

hvn | Collective Worship



Advent 2009 | Follow the star..

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Introduction

This series of reflections for Collective Worship help to mark the season of Advent by inviting the community to **Follow the star**, a theme inspired by the Magi from the East, who were led to Bethlehem by the light of the star (cf. Matthew 2:1-12). The first week of prayer looks first at some of the Old Testament prophecies about the coming of the Messiah, the second week draws on the announcement of the pregnancy of Mary, and the third week reflects on some of the Gospel characters that feature in the Nativity itself.

Each day includes a short line of scripture, a reflection and a suggestion for some more thoughtful or active way to spend the Advent day - this might lead to some sharing or further prayer from the form group. There is a communal prayer to close the worship.

This prayer booklet is accompanied by an Advent Calendar in PowerPoint format. This series of slides includes the words of scripture and the communal prayer. It works by beginning with Slide 1 and then clicking the appropriate numbered star for the day. The stars are numbered from 1-15, one for each school day of Advent. These numbers are indicated in the prayer, below.

Summary of the Prayer Themes

The First Week of Advent - The Prophecy

Monday 30th November	Isaiah	Prepare a way for the Lord <i>Is 40:3</i>
Tuesday 1st December	Psalms	O Lord, come to our help <i>Ps 79:3</i>
Wednesday 2nd December	Micah	He will bring peace <i>Mic 5:5</i>
Thursday 3rd December	Zephaniah	The Lord your God is with you <i>Zeph 3:17</i>
Friday 4th December	Jeremiah	The King will reign wisely and do what is right and just <i>Jer 23:5</i>

The Second Week of Advent - The Pregnancy

Monday 7th December	Gabriel	You have won God's favour <i>Lk 1:30</i>
Tuesday 8th December	Mary	I am the Lord's servant <i>Lk 1:37</i>
Wednesday 9th December	Joseph	Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid <i>Mt 1:20</i>
Thursday 10th December	Elizabeth	The Lord has done this for me <i>Lk 1:25</i>
Friday 11th December	Zechariah	Light to those who live in darkness <i>Lk 1:79</i>

The Third Week of Advent - The Nativity

Monday 14th November	Herod	Go and find out all about the child <i>Mt 2:8</i>
Tuesday 15th December	Shepherds	Let us go to Bethlehem <i>Lk 2:15</i>
Wednesday 16th December	Magi	We saw the star as it rose <i>Mt 2:2</i>
Thursday 17th December	Angels	Glory to God in the highest <i>Lk 2:14</i>
Friday 18th December	Jesus	He is the one to save people <i>Mt 1:21</i>

The First Week of Advent - The Prophecy

Monday 30th November | Isaiah | Prepare a way for the Lord

- Calendar Click on Star 1 to display the scripture. Click again to display the prayer.
- Reflect On this first Monday of Advent, we hear the call of the prophet Isaiah: **prepare a way for the Lord!** Advent is all about being prepared and getting ready – getting ready for Christmas. But it's not just about making sure you've done all your shopping, written your cards and stuffed the turkey in time. More importantly than that it's about getting your mind and your heart ready to celebrate the *true* reason for Christmas. Like Magi, angels and shepherds, so we, too, now follow the star that leads us to Jesus.
- Think Start to prepare a way for the Lord today... How can you make each day of Advent a bit different? Think of some of the ways that you can get ready to celebrate Jesus' birth.
- Pray Prepare our hearts, Jesus,
to celebrate this Advent season
with happiness and excitement.
Help us to be ready for Christmas
by living in peace and love each day.
Amen.

Tuesday 1st December | Psalms | O Lord, come to our help

Today is World AIDS Day

- Calendar Click on Star 2 to display the scripture. Click again to display the prayer.
- Reflect The words of the psalm reflect our constant need for God's protection and help. Our Advent waiting reminds us that the Lord comes to our help – bringing us courage, strength, hope and healing. We can all appreciate these needs, but those who are living with illness particularly feel them.
- Today's World AIDS Day unites us with the millions of men, women and children across the globe who are affected by HIV. It remains a huge problem for parts of the world living in poverty, with inadequate sanitation and healthcare. We pray for them today.
- Think Wear a red ribbon to mark World AIDS Day and pray for all those who are experiencing illness.
- Pray Compassionate and gentle Lord,
you show us how to care
and you bring healing to those who are sick.
We pray on World AIDS Day
for all who live with HIV
in this country and throughout the world.
We pray especially

for those who do not receive the care and medical help they need.
Help us to respond with generosity and love
to those who suffer.
Amen.

