

## Enough for Advent

During the season of Advent, the Joint Public Issues Team are offering a series of four reflective readings and prayers. They are designed to be suitable for use in Sunday services as part of the lighting of advent candles, but could be used in other contexts too.

These resources are designed as part of the #ENOUGH campaign, to help churches be more aware of its key priorities and to help root our public campaigning with our Gospel faith.

**#enough**



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Through the #ENOUGH initiative we are seeking to challenge policy makers not to lose sight of the underlying principle that the benefits system in our welfare state was designed and established to make sure that everyone in need has **enough**. We recognise the economic constraints in which policy makers have to operate, and affirm the principle that our system needs to be fair. But we are concerned that some of the more recent developments in benefits cuts and sanctions, deliberately leave people with less than enough, undermining the whole point of its existence.

We recognise that with any campaign comes personal responsibility, and if everyone is to have enough, then those who have more than enough need to be willing to share. Our Advent reflections are designed to help people engage with this challenge; we would also encourage churches to use this to promote an alternative narrative to challenge the pressure of advertising campaigns that seek to measure the quality of Christmas by how much we spend.

For people who are already financially hard-pressed; the idea that unless they spend significant amounts of money on food, presents and celebrations they are somehow not having a “proper Christmas”, can be a particularly damaging one.

As those who call for a welfare system that provides enough, we can model this reality by being content with enough ourselves, and declare the Good News that the true heart of the Christmas message is that God has provided more than enough for our eternal salvation.

We hope that you find these resources and ideas helpful.

For more information about the #ENOUGH initiative, please see the Joint Public Issues Team website:  
[www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/enough](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/enough)

## Worship Resources for the First Sunday in Advent

### ENOUGH

In different ways, the lighting of the first Advent candle  
Turns our eyes momentarily away from this present world.  
We look back and remember the stories of those who are the founders of our faith;  
Those through whose lives, our God began this salvation story.

Some will call this the candle of hope;  
Inspired by great narratives of faithfulness from ages now passed,  
We look beyond our present realities  
To watch and wait in anticipation of Christ's eternal coming.

It is a moment of contentment  
As we glimpse the infinity of God's generosity and grace  
The eternity of God's provision  
The endlessness of the hope that has always been ours.

And there is enough  
Even in that most fleeting of glances at the riches lavished upon us;  
Enough to continue our journey of hope  
Enough to re-centre our attention on God's coming Kingdom

And yet it must also be a moment of discontent  
For God turns our eyes briefly away  
Only that we might look at this world afresh  
With renewed restlessness to see his Kingdom come.

It is not the discontent that impatiently counts down shopping days  
With Christmas adverts, flash-sale offers and on-line wish-lists;  
The discontent that some would foster  
So that we might want more, consume more – spend more.

The discontent to which God calls us  
Is not the discontent that measures love by what we spend  
Defines our worth by the material value of what we receive  
And seeks to turn gratitude for love into debt to strangers.

Ours is a holy discontent  
The discontent of those who recognise that God has given more than enough;  
Yet believe that it is not enough to simply receive  
Without concern for those who remain in need

It is not enough to leave unchallenged  
The narratives of harm and attitudes of inhumanity  
That give the least to those whose need is most  
And hides from them the light of hope that we are called to bear

### Prayer

Eternal God  
May the light of hope  
That you have kindled throughout history  
Shine upon us

And shine through us  
Into the world you have created  
And to which you will one day return.

Your provision of salvation  
Is woven into every age of history;  
Defining our humanity;  
Restoring our dignity;  
And from generation to generation,  
Calling us to walk in your ways.

We give you thanks for those whose example, whose endeavour and whose faithfulness  
Have turned our eyes towards your light,  
Who have helped us understand what it means to be your people,  
And whose footsteps mark the paths that we now follow

Where the causes of the powerful  
The interests of the wealthy  
And the indifference of the selfish  
Crush the worth and dignity  
Of any who are made in your image,  
Make us no less tireless in our endeavours  
To bear your light in the midst of that darkness.

And so may your presence be revealed  
Your image restored  
And hope be rekindled  
AMEN

## Worship Resources for the Second Sunday in Advent

The Second Sunday in Advent, in most traditions, calls us to reflect on the prophetic voices that foretold the coming of Christ. Some will focus on the Word of God itself, remembering the place of the Scriptures in our life and belief. It is also known as the “candle of love” reminding us that Christ has brought us hope, love, joy and peace. The laws of the Old Testament were founded on the simple principle that we are called to love God with all of our being and love our neighbours as ourselves. We recognise of course that the message of the Old Testament prophets is the “Word of the Lord” and might remember that their message was one of Justice, often calling people to return to that Covenant of Love that was expressed in God’s laws of justice and righteousness. As we celebrate and look to Christ’s coming, we cannot escape the call for justice which underpins this.

