

Advent Assembly Notes

Week Two: Peace



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 at Christmas.

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

ADVENT WEEK TWO. You may wish to omit the following INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL ABOUT ADVENT'S DEFINITION AND ADVENT WREATHS if you have already used MISSIO'S WEEK ONE ADVENT ASSEMBLY.

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 the word 'advent' means and where else they might have heard it.



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

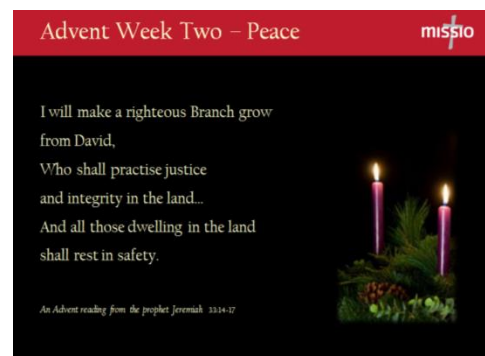
On the second week of Advent we light the second candle, representing **peace**.

In Advent, the Church has carefully selected readings from the Bible that help Christians around the world journey towards Christmas. Today's reading is taken from the prophet Jeremiah, who lived around 600 years before Jesus.

Jeremiah was a gentle and just prophet who tried hard to encourage people to follow God's loving ways. Sadly, in a time when strength and status were worshipped more than God, Jeremiah's efforts were often ridiculed. His hope lay with the birth of a saviour who would successfully lead the people in the way of peace.

Jeremiah's vision of this saviour is illustrated in today's Advent reading. Listen carefully so as to identify how Jeremiah's vision could be seen to predict the arrival of Jesus, God made man.

You are encouraged to read out the entire passage (see below), however on the presentation slide only the last lines are shown. Click to reveal.



An Advent reading from the Prophet Jeremiah 33:14-17

See, the days are coming – it is the Lord who speaks –

when I am going to fulfil the promise I made

to the House of Israel and the House of Judah:

‘In those days and at the right time,

I will make a righteous Branch grow from David,

Who shall practise justice and integrity in the land...

And all those dwelling in the land shall rest in safety.

SLIDE FOUR

Jeremiah was known as a man of peace. But what does that actually mean? What does the word ‘peace’ mean?

Often to have a better understanding of a word, it helps to go back to its linguistic roots, to where the word came from. The study of the origin of words is called etymology and is a little like how going back to the Old Testament scriptures helps us to understand the advent of Jesus.

The English word *peace*, stems from the ancient Sanskrit word ‘pasa’ which means cord or bond. In addition our word ‘peace’ is also a translation of the Hebrew word ‘shalom’ which means to restore.

Hebrew was a language used by Jesus, so he will have known that ‘shalom’ is a verb. And what is a verb? It’s a word used to describe an action. Peace, then, for Jesus is something we create.

If time permits recreate the following illustration by asking two volunteers to hold a length of rope.

The best way to illustrate this is to take a rope, a rope that represents peace between people, then cut this rope.

The rope, the bond, remains broken unless we do what? *Ask for suggestions.*

Unless **we** take action, unless **we** tie it back together.

We restore broken bonds. **We** create peace.

Invite the two students to retie and then once again hold the restored length of rope. The students will be stood closer together as the act of cutting and retying has shortened the ropes length.



When we make the effort to restore broken bonds and forgive each other we are drawn closer together, through our shared desire to work through difficulties and live in peace.

SLIDE FIVE

Jesus taught clearly that all of us can bring about peace and help restore broken bonds. We can do this not only for those living around us but also for those living far away and who we may never meet, such as the people in the African country of South Sudan.

South Sudan is in the remote area of East Africa, you can see it here on the map (indicated by the red circle).

Many South Sudanese have never known a time of peace as their country has been troubled by wars and conflict for over 40 years.

It was the same in Jeremiah's time, which is why he longed for the birth of Christ. Jeremiah trusted that Christ would guide the people towards a better way to live together, where mercy and justice would take precedence over revenge and intimidation.

Jeremiah's longing was fulfilled through the birth of Jesus. But as it was then, it remains up to us now to follow Jesus' example and work with God to create a better world.

