ADVENT 2025 (Overview)

Verse: "Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord" Isaiah 2:5

This Advent, we invite you to journey with us as we explore the theme: *Shine Light this Christmas!* As we prepare for the birth of Jesus, we'll reflect on how God's light transforms lives through hope, peace, joy, and love, and consider the part we play in shining that light into the world around us.

What comes to mind when you hear the word *light*? What images, thoughts, or feelings does it bring?

Light is essential to life on Earth, though it's easy to overlook its impact. From helping plants grow and giving vision to humans and animals, to influencing our sleep, mood, and health, and powering clean energy - light is woven into everything. Without it, life as we know it couldn't exist.

Light also carries rich symbolic meaning. Around the world, we see people shining their "light" by illuminating ideas and experiences, spreading knowledge, standing up to injustice, revealing hidden beauty, and sharing love and grace with others.

Throughout Advent, our reflections, based on the lectionary readings (Year A), will focus on God's promise to bring everlasting light to all people through Jesus. As we recognise the darkness in our own lives and the world around us, we'll also celebrate the Light of the World who transforms that darkness with hope, peace, joy, and love.

Together, we'll use art, science, storytelling, and acts of kindness to prepare our hearts for Jesus' coming, celebrating His light and discovering how we can share it with others.

Each week is themed:

- Advent One: November 30th – Shine the Light of Hope
- Advent Two: December 7th – Shine the Light of Peace
- Advent Three: December 14th – Shine the Light of Joy
- Advent Four: December 21st – Shine the Light of Love
- Christmas: December 25th - Christ, the Light for All People

There will be three resources available for you to use, and adapt for your context:

- **A worship resource:** this includes biblical themes to get you thinking, liturgy including Calls to Worship and Candle lighting, as well as additional suggestions for Bible readings, Prayers, Interactive activities, Music, Videos, Quotes, and Mini Message and Sermon Ideas
- **A Community/Family Resource** called 'The Great Light Challenge': this includes suggestions for games, books, science experiments, craft, Acts of Kindness, prayer based on the weekly themes.
- **A Small group/Faith@home resource**

Advent One: 30 November

Shine the Light of Hope

Symbol of Light: Candle

Introduction
It's easy to focus on the darkness.
As we look around at the world, our society, our neighbourhoods, and even our own lives, it can feel as though darkness is everywhere. Our news channels and social media feeds are filled with stories of despair, pain, greed, death, and destruction. At times, it can seem like the darkness is overshadowing and suffocating hope.

But this Advent, while we acknowledge and reflect on the darkness in our world, we will also choose to look for, and look toward, the light. The light that Christ brings, and the light that each of us is called to shine.

The readings this week, and in the weeks to come, are filled with hope:
Hope in what God is doing.
Hope for humanity.
Hope for our world.

And it's not a passive hope - it's active!

So: *"Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord."*
Let's be people who transform darkness into light.
Let's be people who carry hope and share it with others.

Bible Readings:

Isaiah 2:1-5, Psalm 122, Romans 13:11-14, Matthew 24:36-44

Bible Themes:

- Nations streaming, with hope, to the House of the Lord
- People actively engaging with the Lord, and inviting others:
    - "Come, let us go to the mountain of the Lord" Isaiah 2:3,
    - "Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord" Isaiah 2:5,
    - "Let us go to the House of the Lord" Ps 122:1
- Expectations/hope for what God will do
- The transformation from darkness to light: Sleep to Awake, Night to Day, Works of darkness to armour of light
    - "The night is far gone; the day is near. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light". Romans 13:12
- The Coming of the Son of Man
- Be watchful, be ready, be awake for the coming of the Son of Man
- Waiting with hope, praying for peace

Advent Two: 7 December

Shine the Light of Peace

Symbol of Light: Lightbulb

It can be easy to focus on the lack of peace in our world. When we look around at our society and neighbourhoods, we're often overwhelmed by signs of conflict, political instability, poverty, natural disasters, misuse of power, and even technological advances that seem to disrupt rather than help our lives.

People of all ages, especially younger generations, are living with fear, stress, and anxiety as they struggle to find peace in a world that feels unstable and ever-changing.

This week, we invite you to shine a light on places where peace feels impossible. Not to amplify the darkness, but to bring awareness, to seek understanding, and to ask, "Where is God already at work?" and "How can we join in bringing peace where it's needed most?"

The readings this week, and in the coming weeks, are full of powerful words: prophecies and promises of God's plan to bring lasting peace. Not just calm or quiet, but transformative peace. Peace for individuals. Peace for communities. Peace for the world.

God's peace is not passive - it's active! So, let's respond to the call:
"Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord."

Let's bring light to dark places, and let's share God's peace wherever we go.