Wednesday 2nd December | Micah | He will bring you peace

- Calendar Click on Star 3 to display the scripture. Click again to display the prayer.
- Reflect Eight centuries before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Micah found the world in a bit of a mess. But he came with a message promising that God's peace would come – that God would shepherd and guide his people. That peace comes in the birth of Jesus, who shakes up the world and gets us to think again about how we live with one another.
- The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, violent crime in our own country, even our own little disputes and stresses remind us how we still need that peace today. How truly peaceful are you?
- Think Be full of peace today – even if that means biting your tongue before saying something negative or aggressive, and especially if it means that you need to make it up to someone.
- Pray Peace, Lord,
that's the gift you give to our world.
So inspire us, we pray,
to be people of peace today.
In our conversations and encounters,
in our opinions about others,
in our thoughts and actions.
Through our peace,
make this world a more peaceful place.
And remind us that everything we think, do and say,
makes a difference to those around us.
Amen.

Thursday 3rd December | Zephaniah | The Lord your God is with you

- Calendar Click on Star 4 to display the scripture. Click again to display the prayer.
- Reflect Zephaniah's message reminds a waiting world that God was not some distant idea or being – but one who is really with us. In the birth of a child, we can see, touch, smell and hear our God: a God who cares for us, forgives us, loves us and protects us. God's presence is everywhere in our world. We can sense it in the beauty of creation, in the kindness of others, in the love of a friend or relative. Keep your eyes and ears open and look out for God today.
- Think Look out for signs of God's presence in the world – and try to show God to others through your words, actions and thoughts today.

Pray
God-with-us
and-in-us,
be-in-others
and-be-everywhere
throughout-our-day
Amen.

Friday 4th December | Jeremiah
The King will reign wisely and do what is right and just

Calendar Click on Star 5 to display the scripture. Click again to display the prayer.

Reflect Through the words of the prophet Jeremiah, we begin to learn how Christ our King will serve his people. Jesus will **reign wisely and do what is right and just**. The child we await at Christmas becomes the Jesus who proclaims the Kingdom of God, teaching people to forgive each other, to peaceful, fair and compassionate. Jesus stands up for the poor, reaches out to the outcast and the marginalised. It seems obvious stuff – but it surprised people then and somehow remains radical and necessary today. Pray for our needy world today and for all that is right and just.

Think Spend some time thinking about those who experience injustice and poverty. Consider donating some of your spare change to charity.

Pray Lord God, we pray for what is just and right:
an end to poverty,
respect for our environment,
equality amongst people,
opportunities for everyone.
Inspire our leaders to choose wisely,
and inspire us to play our part
in building a just a right world.
Amen.

The Second Week of Advent – The Pregnancy

Monday 7th December | Gabriel | You have won God's favour

- Calendar Click on Star 6 to display the scripture. Click again to display the prayer.
- Reflect The Angel Gabriel brings wonderful news to Mary... wonderful, life-changing and, in all honesty, terrifying news. **You have won God's favour!** With these words, Mary learns that God has chosen her from all women for an incredible life.
- God chooses Mary but he also chooses *all* of us to share in the brilliance of Jesus' birth. It's like we've all won God's favour, we've all be blessed and chosen by God. Gabriel brings you this life-changing news today as well. How do *you* react?
- Think Keep the words of Gabriel in your mind today: 'You have won God's favour.' See if it makes a difference to the way you approach the day.
- Pray Speak to us, Lord: **we have won God's favour!**
Be in all that we say: **we have won God's favour!**
Inspire our actions and attitudes: **we have won God's favour!**
Lead us to be generous with our time: **we have won God's favour!**
Guard us through this Advent day: **we have won God's favour!**

