



Advent and Christmas Worship Planning Materials

These resources have been created by a collaborative team from across the Qld Synod of the Uniting Church, to help congregations, communities and families celebrate Advent together intergenerationally.

In this document are bible readings, themes and suggestions for prayers, videos, and activities to do in worship, to assist with weekly worship preparation for the four Sundays of Advent, and Christmas Day or Christmas Eve. There are also suggestions for a Blue Christmas/ Solace/ Thanksgiving and Remembering Service, and an Advent Candle Litany.

These resources are connected thematically with the *Journey to Joy Countdown to Christmas*, and *Advent and Christmas Reflections* to enable ongoing engagement for congregation members, families, and people in your community over this Advent and Christmas season. These additional resources include 15-character reflections (three for each week's theme), topics and questions for discussion for small groups, families, or individuals to engage with. These reflections invite the participants to explore a character connected with the Advent story, how their own story might connect, as well as some challenges connected with the weekly theme. They are designed to invite conversation, connection, and creativity across generations through providing opportunity to share and hear each other's stories, as well as to engage in activities together exploring God's big story.

In preparing these resources, we wanted to be able to help congregations to ground the Christmas season in the story of Jesus' birth and the JOY that brings for us, share the joy of Christmas with a wider audience in ways that are accessible and inclusive, and align with a discipleship narrative. This narrative is focused on: following the ways of Jesus and connecting to God, connecting with other people in our faith communities, and connecting out into the world; encouraging people to consciously seek, accept and share joy; encouraging people to donate to appeals that can bring joy to vulnerable people and work to transform community; and to remind us that we are one body, one community, and one church.

The full suite of Journey to Joy resources are available to download at <https://ucaqld.com.au/synod-services/communications/christmas/advent-2022-resources/>

Theme: Journey to Joy

The theme was chosen collaboratively, and we chose not to use the lectionary as it didn't fit the theme well. Instead, we have chosen a range of Bible readings that reflect the breadth of the *characters of the nativity*, and their parts in God's big story. The weekly themes and readings are:

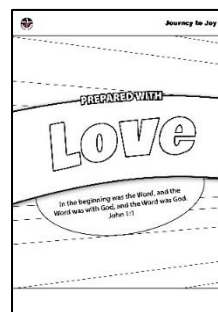
Advent 1. Sunday 27 Nov	Prepared with Love	John 1:1-5; Isaiah 9:2-3 & 6-7
Advent 2. Sunday 4 Dec	Focus on Peace	Matthew 1:18-24; Isaiah 7:10-14; Ephesians 2:14-18
Advent 3. Sunday 11 Dec	Sharing in Hope	Luke 1:5-20, 39-45; Philippians 1:1-11
Advent 4. Sunday 18 Dec	Unexpected Joy	Luke 2:8-20; Philippians 4:4-7
Christmas. 24/25 Dec	Unwrap Joy, Embrace Jesus	Luke 2:1-7; Matthew 2:1-12; 2 Corinthians 9:15

The *things to think about and discuss* section of each week in this document will give you an idea of what to think about when preparing the message and the overall service for the day. These questions can also be used as discussion starters during the service.



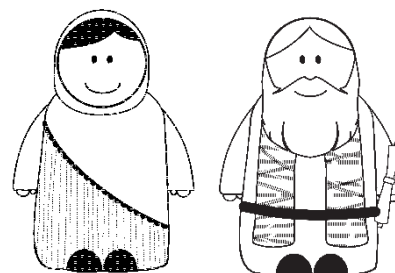
Decorations and Visuals

There is an **Advent Litany** that uses the traditional Advent themes, ordered according to the *Journey to Joy* themes. In addition to the traditional candle lighting, there is an option for making a collaborative artwork or **Poster** as part of the litany.



For each week there is also a set of **Postcards** that link the themes and key Bible readings. These can be used to help focus and engage people of all ages during worship service, and to help share the messages and themes of the Advent and Christmas season to the wider community.

There are also 15 **Character** images which can be printed and used in worship in many ways.



You might like to use these or other materials and ideas to decorate the inside and outside of your church or building to help create a sense of a journey or connect with the themes and the season.

- Print Posters or Postcards and add one each week to reveal the full picture
- Decorate a Christmas Tree with the Character ornaments
- Have an empty manger and a path leading to this, add baby Jesus on Christmas Eve or Day
- Have a giant present to put outside each Sunday with a different advent theme word on it
- Have a path or labyrinth set up

We have not prepared any additional Sunday School or children's ministry materials for this resource as the intent of this resource is to help connect intergenerationally in worship during this time. There is material available from MAX 7, which connects with some of the videos recommended for worship available at <https://www.max7.org/en/resource/dd88630a-d2a7-48f5-8347-9dfb99302b8a>.

We pray that this resource will help you prepare worship that connects everyone in your community with the Love, Peace, Hope and Joy found in Jesus through this season.

If you have any questions about the resources, or how to use them, please contact the Qld Synod Mission Engagement Team at communications@ucaqlld.com.au or Jess Pinkerton at jessica.pinkerton@ucaqlld.com.au

Thank you

Our deepest thanks to everyone across the Queensland Synod who has joined us on this Journey to Joy. We feel the blessing of this collaboration and we couldn't have done it without you and your contributions.

Special thanks to Kath Ruhle and Estelle Goldberg (The Gap UC), Jill Ross and team (St. Pauls UC, Stafford) Rebecca Bell, Jessica Pinkerton, Dominic Chan, and Brian Hoole (Emmanuel UC, Enoggera), Paul Wetzig, Michael Mann, Rebecca Riggs, Peter Rekers, and Andrew Mckaysmith.

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Advent Litany

The Advent Litany is written for 2 leaders (anyone within the congregation) and congregational responses (in bold). It is in the form of a prayer for others (intercession) and can be used in place of these prayers in the worship service. The posters and postcards are created with the same motif of a path that winds through the ups and downs of a Journey to Joy.

What you need:

For Candle Wreath:

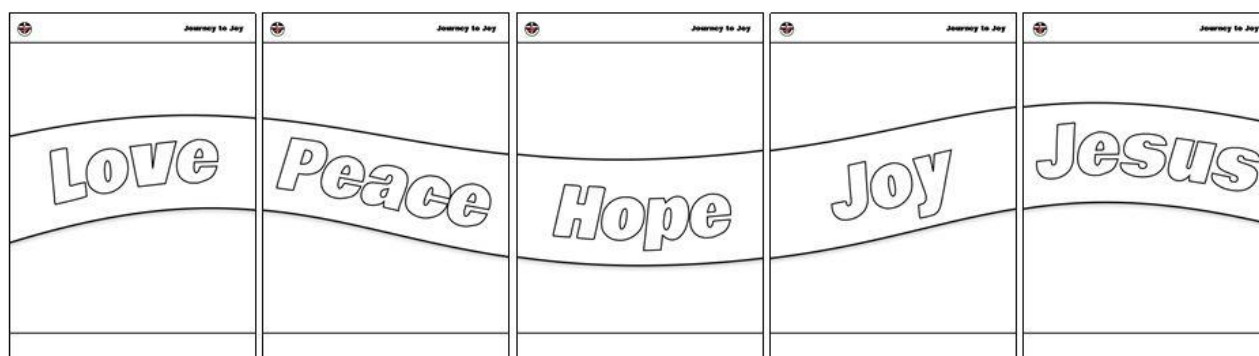
- 5 candles of any colour – you might choose to keep with the traditional 3 purple, 1 pink and 1 white, or you might like to do something different this year. If you are using traditional coloured candles, keep the pink candle of joy for advent week four.
- Other greenery or materials for your advent wreath
- A lighter or matches

For Communal Art:

- Large sheet of cardboard (or a canvas)
- Journey to Joy Poster template
- Sand (or glitter)
- PVA glue
- Paint brush to spread the glue
- Table cover
- Tray or box to collect excess sand etc.
- This script and associated PowerPoint or other alternative way to project the words.