### ISAIAH 42:1-4

‘Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight;  
I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations.  
He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets.  
A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out.  
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged  
‘til he establishes justice on earth.  
In his teaching the islands will put their hope.’

On this second Sunday in Advent, we light again the first candle of hope  
In continued thankfulness for the people and the stories on which our faith is founded.  
We re-affirm our identity as God’s people; celebrate anew salvation’s gift.  
And in its light, turn our faces again to the ways of God’s coming Kingdom.

And to this flame we add another,  
Remembering that in every generation  
There have been those for whom it is not enough to simply receive of God’s riches  
But find themselves compelled to make God’s message known.

Theirs were voices that echoed the eternal truths of God’s word,  
Making them plain in the language and rooted in the everyday life  
Of those whom God would call to listen and hear  
Beckoning hearts and minds to re-embrace laws of love and justice.

We celebrate those words of promise  
Which spoke of one whose coming would herald the dawn of eternal hope  
Declaring justice and all that is right  
For every place and people; on every island and shore.

We have seen his coming, and in it seen enough  
To believe that one day his every word and promise will be fulfilled.  
And in our living and speaking, to seek to shed the light of its truth  
Into every corner of our dark world.

God’s word has come to us; God’s love has been outpoured, and love’s message is clear  
That those who love God are called to obey his timeless command  
To love our neighbour as ourselves  
And in seeking out our neighbours, consider no-one a stranger.

And from this foundation spring Divine decrees, echoed in the voice of every prophet,  
To provide for the orphan, care for the outcast, give bread to the hungry and defend the helpless.  
We speak of God's coming by challenging any statute or structure  
That will not give enough to those whose hands remain empty.

This flame declares that God has provided for our Salvation  
A truth we make known in many words and symbols  
Not least when we loosen our grasp and turn from our longing for what is only material  
So that all might have enough.

## **Prayer**

Righteous God  
We hear again the voice of your prophetic word  
Declaring your coming  
And proclaiming your Kingdom  
Of light, love and justice.

As we embrace afresh the promises of your salvation  
And find strength in the timeless truths of your word  
Help us to also hear their challenge  
And allow our lives to be tested  
By the light of their truth.

As we seek the coming of your Kingdom  
Make us restless for its ways  
Tireless in our endeavours to work for its fulfilment  
And faithful in our resolve to declare its message

AMEN

## Worship Resources for the Third Sunday in Advent

On the third Sunday in Advent, the focus in most traditions turns to John the Baptist. Some remember the story of Mary, using the fourth Sunday to focus on the child Jesus himself. The candle we light is also known as the candle of Joy, recognising the third of the elements hope, love, joy and peace, which are key expressions of God's gift of salvation. In different ways each of these represents "making real" the words and truths that have already echoed through our Advent reflections. Ours is not a faith of words alone, but one which seeks to embody and apply God's truth to the reality of our world. As those who celebrate God's eternal provision, we make this truth real when we challenge any behaviour or narrative that goes against God's principles of generosity and grace. We declare it when we stand against those who would seek to silence the heart-cry of the oppressed.

### ISAIAH 40:3-5

A voice of one calling:

'In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord;  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.  
Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low;  
the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.  
And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together.  
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Today we light another flame  
Christ is our hope; God's love is revealed  
So that even in the midst of this world's darkness  
Our hearts can know joy that no earthly circumstance can extinguish.

And this flame reminds us that where kings and rulers jostled for position,  
While politicians and generals amassed their plans and strategies,  
It was not in their corridors of power that God's voice was heard  
But through the words of a desert dweller in a forgotten corner of our world.

A voice that cried out in the wilderness;  
God's message made known through the life and circumstances  
Of one that many would consider as having no worth  
Yet whose poverty was no barrier to being the vehicle of God's unstoppable truth.

His was a call for the mountains of oppression to be laid low,  
The pathways to justice to be made straight and even.  
His was a confident declaration that God's salvation would be seen by all  
Unashamedly condemning any who would not turn from the ways of oppression and harm.

This is a moment to pause and consider  
Where are the unexpected places, the uncomfortable circumstances, the awkward people,  
In which and through whom God might be speaking today?  
What are the messages that cry out from wastelands and wildernesses that our society has created?

The desert is a place where it is a struggle to find enough.  
Where the locusts and rags of disadvantage and depravation are all that some can muster.  
But this is not a place of silence; and if we leave its voice unheeded  
What divine message might we fail to hear?

When lonely voices cry from the darkness of the wilderness places  
Fashioned by neglect and greed, selfishness and abused power  
These are the voices to which we can add our own  
That a chorus of righteousness and truth might truly resound in our world.

