

Household & Multi-Age Advent Resource 2013

A Text to Explore Each Week

Week 1	Psalm 122
Week 2	Isaiah 11:1-9
Week 3	1 Samuel 2:1-8
Week 4	Romans 1:1-7

About this Resource

This Advent Resource encourages households, multi-age small groups and multi-age congregations to engage together around one of the Advent lectionary readings for each week of Advent. While an individual may move through a sequence of readings daily, the household texts and prayer encourage communal practice, which differs in dimension from private reflections. Communal practice is best done with strong external markers, with repetition and re-visiting to encourage and enable sharing between community and household members. The concrete materials these reading practices suggest relocate the text from 'locked in our heads' to 'out in our midst'. Advent is the season of anticipation that God comes incarnate, material and concrete in the midst of community, demonstrating love and reality. We celebrate that God is knowable as more than a concept or theological principle. God is revealed as being and person and living.

How to use this Resource

To find the richness of text in community, repeat the household text of the week every day for the week, perhaps at different times as the rhythms of your household allow. Move between the different ideas for accessing the text, and listen afresh for the Word of God each day. Support each other's different abilities and disabilities in the task of engagement. Let the strong readers, the sensates, the intuitive constructors, the knowledgeable, the colourful communicators, the imaginative and the socially aware all serve and empower each other in the experience of opening the Bible together.

Supplementing this Resource

For those who would value daily ideas for households and families, [Taking the Advent Story Home](#) from Vibrant Faith is worth exploring. In addition, the Centre for Theology and Ministry has also produced a [CTM Advent Resource 2013](#) that combines daily reflections and these household/multi-age suggestions.

Acknowledgements

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Week 1 Psalm 122

*I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the LORD!"
Our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem.*

*Jerusalem—built as a city
that is bound firmly together.
To it the tribes go up,
the tribes of the LORD,
as was decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the LORD.
For there the thrones for judgment were set up,
the thrones of the house of David.*

*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
"May they prosper who love you.
Peace be within your walls,
and security within your towers."
For the sake of my relatives and friends
I will say, "Peace be within you."
For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,
I will seek your good*

Building the city

Print out a copy of Psalm 122, making sure the verse numbers can be seen. If you divide a verse between two blocks, add a sub-verse number. Cut it into sentences. Stick the sentences onto wooden blocks.

Gather as a household, and divide the blocks between you. If you have very little pre-readers, team up with partners.

Say something like: 'The part of the Bible we are reading is from Psalms, and is a poem prayer for a city. We are going to build a city from the blocks as we read this poem prayer.'

'Reconstruct' the text reading each verse in order, and then placing the block on a stable surface, gradually building up the city.

Review the 'building' and 'city' language of the text together.

Note: house, gates, built, bound firmly, set up, walls, security, towers.

Read the text pausing on these words and use them as the catalyst for construction.



Imagine our cities

Find images of various cities around the world. National Geographic and Time magazines are a good source for these. Alternatively, create a slide show together from digital images. Take note together of the variety of urban landscapes, noting cultural and economic factors. Let your discussion include the ethical and political issues of urbanisation.

Pray for cities

Note Psalm 122:6. 'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem'.

Recognise that this is a call for us to pray for cities wherever they are, not a particular focus on Jerusalem. Use the beautiful prayer from vs. 7 as a basis for prayer for the cities of the world which you have images of. Extemporize prayers based on the needs of the city, and use the refrain between prayers for each city as something that everyone can pray together.

*"May they prosper who love you.
Peace be within your walls,
and security within your towers."*

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Week 2 Isaiah 11:1-9

*A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.
The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.
The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's
den.
They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.*



Stick man (Isaiah 11:1-5)

As a household collect some sticks from your garden or local bushland. As you search for sticks, notice the way young shoots have grown from old stumps. Talk about the way families are often described by 'family trees', exploring the idea of branches and new growth, sharing a common life or heritage from a single trunk.

Take your sticks home and use string, wire or plasticine to create people from your sticks. Read the text of Isaiah 11:1-5, introducing the background that this passage speaks of on the branch of Israel's family tree, a branch which Jesus' family came from. Make a display of your 'stick-people' attaching a particular phrase from the passage to each one, perhaps drawing a background scene or 'positioning' your stick person to demonstrate the phrase.

If you can find the picture book 'Stickman' by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler in a library (or if you are an astute family you may already have this wonderful story in your home) enjoy reading the adventures of Stickman. In this story, Stickman is greatly mis-judged and misunderstood. Use this to idea to consider questions of how Jesus might be misunderstood. Note in v. 3 that the 'stickman' (Jesus) doesn't judge others (especially the poor) superficially, but with justice.