Note:

- Prepare in advance the cardboard with the outline from the Poster template and just before the service paint the PVA glue on the path behind the words.
- During the service have people sprinkle sand on to the wet glue on the cardboard, and then shake off the excess to reveal the path and the words.
- You could also use pens, pencils, or paint to colour in the path, or use stickers or collage materials to make it. The choice is yours, use whatever materials and creative ideas you have available to you.
- You do not need to do the art *and* light the candles; you can do either on their own.



Week 1 – LOVE

Light the first candle, and make the LOVE artwork

Leader 1: Today is the first Sunday of Advent - the time when we prepare once again for the coming of Jesus.

Leader 2: The season of Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas. This Advent, we are embarking on a Journey to Joy. Each week we will light one more candle and together make a piece of art to visually represent the prayers of the people in this place for the world around us.

1: There will be some words that we say, and there will be some responses that we invite you to say – they will be on the screen for you to join in as we lead. This week we light the candle of Love (*Light the first candle*)

2: The Bible tells us that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, light and dark, the animals and plants, and in his image, he created us, perfect human beings. But due to our choices, we didn't stay perfect, and sin entered the world and our hearts. But this didn't stop God's love for us.

All: We need your Love, O God.

1: God loves us so much that he sent his son into the world as a baby. But before the baby arrived, there were prophets that prepared the way. They said that the baby would be born of a virgin, that he would be called Emmanuel, and that he would save us from our sins. It is this baby that we wait for, journey towards, and celebrate again this year. Jesus was prepared with Love because God is Love.

All: We need your Love, O God.

2: As we pour sand onto this cardboard, we remember our need for God's love.

All: We need your Love, O God.

1: An overwhelming love that washes us clean and makes us whole and new again.

All: We need your love, O God.

2: Love which holds us together during all the chaos of life around us.

All: We need your love, O God.

1: I invite you to come and sprinkle a handful of sand onto the cardboard and name people and places particularly in need God's love at this time: e.g., Victims of war and abuse; people who have lost loved ones; widows, orphans; people who are lonely and far away from the people they love; people living with broken relationships. (*Leave space for prayer and people to contribute*)

2: God of Love, help us to show your love to others. Help us wait for your coming, help us to Journey to Joy, and help us feel the love that you have prepared for us.

All: We need your love, O God. Amen.



Advent 2 - PEACE

Light the first and second candles, and make the PEACE artwork

Leader 1: Today is the second Sunday of Advent - the time when we continue to prepare for the coming of Jesus.

Leader 2: The season of Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas. This Advent, we are embarking on a Journey to Joy. Each week we will light one more candle and together make a piece of art to visually represent the prayers of the people in this place for the world around us.

1: There will be some words that we say, and there will be some responses that we invite you to say – they will be on the screen for you to join in as we lead. Last week we lit the candle of Love, this week, we light the candle of Peace. (*Light the first and second candles*)

2: The Bible tells us that Zechariah, and Joseph were visited by angels to give them the amazing news that their wives would have miracle babies. The angels recognised that their message was alarming and told these men to not be afraid. Do you think their message cut through the distraction and helped to bring peace?

All: We need your Peace, O God.

1: The Bible also tells us that Caesar Augustus declared a census and that everyone would need to travel to their hometown to be counted. It was at this time that Mary and Joseph's miracle baby was due to be born. The baby was to be the Prince of Peace. But how can you focus on peace amongst all the chaos of a crazy world?

All: We need your Peace, O God.

2: As we pour sand onto this cardboard, we remember our need for God's peace.

All: We need your Peace, O God.

1: An overwhelming peace that calms us in the wildest storm and stills our racing hearts.

All: We need your Peace, O God.

2: Peace which surpasses all understanding and makes no sense in the crazy chaos of life around us.

All: We need your Peace, O God.

1: I invite you to come and sprinkle a handful of sand onto the cardboard and name people and places particularly in need of God's peace at this time e.g., people caught up in war, people whose lives and homes have been destroyed by disasters, people who are anxious and afraid of the future, neighbours who disagree, people facing medical procedures and living with grief. (*Leave space for prayer and people to contribute*)

2: God of Peace, help us to focus on your peace. Help us wait for your coming, help us to Journey to Joy, and help us show others the peace that can only come from you, and your Son, the Prince of Peace.

All: We need your Peace, O God. Amen.



Advent 3 - HOPE

Light the first, second and third candles, and make the HOPE artwork

Leader 1: Today is the third Sunday of Advent - the time when we prepare once again for the coming of Jesus.

Leader 2: The season of Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas. This Advent, we are embarking on a Journey to Joy. Each week we will light one more candle and together make a piece of art to visually represent the prayers of the people in this place for the world around us.

1: There will be some words that we say, and there will be some responses that we invite you to say – they will be on the screen for you to join in as we lead. Last week we lit the candle of Love and Peace, this week, we also light the candle of Hope. (*Light the first, second and third candles.*)

2: The Bible tells us that Elizabeth's baby, John, would prepare people to be ready for the Lord. It was a message of hope for those who had waited so long for their rescuer, the Messiah to come. While waiting for so long, they may have lost all hope and felt stuck in a weary and tired world.

All: We need your Hope, O God.

1: The Bible also tells us that Mary's miracle baby Jesus, would be the hope for the world. Elizabeth was so excited when Mary visited her, and her baby leaped for joy. Elizabeth was blessed and excited to share her life and her home with the woman who literally carried the hope of the world inside of her. They shared in hope together.

All: We need your Hope, O God.

2: As we pour sand onto this cardboard, we remember our need for God's Hope.

All: We need your Hope, O God.

1: An overwhelming hope that helps us to get through the most difficult times in our lives.

All: We need your Hope, O God.

2: Hope which to others might feel like optimism, or scepticism, and makes no sense to those around us.

All: We need your Hope, O God.

1: I invite you to come and sprinkle a handful of sand onto the cardboard and name people and places particularly in need of God's hope at this time: e.g., people dealing with long-term illness; people in war torn places; people facing the loss of their homes; people who have lost their jobs, or can't find work; those who are struggling to find people to work to keep their businesses open; those battling addictions, and struggling with mental illnesses; Asylum seekers and refugees; Australia's First Nations People; Friends and relatives of missing persons; People dealing with the effects of drought in Australia and other places. (*Leave space for prayer and people to contribute*)

2: God of Hope, help us to Share in your Hope. Help us patiently wait for your coming, help us to Journey to Joy, and help us show others the hope that can only come from you, and your Son, the Hope of the World.

All: We need your Hope, O God. Amen.



Advent 4 - JOY

Light the first, second, third and fourth candles, and make the JOY artwork

(NB if using traditional coloured candles, light the pink candle for Joy)

Leader 1: Today is the fourth Sunday of Advent - the time when we prepare for the coming of Jesus which is getting even closer.

