

Advent Hope

Order of Service

Welcome

Opening Words

'I am the Alpha and the Omega' says the Lord God,
'who is and who was and who is to come, the sovereign Lord of all.'
He who gives this testimony speaks: 'Yes, I am coming soon!'
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Choice of song

Hark the glad sound, the Saviour comes

Philip Doddridge (1702-1751), Public domain

or

Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord

Brenton Brown and Ken Riley, © 2005 Thankyou Music

Advent Hope Interview - available to download from BU website
Malcolm Broad, Baptist Union Treasurer

Lighting of the Advent candle

We light this first Advent candle to remind us of the Advent hope –
Jesus is coming again!

The Apostle Paul writes: Night is almost over, and day will soon appear. We must stop behaving as people do in the dark and be ready to live in the light. (Romans 13:12)

Confession

Merciful God, we confess to you now that we have sinned.

We confess the sins that no one knows and the sins that everyone knows:

the sins that are a burden to us and the sins that do not bother us because we have got used to them.

We confess our sins as a church:

we have not loved one another as Christ loved us and we have not given ourselves in love and service for the world as Christ gave himself for us.

Father forgive us.

Send your Holy Spirit to us, to give us power to live as, by your mercy, you have called us to live; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

From Gathering for Worship

© 2005 Baptist Union of Great Britain, Canterbury Press

Advent Hope Interview - available to download from BU website
The Revd Nick Lear, minister of Colchester Baptist Church

Song

O Come O come Emmanuel linked with Bible readings

Words from the Latin (12th century) tr JM Neale (1818-1866), Public domain

A traditional Advent hymn which addresses God with many of his different names and includes references to prophecies about the Saviour who was to come. Between each verse of the hymn read a verse or two from scripture to remind us of these prophecies.

Before verse 1

Isaiah 7:14: Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel.

Verse 1 - O come, O come Emmanuel

Exodus 24: 12, 15-16 The Lord said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commands I have written for their instruction".

When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai.

Verse 2 - O come, O come thou Lord of might

Isaiah 11: 1-2, 10 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him and his place of rest will be glorious.

Verse 3 - O come thou rod of Jesse, free

Isaiah 60: 1-3 "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn."

Verse 4 - O come thou dayspring, come and cheer

Jeremiah 23: 5-6 "The days are coming", declares the Lord, "when I will raise up to David a righteous branch, a king who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness."

Verse 5 - O come thou key of David, come

Advent Hope Interview - available to download from BU website

The Revd Jane Day, minister of Gildersome Baptist Church, Leeds

Prayer

O Lord our God,
make us watchful and keep us faithful as we await the coming of your Son our Lord;
that, when he shall appear, he may not find us sleeping in sin but active in his service
and joyful in his praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

From *Gathering for Worship*

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All-Age Talk: 'A Question of Sort' (10 minutes)

by Hannah Field, The Girls' Brigade England and Wales: Mission Development Worker, Arise Children's Evangelist

This 'All-Age Advent Talk' takes as its starting point Romans 13:12 (used with the lighting of the Advent candle) and the advice that Paul gives to Christians as they seek to live in the hope of Jesus' return.

Its three key points are:

- We prepare for a purpose.
- We can train and get ready, by trying to be F.I.T.
- We do this because we know God gives us hope!

To help provide a flavour of how it could be shared in an 'Advent Hope' service, a 'script' has been written out – please feel free to use this as a guide.

For those people who have access to visual projection (such as a laptop and projector / overhead projector), please refer to the notes in **red**. For those people who do not have access to such equipment, please refer to the notes regarding hand-outs, in **blue**.

Introduction

We've just prayed about God helping us to be active in Christ's service and this is something that a guy from the Bible, named Paul, often talked about. We can read lots of what he had to say about this in the New Testament.

Paul is widely respected today for his attempts at 'sorting out' the early Christian Church. He is also widely respected for his sporting knowledge.