You can see a reading of 'Stickman' on Youtube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5um-hUdtKok>

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Crazy combinations (Isaiah 11:6-9)

Isaiah 11:6-9 gives us a picture of a time when things that we think can't belong together will, because the presence and wisdom of God will make it safe and good. This challenges our thinking about who can be included in the reign of God. Even the dangerous and scary are made safe.

• Isaiah's Zoo

Collect the following from a set of plastic animals: wolf, lamb, leopard, goat, calf, lion, cow, bear, lion, ox, child, snakes (x2) children (x2; Lego people would be appropriate). Place these in a pile in the middle of your table. Read Isaiah 11:6-9. At the mention of each animal, members of the household race to find the named animal in the pile.

Line up the animals together in their pairs as friends. Go through the pairs and note that one of each pair was 'clean' (edible) and the other was 'unclean' (inedible). To the Israelites these were not just 'tame' and 'wild' animals, but ritually in different classes.

Consider what it is that restrains the hurt and destruction.

How can the 'full knowledge of the Lord in the earth' make dangerous things safe, reconcile enemies or make things 'clean'?

Is knowing God really that powerful and transforming?

• Isaiah's Dessert Menu

For one meal of the week experiment with some crazy combinations of foods that we don't usually think of belonging together. Come up with a menu of combinations for dessert and challenge each other to enjoy from the list as you read the text together. Eg. Beetroot and ice cream, minted peas and lime jelly, scrambled eggs and strawberry jam, melon and prosciutto.

Not only does God seem to reconcile unlikely combinations of natural predators, God makes partnerships of these combinations.

What unlikely partnerships might God's peace and knowledge make possible?



Stick man activities in multi-age small group



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Week 3 1 Samuel 2:1-8

*Hannah prayed and said,
“My heart exults in the LORD;
my strength is exalted in my God.
My mouth derides my enemies,
because I rejoice in my victory.
“There is no Holy One like the LORD,
no one besides you;
there is no Rock like our God.
Talk no more so very proudly,
let not arrogance come from your mouth;
for the LORD is a God of knowledge,
and by him actions are weighed.
The bows of the mighty are broken,
but the feeble gird on strength.
Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,
but those who were hungry are fat with spoil.
The barren has borne seven,
but she who has many children is forlorn.
The LORD kills and brings to life;
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.
The LORD makes poor and makes rich;
he brings low, he also exalts.
He raises up the poor from the dust;
he lifts the needy from the ash heap,
to make them sit with princes
and inherit a seat of honor.
For the pillars of the earth are the LORD’S,
and on them he has set the world.*



Reversals

Hannah’s song, like Mary’s magnificat, responding to the news that she will unexpectedly bear a son, of God, is full of ‘reversals’. The many ‘reversals of fortune’ show both God’s justice in putting things right, but also God’s unexpected ways.









Celebrate the ‘reversals’ of this passage by performing some reversals of your own.

- Try reading one line or phrase each in a circle, but ‘reverse’ direction if there is a ‘reversal’ in the text.
- Try reading the passage backwards, either by phrase, or by word if you are up for the challenge
- Try writing the passage out in ‘mirror’ writing, which reverses each letter.

Snap!

Hannah’s song of praise in 1 Samuel 2:4-8 is structured in couplets around a succession of vivid images, with two corresponding lines for each image. To highlight the clarity of this structure, as a household make a set of cards, each card showing one line and the matching image (see examples that follow, but draw your own authentic images). To make sure you have matching images ensure the same person draws the picture on all of the cards for the one image. Work in pairs to help those who are graphically or artistically less confident and those who are less experienced readers. Make a double set of these so you will have 32 cards in all. Play a game of ‘Snap!’ with them, reading the matching or corresponding couplets

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Couplets	Image
The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength.	 warrior
Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry are fat with spoil.	 Food
The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn.	 Mother
The LORD kills and brings to life; The LORD brings down to Sheol and raises up.	 Life and Death
The LORD makes poor and makes rich; The LORD brings low, and also exalts.	 Money
The LORD raises up the poor from the dust; The LORD lifts the needy from the ash heap,	 Dust and Ash
to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor.	 Throne
For the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and on them The LORD has set the world	 Earth



Music

Hannah's song is closely related in style to the song, which Mary sings (Luke 1:46-55), following the revelation that she also will bear a child. Mary's song, often called 'The Magnificat', has been set to music many times. Monteverdi, Vivaldi, Bach, Rutter, Rachmaninoff, Pärt, all have well known settings, and there are several more contemporary adaptations, like the syrupy work of David Haas, and the reliably charming but folky John Michael Talbot.