## **Prayer**

Loving God

You have come that we might have life;  
That those made in your image,  
Might be renewed and fulfilled;  
That the messages of hope, love and justice  
Might begin to become reality  
Through our acts of goodness  
And our commitment to your cause.

As those who wait for your salvation  
To be complete through your final coming  
May we also be those  
Who declare its message and embody its cause,  
In the here and now.

Like candles in the darkness  
May our words and actions  
Shine the hope of your Gospel in the midst of shadow  
Declaring 'enough' where oppression prevails;  
'Enough' where the voices of the wilderness are still silenced;  
'Enough' when your truth remains hidden  
And never enough  
While places remain  
Where the light of our message has yet to fully shine.



## Worship Resources for the Fourth Sunday in Advent

Many who light the fourth candle of Advent, do so particularly remembering the moment that Mary received the news of Christ's coming through the visit of an Angel. God's purposes are already declared, but this is the earthly beginning of the Messiah's coming. In some traditions the candle is lit to speak directly of the Christ-child; others describe it as the candle of peace – the fourth element that seeks to express something of our Gospel identity. We seek to draw these elements together and particularly remember that saying "yes" to God's purposes involves embracing the narratives of truth and justice that lie at the heart of our Gospel story.

### LUKE 1:50-55

His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.  
He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;  
He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.  
He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.  
He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.  
He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful  
to Abraham and his descendants for ever, just as he promised our ancestors.

The candles of Advent burn  
Their flickering lights speak of the hope, the love, the joy  
That is ours through Christ who has come  
And is coming into our world.

We light the flame of peace  
In the midst of a world that is wracked with conflict and unrest,  
Yet one in which goodness still overcomes evil  
Where darkness can never prevail against light.

Together we remember, how centuries ago  
The voice of an angel spoke words of favour to a startled young woman  
Announcing that God would be with her; that salvation would come  
Even though the pathway ahead would not be an easy one.

It was in God's presence that her peace was found  
Not by avoiding the heartless decrees of a tyrannical regime  
Or escaping the judgement of those who assumed the worst of her  
Peace, even as she faced their every consequence on a stable floor.

God's promise and God's purpose were enough  
Enough for her to embrace the narrative of eternity;  
To set aside self-interest for humanity's salvation;  
And declare with world-changing simplicity "let it be to me"

So let us see enough in her profound example,  
To declare our own "yes" to God's eternal will and decree.  
Where God's Word calls for justice, and end to oppression  
May we be no less willing to submit to its ways.

So may we know God's peace as we await God's coming  
As we empty ourselves of pride and raise the cause of those in need  
As we fill with good things the hands of those who long for enough

That all of humanity might see and know that God has come to us.

**Prayer**

God of peace  
Whose earthly coming  
Began amidst the everyday life and struggle  
Of a human family.

May our lives and actions  
Reflect the light and truth that we once again embrace  
So that every earthly family  
Might know that a Saviour has come.

Where mouths remain hungry  
And hands remain empty;  
Where the gifts of your earth  
Are locked away by greed and self-interest,  
May hope and justice be born through us  
As we walk the pathways of your Kingdom's dawn,

AMEN

## Reflection for Christmas Day - 5th Advent Candle

John 1:14 & 16: The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth... Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.

At a moment in history, in a place and a time,  
An infant's cry in the still night air  
Declared salvation's dawn.  
His mother lay back exhausted  
While her trembling husband laid this fragile child  
In an animal's manger.

We light this flame because we believe  
That in this moment, it was none other than God  
Who took on the flesh of a human infant,  
Reaching into the deepest realities of our existence  
To become this world's salvation.

Today we will unwrap our gifts  
Share food and laughter  
Embrace loved-ones and savour memories.  
But these things alone can never be enough  
To satisfy our deepest needs and longings.

Like this fragile, flickering flame  
They are but precious symbols  
Of a deeper and more lasting gift;  
The gift of eternity itself  
That no earthly circumstance or human hand can ever wrench from us.

We who have seen his glory,  
Revealed in the scant chaos of this manger birth,  
Offer ourselves afresh in Christ's service,  
Content to believe; content to receive,  
And called to be those who make Good News known  
Wherever the darkness of injustice and ignorance prevails  
For nothing else is enough.

### Prayer

Living Christ, light of the world  
On this day we are touched afresh by your glory  
Awestruck not by the grandeur of your arrival  
But the immensity of its significance.  
Your light has come;  
Our hopes and longings are fulfilled in you.  
Stir our hearts afresh  
To live our lives in the light of your coming  
That your good news  
Might be made known through us  
AMEN

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The Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) is changing its legal status from a charitable unincorporated association to a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO). From 1 January 2020, BUGB will operate as a CIO with registered charity number 1181392.

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