Bible Readings:

Isaiah 11:1-10, Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19, Romans 15:4-13, Matthew 3:1-12

Themes:

- The Peaceful Kingdom
    - "The wolf shall live with the lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the kid;
      the calf and the lion will feed together, and a little child shall lead them.
      7 The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together;
      and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
      8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
      and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den." Isaiah 11:6-8
- The difference the Root of Jesse will make: Spirit of wisdom, Spirit of counsel and might, Spirit of knowledge and fear, Judge for the poor and oppressed, Righteousness, Faithfulness, Peace bringer
- A vision of an ideal world
- Christ welcomes all – jews and gentiles – and we should welcome one another as Christ has welcomed us
- Jesus confirmed the promises given to ancestors in the past

- Proclamations of John the Baptist about the one coming
- Repent and bear fruit worthy of repentance
- Living in God's peace and harmony

Advent Three: 14 December

Shine the Light of Joy

Symbol of Light: Fireworks

At this time of year, our surroundings are full of symbols of joy - colourful displays, bright lights, festive music, fragrant candles, beautifully wrapped gifts, and more.
On the surface, it can seem like joy is everywhere.

But what if we paused to shine a light on our own thoughts and feelings or on the lives of those around us? We might discover that while Christmas can be a time of great joy, it can also be a time of hardship and heaviness. For some, it's marked by exhaustion, loneliness, worry, or even numbness.

This week's readings take us back to times when God's people had little reason to feel joyful.
They were living in exile.
In societies divided by politics, religion, wealth, and ethnicity.
They were tired, disillusioned, and longing for something more.

It's into that very darkness that God spoke, delivering messages of hope and joy.
God was present. And God had a plan: a future of restoration that would bring deep, lasting, overflowing joy for all people.

Not a surface-level, glittery kind of joy but a bold, active, world-changing joy.

So, as we journey through this Advent season:
"Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord."

Let us bring light into dark places and let us share the joy of God with those around us.

Bible Readings:

Isaiah 35:1-10, Psalm 146:5-10, Luke 1:46b-55, James 5:7-10, Matthew 11:2-11

Bible Themes:

- A future of restoration and hope after exile which leads to profound joy
- The return of the redeemed to Zion
- Transformation
- Everlasting Joy - sorrow and sighing flee away
- Who the Lord is and what the Lord does – Psalm 146 and Mary's song of Praise
- Happy are those whose hope is in the Lord
- Be patient for the coming of the Lord
- Are you the One to come?
- What do you hear and see?

Advent Four: 21 December

Shining the Light of Love

Symbol of Light: Glowing animals

All throughout the Bible, we read stories of people turning away from God - choosing their own selfish desires, which often lead to pain, destruction, and even death.
It can be hard to read these stories and realise how often we, too, make similar choices. We stray from God's ways, and our decisions sometimes hurt others and ourselves.

But the good news is this: God has never given up on us.

From beginning to end, the Bible is also filled with stories of God's deep and faithful love for all people and God's ongoing plan to restore what has been broken. Even when we least deserve it, God continues to shine light into our darkness, offering love, forgiveness, and grace.

This week, we take time to reflect on the darkness both within us and around us.
With the Psalmist, we can cry out with honesty and hope:
" *Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved."*

Our readings this week point us toward God's ultimate plan of restoration through Jesus, Emmanuel, God-with-us who came to pour out undeserved love and offer forgiveness to all.

So, as we journey on:
"Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord."

Let us bring light into dark places and let us share God's love with others.

Bible Readings

Isaiah 7:10-16, Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19, Romans 1:1-7, Matthew 1:18-25

Additional: 1 John 4: 7-21

Themes:

- Reassurance and trust in God's plan for humanity.
- God with Us
- Restore us – a prayer of restoration
- Let your face shine, that we may be saved
- Paul's introduction of himself and Jesus
- Paul's acknowledgement of the promised one.
- Joseph's concern and the angel's comfort/reassurance - this is God's plan as spoken by the prophets.
- God is love
- We love because God first loved us

Christmas Day: 25 December

Christ, the Light, for all people

Symbol of light: Jesus in a manger

Over the past four weeks, we've reflected on what it means to live in darkness, and we've explored the power and promise of light.

Our Bible readings have been filled with prophecies and proclamations - words of hope, peace, joy, and love pointing to God's plan for restoration through the Light of the World.

As we've listened to stories from long ago, we've also considered how we might reflect that same light in our own neighbourhoods, towns, and cities.

At Christmas, we celebrate the fulfilment of God's promise. Jesus entered the world not with grandeur or fanfare, but in humility - born among the broken and the overlooked. Like a light breaking through the night, Jesus came to reveal truth, to embody grace, and to share divine love with all people.

As we receive this gift once again, we are invited to reflect on what Christ's light means in our lives and in our world today. You might like to consider these questions:

As the light of Jesus shines: What is illuminated in the world around us? What truths are uncovered? What is revealed in our communities, in our hearts? Who might still be living in darkness? In whom, or where, might we be missing the light of Christ? How are we being called to respond?

So, "Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord."

Let us be people who transform darkness into light, and who shine the hope, peace, joy, and love of Christ into the world.

Readings:

Nativity 1: Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 96

Nativity 2: Luke 2:(1-7), 8-20, Titus 3:4-7

Nativity 3: Hebrews 1:1-4, John 1:1-14

Themes:

- Praise God – shepherds, angels, all people, the Earth
- God's gift of Jesus is for all people – Psalm 9, Luke 2:1-20, John 1:1-14
- A Child has been born for us
- The Great Light
- The goodness and loving kindness of God our saviour
- Let us go to Bethlehem (with haste): reminiscent of Advent 1
- God spoke through prophets now through the Son