

J P Hope is here: I T Advent candle-lighting prayers

Introduction

Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, Lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!”

Isaiah 40:9

As these words are proclaimed, the time of Israel’s restoration is drawing near. This is a statement of what will/could/might be – but is not yet. This is hope in a nutshell! Hope is belief that change will come, that promises will bear fruit, and that there will be liberation.

Too often in our society, hope has become such an insipid word – we hope for something but with little conviction, action or real belief.

The Joint Public Issues Team’s [six hopes for society](#), underpinned by the gospel imperative, are a statement of what will/could/might be but is not yet.

Advent is a time when this real hope is central to our churches’ thinking. It is a time to lose our fear and proclaim: ‘Here is our God!’



How to use the resource

1. The prayers should be used at the appropriate point in your weekly worship during Advent – often but not always at the start of an Advent service.
2. Candles lit in previous weeks should already be burning as the service begins.
3. Each week, alongside a prayer for action, there is an invitation to hang the corresponding JPIT hope symbol on the Christmas tree (should your congregation have one), from a lectern or perhaps from the pedestal/table that holds the Advent candles.
4. We also encourage you to provide paper or card hope symbols for each member/family of the congregation meeting in person to take home to hang on their own Christmas tree. Online worshippers could be sent a digital version. You will find these at <https://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/advent>
5. Using the link above, you will also find a document containing text and an image you can print in newsletters or Sunday service sheets, placed on church websites or shared on your church's social media platforms.
6. Please encourage voices that reflect the diversity of your congregation to lead parts of the liturgy. Parts labelled 'Leader' may be shared out between up to three people each week. Other members of the congregation can be asked to light the candles and to hang the symbols.

An overview of the material

Day	Lectionary theme for 2021	JPIT liturgy theme and hope	'Christmas is Coming' hymn verse theme	Traditional Advent theme	Liturgical Colour
Advent Sunday	Signs of the coming	Hope; the environment is renewed	1. Hope	Hope	purple/ violet
Second Sunday in Advent	John the Baptist, 'prepare the way'	Peace; a world that actively works for peace	2. Prophets	Peace	purple/ violet
Third Sunday in Advent	Money and possessions (sharing)	Flourishing life; a just economy	3. John the Baptist	Joy	pink (rose)
Fourth Sunday in Advent	Magnificat – Mary's song	Joy; poorest and most marginalised at the centre	4. Mary and the Magnificat	Love	purple/ violet
Christmas Eve/Day	Immanuel is born	Love; welcome the stranger	5. God with us	God with us	white and gold

Advent hymn

The liturgy is intended to work with the advent song 'Christmas Is Coming' by John Bell (tune: Advent Ring; from 'Innkeepers and Light Sleepers'; ©1992 WGRG, Iona Community).

Another suitable piece could be substituted as desired.



28 November 2021: First Sunday in Advent

Leader: We read from the prophet Isaiah:

‘Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!”’
– the Advent God of creation.

The first candle is lit

Leader: As we light our first candle, we give thanks to God for the gift of this bounteous creation, celebrating its diverse life and wondrous beauty. We know that all created life should be enabled to flourish as God intended, and yet often our actions do not treat it with value. As we face the climate crisis, we lament the ways in which creation has been stifled and altered by our actions. And yet, we also give thanks for the hope we find in the Creator as we wait for God to visit us again.

The JPIT globe symbol is hung on the Christmas tree, lectern, etc.

Sing chorus and verse 1 of ‘Christmas is coming’ by John Bell

Leader: Let us pray.

We pray for all who work to renew the environment, to reverse the years of neglect and abuse and bring hope, love and light to the world. We commit ourselves to play our part in protecting this most precious of gifts and to ‘lift up our voices mightily’ to call on all to do more to care for creation. Amen.



5 December 2021

Second Sunday in Advent

Leader: We read from the prophet Isaiah:

‘Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!”’
– the Advent God of peace.

The second candle is lit

Leader: As we light our second candle, we give thanks to God for the gift of peace. We remember the Prophets, throughout the ages, who have spoken out for peace against the clamour of violence, bloodshed and war. Jesus reminds us that ‘blessed are the peacemakers’, yet in our own lives, in our churches, communities and between nations we see conflict and witness those who prepare for war. May we not be content with uneasy peace but find strength as we wait in hope for the reign of the Prince of Peace to build real and lasting peace.

The JPIT dove symbol is hung on the Christmas tree, lectern, etc.

Sing chorus and verse 2 of ‘Christmas is coming’ by John Bell

Leader: Let us pray.

We pray for all peacemakers, for the mediators and negotiators, for those who challenge aggression and refuse to meet violence with violence. We commit ourselves to the way of peace and to ‘lift up our voices mightily’ to call on all to live in God’s peace. Amen.



12 December 2021

Third Sunday in Advent

Leader: We read from the prophet Isaiah:

‘Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!”’
– the Advent God of flourishing life for all.

The third candle is lit

Leader: As we light our third Candle, we give thanks to God for the gift of life in all its fullness. We see the gap between rich and poor increase and debt becoming a way of life for too many people. We are mindful of John the Baptist, who prepared the way of God by challenging people not to be selfish, so that all may flourish. In a season of excess, may we seek only what we need so that others may flourish too.

The JPIT piggy-bank symbol is hung on the Christmas tree, lectern, etc.

Sing chorus and verse 3 of ‘Christmas is coming’ by John Bell

Leader: Let us pray.

We pray for a just economy with equality at its heart, an economy where all may flourish. We pray for those in power to work tirelessly for such a vision. We commit ourselves to ‘lift up our voices mightily’ as we strive for economic justice for all. Amen.



19 December

Fourth Sunday in Advent

Leader: We read from the prophet Isaiah:

‘Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!”’
– the Advent God of joy.

The fourth candle is lit

Leader: As we light our fourth candle, we recall the words of Mary as she sang praises to God who ‘looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant’. Mary’s joy is not only that she has been chosen, but that in God’s grace there is no marginalisation! Too often in our world, individuals and groups are pushed to the margins and not heard. May we work towards a society where those marginalised and their voices are drawn into the centre.

The JPIT ‘marginalised brought into the centre’ symbol is hung on the Christmas tree, lectern, etc.

Sing chorus and verse 4 of ‘Christmas is coming’ by John Bell

Leader: Let us pray.

We pray for a joyful world where the lowly are lifted high and the hungry are fed. We pray for our churches and communities that we may look towards the margins and not always to the centre. We commit ourselves to ‘lift up our voices mightily’ to challenge a worldview that pushes people to the margins. Amen.



24/25 December

Christmas Eve/Day

Leader: We read from the prophet Isaiah:

‘Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!”’
– the Advent God of love.

The fifth candle is lit

Leader: As we light our fifth candle, we celebrate the birth of Jesus! At a time when our country is debating immigration policy, we remember Jesus, a refugee child, fleeing to safety. We celebrate Christ who, with God’s love, welcomed strangers and those had been marginalised. May we live as disciples of the incarnate God, who through our welcome and our love, will build communities of grace for all.

The JPIT shaking hands symbol is hung on the Christmas tree, lectern, etc.

Sing chorus and verse 5 of ‘Christmas is coming’ by John Bell

Leader: Let us pray.

We pray for welcoming, caring and loving communities. May our churches welcome all as Jesus has welcomed us. Help us to work with others in our local community to promote an openness to the stranger. We commit ourselves to ‘lift up our voices mightily’ to challenge those in our society who are not welcoming of others, and instead to be joyously welcoming to everyone. Amen.