Have some fun searching for some these on YouTube – be ready to love some, and laugh loudly at others. Nevertheless, reflect on the idea that for each of these representations of the song of Mary, someone at some point and in some context in history thought it was 'just right'. When they imagined the experience of a peasant girl hearing of how she was to be implicated in the story of a present and saving God, this was the 'feel' of her expression of response. It bears some thinking about.

So, try this:

Pick a version of the Magnificat – do a quick review of where it comes from historically/geographically/culturally – listen to a bit of it to get the feel, and then take turns reading parts of 1 Samuel 2 over the music, reflecting the style of the music as you read. The point here isn't to get a beautiful fluent reading, but to experiment with expressing the emotional possibilities of interpretation.

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Week 4 Romans 1:1-7

*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle,
set apart for the gospel of God,
which he promised beforehand through his prophets in
the holy scriptures,
the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from
David according to the flesh
and was declared to be Son of God with power according
to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead,
Jesus Christ our Lord,
through whom we have received grace and apostleship
to bring about the obedience of faith among all the
Gentiles for the sake of his name,
including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus
Christ,
To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be
saints:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the
Lord Jesus Christ.*

Messages within Messages

Paul's letter to the Romans unpacks the good news of Jesus in lots of interesting layers. Make a 'Pass the Parcel' with a packet of Jelly Babies on the inner layer with the phrase 'Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.'

With each layer include a section of the text (as set out following). You can include a small item, like a sticker or lollipop if you think this will enhance your household's experience.

With your household introduce the idea of the 'unfolding gospel or good-news story of God'. Let the ideas of 'revelation' and 'the fullness of time' bubble to the surface naturally during the experience of pass the parcel. Depending on your household tone, choose some favourite Christmas music – the Bach Christmas Oratorio will do just as well as Colin Buchanan's Christmas album or our family favourite tree decorating classic, the cheesy 'Hooked on Christmas'.

Pass the parcel around, stop the music, open one layer, read the text aloud. As a group, repeat the section of text: develop your 'oral' memory skills together in this.

Along the way, review the layers of the text already uncovered to keep track of the narrative. When you arrive



at the middle, celebrate with sharing the Jelly Babies, reminding each other of Paul's understanding of how the gospel included everyone, and was to be shared widely!

(Text from inside to outside, in reverse order!)

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the
Lord Jesus Christ (inner layer)*

*To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be
saints:*

*including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus
Christ,*

*through whom we have received grace and
apostleship*

*to bring about the obedience of faith among all the
Gentiles for the sake of his name,*

*according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from
the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,*

and was declared to be Son of God with power

*the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended
from David according to the flesh*

*which he promised beforehand through his prophets in
the holy scriptures,*

*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle,
set apart for the gospel of God*

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One-letter summaries

This passage is like a greeting card message that encapsulates Paul's vision of the gospel. Print or write out the words of the passage in large letters that can be read by a group. Allocate each person one of the following letters: A, B, C, D, G, P, S, and the name 'Jesus Christ'. If you don't have enough people for all of these letters, just choose some, then repeat later allocating other letters.

Give each person a different coloured highlighter, and work through the passage together giving time for each person to highlight the words that begin with the letter they have been allocated. (If you don't have 8 different colours, use two colours together to make new colours, further enhancing collaboration.)

Read the passage together, with each person reading the words they have highlighted, wish one member of the household reading all of the other words. Repeat as many times as you wish, switching letters.

On separate pieces of paper, invite each person to write out the words beginning with their allocated letter (not necessarily in a list or a straight line).

Look at each other's collections of words, and consider them as summary threads of the gospel.

Choose one thread and try to memorise it as a household.

On subsequent days, try to remember the thread, and also elaborate on it to make sense of the key words, using them as prompts.

A: Apostle Apart According Apostleship Among All Are
B: Be Beforehand By Bring Belong Beloved
C: Called
D: Descended David Declared Dead
G: Gospel God Grace Gentiles Jesus Christ
P: Paul Promised Prophets Power Peace
S: Servant Set Scriptures Son Spirit Sake Saints



Postcards

During this week, write some Advent greeting cards to each other in your household. Base your messages on your favourite phrases from Paul's opening to the Romans, copying them onto your own cards and decorating with picture or symbol.

For example:

"You are called to belong to Jesus Christ"
"Grace to you and peace from God"
"God promised the gospel beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures"
"Through Jesus we have received grace"

Some More Advent Resources from Beth Barnett

Are You Ready?

A story based on John 1:19-28

A Christmas Tree Prayer

A multi-age prayer idea

An Advent Prayer Idea

A multi-age prayer idea based on John 1:18

Who's the Boss?

An interactive Bible Reading of Matthew 2

Try this at home

Some activities to try as a household