Leader 2: The season of Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas. This Advent, we are embarking on a Journey to Joy. Each week we will light one more candle and together make a piece of art to visually represent the prayers of the people in this place for the world around us.

1: There will be some words that we say, and there will be some responses that we invite you to say – they will be on the screen for you to join in as we lead. Last week we lit the candles of Love, Peace and Hope, this week, we also light the candle of Joy. *(Light the first, second, third and fourth candles.)*

2: The Bible tells us that angels brought messages to Zechariah, Mary, and Joseph. Messages that something special was happening. Babies would be born, but not just any babies. Special babies. One who would be a joy and delight and filled with the Holy Spirit; the other who would be our Saviour, the Messiah, Emmanuel, God with us. Two babies that would bring Unexpected Joy to the world.

All: We need your Joy, O God.

1: The Bible also tells us that angels brought messages to shepherds while watching their flocks. They said they brought good news of great joy for all people! They announced that the Messiah had been born. The shepherds rushed to find the baby, and then continued to spread the news of great and unexpected Joy.

All: We need your Joy, O God.

2: As we pour sand onto this cardboard, we remember our need for God's Joy.

All: We need your Joy, O God.

1: An overwhelming Joy that takes our breath away and makes the whole world stand still.

All: We need your Joy, O God.

2: Joy that makes our soul dance like kids under a sprinkler on the lawn.

All: We need your Joy, O God.

1: I invite you to come and sprinkle a handful of sand onto the cardboard and name people and places particularly in need of God's Joy at this time: e.g. people spending Christmas alone or far from family and friends, people who can't afford to buy any or expensive presents, people who will wake up on Christmas with no presents under the tree, people suffering with anxiety, depression and mental health challenges, people waiting for good news that just never seems to come, people suffering the effects of disasters, people facing the loss of jobs, homes and family or friends, people struggling to be faithful in difficult times. *(Leave space for prayer and people to contribute)*

2: God of Joy, help us to receive your Unexpected Joy. Help us patiently wait for your coming, help us to Journey to Joy, and help us show others the Joy that can only come from you, and your Son, who is Joy to the World.

All: We need your Joy, O God. Amen.



Christmas – JESUS

Light the first, second, third, fourth and fifth candles, and make the JESUS artwork

Leader 1: This Advent we have been on a Journey to Joy.

Leader 2: Today we are here, at Christmas, to celebrate and welcome the birth of Jesus. Each week we have been lighting candles and making art to visually represent the prayers of the people in this place for the world around us.

1: As we celebrate Jesus' birth today there will be some words that we say, and there will be some responses that we invite you to say – they will be on the screen for you to join in as we lead. Last week we lit the candles of Love, Peace, Hope and Joy. This week, we also light the Christ Candle, the one that represents Jesus. (*Light the first, second, third, fourth and fifth candles.*)

2: Though waiting is sometimes hard, Jesus is worth waiting for! Our hoping and waiting through Advent has been worthwhile. Jesus' birth is a time of joyous celebration. As angels and shepherds rejoiced, so do we.

ALL: We celebrate your Joy, Lord Jesus

1: A new star appeared in the sky at the time of Jesus birth and brought wise men from the east to find the King of Jews. They followed it and when they found him, gave gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh. As they unwrapped their gifts, they bowed down to worship him, and joyfully embraced Jesus the Messiah.

ALL: We celebrate your Joy, Lord Jesus

2: As we pour sand onto this cardboard, we remember to that Jesus is our joy and our salvation.

ALL: We celebrate your Joy, Lord Jesus

1: We remember that Jesus is born and that he is Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace.

ALL: We celebrate your Joy, Lord Jesus

2: We remember that Jesus is the Light of the World, the Good Shepherd, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that we receive his love and forgiveness when we unwrap and embrace the Love, Hope, Peace, and Joy that He offers us.

ALL: We celebrate your Joy, Lord Jesus

1: I invite you to come and sprinkle a handful of sand onto the cardboard and name people and places particularly in need of Jesus at this time: everyone (*Leave space for prayer and people to contribute*)

2: Lord God, Thank you for your Son Jesus. Thank you for Journeying with us through this advent season and thank you for helping us to experience and share your Love, Peace, Hope and Joy with your world. Help us to be courageous in sharing this good news of Jesus as we help ourselves, and others to Unwrap his Joy, and Embrace your son Jesus too.

ALL: We celebrate your Joy, Lord Jesus

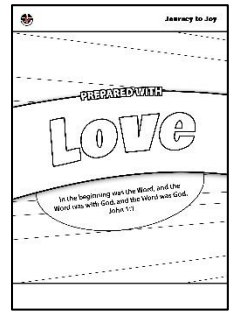


Advent 1 - 27 November - Prepared with Love

Scripture: John 1:1-5; Isaiah 9:2-3 & 6-7

Postcard: In the beginning was the Word. John 1:1

Have postcards available to colour during the service. Invite people to send their postcards to someone who might need to be reminded that they are loved this week. Or use the postcards during prayer time (see suitcase prayer idea below).



Characters: God, Prophet Isaiah, Prophet Micah

Things to think about and discuss

Preparing for the Journey

This week, we are starting a journey. An ADVENT journey – a Journey to JOY. Along the way we'll hear, see, smell, experience, and feel many different things. But first we need to think about how we're preparing this journey.

- If you could go on a journey to anywhere in the world, where would you go?
- How would you prepare for this journey? What kinds of things would you pack in your suitcase or bag?
- Share about a time that you've prepared for a journey.
- Why is it ADVENT important?
- How have you prepared for the birth of Jesus in the past? Do you have any special Advent or Christmas traditions?
- How would you like to prepare for the birth of Jesus this year? Is there anything new that you'd like to try?
- Share about something that has made the Advent journey special for you in the past.
- Share about something that you'd like to try or do this Advent.

Bible Reading Ideas

Isaiah 9: 2-3 & 6-7

- Watch 'Prophets Told about Jesus' as an introduction to the Isaiah reading.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jtz5ZmVzzI>
- Before the reading begins, invite people to think about what words or phrases catch their attention/jump out at them during the reading. Read slowly to allow people time to think about, and picture the words they hear.

John 1: 1-5

- Before the reading begins, invite people to close their eyes and sit in silence. On the word LIGHT everyone can open their eyes.
- Watch this Bible Noise video from Engage Worship. In all the noise what words jump out at you? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2c5MSqvo_gQ

Video

- What is Advent – Busted Halo <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eC0FGQLBp7w&t=12s>

Prayers

- **Offering prayer**

(From *Multi-Sensory Prayer*, Sue Wallace, Scripture Union, England, 2000, p21)

As we offer our lives to God, God prepares us with Love. This prayer could also be used in conjunction with a Communion service. You can ask congregation members to bring something symbolic of themselves or their work and place it at the foot of the cross up the front at the appropriate time during the service. If doing this with Communion when Communion is served, the congregation can take back the things they brought up. This is symbolic of the fact that we give our lives to God but that he gives us back eternal lives, transformed, and made whole. If you are not having a Communion service, to express God giving back in some other way, you may like to give everyone a flower (for example) as they take their items back.

- **Advent prayer**

(from *One Hundred and One Ideas for Creative Prayers*, Judith Merrell, 1995 p34).

Lord Jesus, as we buy our Christmas presents,
Help us to remember that we're celebrating your birthday.

As we write our Christmas cards,
Help us to remember that we're celebrating your birthday.

