

Advent Workshop

Week Two: Peace



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.



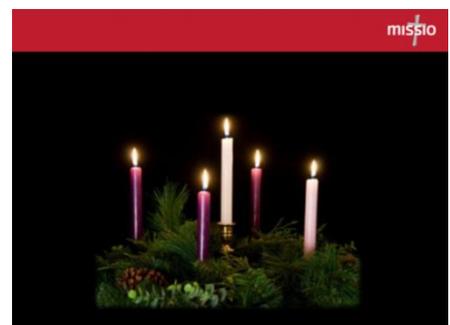
This and corresponding Missio Advent workshops, employ scriptural readings from the liturgical season and refer to **one** of our international projects. Every year - thanks to supporters across the world - Missio funds hundreds of Church run projects in areas of poverty, conflict and turmoil.

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 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.

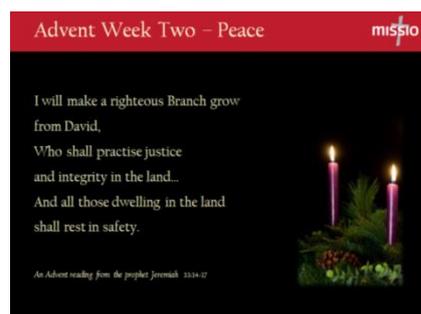
Jeremiah's vision of this saviour is illustrated in today's Advent reading. Listen carefully so as to identify how Jeremiah's vision could be seen to predict the arrival of Jesus, God made man.

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

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.



EXTENSION QUESTION – Working with your neighbour, discuss how these words from Jeremiah could be seen to predict the arrival of Jesus. Be prepared to share your responses with the class.

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 – the coming – 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, is something we create.

EXTENSION TASK – Restoring broken bonds

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

Invite two volunteers to hold a length of rope.

Now let's cut this rope to symbolise what happens when fighting cuts the relationship between people.

Cut the rope in the middle, leaving the two students holding the detached rope ends.

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, such as the people 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 encouraging 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 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.

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.

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:

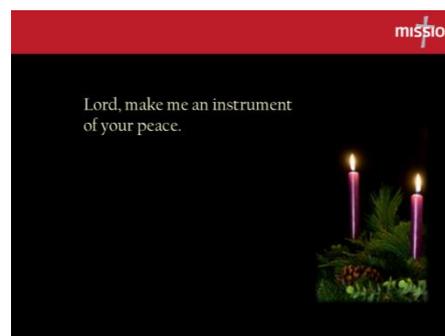
- We can choose to be the person who tries to reconcile friends who have fallen out.
- We can choose to walk away from a fight when we feel annoyed or provoked.
- We can choose to be the person who tries to look at things from another's point of view, rather than seeking ways to attack.
- We can choose to not get involved with gossip, but base our opinion on the facts.
- We can also help Bishop Paride by supporting Missio, so that the the Bishop can continue his mission and so that similar peace villages can be established in other areas.

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 time today by reciting the words of a famous prayer, 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