One person who is doing this is Bishop Paride Taban (pictured).

Bishop Paride has dedicated his life to restoring broken bonds and building peace in South Sudan.

As so much of the fighting is due to rivalry amongst communities and tribes, Bishop Paride's integrity and fairness when helping to resolve differences is a reminder to the South Sudanese and to us, that God loves no person or group more than any other.

This is illustrated right from the start of Jesus' life. When Jesus was a baby, God invited poor local shepherds, rich foreign Magi, people of different backgrounds and beliefs to stand around His manger. Right from birth and throughout his life, Jesus introduced to the world a new way of living together in solidarity and peace.



SLIDE SIX

Following the example of Jesus, Bishop Paride is also trying to encourage the South Sudanese to live together peacefully.

With help from the charity Missio, Bishop Paride set up a 'Peace Village' in a remote part of the country.



Bishop Paride knew that the different tribes in this area had no access to education, healthcare or the Church. This was making the people feel desperate and afraid. Bishop Paride knew that when people feel like this they can act in ways they wouldn't normally: they can become aggressive, demonise others, and create enemies.

So he ensures that the Peace Village conducts workshops to help bring together people from each of the tribes, to encourage them to get to know one another and to try to understand one another.

A health clinic, a nursery and primary school and a vocational training centre that provides villagers with work skills, can all be found in the Peace Village too. These aim to relieve some of the fears and sense of desperation that was the cause of much fighting.

The Peace Village has been a big success. Thousands of South Sudanese from different tribes have moved into the area because they too want to live free of fear. Some of the Peace Village residents can be seen on the slide.

Bishop Paride now wants to create a Peace Academy, so that he can help build more Peace Villages across the country. He wants to help local people become peacemakers through studying the example of Jesus and learning how to build Peace Villages in their own communities.

Through his faithful efforts Bishop Paride has become a role model to many. The quotation on the slide comes from a South Sudanese tribal chief.

'God has given Bishop Paride a call to establish the Peace Village. Now he is a beacon and an example to all other people to make similar communities.'

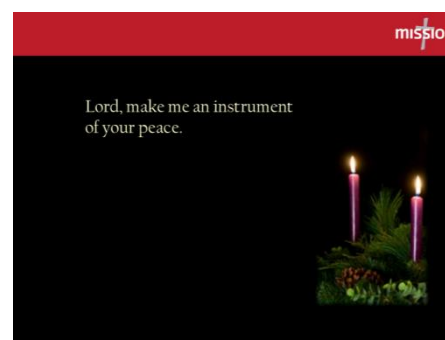
SLIDE SEVEN

All of us can become beacons of light and instruments of peace, providing an example for others to follow.

Ask pupils to consider ways they can do this, or use some of the examples below:

- We can choose to be the person who tries to reconcile friends who have fallen out.
- We can choose to walk away from a fight when we feel annoyed or provoked.
- We can choose to be the person who tries to look at things from another's point of view, rather than seeking ways to attack.
- We can choose to not get involved with gossip, but base our opinion on consideration of the facts.

We can also support Bishop Paride through our prayers and by sharing what we have, so his dreams of establishing a Peace Academy and more Peace Villages might be made real.



Through efforts such as these we continue to make Christ's presence known on earth; delivering to all people the true gift of Christmas every day; that is God's everlasting peace and love.

Let us conclude our assembly today by reciting the words of a famous prayer for peace, written by St Francis of Assisi.

Whilst we do so, let us remember Bishop Paride and ask God to bless all his efforts in South Sudan.

Pause to reflect.

Let us pray also for peace in our homes, especially in families where there are difficulties and divisions. *Pause to reflect.*

The prayer is revealed on the screen in stages and so requires multiple clicks.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is hurt, let me bring mercy.

Where there is doubt, let me show faith;

where there is despair, let me give hope.

Where there is darkness, let me be light;

where there is sadness, let me bring joy.

Lord, grant that I may not seek to be comforted but to comfort;

not seek to be understood but to understand;

not seek to be loved but to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

it is in forgiving that we are forgiven;

it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

SLIDE NINE – Closing holding slide