Tuesday 8th December | Mary | I am the Lord's servant

Today is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception

- Calendar Click on Star 7 to display the scripture. Click again to display the prayer.
- Reflect We celebrate this Feast Day by thanking God for the generous and strong faith and love of Mary. In a moment her life is turned upside down. Mary's pregnancy was extraordinary. Her acceptance of it is equally remarkable. But, far from dwelling on her own importance, Mary's overwhelming desire to serve God shines through.
- In celebrating Mary's role in birth of Jesus, we sometimes forget the scandal and shock she would have created in her local community. It makes her reaction even more astonishing - but it also shows us just how a really strong faith makes anything possible.
- Think Be joyful, positive and affirming today: say 'Yes!' to God!
- Pray Amazing God,
you chose Mary to be the Mother of your Son.
We rejoice with her today
for the gift of new life in Jesus.
As we celebrate Mary's faith,
help us to say 'yes' to you
by being generous in charity,

strong in faith,
and overflowing with love.
Amen.

Wednesday 9th December | Joseph | Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid

- Calendar** Click on Star 8 to display the scripture. Click again to display the prayer.
- Reflect** With the surprise and excitement at the news of Mary's pregnancy, the reaction of Joseph is sometimes forgotten. Matthew's Gospel describes Joseph as 'a man who always did what was right' but even he must have been confused at the events that were happening. The Angel appears to him, too, and somehow calms his fears, telling him to stay with Mary. Joseph's enormous faith in God allows him to accept what was happening and, despite the questions that would doubtless be asked and the scandal that surrounded Mary's pregnancy, he does the right thing.
- Think** Do the right thing... In all the choices that you'll make today, stop to think and reflect before rushing to do something. Pray that God will inspire you to choose wisely, and that you will think of other people before yourself.
- Pray** Thank you, God, for the example of Joseph who shows us great courage and faithfulness.
Calm our own fears
and help us to trust in you.
Amen.

Thursday 10th December | Elizabeth | The Lord has done this for me

Elizabeth is the cousin of Mary – she's married to Zechariah. In their old age, God sent an Angel to tell them that they were to be blessed with a child, even though they had been unable to conceive. At first, Zechariah couldn't believe that his wife was pregnant – and so he was struck dumb until the Angel's message came true. When John is born, Zechariah's voice is restored and he praises God for blessing them. John becomes a Baptist, preparing the way for Jesus.

- Calendar** Click on Star 9 to display the scripture. Click again to display the prayer.
- Reflect** Mary rushes to share her good news with her cousin, Elizabeth, who is also expecting a child. It's exciting news that they share with each other, each unexpectedly blessed by God. Elizabeth describes how the child in her womb seems to leap with joy, so brilliant is the news that Mary brings. Like Mary, she praises God: **the Lord has done this for me**. They both show massive faith – showing that everything in life comes from God's hands.
- Think** Think about how God blesses your life. Perhaps there are lots of blessings in your life that you take for granted? Praise God for those things today.
- Pray** Bless us, God,
as we recognise the wonderful things you do for us.
We thank you for the many ways that you touch our lives.

Help us as we follow the star towards Bethlehem
to be grateful and joyful.
Amen.

Friday 11th December | Zechariah | Light to those who live in darkness

- Calendar Click on Star 10 to display the scripture. Click again to display the prayer.
- Reflect Zechariah's song of praise at the birth of his son, John, celebrates the wonderful promise that God has made with the world. As he rejoices in his newborn son, Zechariah recognises that John will have an important task in preparing people to welcome Jesus. He sees that God has blessed the world with another chance to put things right – to step out of the darkness and to walk in the light.
- Sometimes we might have our own moments of darkness – the sort of problems or concerns that can really test us? Pray for God's light to shine on you.
- Think Keep your eyes open for anyone who might be facing darkness in their lives – for anyone who is feeling worried or stressed or anxious about something. Be like a light for them. Listen, be compassionate, and show that you care.
- Pray Brighten the darkness of our lives, Lord,
by restoring our hope in you.
Be close to anyone who is struggling today
and help them to see that your light will shine.
Amen.