As we sing carols,
Help us to remember that we're celebrating your birthday.

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas,
Help us to remember that we're celebrating your birthday.

- **Advent Angels** - Prayers for others Activity

(from *Seasons of Celebrations*, Patricia Matheson, Ave Marie Press, 1995, ISBN 0877935661, page 32 <http://seedstuff.blogspot.com/2019/11/>)

Ask everybody in the congregation to write their name on a small card as they come in the door at the start of the service. Collect these all in a collection plate or something. At a given point in the service, explain that everybody is to have an anonymous advent angel who will pray for them for the duration of Advent (and might like to do other things such as sending an anonymous note of encouragement - but at the very least they will pray). Send the plate around and ask everyone to take one of the cards - they will become an advent angel to the person on the card they selected. NB. Someone will inevitably pull out their own name so make sure that they swap with somebody else or with you. encourage everyone every week to pray for their Advent angel.

- **Suitcase Prayers**

Have a large suitcase on display and talk about the journey we are all about to begin, and how we are preparing as individuals, and as a Church. Encourage everyone to write a prayer for ADVENT (on the postcard or on paper) and put it in the suitcase. The prayers spoken during the service can also be added to the suitcase (if printed out).

Other Ideas

- **Drama idea**

Two people are preparing for the same journey. One is organising every detail and the other keeps saying, “I’ll work it out when I get there”, “I’ll play it by ear”, “Let’s go with the flow” etc. After the short drama, the congregation can talk about who they are most like, and how that might impact their ADVENT journey.

- **Share a memory of a past Christmas that you felt an excited anticipation.**

This could have been around waiting for friends or relatives to visit, shaking presents under the tree wondering what was inside, smelling Christmas treats baking, or preparing for a special Christmas concert. Connect these conversations to the concept of Advent being a time of waiting and anticipation.

- **Focus on Others**

Invite people to bring quality groceries as a love offering and make hampers or give to an organisation/school supporting families in need.



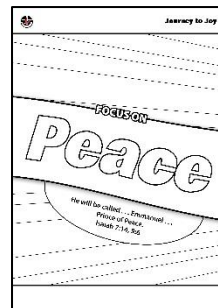
Advent 2 - 4 December - Focus on Peace

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-24, Isaiah 7:10-14, Ephesians 2:14-18

Postcard: He will be called... Emmanuel... Prince of Peace... Isaiah 7:14, 9:6

Have postcards available to colour during the service. Invite people to send their postcards to someone who might need some peace this week.

Characters: Zechariah, Joseph, Caesar Augustus



Things to think about and discuss

Getting Focused: What is Distracting You?

Have you ever been on a journey and been distracted along the way? What was the distraction? How did the distraction impact your journey? (Grumpy children needing a break, a special shop that you HAD to stop at, a brand-new park/art mural/statue etc.)

- Share about a distraction that you had on a journey (see above)
- Share about something that distracts you during this season (busyness, present buying, hosting events, expectations, screens/devices, shame, anger, work etc.)
- Do I need to change anything in my life to help me return my focus to God?
- What are some tips that help you stay focused on God?
- With all the changes that are happening, how can you focus?
- How can distractions take away JOY?
- What was holding Zechariah back?
- The promise of Christmas is that the Messiah will bring peace and goodwill upon the earth. Our focus needs to be on the message of the coming of the Christ child as He is the reason for the season.
- What is distracting us from God's promise of peace and good will?

Bible Reading Ideas

Isaiah 7:10-14 and Matthew 1:18-24

- What's the same? Explain that you will hear two readings and one phrase will be the same in each. See if you can hear (and remember) the phrase. Read the Isaiah reading then the Matthew reading.

Matthew 1:18-24

- Use Engage Worship's resource: Joseph's Story with Visual Props (with or without last line) <https://engageworship.org/ideas/josephs-story-with-visual-props>
- Think about Joseph's distraction – his fear of what society would think of him & Mary, and that he didn't know who might be responsible for the pregnancy.

Videos

- Mess Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWmvu3cEBmM>
- Bible Project Peace Video - <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/shalom-peace/>
- Peace https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llEnx_o6acw



Prayers

- **Pray in Colour** - Have a plain piece of paper, crayons (or pens) and a clipboard or something to lean on for each person. Have quiet gentle music playing in the background.

Say: God loves talking to us but sometimes we are too busy or distracted to listen properly. Today we are going to pray in colour and give ourselves the opportunity to stop and listen to God. Music will play in the background, and we will pray by drawing and colouring on our page with the crayons.

God loves creating and he loves when we create. It doesn't matter if you aren't a good artist, nobody will judge what you create and you don't have to show anyone else if you don't want to. This prayer is good for people who find it hard to concentrate in other ways. When we hold a crayon, it is easier to stay with our prayer and the colour can just flow onto the page.

What we're going to do is just sit and listen to God and draw what he puts in our minds. Don't just go ahead and draw a picture on your own. This is about receiving messages and images from God that he wants you to hear and draw. We need to be quiet and not worry about what other people are doing. It's hard to concentrate on God when we are distracted by someone else. I will start by saying a blessing and then we will pray.

Dear God, Creator of our world and of us, we welcome you to bless each of us here. Please speak to us as we colour and listen to you.

- **A Prayer for Peace** (Fiona Walton in *One Hundred and One Ideas for Creative Prayers*, Judith Merrell. Scripture Union, London. 1995 p40).

Father God, please take us from our feelings of frustration

And give us your peace, Lord.

Please take from us all impatient thoughts

And give us your peace, Lord.

Please take from us all feelings of anger and hatred

And give us your peace, Lord.

Please take from us all feelings of greed

And give us your peace, Lord.

Please take from us all selfish and unkind thoughts

And give us your peace, Lord.

Father God, please give us patient and peaceful hearts.

Please help us to rely on you at all times.

Amen.

- **Preparation Focus prayer** - This week, as we continue our Journey to Joy, our theme is Getting Focused: What's Distracting You?

Before we begin, let's take a moment to be still and FOCUS on God. We are going to do an ancient practice called Breath Prayer. You might like to use one of the following prayers, or your own prayer. As we inhale and exhale, whisper or meditate on the words, and focus on God.

Inhale: Be still Exhale: and know that you are God.

Inhale: Lord, You are my shepherd, Exhale: I have all that I need.

Inhale: There is no fear Exhale: in your Love, oh God

Inhale: Speak Lord. Exhale: for I am listening.



Other Ideas

- **A Journey to Joy** – use this story, poem, and painting for quiet reflection during the service.

This is her story: **“A Journey to Joy”**

“Estelle, I would like you to do a painting, a poem or maybe a story on the theme, ‘A Journey to Joy.’” That was Rod speaking and, when Rod speaks, I like to get going.

My goodness! I hadn’t realised what I had dived into. Over a period of 2 weeks or more, I struggled to unscramble the multitude of words and thoughts that had cluttered and jammed my computer brain – storming by day, sleeping by night, then racing for a pen first thing in the morning. Eventually, after filling a bin with scribbling on paper, a poem evolved and later my story and painting.

As my thoughts changed, I realised that this whole experience, in itself, had indeed been “A Journey to Joy.” With exact timing, God sent six very different, but special people, plus Chutney, on the way to MOTIVATE, gently LOVE, PRAY for, ENCOURAGE, CHALLENGE, and INSPIRE me. What JOY when I could finally say, “IT IS COMPLETE!”