So, with this in mind, let's put ourselves in his sweaty running shoes for a moment, as we play: 'A Question of Sort!'

[Display next slide, with appropriate accompanying theme music if possible]

[Play appropriate accompanying theme music.]

Round One: Picture Board

Right, our first round is the challenge, that is, the 'Picture Board!!' You will be shown a picture through 'sleepy referee eyes', of a sporting object. You will then face two, sorting, questions:

- (1) What sport does the object represent?
- (2) Who on the board participates (or is some cases 'attempts to participate'!) in that sport?

[Run through the quiz – slides/images two to seventeen, in the following running order:

- Display 'sleepy referee eyes' picture
- Ask question one – receive answers
- Reveal answer
- Display names - ask question two – receive answers
- Share answer
- Repeat process.

[Please refer to handout one for the answers.]

[Run through the quiz by using handout one, looking together at one image and question at a time – the answers are at the bottom of the page.]

Round Two: Bonus Question

Well done, I'm pleased to see that you're awake! We now move swiftly onto the next round; so show your enthusiasm as we play the 'Bonus Question'!

[Encourage people to give gasps of exciting anticipation]

[Display slide/image eighteen.]

[Refer to the question on handout two.]

What do all of these people have in common?

[Receive people's answers – encourage them in what they say, but stress that you're being very precise in the answer that you're looking for!]

The answer that I'm looking for is . . . 'they all train'! In other words, they all prepare for a purpose.

Paul often talked about the importance of training and getting ready for a purpose, as was shown in the earlier reading from Romans, and that's what advent is all about – getting ready for the coming of Jesus – we too are preparing for a purpose!

In our training though, we're not hoping in ourselves and what we can achieve, but instead we're hoping in God and what He has already achieved! He sent His son Jesus, to Earth - over 2,000 years ago, on a special mission to be our hope and rescue us, from all the bad things: sin, in our lives. He has achieved the ultimate victory for us through Jesus – who will return, as He has promised! Advent helps us to remember this, and during this time, like always, we can train to be ready for when He comes again, by attempting to be F.I.T.:

[Display slide/image nineteen.]

[Refer to the F.I.T. information on handout two.]

F – Focused: [point to the eyes] on God's word, reading the Bible, spending time with other Christians, praying.

I – Inspired: [point to your heart] celebrating and remembering all that God has done in the past and looking forward to the future - and the Hope that He brings.

T – Trying: [point forwards and upwards] seeking to live like and for Jesus; in both the good and the difficult times of our lives.

After all, God's got a great game-plan, even better than that of the coaches of Hoy and Murray, even better than that of . . . Rooney! God's plan gives us a hope and a future! Like Paul, let's remember and prepare for that!

Round Three: Buzzer

With all this in mind, let's move onto the final 'buzzer' round. You will be given a series of statements; to get them to make sense you have to rearrange and sort out the letters of the final words! Once you think you know the answer, 'buzz in' [encourage people to make 'buzzing' noises.] Right, get ready, here we go . . .!

[Run through the quiz, slides/images twenty to twenty-six, using the following process as an aid: Read through the statements listed below, one at a time, revealing the mixed up letters and then the correct word, before moving onto the next statement,

- (1) We prepare for a: ropeups/purpose
- (2) We can train and get ready, by trying to be: tif/fit:
- (3) We do this because we know that God gives us: hepo/hope.]

[Refer to handout three, looking at each statement (above) and 'mixed up' word individually, then, having verbally shared the answer (see also above), move onto the next statement.]

Conclusion

Well, we've come to the end of another, action-packed: 'Question of Sort' . . . you may now take-off Paul's running shoes – but please keep your socks on – I'm not too sure we could cope with the smell! More importantly though, remember: we are preparing for a purpose, our Hope – Jesus, is coming again – let's be F.I.T., let's be ready, let's be . . . sorted!

