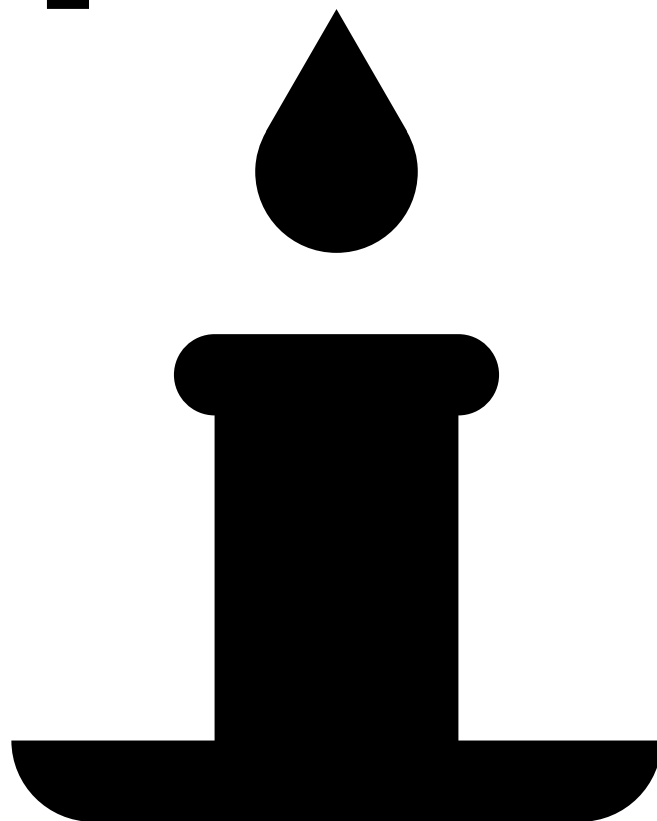


**advent
prayer
pack**



Advent prayer & waiting

This pack was the brainchild of Phil Greig and the people of All Saints Church in Canterbury. The request was simple - for a pack of ideas to help everyone to pray every day more easily: prayers that the whole family could pray together, prayers that could be said and done on the way to school, to work, the office or college - wherever you go during the daytime. We wanted to create prayers that were more than just words - although some of them are - and that sometimes involve the whole body.

So we wondered together about a pack for Advent, this wonderful time of waiting and watching for the baby to come, with all its traditions of preparation.

In the pack we have included prayers from the Sunday before Advent begins (as you make your Christmas pudding) and then prayers to take you right up to Christmas. There are four prayers for each week of Advent, picking up on the themes of the traditional Advent wreath, and prayers that celebrate the lovely things that we do in this most special of seasons. Alongside the ideas for you to try are ideas for prayer stations in your church, to use in the weeks leading up to Christmas and bring the liturgy alive in new ways.

I am very grateful to All Saints for the original idea, and to Revds Stephen and Lesley Hardy for their collaboration, ideas, fellowship and generous sharing of doughnuts in the creation of this pack.

Who knows, if you like it, we may produce more in the future!

Ronni Lamont

Faith and Nurture Adviser, Canterbury Diocese



DIocese of CANterbury
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S MINISTRY
Faith & Nurture

Prayer stations for church

Repentance

There are two stations here: you can do one or both.

Station 1

You need: A large plastic bowl
Water
A selection of stones or pebbles

Take a stone and look really carefully at it. Now imagine that this stone holds all the things that you are really sorry about. Drop the stone into the water and watch it be washed clean as it falls to the bottom. God promises to forgive us all our sins - the things we are really sorry about - and that he will make us like new once again.

Station 2

You need: A shredder
Some paper and pens

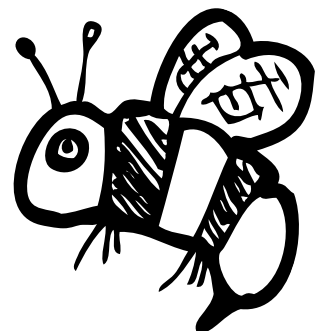
Write the things that you are sorry for onto a piece of paper, then pass it through the shredder. When we say we are sorry - to God and to other people - then we are forgiven, and that sin is taken away completely.

Thankfulness

You need: This video: <http://tinyurl.com/lavenderbees>.
A tablet computer to show the video
Headphones

Watch the video and listen to the sound of the bees.

How does it make you feel?

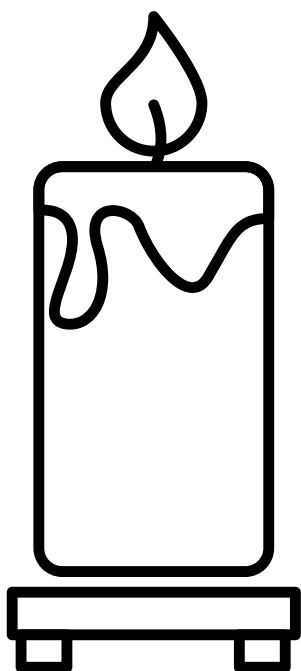


Reflection

You need: A small board, about 30cm x 90cm
Post-It notes
Pens

Do you have a question, or something you would like to say to God?
Write it on a post it note, and stick it on the board.
Now spend a few moments thinking about what you have written.

