

December 2023

This year, the season of Advent falls wholly in the month of December. It's a time of busyness at home and at school with plenty to enjoy; nativity plays and carol services, lights and decorations, plans to visit friends and family... It can sometimes be easy amongst all the fun and excitement to forget what Advent is really about - a time to pause, reflect, and get ready to welcome Jesus into our hearts.

This newsletter shares a glimpse of some of the prayer and liturgy resources that children will experience at school during this month. We hope you find this resource to be a useful addition to your family prayer time.

Last year we released the Jesse Tree resource which is a bit like an Advent calendar and based on the Advent tradition of spiritual preparation through tracing Jesus' ancestry. This beautiful resource will once again be made available for families to use at home, and we hope that parents will take the opportunity to share children's excitement in discovering the daily stories about Jesus' family tree. You can access The Jesse Tree through the Parent Portal.

<https://www.tentenresources.co.uk/parent-portal/>

A Year of Prayer

In the Bible, Jubilee years were held every 50 years, but the Church now celebrates them every 25 years. This means that there's another one coming up in 2025. It's a big deal, and Pope Francis wants us to spend a year preparing for the Jubilee, starting in Advent 2023 - starting *now*. He has called this period of preparation, a Year of Prayer. Watch how Ten Ten Resources is helping schools to prepare!

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December Assemblies in brief

This Advent our Assemblies are part of a series entitled 'Witness to the Light'. This weekly journey of preparation will encourage children to get themselves ready to respond, share and worship. You will find links below to where you can read the Gospels and some prompt questions that you might like to explore further with your child/ren.

Witness to the Light: Ready to Respond

w/c 4th December

Every year we know that we celebrate Jesus' birthday on 25th December, but we don't know when He will come again so, like Mary, we must always have ready hearts for Jesus! This, the first of the Advent assemblies, explores Mary's witness to the light and encourages children to follow her example.

Mark 13:33-37

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+13%3A33-37&version=NRSVACE>

- The Gospel tells us to 'stay awake' and make sure we are ready. In this assembly, children learn that just as Mary said 'Yes' to God, we too are called to be open to God in our hearts and respond through our words and actions.
- You might wish to make a family 'reverse Advent calendar' that could be used throughout Advent with weekly challenges. This week's focus could be thinking of ways we can respond to God by showing kindness and care for others. Children could record examples of sharing each day.

Witness to the Light: Ready to Share

w/c 11th December

John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus and announces that Jesus is more powerful. Advent is a time for getting ready for us to prepare the way for Jesus. Will we be ready to announce His arrival, like the angels on Christmas Day?

Mark 1:1-8

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3A1-8&version=NRSVACE>

- In the Gospel, John the Baptist invited people to confess their sins and start again, ready to welcome Jesus. If you have a child in KS2, this might be a good opportunity to talk about the Sacrament of Reconciliation and perhaps make plans to receive the Sacrament during Advent.
- If you are using the 'reverse Advent calendar' idea, the challenge for this week could be practical ways of sharing God's message of peace and forgiveness by thinking carefully about our words and actions and making a special effort to get along with each other. Children could record examples of sharing peace each day.

Witness to the Light: Ready to Worship

w/c 18th December

John the Baptist is an important witness who helps others to believe that Jesus is the long-awaited Christ. Will you be ready to believe, and worship Jesus this Christmas like the shepherds and the kings?

John 1:6-8,19-28

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+1%3A6-8%2C19-28&version=NRSVACE>

- In his Gospel, John describes John the Baptist as a witness to the light, sent by God so that through him everyone will believe. We can trust John and other witnesses from the Bible because they saw Jesus and knew Him. You might want to ask your child(ren) to talk about what they know and believe about Jesus and who they trust to help them learn about their faith.
- Ask your child(ren) to recall some names and titles of Jesus that tell us more about Him e.g. *Son of God, Saviour of the World*.
- Our focus this week is worship. If you are using the 'reverse Advent calendar' idea, perhaps as a family, you could sing along with some favourite carols or encourage your child(ren) to think about other ways they can praise and worship God. Children could record some of the many reasons to praise and worship Jesus.

Prayer

During Advent, as we prepare to welcome Jesus, family time is special. Our daily prayers throughout this time of preparation are inspired by the Holy Family – Mary, Joseph and Jesus. Each week children will focus on one of the family members, who will guide and inspire our prayers.

Perhaps you would like to include this prayer within your family prayer time.

Father God
Thank you for sending us the Holy Family
to show us how to know and share Your love.
Help me to be like Mary – ready to say ‘Yes!’ to you God.
Help me to be like Joseph – kind, obedient and full of courage.
Jesus, guide me to follow in your loving ways.
Amen.