The Third Week of Advent – The Nativity

Monday 14th December | Herod | Go and find out all about the child

- Calendar Click on Star 11 to display the scripture. Click again to display the prayer.
- Reflect We're following the star to Jesus... but in case we think the journey is like a cosy fairy tale Herod's motives remind us of how tense the birth of Jesus was. He sends the Magi on their way to find out about Jesus, fearful that the promised Messiah had come, jealous and anxious about what it would mean to his reign. Hearing about the newborn King, Herod orders every newborn male to be killed – it's why Mary and Joseph flee to Egypt with their Son. Already, Jesus was unsettling the authorities. Life was going to be very different.
- Think Follow the star by being proud of your faith in God. Use every opportunity you have today to show your belief in Jesus by the way you treat others.
- Pray We pray, Lord, in these days of Advent,
for all who feel threatened,
distressed or worried about anything.
Bring them your peace and your calm
and help them to know that you are always near.
Amen.

Tuesday 15th December | Shepherds | Let us go to Bethlehem

- Calendar Click on Star 12 to display the scripture. Click again to display the prayer.
- Reflect The journey to the star of Bethlehem leads us to the shepherds. Their part in the Christmas story reminds us that the birth of God's Son was an event for *everyone*, not just for the chosen few or for the privileged. Innocently looking after their flock, they are chosen to hear the angel's message: 'Today your Saviour was born!'
- It's certainly good news... and they head to Bethlehem to see for themselves. We probably take their role for granted, but it shows us amazing faith in God, and real hope and expectation. Would you go and see too?
- Think Follow the star by putting God first today. Try not to think about yourself, but see how thinking about others can change your perspective.
- Pray Thank you, Jesus,
for letting ordinary shepherds share in your light.
We pray that we may journey to the stable in Bethlehem, too,
by sharing in the wonder of Christmas.
Amen.

Wednesday 16th December | Magi | We saw the star as it rose

- Calendar Click on Star 13 to display the scripture. Click again to display the prayer.
- Reflect The Magi (often called Wise Men) are the real stargazers in the Christmas story. Following the star from the East, they come to Bethlehem to worship the King, bringing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Warned by God not to return to Herod, we can only assume that they go home transformed by the experience, blessed by the chance to celebrate the birth of Jesus.
- The star leads them to the Lord. It's like they're walking in the light to find the Light. So how do we follow Christ's light? Think about those give you guidance and show you faith.
- Think Follow the star by thinking about those around you who help you and look out for you: your friends, family, teachers and members of your community. Show your appreciation to them today.
- Pray Bless our families: **Lord, lead them by your star!**
Watch over our friends: **Lord, lead them by your star!**
Be close to our community: **Lord, lead them by your star!**
Be in our hearts: **Lord, lead us by your star!**

Thursday 17th December | Angels | Glory to God in the highest

- Calendar Click on Star 14 to display the scripture. Click again to display the prayer.
- Reflect Angels appear all over the Christmas story, serving as God's messengers and bringing this life-changing, astonishing and amazing news. We're told that a whole choir of angels sang to the shepherds on that first Christmas night, 'Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth...!' It's a joyful sound – the sound of hope given back to the world in the gift of the Christ child.
- This Advent day invites us to be angels too, to be messengers of God! Don't worry, though, you don't have to sing. Instead, be an angel through your positive and joyful attitude today.
- Think Follow the star by being angelic! Share in the joy of the angels' good news by acting like the birth of Jesus really makes a difference to you.
- Pray Glory to God in the highest!
Glory to God here on earth!
We pray thankfully, God, for your presence amongst us.
Help us as we follow the star
to reflect your light in everything that we experience today.
Amen.

Friday 18th December | Jesus | He is the one to save people

- Calendar Click on Star 15 to display the scripture. Click again to display the prayer.
- Reflect And so the star leads us to Jesus... Christmas cards and carols tend to paint this cosy romantic image of a silent, smiling, slightly chubby perfect little baby, surrounded by passive looking animals and a load of straw. Truth is, he probably cried... and poed... and was sickly... and burped... and did all of those natural, messy, normal things that all newborn babies do.
- And isn't that the brilliant thing about the incarnation, that God *does* become flesh and lives with us as one like us? God so loved the world that's he with us now. What a brilliant gift!
- Think Follow the star by celebrating this last day of term and by showing Christmas gratitude. Be thankful for everything!
- Pray Jesus our light and our hope,
we follow the star to the stable in Bethlehem.
Stay with us through these Advent days of preparation
and as we celebrate your birth at Christmas.
Bless our community, our families and our friends
with the true spirit of this special time of year.
Amen.

Happy Christmas!



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