Waiting



You need: A large candle
Tea lights
A fire extinguisher nearby

Light the candle, and sit and watch it for a while.
You might like to light a tea light, and place it near the larger candle.
We get all our life from God, just as you lit your light from the candle.
Sit and look at the flames, and let God speak to you in the peace.

Being

You need: A selection of fresh herbs such as mint, basil, bay or rosemary
Vases or pots to contain the herbs and keep them fresh

Gently rub the leaves of one of the herbs between your fingers. Now smell your finger.
What does that smell remind you of?
Try other herbs and see what comes to mind.



Waiting

Christmas Pudding

It is traditional to make your Christmas pudding on the Sunday before Advent Sunday ('Stir up Sunday'). You may think making a Christmas pudding is difficult, but it really isn't - it's just a big measuring and stirring activity, with a long cooking time at the end.

Your church or school might like to think about providing the ingredients (at cost) for families who don't bake and therefore won't have use for the remaining ingredients. Children will enjoy doing the measuring out, and you could sell 'Christmas pudding packs'. It's also ideal for Messy Church. And although the recipe features alcohol, you could substitute fruit juice if you you feel that's better.

Note that there is a 24 hour space between mixing up the fruit/sugar/liquid and then mixing in the cake mix and cooking.

This recipe makes 2 puddings. Each of these will feed eight people, so you might like to give one away.

You need: 5oz/140g raisins
5oz/140g sultanas
2oz / 50g each currants, chopped tenderized prunes,
chopped dried apricots, mixed peel, chopped nuts &
chopped cherries,
Juice of 1 lemon
Grated rind of 1 orange & 1 lemon
1 carrot, grated
1 apple, grated
¼ pint ale/stout (or fruit juice)
¼ pint brandy (or fruit juice)
4oz butter
4oz soft brown sugar
3 eggs

3 oz plain flour
1 tsp each mixed spice, cinnamon, nutmeg
3 oz breadcrumbs
2 oz ground almonds

Day 1

Put the dried fruit, peel, nuts, rinds, carrot, apple, glaze fruits into a large bowl and mix with the ale/ stout, brandy and lemon juice. Stir, cover and leave overnight in a dark, cool place

Day 2

In a different bowl, cream the butter and sugar, and gradually add the eggs, fold in the sieved flour, spices, breadcrumbs and ground almonds, then stir in the fruit mix.

Divide between 2 greased 1 ½ pint (1 litre) pudding bowls, and cover with 2 layers of foil.

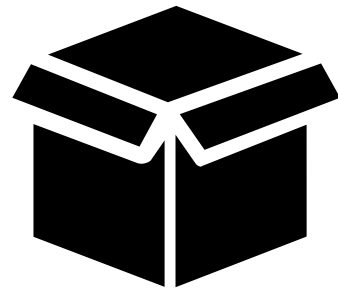
Stand each pudding in a large saucepan (one each) with hot water reaching about half way up the basin, and cover. Keep it at a simmer, and top up with water when the level starts to go down - you don't want to boil it dry and burn everything. Cook for 6 hours, topping up with water if the level goes down. (2 Hours in a pressure cooker).

When cool, recover with foil and store in a cool place.

Re-steam for 2 hours before serving. (30 mins in a pressure cooker)

N.B. Don't be tempted to try and cook the pudding in a microwave. There's a real chance it might catch fire. But you can reheat slices of pudding on Boxing Day in the microwave - if you have any left!

Hope/Abraham



1. Advent boxes

You need: A cardboard box.

This box is to be taken to the local foodbank either at the end of the week, or just before Christmas, when Advent is almost over.

Begin by decorating the box - it's going to be a Christmas present for another family. Use anything that you want to say 'Happy Christmas.'

Every day this week (or during Advent), put something into the box that can then be used by someone who is less well off than you are. This might include food, or useful things like toothpaste or 'smellies' for the shower... make sure that food items won't go out of date before the end of January. You might also be able to put in a few toys, or maybe some chocolate or sweets? Maybe you could spare some of your pocket money to buy something to go in the box too?

N.B. Please be realistic about the financial commitment about this prayer idea - only commit to as much as you can afford.

2. Clearing out

Spend some time clearing out some of your old toys and belongings. Take them to a charity shop, or drop them at a charity that is collecting for children in need, or something similar. Maybe some of your clothes could go to another charity? And some old books to another?

