

Advent 1: Time

The first in a series of Advent reflections and prayers, taking a fresh look at some rich Advent themes – beginning with 'time'.

What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it (John 1.3-5).

Advent candles

Light is a powerful symbol, especially at this time of year. The coming and going of light is an essential marker of time. Light is also a sign of hope; for Christians it speaks of the coming of Christ, the light of the world. Make time each day of Advent to light a candle. This can provide an opportunity not only to mark the simple passage of time, but also to reflect on those significant moments or 'hinges' in time that had particular meaning, and signalled a change or an opportunity. You could use a traditional Advent wreath, or perhaps adapt one by adding a candle each day for a week. You could light the candles before sharing a family meal to encourage the sharing of experiences and memories.

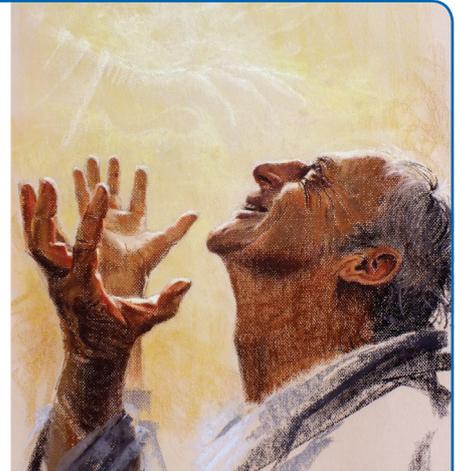
Advent themes take us right back to the calling of the people of Israel: Are there significant moments for your own history which took place before your birth/ gathering? Or in a previous generation? Not every moment will necessarily be happy, some may mark loss, adversity or pain. As you note these 'hinge' moments, how do you respond – with thanks, with sadness, with forgiveness? Do you recognise the presence of God in those moments? Can you tell the story of your candles to someone else?

Pray

God of past, present and future, be the light which guides us on our journeys, which illuminates our understanding and which shines through us as a beacon of hope for others. **Amen.**

Questions for reflection

- ▶ How might you feel if you were held in God's gaze?
- ▶ How do you praise God?
- ▶ How might you stand up and make a difference?



A reflective way into prayer

Reflect on the signs you saw on your way to or from church, or on any other journey – road signs, street signs, etc. What signs have you noticed in the people you have met this morning (e.g. of stress, tiredness, joy)? What do the signs/notices in church say about us? After a few moments of silence, pray together:

*Lord of Advent,
signs can warn, annoy, inform and inspire.
May we as your people be signs to your world
of your longing to unite us all as one family –
safe from things that can discourage us,
alert to things that can divide us,
appreciative of things that enrich us,
and open to things that are kingdom-shaped and spirit-filled.
Amen.*

A personal prayer

*Lord Jesus, on you the past and the future hinge.
You open the door to past wisdom and to future knowledge.
You are the kingdom among us and the kingdom yet to come.
May this Advent be as a new beginning in my walk of faith.
And, inspired by all those who have gone before me,
may my steps be bold, faithful and just.
I ask this in your name. Amen.*

Live your faith

Look out for, rejoice in, and actively support a sign of God's coming kingdom as revealed through ordinary actions done to extraordinary effect in your community.