

ADVENT REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS

These reflections have been written to be used progressively over each of the Sundays in Advent, as the candles are lit or to be integrated into a talk. They are supported by the online presentation, *Jesus, our extraordinary gift*, which can be downloaded from allwecan.org.uk/christmas

1. CANDLE OF HOPE

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 13:11-14

You may wish to read all or a part of the passage before the reflection.

We light this candle to symbolise our hope, as we look forward to the coming of Jesus Christ our Lord.

We take comfort in the fact that Jesus' return nears each day. The days of darkness are numbered and we glimpse the light of Christ breaking through. By placing on the armour of light, we can withstand these dark days of temptation and be a light to our world through our acts of kindness and love.

This Christmastime, as we celebrate God's extraordinary gift of Jesus, we are supporting All We Can to provide Extraordinary Gifts that will make a practical difference to people in some of the world's poorest communities. Many Ethiopian farmers struggle to gain an income to support their families. Typically, farmers use traditional beehives, which do not produce much honey and the quality is poor. This is why All We Can has introduced modern beehives, which produces more honey at a higher quality and sells for a good profit.

Asefa has three children to support, and has quadrupled his income since selling honey from his modern beehive. He says, "Production is higher than the traditional one and it is very simple to protect the quality of the honey." We can give hope to more people like Asefa this Christmas, through giving an Extraordinary Gift, such as a modern beehive business, that will make a practical difference – not just at Christmas, but for years to come.



PRAYER

Our hope is found in you; each day your return draws nearer.
Our hope is alive; we see glimpses of your light breaking through.
Our hope is sustained; your armour of light strengthens us.
Come Lord. Bring your Kingdom of light to our world.
Ignite our hope as we wait for your coming Kingdom. Amen.



3. CANDLE OF JOY

BIBLE READING: JAMES 5:7-10

You may wish to read all or a part of the passage before the reflection.

We light this candle to symbolise joy, knowing that fullness of joy comes from God alone.

There can be joy in the waiting, as we anticipate all that is to come with the return of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Today, like a farmer waiting for her harvest, we can begin to see the beginnings of new life and glimpse signs of God's Kingdom at work. As we wait patiently, we hold on to the joy that is to come with God's eternal reign.

This Christmastime, as we celebrate God's extraordinary gift of Jesus, we are supporting All We Can to provide Extraordinary Gifts that will make a practical difference to people in some of the world's poorest communities. Glorious' family, from Zimbabwe, suffered the effects of diarrheal diseases spread by poor sanitation and lack of access to a safe toilet. All We Can raises awareness of the dangers of poor hygiene and sanitation and helps vulnerable families build their own toilet.

Glorious explains the difference the toilet has made to her family: "The new toilet is safe and sturdy. When it rains, you can use the toilet because it has a roof. Before my children would get sick but now they are much healthier." We can help spread the joy which comes with good health to more families like Glorious', by giving an Extraordinary Gift, such as a toilet, that will make a practical difference – not just at Christmas, but for years to come.



PRAYER

In our waiting; let there be joy.
In our waiting; may we glimpse your Kingdom on earth.
In our waiting; we look forward to your return.
Come Lord. Give us an abounding joy as we wait faithfully for your Kingdom.
In you, Lord, our joy is aflame and eternal. Amen.



4. CANDLE OF LOVE

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 1:1-7

You may wish to read all or a part of the passage before the reflection.

We light this candle to symbolise love, conscious that we are known and loved by God.

We are thankful for a God, who out of his love for us sent his Son into the world to bring reconciliation. We are called to be God's holy people – set apart to display his transforming love to the world. We look forward to when Jesus returns and establishes his Kingdom of love forever.

This Christmastime, as we celebrate God's extraordinary gift of Jesus, we are supporting All We Can to provide Extraordinary Gifts that will make a practical difference to people in some of the world's poorest communities. In Malawi, many girls like Cecilia fall pregnant as teenagers and can no longer go to school, leaving without basic literacy and numeracy. All We Can is helping girls like Cecilia by providing literacy and numeracy lessons, as well as maternal health training and other life-skills which will help them to overcome the struggles of poverty they are facing.

Cecilia says: "I am really excited to be back at school. I have learnt how to read and write. I feel like I shine like a star." We can show love to our global neighbours like Cecilia this Christmas by giving an Extraordinary Gift, such as helping girls in Malawi gain education and skills that will improve their lives. This will make a practical difference – not just at Christmas, but for years to come.



PRAYER

God of love; you have reconciled us with yourself through your Son.
God of love; you have called us to be your holy people.
God of love; you have transformed our lives with your love.
Come Lord. Establish your Kingdom of love forever.
Set us ablaze with your love, that nothing may cause us to fall. Amen.



5. JESUS, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

READING: ISAIAH 9:2-7

We light this candle to symbolise Jesus, the light of the world.

The birth of Jesus heralds a dawning of a new time: God dwells with his people. In Jesus, God's light enters the world and the darkness is powerless to overcome it. Now we, who once walked in darkness, have been exposed to a great and glorious light. Jesus is God's extraordinary gift to us, the radiant light which shines into our world offering hope, peace, joy and love for eternity.

PRAYER

Jesus light of the world; you ignite our hope with your promises.
Jesus light of the world; you shed peace into our hearts.
Jesus light of the world; you awaken a joy that is eternal.
Jesus light of the world; you set us ablaze with your love.
Thank you Jesus, for being the light of our world.
Amen.