Advent is about waiting for Jesus to come. It's good to clear out some of our old things, to make room for the new things that Jesus (and Christmas) will bring, and for other people to benefit from our clearing out. When you have finished, spend some time asking God to bless the people who will receive the things that you have thrown out.

3. Bulbs for Christmas

You need: A few crocus bulbs (or another type of bulb or corm)
A pot or container
Compost to plant the bulbs in
A cardboard box

Fill the pot 3/4 full with compost, and then carefully place 3-4, bulbs on top, depending on the size of the pot. Now cover the bulbs with some more compost, and gently water. Pop the bowl in a dark place, and keep an eye on it over the next few weeks. Keep the compost moist, but not wet. Once the plants start to grow, take them out of the dark, decorate with a pretty ribbon, and give to a friend or neighbour.

While the bulbs are in the dark place, think about what it feels like to be 'in the dark'. Sometimes, God can come close to us when we feel like we can't see what's going on in our lives, or it doesn't make any sense. But the bulbs grow in the dark, and we grow in our trust in God when we're 'in the dark'. When you get the plants out, and put them in the light, take a moment to thank God for all that growth. Say thank you too, for how we can learn in the dark, often without recognising what's going on.

4. Valuing older people

Abraham was very old when God told him to move himself and all his family and belongings away from where he lived to a new place. That must have been very hard, but maybe there was something about this older man that God saw was going to be very good - that he was ready for a big adventure.

Do you know an older person? Maybe a grandparent, or a friend at school or church, or somewhere else that you go? How could you show that you value them?

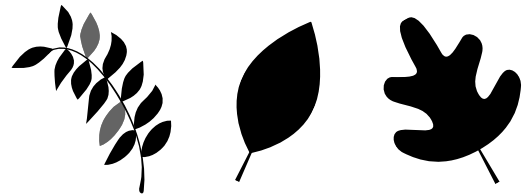
Pray for them this week, and ask God to bless them. Perhaps you could do something for them this week, possibly with the help of another adult?

The Old Testament Prophets

1. Signs of life

Go for a walk near where you live. Look for signs of life that are breaking through, despite the pavements and roads.

What can you see? Look for signs of animals that live near you too - tracks, poo (not just from dogs!), scratching and other evidence that animals have been this way. How about cobwebs - can you see the spider, how big is she?



What can you hear?

Are you walking through dead leaves?

Perhaps you'd like to take some home, and turn them into something else, like a collage? Are there conkers still lying around, or acorns, or other seeds from trees? What else can you see as you walk along?

Now say a prayer as you walk along, thanking God for all that you see, and hear, and smell, and can touch. The prophets spoke for God to other people. How is God speaking to you in this walk? Is there anything you want to talk about with your friends and family as you walk along?

2. Prayer bracelets

You need: A length of leather, such as a bootlace
Five different coloured glass beads

String the beads onto the leather strap, tying a small knot on either side of each bead, so that they can't move about.

Imagine each bead is a different person that you want to pray for. Every time you wear your beads, run your finger over them and ask God to bless each person as you think about them.

3. Litter picking

The prophets spoke of how God was either pleased with his people, or not so pleased. Christians believe that God made the world. How do you think he feels when we leave it looking all mucky, with litter and mess?

Spend some time this week picking up litter. Think carefully about where you want to clean up - be realistic! You might do this with your school class, around the school grounds, or near where you live with your family.

Make sure that you wear gloves to keep the dirt off your hands, and don't go out without an adult. Take bin bags to put the litter in, and make sure you dispose of it sensibly.

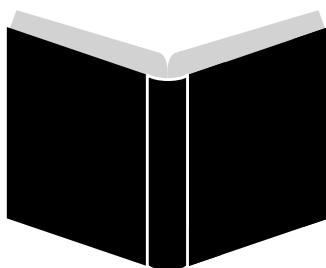
As you pick up the litter you could pray two different sorts of prayer: you could ask God to bless the people who dropped the litter, and that they might think before they drop any more. And don't forget to thank God for the place where you are, and all the people who use it as part of their daily lives.

4. Christmas carols

Will you be singing carols at school or church?

Look at the words of your very favourite carol, and think about the story that they tell you. What do they tell you about God? What do they tell you about people? Can you say why you like this carol so much? It may even be the tune that you like, not the words.

Now thank God for this carol, and thank him for the people who write music and words to help us to worship God at this time.



John the Baptist/Mary

Some Churches light the Mary candle this week, others keep Mary for next week. Follow whichever your church celebrates

1. Christmas tree time!

As you decorate your Christmas tree, think about the various decorations and what they might be symbols of. Here are some ideas:

Angel/star: to show people where the baby Jesus was to be found. Thank God that Christmas speaks to us of how much God loves everyone, and wants us to know his love in our lives.

Lights: Jesus said he was like a light shining in the darkness - and tree lights are so magical in how they twinkle and change.