[Display slide/image twenty-seven, with appropriate, accompanying theme music]

[Play appropriate, accompanying theme music]

Song

Jesus you're my firm foundation

Jamie Harvill and Nancy Gordon, 1994 Integrity's Hosanna! Music/ Integrity's Praise! Music / Sovereign Music UK P O Box 356, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 3WP UK sovereignmusic@aol.com

Bible Reading

Luke 4: 16-21

Sermon - 'Looking back with hope'

written by the Revd Dave Hewitt, Regional Minister South West Baptist Association

As Christians our hope for the future is based on events in the past. (1 Peter 1:3)

2000 years ago an event took place that was to change the world in a way that nothing else has before or since. But how can something that took place so long ago and so far away offer hope to the world today? Of what relevance is the coming of Jesus 'there and then' for 'here and now'?

1 Jesus came into a world very much like this.

In many ways, of course, the world had changed beyond all recognition, but it is worth remembering that Jesus came into a world of...

a Political unrest

For more than 70 years, the Jewish nation had been a subject people, but now there was a sense of revolution in the air. Some were praying for peaceful change, others wanted more action. A failed revolution had taken place just a matter of months before Jesus was born. The situation was unsettled; there was a rising tide of nationalism. Jesus was born at a time of violence, strife and unrest.

b Economic disparity

Jesus was born into a world where the gap between the rich and poor was growing ever wider. The tax burden on the ordinary people was increasing. As a subject people they were required to pay taxes to Rome as well as their own authorities. (It is reckoned that the tax burden exceeded 40% of the ordinary working man's income). Mary and Joseph found themselves in Bethlehem because of a census for tax purposes. Beneath the luxury and magnificence of the Empire, there was grinding poverty.

c Moral confusion

Old, long held standards were breaking down. People no longer knew what was right or wrong. The Empire was disintegrating from the inside out. Some, like the Essenes, tried to escape the moral decline of 'modern life' and 'downsized', setting up new communities in the desert. Others, like the Pharisees, tried to stem the flow with ever more rules and regulations. They became hard and finicky- a self righteous moral minority. Others, like the Sadducees, decided to go with the flow; 'Don't rock the boat' was their motto. The ordinary folk were simply confused.

d Religious expectancy

There was a feeling in the air that it was time for God to do something. The old gods of Rome were dead or dying. Some were looking to eastern gods; others were rejecting the idea of God altogether or trying other pathways. People were looking for something new, something real. So much so, that when a strangely dressed man in the desert began proclaiming his uncompromising message crowds flocked to hear him. (Mark 1:1-6).

God has decided that a world like this is a valid place for him to visit.

2 Jesus came to people very much like us.

Think of the supporting characters involved in the Advent drama:

- a The elderly couple. Zechariah and Elizabeth- an insignificant country parson and his wife! Simple, kindly, ordinary. Note the contrast of Luke 1:5.
- b The young village teenager. Mary. A provincial girl from Nazareth. Engaged - therefore older than twelve. (Girls usually married in their mid teens.) An ordinary girl with no special qualifications or pedigree. The girl next door.
- c The thoughtful local man. Joseph. The silent player- not a single word of his is recorded in the gospels. A good man- concerned to do the right thing, only he wasn't sure, at least at first, what the right thing was!
- d The rough working men. Shepherds had no religious or social status. They lived rough. (Luke2:8) They had no fixed abode, no permanent address. Shepherds were generally considered to be dubious characters- untrustworthy, dishonest, rogues. They were outsiders, (security guards on the night shift), yet they were the first to know - the first to worship.
- e The pagan astrologers. It sounds so much better to call them Kings or Wise Men! But they weren't. They were the scientists of the day, studying the stars trying to predict the future. Strange people to find their way to Jesus.

Ordinary people. People like us. An elderly couple trying to come to terms with the disappointment of childlessness; a teenage girl who find herself unexpectedly pregnant; a working man who suddenly finds his world turned upside down; migrant workers whom people find it hard to trust; people from another culture who are prepared to look for the truth as best they know how, and prepared to go wherever the search takes them. The coming of Jesus offers hope to people like this.