I am deeply grateful to God, through the power of his Holy Spirit, for his JOURNEY WITH ME on “A JOURNEY to JOY.”

Estelle Goldberg worships at The Gap Uniting Church

Poem – A Journey to Joy by Estelle Goldberg

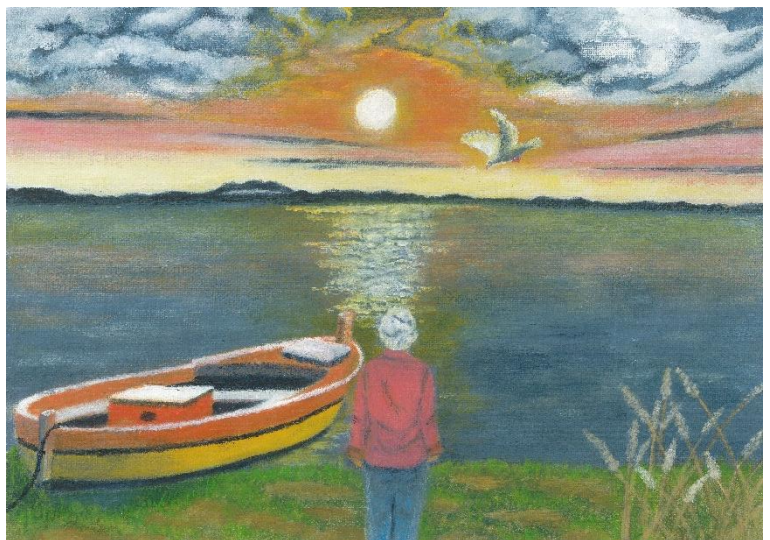
You bring me to this quiet place.
You know each secret thought.
You understand the pain I feel,
the tears, that emptiness.

Through feeling pain, I meet your JOY
and know Christ's presence here.
You strengthen me and help me grow,
transform the dark to light.

If I could write a million words,
my pen would still flow on.
The JOY you bring cannot be bound
for you have more in store.

Though bleak the way may often seem,
your Spirit meets each need.
We JOURNEY ON TO JOY each day.
My journey's yours as well.

Painting – A Journey to Joy by Estelle Goldberg



- **Christmas Distraction (Visual or Drama)**

Start the service with the Church filled with lots of Christmas 'stuff' (gifts, trees, cooking supplies, catalogues, boxes of ornaments). As the first prayers and songs are sung, gradually take away the distractions and leave the elements that you want to focus on. You could also use this as a drama idea – have a couple of people rushing around trying to prepare for Christmas, and then pause to focus on God.

- **Have quiet or silent times of reflection during the service**
- **Pass the Peace**

You could try this in Auslan, or another language. Or maybe do it silently while reflective music is played.

- **Focus on others**

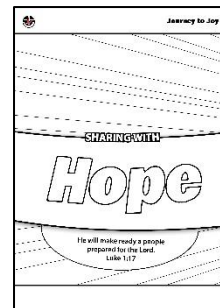
Invite people to donate to organisations that work to bring peace to the world like Uniting Care Queensland. Video and information at <https://www.unitingcareqld.com.au/seasons-greetings>

Advent 3 – 11 December - Sharing in Hope

Scripture: Luke 1:5-20, 39-45; Philippians 1:1-11

Postcard: He will prepare a people who are ready for the Lord. Luke 1:17 or
I thank my God every time I remember you. Philippians 1:3

Have postcards available to colour during the service. Invite people to send their postcards to someone who has mentored or journeyed with them to say, 'thanks for caring for me', or send to someone who needs some hope.



Note: There are two postcard options for this week with different verses, have both available and let congregation members choose which one they would like to use.

Characters: Mary, Elizabeth, John the Baptist

Things to think about and discuss

Who is on the Journey with You?

This week our theme is: Who is on the Journey with You? As we prepare for Christmas, and as we focus on God, we are going to take the time to think about who is journeying with us. You might like to think about these questions:

- Have you ever been on a journey with another person/group of people/family? What did you enjoy about the journey? What did the other person/people add to the journey?
- Was there anything that you didn't like about journeying with others?
- Who has supported you on your faith/life journey in the past? What difference has that person made to you?
- Who is journeying with you at the moment? Who's supporting/mentoring/caring for you and who are you supporting/mentoring/caring for?
- Why is it important to journey with others?
- Have you experienced the hopefulness we get in sharing with others?
- Journeys often aren't just about joy – sometimes things go wrong, and you want people beside you to share in hope and love to get you through.

Bible Reading Ideas

Luke 1:5-20, 39-45

- Before the reading, encourage people to call out as many different emotions as possible. As the Bible passages are read, encourage people to think about what emotions might have been felt by Zechariah, Elizabeth, and Mary.
- Watch Mary Visits Elizabeth Video (First part or all of it)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tmkp1zPnfw>

Videos

- Erste Christmas Ad 2019 (Who are you journeying with?)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEVimVi5K9U>
- Erste Christmas Ad 2018 (Who are you journeying with?)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcx7hBWeULM>



Prayers

- **Using Candles** - prayer of intercession for those who need hope. (Sue Wallace. *Multi-Sensory Prayer*. Scripture Union, England. 2000 p.18.)

Many people find comfort in lighting a candle for someone they know who is suffering. You will need candles, small plastic boxes of wet sand, and some things that are visibly broken (e.g. broken glasses, pottery, old radios, pictures ripped up). Use the broken things to form a sculpture, arranging them so they represent a tower, mountain or cross. Explain to the congregation that in this activity they will spend time thinking of people who feel that they are broken or suffering in some way. Play some background music whilst people think about this. Distribute some candles and ask the congregation to light a candle as they pray for the person that came to mind. Place the boxes of sand near to the sculpture and use the sand as a base to stand the lit candles in.

- **Anchor of Hope** (Sue Wallace. *Multi-Sensory Scripture*, Scripture Union, Great Britain, 2005 p30-1).

This is a practical prayer activity that works best in large groups or a congregation. You will need a strong, thick rope that is long enough for everyone to hold on to; something to attach the rope to that can hold is firmly (a strong bracket, hook or pillar); an anchor (doesn't have to real - a cardboard one will do). Attach the rope and anchor to the bracket etc. and make it look like the anchor is holding the rope if possible. Trail the rope across the building. Read Heb. 6:13-20. Invite everyone to hold onto the hope of heaven symbolically, by holding onto the anchor line. Be aware of safety issues. Ask the congregation or group not to pull on the line too hard. You may then wish to use the simple piece of liturgy below.

The Anchor of Hope Prayer

When life is hard, and we can't see the future
we hold on to the anchor of hope in you.
When everyone around us laughs at our beliefs
we hold on to the anchor of hope in you.
When everything we touch seems to end in disaster
we hold on to the anchor of hope in you.
When we're suffering illness or tiredness or stress
we hold on to the anchor of hope in you.
When tears fill our lives, and our hearts are grieving
we hold on to the anchor of hope in you.
When we're feeling lonely or far from our friends
we hold on to the anchor of hope in you.
When times are good, and we start being forgetful
we hold on to the anchor of hope in you.
Amen.

- **Paper Prayer Chain** (*One Hundred and One Ideas for Creative Prayers* by Judith Merrell. Scripture Union, London. 1995 p72)

Give each person a strip of coloured paper for them to write a one-line prayer of thanks. If you only have a small group each member may want to do this on several strips of paper. All the strips can be connected to form a chain of thanks that can be used as a festive Christmas decoration.