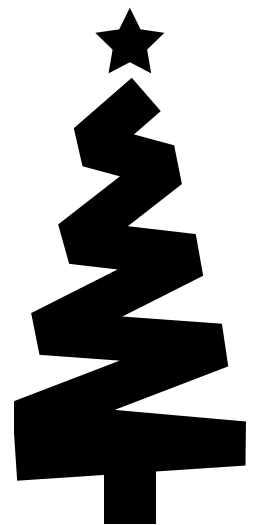
Baubles: Baubles can reflect our image back to us, reminding us that God loves each one of us. And baubles reflect light into the world.

Nativity decorations: These are often part of the Christmas story, so think about the role that each person/animal played in enabling the Christmas story to happen.

Tinsel: Chains of sparkle, maybe they stand for how we link up together to shine as God's lights?

What else do you use for your tree? Think about each decoration as you pop it on the tree and thank God for this exciting time of year, and for the beauty of the tree that you have decorated together.

God can take something that really isn't so special, like a tree, and turn it into something magical - which is what you have just done!



2. Paper chain prayers

You need: A pack of paper chain papers. These have glue at one end, so you can loop them around to make a circle, and join them into one long chain.

Every day, take at least one link for the chain, and write a prayer on it. Now join it onto the chain, so the chain of prayers grows each day. Try and get everyone in your family to do one with you.

At the end of the week, hang your chain up somewhere where you'll see it often. Now think of all those prayers- God hears every one.

3. A baby card!

When people have a new baby, lots of friends and relatives will send them a card to say how wonderful this is! They often have a picture of a new baby on them, and typical new baby toys. Mary probably didn't get any baby cards, as that wasn't the custom at that time.

This week, make a card that you could send to Mary and Joseph, congratulating them on the birth of the baby Jesus. What will you put on it? What about the words of greeting inside? What colour will you make it?

When you've finished, put it up somewhere in your house, as part of your decorations. Say a prayer for all the people who are expecting a baby soon, especially those in areas where health care may not be as good as ours.

4. The nativity story

You need: A bible



Read the story of how Jesus was born. It's in the bible, at Matthew 1:18-2:23 and Luke 2:1-20.

What do you notice about these two tellings of the story?

Say a prayer, thanking God for the people who wrote down these stories for us, and for all the people who have translated and worked on the Bible down through the centuries.

Mary/John the Baptist

1. Being second

John the Baptist always talked about 'the one who was to come after him', meaning Jesus, and saying that he himself was less important than the person coming soon.

Have you ever come second in a race, or been in a losing team? How did you feel? Say a prayer, thanking God for all that John the Baptist did in preparing the way for Jesus, and asking God to bless all the people who feel as if they aren't as important as others.

2. Preparing for Christmas

The whole of Advent is about preparing for Jesus to come. But in this last week of Advent, it may be particularly busy at home.

How you could help? Maybe your family could work together so that you do the final preparations together? Ask your Mum and Dad - or whoever you live with - what you can do as the big day approaches.

Pray for all the people at home, at school, and church, who are very busy at the moment. Ask God to help them to take a little time for themselves, so that they can think about the meaning of Christmas as it approaches.

3. Angels ahead!

You need: Christmas catalogues or images
Glue
Card



Look through Christmas catalogues, and online, for pictures of angels. With adult help, cut some out, and make an angel collage greeting card.

Think carefully about who you will give this to, and then write a prayer for them inside. Now give it to someone who is special to you.

4. Night time stars

You need to do this with an adult, ideally as a family.

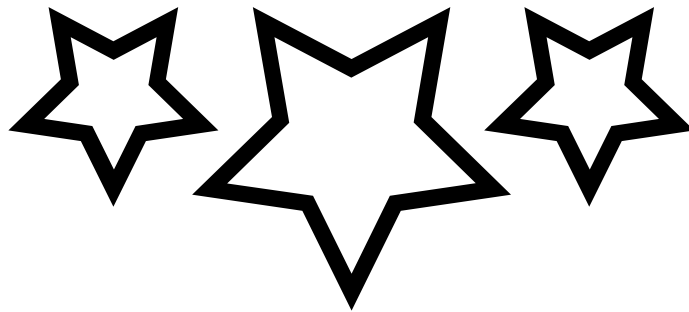
On a clear night, go for a walk to a place that is as far away from lots of streetlights as you can. Now look up and look at the stars.

Can you identify any? Maybe look on the internet before you go out to see which planets are visible at the moment, and how to identify them. Say a prayer together to thank God for the huge, awesome sky that you are looking at.

Two great websites for helping you recognise what you are looking at are:

www.space.com/16149-night-sky.html

www.jb.man.ac.uk/astronomy/nightsky



**Thank you for travelling with us
through Advent. We hope you have a
wonderful Christmas!**

Ronni & the Advent Team