

Or was your love your inner energy,

the love you received your support,

the love you gave a light in the darkness,

the love you give the strength I need?

Will you help me through Advent, dear Lord,

little one?

Give me the grace to greet you

without suppressed sighs of weariness.

Give me the generosity to invite you home

without thought to the inconvenience.

Give me the will to rise to your demands,

to share your love and to receive it.

It's not so much to ask, I know,

when you have faced it all -

the Advent task, the Christmas hope -

two thousand times before.

Peter Thurston

Monday, December 18th

Astonishing God, your prophet Isaiah envisaged a day
when the wolf and lamb would lie down together,
and the leopard with the kid, and a little child would lead us.

Astonish us anew by your gentle ways of peace here and now and
with us.

Shape your church to live from faith instead of fear.

Make your future present through the lives of those
who show us how to love our enemies.

Hasten the day when the earth will be full of the knowledge of
you,

and your fulness will be all in all,

and all creation from the depths of the sea
to the heights of the mountains

will know the peace to which your Son shall lead.

Awaken that dawn when we are surrounded

with everlasting praise to you,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Sam Wells & Abigail Kocher, "Joining the Angels' Song"

Tuesday, December 19th

Jesus, protector, I long for your coming. The promise of new light
is there if only I can believe.

Protect me from dangers and lead me through the gloom and
darkness to the joy I so long to find in you.

Lift me from my lowly sins and give me the promise of salvation
with no more shame, only the light and saving grace of your love.

Today Lord in our winter cold, I pray for the homeless especially
those sleeping rough in our own area. Help charities such as Crisis
and Wycombe Homeless Connection in their work of rebuilding
lives.

Wednesday, December 20th

God of forgiveness, I turn to you in my great weakness and beg for your help. Let me feel the joy growing in my heart as I anticipate your coming. I hear the message of the prophets of old and know that the Messiah will bring new life and new ways of living. From the humbleness of my life, help me to grow and bloom and hear the words that will change the world. Today Lord I pray for Christians around the world suffering for their faith in you. May they be sustained by your love as together we wait expectantly for your return.

Thursday, December 21nd

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. Amen

SSF Office David Silk

Friday, December 22nd

Our heavenly Father, as once again we prepare for Christmas, help us to find time in our busy lives for quiet and thought and prayer; that we may reflect upon the wonder of your love and allow the story of our Saviour's birth to penetrate our hearts and minds. So may our joy be deeper, our worship more real, and our lives worthier of all that you have done for us through the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saturday, December 23rd

May God the Father, who loved the world so much that he sent his only Son,

give you grace to prepare for eternal life.

May God the Son, who comes to us as Redeemed and Judge, reveal to you the path from darkness to light.

May God the Holy Spirit, by whose working the Virgin Mary conceived the Christ, help you bear the fruits of holiness.

Michael Perham

Sunday, December 24th

The Art of Waiting

God of surprises,
It was a night such as this:
dark, unsuspecting, ordinary,
the night you chose to send
your Son,
tiny, helpless, yet saviour of
the world.

You carefully chose those you
would tell first,
knew who would receive the
birth announcements,
who would welcome him and
bring him gifts.

Thank you that you chose me too.
Now, whom must I tell?

Wendy Bray