- **Let Your Lights Shine** (Sue Wallace. *Multi-Sensory Prayer*. Scripture Union, England. 2000 p.50.)

You will need a set of Christmas lights that only work when all the bulbs are in place. Do safety checks first. With the lights unplugged remove all the bulbs and give one to each person in the congregation or group. Ask them to pray about the situations they have found most difficult lately. People could also pray for a friend or family member who is who is going through a difficult time. Put all the lightbulbs back in place then switch on the power. Nothing may happen if so mention that this is because every bulb is important to make the set of lights work, just as each of us is important to God. Check the lights again and switch on again hopefully the lights will shine. You may wish to use the lights to decorate a Christmas tree, a cross, or other symbolic object.

Other Ideas

- **Discussion and response activity on Luke readings** (from <http://seedstuff.blogspot.com/2020/12/advent-4-b-december-20-love.html>)

Discussion:

1. When is it hardest for us to say yes to God?
2. What makes Mary able to say it?
3. How can we follow her example?
4. What is one way we can show God's love and peace this Christmas?

Response Activity:

Give everyone the following prayer, a pen or pencil, and a silent space to write their response:

Lord, help me to marvel at Gabriel's message when I am.....

Lord, give me courage like Mary to tell you about.....

to ask questions when I feel.....

and to confidently give you my

Help me to see the Christmas story with new eyes and to thank you

for.....

Amen

- **Focus on others**

Invite people to donate to organisations that work to bring hope to the world like Uniting World.

Videos and information at <https://everythingincommon.com.au/>

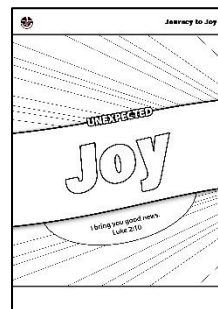
Advent 4 - 18 December - Unexpected Joy

Scripture: Luke 2:8-20; Philippians 4:4-7

Postcard: I bring you good news. Luke 2:10

Have postcards available to colour during the service. Invite people to send their postcards to someone who might need some Joy this week.

Characters: Jesus, Shepherds, Angels



Things to think about and discuss

How do you handle the unexpected?

This week, our theme for our ADVENT journey is 'How do you handle the unexpected?'. We are going to hear stories of some of the unexpected things that happened during the first Christmas, and we are going to think about how we react to the unexpected.

- Have you ever had something unexpected happen on a journey? What happened? How did you react? (Flat tyre, train, wrong turn, someone suggesting a different route/sight-seeing opportunity, illness)
- Has anything unexpected happened to you that changed the way that you thought about God, or your faith? Has anyone impacted you in an unexpected way?
- Has anything unexpected happened to you this ADVENT? How did it make you feel? How did you react?
- What do you do when unexpected/ bad/disappointing things happen to you? How do you find joy during those time?
- The angels visit to the shepherds was completely unexpected. God delivering His special message to shepherds was completely unexpected. What things have happened/shown up in your life that were completely unexpected?
- How do you celebrate when the party looks like a barn, and you were expecting a royal feast in a palace? (Read *Tonight in The Palace: Lost Sheep*)
- Why do you think God chose shepherds to be the first to hear about Jesus' birth? How do you think Mary and Joseph felt when the shepherds brought them the angels' news?

Bible Reading Ideas

Luke 2:8-20

- Before the reading assign an action to certain words (Shepherd: hold a crook, Angel: flap wings, Baby: rock a child etc.) Read the reading attempting to do all the actions.
- Before or after the Bible reading use the resource - Hear the Shepherds perspective: <https://engageworship.org/ideas/three-christmas-monologues>
- Saddleback's Shepherd's Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJIC57EvYFo>

Videos

- 4 Words 4 Stories – Do not be afraid <https://gochattervideos.com/downloads/4-words-4-stories/>
- Jesus is Joy to the World video – Go Chatter <https://gochattervideos.com/downloads/joy-to-the-world-3/>
- What is Joy video? - Go Chatter <https://gochattervideos.com/downloads/what-is-joy/>



Prayers

- **Trusting in God:** (adapted from Sheila Hopkins cited in Judith Merrell, *One Hundred and One Ideas for Creative Prayers*. Scripture Union, London, 1995. p44).

Make a list of all the times it is good to know that we can trust God to be with us and help us, even in the unexpected. Weave all your responses into a response prayer below.

Thank you, God that when we are nervous or afraid...

We can trust in you.

Thank you that when we have a difficult decision to make...

We can trust in you.

Thank you that when we are in an awkward situation...

We can trust in you.

Thank you that when we are in trouble...

We can trust in you.

Thank you that when there is no one else to turn to...

We can trust in you.

Thank you, Lord, that we can depend on you because you never let anyone down.

Amen.

- **Candy Cane Prayer** (An Advent of Ideas: *Daily Activities to keep your family centred on Christ during the holidays*. Dec 11.)

Give each person a candy cane and use this reflection as a prayer that involves the sense of touch, sight, touch, and taste.

Shepherds used canes to guide and protect their sheep.

Candy canes remind us of the shepherds that saw the baby Jesus.

When you hold the candy cane upside down it looks like the letter “J” for Jesus.

The colour red reminds us of Christ’s blood shed for us on the cross, and white symbolises Jesus’ holiness and purity.

Lord, as we share candy canes at Christmas, help to remind us of the Unexpected Joy you bring. And as we eat these candy canes, and taste their sweetness, help remind us how sweet your love, is for us. Amen

Response activity: Prepare cards, with a hole punched in a corner and tie it to the neck of a candy cane. Write in the card a message you’d like to share with someone to gift them the candy cane.

Other Ideas

- **Story – Tonight In the Palace** by Andrew McDonagh, Lost Sheep
<https://www.lostsheep.com.au/stories/tonight-in-the-palace-a-christmas-story/>
- **Pipe Cleaner Joy** (from *Flame Creative Children’s Ministry* blog
<http://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/2012/09/praying-for-joy-fruits-of-spirit.html>)

Take a pipe cleaner and twist it round your finger to make a spring. Springs are bouncy and fun, reminding us of the feeling of joy! As you make a spring by twisting the pipe cleaner around your finger, ask that God will grow the fruit of joy in your life. Take the pipe cleaner home and keep it as a reminder to keep asking God for joy in your life.



- **Call to worship: Streamers**

Have lots of 60cm (2') pieces of very brightly coloured streamer and safety pins at the door as people arrive. Ask them to take a pin and to choose two different coloured streamers to take into church with them. During the start of the service ask people to think of something that gives them great joy. On your count, tell them to shout out their reason for joy and wave their streamers about. Do it a couple of times to get everyone in the mood. After praying, thanking God for all the reasons for joy which we have, encourage people to pin their streamers on to their clothing somewhere as a reminder of the joy that God gives each one of us.

- **Christmas Stars** (*One Hundred and One Ideas for Creative Prayers* by Judith Merrell. Scripture Union, London. 1995 p73).

Pre-make cardboard stars that can be written on. For example, on one side a prayer of thanks to God for the gift of Son on that first Christmas could be written, and on the other side an encouragement to a person to give them joy. The star can be gifted to that person to hang on their Christmas tree to give them joy. Decorate the edges of the star and punch a hole in the top and attach a piece of ribbon. If your church has a Christmas tree, people could make an additional star to hang on the church Christmas tree.