3 Jesus came to meet needs very much like our own.

Although we live at very different time and in a very different culture, we still have the same needs, desires and longings.

- a The need for faith. "Who can I trust?"
- b The need for hope. "Is there a future?"
- c The need for love. "Does anybody really care?"

JB Phillips has a fable about a senior angel who is showing a junior angel around the splendours of the universe. As they flit across the infinite vastness of space they enter one particular galaxy of a mere 500 billion stars. The senior angel points out a small and insignificant planet that looks as dull as a dirty tennis ball. 'I want you to watch that one particularly', he tells his younger colleague. 'Why? What is so special about that one?' the younger one asks. 'That' he is told, 'is the Visited Planet'.

Our hope for the future lies in that 'visit' in the past. We look back with hope!

Choice of Song

In Christ alone

Stuart Townend & Keith Getty, © 2001 Thankyou Music

or

God came in Jesus (tune: Morning has broken)

Alan Gaunt, © 1991 Stainer & Bell Ltd

We do not have permission to reproduce the full words, but these are available from:

<http://www.stainer.co.uk/hymns/advent.html#godcameinjesus>

Advent Hope Interviews - available to download from BU website

Ian Chisnall - Co-ordinator Hope08

Richard Talbot - Stewardship Money

Intercessory Prayer

Lord, prepare us for your Advent coming.

In our prayers today we try to come to you, sure that you will come the rest of the way.

Lord, prepare us for your coming – in the church.

Clean out the unnecessary clutter of our church life,
the piles of dead habits, the cupboards full of prejudice,
the cobwebs of compromise and the sad rotas of forgotten dreams.

Open our church to the free flow of your refreshing Spirit.

Give to this church a new vision and hope.

We want to belong to you again.

[In particular, Lord, we pray for ... a special local plan or project]

Lord in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Lord, prepare us for your coming – in the world.

Come, drive away despair from our politics;

revive our dreams of justice; restore our passion for what is good, right and true.

Establish your just and gentle rule [in places like ...]

where peace has been powerless and violent people have had their day.

Set a flame to the fuse of justice [in places like ...]

where arrogant people have defied the moral order year after year.

Guard well the new springtime of hope [in ...]

where peace has come like a gift, wrapped in reconciliation and gladness.

[In particular, Lord, we long for this ... a particular world need]

Lord in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Lord, prepare us for your coming – in our community.

In the problems of our locality help us never to forget the supremacy of love.

May love motivate our care for this neighbourhood.

May love heal the social ills which drag us into despair.

May love inspire our citizenship to rise beyond mediocrity.

We name in our minds the problems locally of which we are aware

[particularly ... local issue] and pray that love, gracious and practical, will find a way.

Lord in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Lord prepare us for your coming – in those in need.

Give us eyes to search the face of the stranger and there to see the face of the saviour.

Give us sensitivity to hear the doubt and hesitation, and there, with that person, to share the confusion and futility.

There are those we know who are ill now, struggling today to handle the pain.

Let us pray for them, for you come to us in them, and you ask for our love.

We give that now, as we name them and love them, in our hearts.

What we have promised in love and prayer, let us never forget to do.

Lord in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Advent Lord, come ever nearer.
Come to rejuvenate our faith.
Come to fortify our social conscience.
Come to open wide our eyes of wonder.
So that when the Saviour comes,
he may steal into our heart – and find them ready.
Even so come, Lord Jesus. **Amen**

Choice of Song

All my hope on God is founded

Joachim Neander (1650-1680) and Robert Seymour Bridges (1844-1930), Public domain
or

Jesus, hope of the nations

Brian Doerksen, 20022002 Integrity's Hosanna! Music/ Sovereign Music UK
P O Box 356, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 3WP UK
sovereignmusic@aol.com

Closing Prayer

Look forward in hope to the coming of your Saviour,
prepare the way for Christ your Lord;
welcome him with love and faith when he comes in glory.
And may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow
with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.