

Advent Workshop

Week One: Hope



SLIDE ONE – HOLDING SLIDE

The workshop lasts up to 30 minutes. We recommend you deliver all content but please use the slides and script as circumstances allow.

The extension tasks are optional and stand alone so you can choose which ones to use, or use all of them.



This and corresponding Missio Advent workshops, employ scriptural readings from the liturgical season and refer to one of our international projects. Every year - thanks to supporters across the world - Missio funds hundreds of Church run projects in areas of poverty, conflict and turmoil.

SLIDE TWO

You may wish to omit the following introductory material about Advent's definition and Advent wreaths.

If so, begin the workshop on slide three.

Explain to students that this workshop 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.

Question: Can you name the most recognisable symbol?

Answer: 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.

Question: What do you think its shape symbolises?

Answer: 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.

Question: What do the candles signify?

Answer: 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.

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.

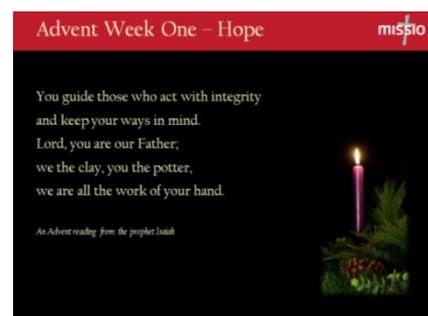
But Isaiah remained faithful. He believed God was listening and would appear amongst the people; promoting peace, justice and dignity for all.

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).

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

**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.**



EXTENSION QUESTION – Working with your neighbour, discuss how these words from Isaiah gave the Israelites hope. Be prepared to share your responses with the class.

SLIDE FOUR

Isaiah recognised that despite everything, God was still with the people. He never lost hope that God, who as a Father created each and every one of us, would never forget to guide and love all his children.

But 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 for all.

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.

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.

Question: How might you do that? In what ways can you show support and care to others?

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



SLIDE FIVE

Having looked at things we can do to bring hope to people who live near us - **and remembering that God calls us to share his love with all people, everywhere** - let's now think about ways we can bring hope to those who live far away.

Like these pupils at the Marka School for Refugees in Amman, the 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 for Refugees are victims of conflict.

Until recently the pupils lived in Iraq, but they and their families were forced to flee their homeland 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.

EXTENSION QUESTION

Try to imagine what it would feel like to have to suddenly leave your homeland because it was too dangerous to stay. Discuss with your neighbour **one thing** you would miss the most and **one thing** you would take with you. Be prepared to share your responses with the class.

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 an education, a person's life chances are limited.

**Additional note: Iraqi Christians in Jordan are not afforded official refugee status. This means they are not entitled to state benefits and adults are unable to work.*

Thankfully a Jordanian priest called Fr Khalil (pictured) decided to do something that would help restore hope. With help of his parishioners, Fr Khalil set up the Marka School for Refugees.

The school provides the children with free education and as families arrive in Amman with very little, the school also provides pupils with uniforms, books, equipment and meals. **This is possible due to the donations made by Missio's supporters.**

Thanks to Fr Khalil and the Marka School for Refugees, pupils and their families are given hope that their future can be brighter.

SLIDE SIX

The Marka School for Refugees, the example of Isaiah, and the season of Advent reminds us of the importance of hope.

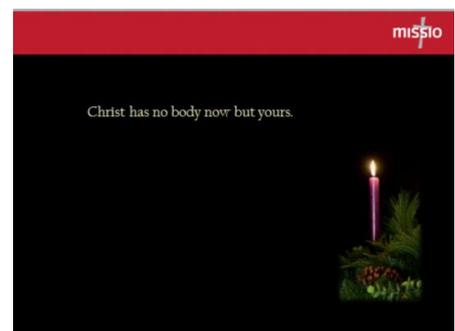
In the weeks leading up to Christmas we wait in hope for the arrival of Jesus - God made man - who would show the people of the world how to live together: forgiving errors, acting with kindness, supporting the needy, promoting peace, striving for justice.

By living like this, **we** continue to make Christ's presence known on earth every day: delivering to all people the true gift of Christmas, God's love.

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 help them and many children like them across the world, by supporting Missio. *Pause.*



Now let us read our closing prayer: *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 SEVEN – Closing holding slide