- **Discussion and response activity on Luke reading** (found at <http://seedstuff.blogspot.com/2020/>)

Discussion:

1. What is a God moment/"God stuff"?
2. How do we remind ourselves that Jesus walks with us?
3. How do we encourage each other to notice the "God stuff" in our lives?
4. How do we encourage each other to respond to the "God stuff"?

Response Activity:

Give everyone a short piece of tinsel or a tree decoration of some sort to take home as a reminder that the God stuff/moments can be found on any day of the year, not just Christmas day. An extra option would be to give each person a small white card on which they could write a few words to remind them of the miracle of Christmas which could then be attached to the tinsel or ornament.

- **Focus on others**

Invite people to donate to organisations that work to bring peace to the world like Uniting Care Queensland. Video and information at <https://www.unitingcareqld.com.au/seasons-greetings>

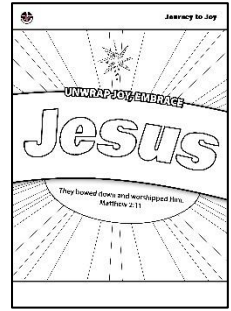
Christmas – 24 and 25 December - Unwrap Joy, Embrace Jesus

Scripture: Luke 2:1-7; Matthew 2:1-12; 2 Corinthians 9:15

Postcard: They bowed down and worshipped him. Matthew 2:11

Have postcards available to colour during the service. Invite people to send their postcards to someone who might need some Jesus this week.

Characters: Wiseman, Anna, Simeon



Things to think about and discuss

How do you unwrap and embrace the JOY?

This week we celebrate the birth of Jesus and unwrap and celebrate the joy that Jesus brings to our lives, and the lives of many people all around the world. We continue to journey with characters from the Christmas story and see how the birth of Jesus impacted them. Before we move on let's think about JOY.

- When have you felt and/or embraced joy on a journey?
- What does JOY mean to you? When have you experienced an overwhelming feeling of joy?
- How does the birth of Jesus bring you, or others that you know, joy?
- When have you felt joy this ADVENT?
- Who could you share this joy with?
- Share about how you spread the Christmas message of Jesus with others.

Bible Reading Ideas

Matthew 2:1-12

- Before listening to the reading, introduce the characters (Herod, Magi, Star, Mary and child/Jesus). You could have people dressed up or images on screen. Share how this reading has enough tension and plot twists that it could be from a movie. Invite the congregation to listen out for all of the highs/lows, emotions, plot twists and how the characters interact.
- Saddleback Kids Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zk1LhnqROCM>

Videos

- **Jesus is Joy to the World** <https://gochattervideos.com/downloads/joy-to-the-world-3/>
- **The Lego Christmas Story** <https://gochattervideos.com/downloads/the-lego-christmas-story-northern-english/>
- **Christmas Message from the Moderator** – add video link

Prayers

- **Paper Prayer Chain** (*One Hundred and One Ideas for Creative Prayers* by Judith Merrell. Scripture Union, London. 1995 p72)

Give each person a strip of coloured paper for them to write a one-line prayer of thanks. If you only have a small group each member may want to do this on several strips of paper. All the strips can be connected to form a chain of thanks that can be used as a festive Christmas decoration.

- **Christmas prayer** (Evelyn Steward cited in *One Hundred and One Ideas for Creative Prayers* by Judith Merrell. Scripture Union, London. 1995 p35)

This prayer can be designed by a group by asking them to write or draw their ideas and then insert them into this response prayer.

Lord God, thank you for Christmas cards and presents,

But most of all, thank you for Jesus.

Thank you for Christmas trees and fairy lights,

But most of all, thank you for Jesus.

Thank you for parties and special outings,

But most of all, thank you for Jesus.

Thank you for Christmas ham and pudding,

But most of all, thank you for Jesus.

Thank you for carol singing and.... etc.

Amen

Other Ideas

- **Story – 3 wise Camels** by Andrew McDonagh, Lost Sheep
<https://www.lostsheep.com.au/stories/the-three-wise-camels/>
- **Story – My Birthday, Jesus Birthday** by Holly Davis
<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/5742505-my-birthday-jesus-birthday>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_TQCZRQB_w
- **Focus on the baby** (Wendy Rayner, Annie Slade “*Multi-Sensory Seasons*”. Scripture Union, UK 2005 p 51). You will need a real baby or a baby doll. Place the baby in the centre of the group and spend some time meditating on the incarnation. You can use or adapt this script.

Jesus came to earth as a baby. In many ways he was just the same as any other baby. He cried, played, gurgled, and babbled, grew. God used his Son’s physical body to minister to people.

Firstly, look at the baby’s hands. What can they do? They can hold the finger of a caring adult; the baby can suck on them; they can touch surfaces and discover textures; they can play with toys, food- and just about anything they can reach!

Now consider what Jesus’ adult hands did. They reached out to touch the untouchable; they held cups of wine at weddings and feasts; they mixed spit and dust to heal a blind man; they turned the tables over in the Temple; they broke the bread at the Last Supper; they were nailed to the cross.”

Then you could move on to consider other parts of the baby in the same way as the examples given, relating them with Jesus’s life as an adult.



- **Focus on others**

Invite people to donate to organisations that work to bring hope to the world like Uniting World.
Videos and information at <https://everythingincommon.com.au/>

Service of Solace/Blue Christmas/Remembrance and Thanksgiving Service

Scripture: Luke 1:46-56 (Mary's song)

Things to think about and discuss

Advent and Christmas aren't always a joyful time for all. Like many of the key moments of the calendar, this time of the year has the potential to bring up some big and complicated feelings. For those who have lost loved ones, jobs, or relationships there is often a sense of grief and loneliness at this time. Making space for, and acknowledging those feelings is important, especially at this time of year, and is an opportunity for us to gather our whole community into the experience of faith.

This service can take many forms and often includes times of quiet reflection, candle lighting and words of hope and encouragement. There are many websites with ideas and resources including:

- <https://pilgrimwr.unitingchurch.org.au/?p=357>
- <https://youngclergywomen.org/blue-christmas-service-when-christmas-hurts/>
- <https://godspacelight.com/2018/12/10/acknowledging-our-pain-resources-for-a-blue-christmas-service/>

And these ideas from our contributors.

Prayers

- **Using Candles** - prayer of intercession praying for those who need hope. (Sue Wallace. *Multi-Sensory Prayer*. Scripture Union, England. 2000 p.18.)

Many people find comfort in lighting a candle for someone they know who is suffering. You will need candles, small plastic boxes of wet sand, and some things that are visibly broken (e.g. broken glasses, pottery, old radios, pictures ripped up). Use the broken things to form a sculpture, arranging them so they represent a tower, mountain or cross. Explain to the congregation that in this activity they will spend time thinking of people who feel that they are broken or suffering in some way. Play some background music whilst people think about this. Distribute some candles and ask the congregation to light a candle as they pray for the person that came to mind. Place the boxes of sand near to the sculpture and use the sand as a base to stand the lit candles in.

