

Advent

prayers to use during Advent

AIM

To offer some prayers that could be used by individuals or groups during the Advent season.

INTRODUCTION

In the Christian tradition, Advent is a time of preparation and prayer. This means that we might choose to commit ourselves to more regular prayer at this time or to have a prayer group that meets particularly at this time of the year. In this document you will find prayers written with Advent themes in mind that can be used by groups or by individuals.

You may want to consider how to prepare a space or place for prayer that reflects the five themes suggested:

- Waiting and watching
- What's missing
- Taking risks
- Finding Jesus
- Receiving Jesus

Theme 1: Waiting and watching

Waiting and watching -

Hoping and praying,

Patience and worry,

Hopes and fears,

Smiles and tears,

Loneliness and hugs,

Sleepless nights and exhausted days.

Waiting and watching -

Emotions and confusions.

The mind races with possibilities

That dare not be expressed.

Eyes meet, tears start,

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Averted looks, embarrassed faces -

How to respond?

Waiting and watching -

Heartache and hope,

Helplessness and action,

Shock and acceptance,

Dreams turned to nightmares,

Jumbled days and nights -

Has life changed forever?

Waiting and watching -

God knows the pain.

God knows the wretchedness

Of watching those we love.

God knows the heartache

Of being powerless to help.

God knows the cost of living and loving.

God knows,

God shares,

God cries,

God cares.

God's arms are strong to hold our weakness,

His presence is peace to receive our fear,

And his patience and strength

Are there for us -

Always.

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Theme 2: What's missing at Christmas

O God, there's a big black hole in my Christmas.

How can I celebrate with this emptiness that threatens to swallow me up?

I am grieving,

I am mourning -

For lost hopes and shattered dreams.

My heart sometimes feels empty

and sometimes so full of emotion I find it hard to know what I feel!

I want that big black hole to swallow me up.

I don't want to face the jollity or sing carols.

I can't say "Happy Christmas" and mean it -

I feel a searing pain every time someone says those words.

But I can't tell anyone, Lord.

So I try to make the effort

But I'm dying inside

This big black hole seems worse when everyone wants me to be happy

I just want someone to say, "It's OK, you can cry,

You can be sad or angry or empty this Christmas,

You don't have to celebrate to please me."

And I even want someone to say, "and I'll cry with you,

I'll hold you together when you feel you're falling apart."

But I don't know if I could trust someone that much

And I might be embarrassed afterwards, letting someone so close.

How can I long for something, and yet not really want it, both at the same time?

And what do I do with this big black hole this Christmas?

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I'm frightened, Lord - but I'm not sure why.

I don't like to delve too deep into the big black hole –

It might contain a monster!

So I turn away and see the fairy lights and tinsel –

In other people's houses.

Lord God, there is a room in my house

That is empty when I want it to be full

There is a space in my heart

That is empty and I want it to be full

I've tried filling the spaces with other things -

But they are only substitutes,

They don't last, they don't fit the space properly -

And I feel more empty than ever!

I remember your birth and the space you filled.

It was an odd space - not a proper room

not a nice, well prepared and welcoming space.

It's a bit like the big black hole I have –

My space is empty and unwelcoming

It is not pretty, it is not clean,

But it's all I have to offer this Christmas -

And it really does need filling,

The blackness needs your light.

But I hesitate to let go

I feel I am justified in having a black hole, an empty room

And I won't give it up easily

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But I know you will be gentle with me
You won't expect me to be happy
And wear flashing earrings or a jazzy bowtie
To prove I'm grateful for your company
Can I let you in to my empty space and still be me this Christmas?

I think I'll be like the Psalmist and shelter under your wings -
In the shadow of your wings the blackness may not seem so noticeable.
I'll exchange my empty black hole for the comfort of your shadow,
Protecting and guarding me like a mother hen.

Thank you for being everything I need this Christmas!
You are different things to different people,
And I won't listen if anyone tells me I've got the wrong part of you for Christmas.
I've got the part of you I need.
Everyone else can enjoy your miracle birth,
The ecstatic angels,
And the beautiful wise men,
I just need your quiet, humble gentleness,
Your protection and your hope.

Theme 3: Taking risks

Jesus is God come to us naked,
Jesus is God come to us vulnerable,
Jesus is God taking his biggest risk ever.
Jesus shows us that suffering and redemption go hand in hand.

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Jesus is still taking risks -

Coming to us naked and vulnerable,

Showing us the link between suffering and redemption,

Defeat and victory,

Death and rebirth.

Jesus asks us to give him space in our lives,

And risks us saying, "Sorry, no room".

Jesus asks us to leave behind things that give us security,

And risks us saying "I have too much to leave".

Jesus asks us to be willing to suffer with him,

And risks us saying "I don't know you" when we panic and run away.

Jesus risked everything for us,

And found that God's crazy plans

To link vulnerability and love

Brought resurrection from a grave.

Dare we trust?

Dare we follow?

Crazy plans!

Risk and faith.

Letting go.

Becoming vulnerable.

Where will it lead?

Dare we allow our plans to die?

Trusting that God's plans

Will bring resurrection from the grave?

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Theme 4: Finding Jesus

"The star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was." (Matthew 2:9)

Stop!

This is where Jesus is!

Stop and see ...

Stop and hear ...

Stop and know ...

This is the place where Jesus is!

Stop everything!

(pause)

Wait here awhile,

let Him meet you.

Give Him time,

give Him attention.

Adore Him!

God's Wonder is here –

vulnerable,

fragile ...

and Holy!

(pause)

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Stop over the place where Jesus lies.

Draw near and smile

at the child

who is God.

Theme 5: Receiving Jesus

It's Christmas!

So Jesus shares Himself with us. (pause)

Each time we notice Him ...

He seeps in ...

to a little bit more ...

of our being. (pause)

Jesus shares Himself with us ...

each time we open ourselves ...

to His presence. (pause)

This Christmas ...

let's receive Him! (silence)

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EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourself and for others who will use this material:

1. What was the most helpful thing?
2. What was the least helpful thing?
3. What would you like to try now?

THE NEXT STEP

If you want more Advent ideas please revisit the website.

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If you have comments and particularly contributions to the prayer year, you can email the V4L prayer year coordinator via prayer@vision4life.org.uk

If you want to make contributions or ask questions about other V4L years you can email:

Year 2 – Transformed by the Bible: bible@vision4life.org.uk

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