

# Advent Assembly Notes

## Week One: Hope



### SLIDE ONE – HOLDING SLIDE

#### TEACHER'S NOTES

This presentation lasts up to 20 minutes. **We recommend you deliver the whole assembly but please feel free to use the slides and script as time allows.**

This and corresponding Missio Advent assemblies employ scriptural readings from the liturgical season. These help pupils consider how the weeks leading up to Christmas help us to prepare for the gift of God's love to the entire world, made present in the birth of Christ.

This assembly has been prepared by **Missio**, Pope Francis' worldwide charity for overseas mission. Through educational, medical, welfare and formation initiatives, Missio brings the hope of the Gospel where there is turmoil, poverty and uncertainty in the world.

Missio projects are almost entirely funded by supporters' donations. With the exception of Gift Aid, we receive no UK government assistance. **Your support enables our work to continue overseas and at home.**



#### START OF ASSEMBLY

##### SLIDE TWO

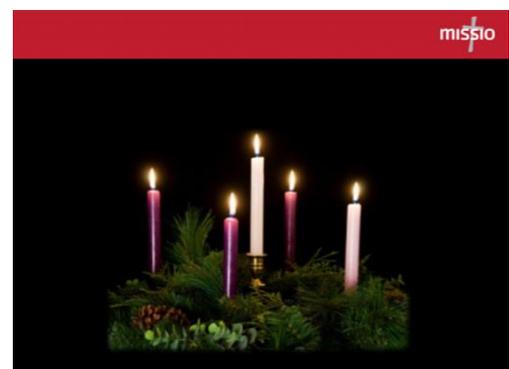
Explain to students that this assembly is going to help us find out more about the season of Advent.

Question: Ask students if they know what season we have entered?

Answer: Advent.

Question: Ask students if they know what the word 'advent' means?

Answer: The arrival of a notable person or thing, an appearance



In the four weeks leading up to Christmas, we await in hope the arrival of Jesus. Throughout the season of Advent, the Church uses many symbols to help us understand the significance of God becoming one of us, through the birth of Jesus.

One of the most recognised symbols is the Advent wreath. The Advent wreath is an ancient symbol of the Christian's journey towards Christmas. Every element of the wreath communicates something special about this journey.

Its circular shape represents God's eternal loving presence; it has no beginning and no end. The evergreen leaves, which never fade in colour, also signify God's constancy.

The candles represent hope, peace, joy, love, and the light of Christ, which shatters all darkness. You can see that three of the candles on the wreath are purple. In the Catholic Church the colour purple symbolises new beginnings and times of change. Indeed, the birth of Jesus was to bring about enormous change across the world, over time, and in our lives.

We continue to bring about change for the better when we chose to be missionaries of God's love; delivering hope to the world.

### SLIDE THREE

On the first week of Advent we light one purple candle, representing **hope**.

In Advent the Church has carefully selected readings from the Bible that help Christians around the world journey together towards Christmas. Today's reading is taken from the prophet Isaiah, who lived around 700 years before Jesus.

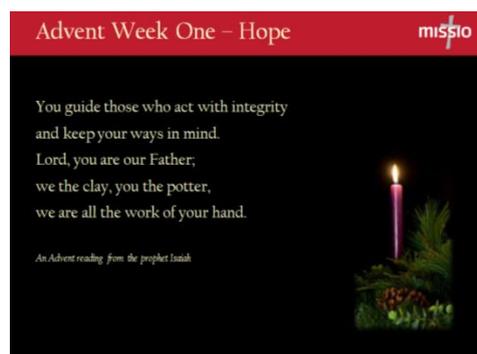
At the time Isaiah's words were written down, his people, the Israelites, were being attacked and oppressed by neighbouring countries. In the midst of such suffering the Israelites were losing hope. They were turning away from God as their pleas for His help appeared not to be answered. But Isaiah remained faithful. He believed God was listening and would appear amongst the people; promoting peace, justice and dignity for all.

Isaiah tried hard to encourage the Israelites through his actions and words, like those found in the following reading set for the first Sunday of Advent.

*You are encouraged to read out the entire passage (see below), however on the presentation slide only the last few lines in bold are shown on the slide.*

**A reading from the prophet Isaiah** 63:19, 64:3, 4,7

No ear has heard, no eye has seen  
any God but you act like this



for those who trust him.

**You guide those who act with integrity  
and keep your ways in mind.**

**Lord, you are our Father;  
we the clay, you the potter,  
we are all the work of your hand.**

#### **SLIDE FOUR**

Isaiah recognised that despite everything, God was still with the people. God has created each and every one of us and he will never forget us. It is the hope Isaiah has in God that we are reminded of during Advent.