- **Broken Dreams** (Sue Wallace. *Multi-Sensory Prayer*. Scripture Union, England, 2000. p12-13)

For some people the lamp of hope may have gone out, and people have shattered hopes and broken dreams. This ritual is a way of expressing those broken dreams and disappointments before God and asking God to make them into something new. You will need broken pieces of pottery or tiles (not sharp). Or use cardboard, or other broken textiles; tile grout and tile adhesive; a simple wooden cross; and pencils. Ask people to write their broken dreams and disappointments onto the back of the broken pieces of pottery. Give time and space to think and to pray that God would make something new out of them. Then when everyone is ready, spread tile adhesive across the cross, and let everyone place their broken piece of pottery (writing side down) where they choose on the cross. When everyone has finished, allow the group to fill in any spaces and allow the tile adhesive to dry then grout the whole thing together (and varnish afterwards if you choose). When the mosaic cross is finished use it as part of a communion service later.

- **Advent prayer and reflection** (by Stacey Wilson, found in *2020 Engage Together Advent*, <https://ctm.uca.edu.au/children-and-families/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2020/09/2020-Engage-Together-Advent.pdf>)

Advent recognises a sense of hope, in the middle of difficult circumstances. It recognises things growing out of struggle. It recognises the Kingdom of God breaking in – and subverting the expectations of the people who were looking for the Saviour. When we make space for difficult feelings, and name them as real and legitimate, we also make space for the grace of God to come and meet us all in our feelings and struggles and hardships, and we make space for new things to grow out of that.

As we enter this time of Advent, we acknowledge that there are those within our community who hold grief in their hearts. For some their grief is long lived, a companion, not welcome but familiar. For others their grief is new, bright, and loud. For some their grief is approaching at a speed they cannot predict but with an inevitability that has already taken its toll. Hope and pain are held together in the story of the birth of Christ.

(Light a candle)

We light this candle and remember Sara and Abram, Hannah and Ephraim, Elizabeth and Zechariah who waited and grieved.

We light this candle and remember the stories that remain untold because that much-loved child has not arrived.

We light this candle and remember the families who loved a child whose life did not get lived and the families who held those they loved only briefly.

We light this candle and remember that families come in many different forms.

At Advent, we tell this story of the birth of a child, unexpected, and beloved. And we hold in our hearts the knowledge that in a few months at Easter, we grieve the loss of that life, and all the things that it means to us as believers. Joy and grief, together. This is the story of a family who did not fit their society expectations, a family who loved and grieved, just as many of us in this space are family who love and grieve together.

We light this candle and remember that stories of birth and family are often touched by grief and pain.

We light this candle to remember those who weep silent tears of the heart.

We light this candle and remember.

Other Ideas

- **A Journey to Joy** – use this story, poem, and painting for quiet reflection during the service.

This is her story: **“A Journey to Joy”**

“Estelle, I would like you to do a painting, a poem or maybe a story on the theme, ‘A Journey to Joy.’” That was Rod speaking and, when Rod speaks, I like to get going.

My goodness! I hadn’t realised what I had dived into. Over a period of 2 weeks or more, I struggled to unscramble the multitude of words and thoughts that had cluttered and jammed my computer brain – storming by day, sleeping by night, then racing for a pen first thing in the morning. Eventually, after filling a bin with scribbling on paper, a poem evolved and later my story and painting.

As my thoughts changed, I realised that this whole experience, in itself, had indeed been “A Journey to Joy.” With exact timing, God sent six very different, but special people, plus Chutney, on the way to MOTIVATE, gently LOVE, PRAY for, ENCOURAGE, CHALLENGE, and INSPIRE me. What JOY when I could finally say, “IT IS COMPLETE!”

I am deeply grateful to God, through the power of his Holy Spirit, for his JOURNEY WITH ME on “A JOURNEY to JOY.”

Estelle Goldberg worships at The Gap Uniting Church

Poem – A Journey to Joy by Estelle Goldberg

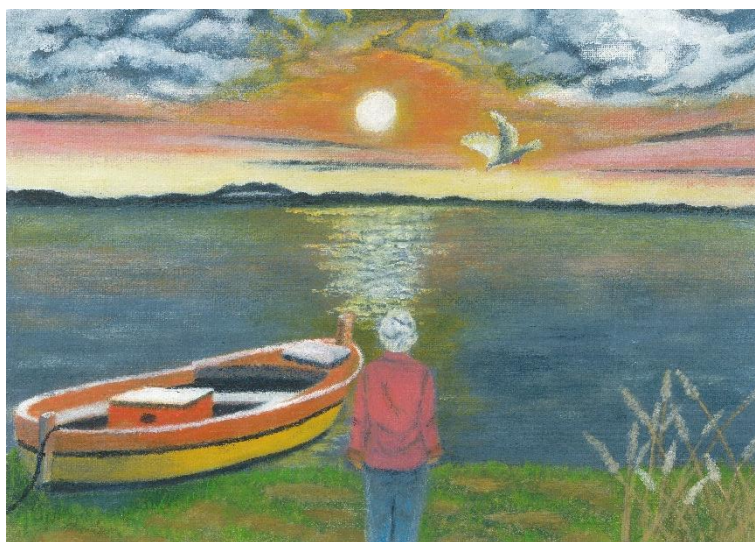
You bring me to this quiet place.
You know each secret thought.
You understand the pain I feel,
the tears, that emptiness.

Through feeling pain, I meet your JOY
and know Christ's presence here.
You strengthen me and help me grow,
transform the dark to light.

If I could write a million words,
my pen would still flow on.
The JOY you bring cannot be bound
for you have more in store.

Though bleak the way may often seem,
your Spirit meets each need.
We JOURNEY ON TO JOY each day.
My journey's yours as well.

Painting – A Journey to Joy by Estelle Goldberg



Songs, Hymns and Carols

There are many great Songs, Hymns and Carols available for use during the Advent and Christmas season. This list might have some new, or old favourites that you might consider using this year as suggested by some of the contributors of these resources.

- It's Christmas, Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash, CCLI 7050425
- On that Very First Christmas, Colin Buchanan, CCLI 4829076
- The King of Christmas, Colin Buchanan, CCLI 4829100
- Joy to the World (King of Kings), Colin Buchanan, CCLI 7058149
- Joy to the World (Unspeakable Joy), Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash, CCLI 5607039
- Noel, Chris Tomlin, CCLI 7050419
- Hymn of Joy, Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash, CCLI 7050420
- Joy To the World, Autumn Hardman, et al. CCLI 7095548
- Joyful Joyful We Adore Thee, Charlie Hall, et al. CCLI 4255585
- Peace Like a River, Bob Singleton, CCLI 4595764 (add another verse - Hope like an Anchor)
- My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less, Alanna Glover, et al. CCLI 7189243
- Shine, Jesus, Shine (Lord, the light of your love) Graham Kendrick, CCLI 30426
- Before The World Began, Ben Cantelon, et al. CCLI 5592766
- Love came down at Christmas, Christina Georgina Rossetti, et al. CCLI 1757784
- All Things Bright and Beautiful, Cecil Frances, et al. CCLI 1510282
- How Great Thou Art
- Immortal, Invisible, God only wise
- Let there be Love (Here among us)
- Glory to the King of Kings
- Lord of all hopefulness
- Amazing Grace
- Shout for Joy
- While Shepherds Watched their Flocks
- Angels we Have Heard on High
- O Little Town of Bethlehem
- Mary, Did You Know?

David McGregor is generously sharing a collection of his All-age, child friendly songs for the Advent/Christmas season. With free streaming, he has made it ever so easy for you to share these with your congregations. You will find video at <https://vimeo.com/showcase/8973281>, and Music score/Lead sheets available free at <https://togethertocelbrate.com.au/>