The Christian faith teaches that having hope in God does not mean sitting back and doing nothing. Like Isaiah we should be active in our efforts to make things better. Even if our efforts only seem small, like lighting a candle in a dark room, we must trust that with God's grace we can shatter darkness and bring hope to others.

Sadly, there are many people in the world who live without hope. Living without hope can lead to anxiety and suffering. In hopeless times we cannot see a way forward and the future seems lost.

There will be people around you who feel this way: here at school, in your communities, perhaps even at home. It is important that as children of God we follow the example of Jesus, who brought hope to the hopeless by showing them support and care.

How might you do that?

*Possible responses: visiting an elderly person, befriending a pupil who is lonely, praying for someone who is struggling to cope.*

In a speech Pope Francis gave to young people he reminded us never to doubt our ability to make a difference and be bearers of hope – wherever it is needed. The Pope said...

**'To all young people, I repeat: Do not let yourselves be robbed of hope! Let us become bearers of hope!'**



## SLIDE FIVE

We have just looked at things we can do to bring hope to people we know who live near us; now let's think about how we can bring hope to people we don't know and who live far away.

Like these pupils at the Marka School in Amman, capital of Jordan. Jordan, as you can see by the red circle on the screen, is a country in the Middle East and not far from the land where Jesus was born.



Just as in the time of Isaiah, the Middle East remains a place troubled by conflict. All the children at the Marka school are victims of this conflict.

Until recently the Marka school pupils lived in Iraq, a country to the east of Jordan, but they and their families were forced to flee Iraq due to violent attacks and persecution. Some families had only a few hours to leave their homes and were allowed to take only one or two possessions when they left, not knowing if they would ever return.

Question: Try to imagine what it would feel like to have to suddenly leave your homeland because it was too dangerous to stay? What would be the one thing you would struggle to leave behind?

For many of the young Iraqis, leaving their friends and other family members was the greatest loss. When they arrived in Jordan they were strangers, with neither a home to live in or school to go to\*.

For months the children missed out on forming new friendships and learning new things. This led to a sense of hopelessness, because without the support of friends and the knowledge provided by education, a person's life chances are limited.

*\*Additional note for teachers: Iraqi Christians in Jordan are not afforded official refugee status. This means they are not entitled to state benefits, education, housing, and adults are unable to work. The images on the slide show Church supported housing also provided to Christian Iraqi families, again largely thanks to Fr Khalil and his team. The Marka school referred to in the following slide, is run entirely through charitable donations; no fees are obtained from pupils' families.*

## SLIDE SIX

Thankfully a Jordanian priest called Fr Khalil (pictured) decided to do something that would help restore hope.

With help of his parishioners and the charity Missio, Fr Khalil set up the Marka School for the Iraqi children in Amman. The school educates and supports around 200 pupils each year.



There are lots of other Iraqi children waiting to attend but at present the school can't afford to support any more pupils.

The little boy pictured here with Fr Khalil is called Matty. He is the Marka School's youngest pupil. As families arrive in Jordan with very little, the Marka school provides children like Matty with free uniforms, books, bags, and school meals.

Thanks to Fr Khalil and the adults who volunteer their time as teachers, teaching assistants, cooks, seamstresses and caretakers, children like Matty are able to continue to learn and flourish.

### SLIDE SEVEN

Thanks to the Marka School and many other Church run schools across the world supported by Missio, some of which are pictured here, Matty and his family are given hope that the future can be brighter. This echoes the message of Advent.

We are reminded that God never forgets us, to trust him in everything and to bring hope to the world through our words and actions. Then **we** continue to make Christ's presence known on earth every day: delivering to all people the true gift of Christmas, God's love.



### SLIDE EIGHT

This sentiment is captured well in a prayer written by St Teresa of Avila. We'll finish by reading it together.

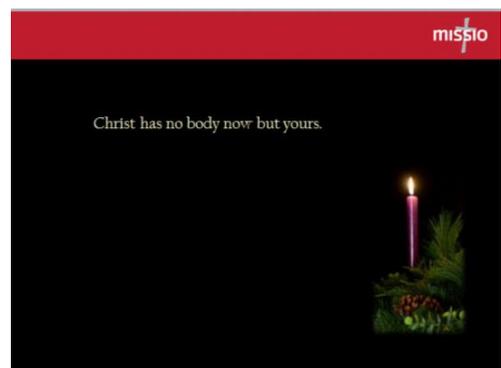
Before we do let us bring to mind people who might be living without hope today. **Pause to reflect.**

And let us pray for all the pupils at the Marka school, considering ways we might support them practically too, so that they might have hope in a better tomorrow.

**Pause.**

Now let us read our closing prayer together: **The prayer is revealed in stages, and so requires multiple clicks.**

Christ has no body but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks



With compassion on this world,  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,  
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.  
Christ has no body now on earth,  
But yours.

**SLIDE NINE – Closing holding slide**