

ADVENT CALENDAR

*(Based on material from
'The One True Light' by Tim Chester)*

| | TUES 1ST DEC | WED 2ND DEC |
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| Reading | In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1 v 1 | In the beginning was the Word.....He was with God in the beginning. John 1 v 1-2 |
| Reason for hope & joy | John starts his gospel in the same way as the opening book of the Bible - 'In the beginning....' As we begin our studies in John, we can see that this is relevant to everyone - it is the story of how it all began. But the account in John is not of creation...it is a story of hope and re-creation, of Jesus coming to mend the brokenness of the world. | John talks about Jesus as being the Word of God, through whom we hear the voice of our Father, God. This is how God communicates with us - as we look at the story of Jesus, we hear the message from God. Amazingly, we hear from Jesus - the Word - as we study the words of Scripture. |
| Action | Lord Jesus, thank you that you have come to bring hope to our broken world. Help us to see you at work through Advent. | Find the verses above in a different version of the Bible (try www.biblegateway.com) and ask God to help you to have eyes to see fresh truth in familiarity through this season. |

| | THURS 3RD DEC |
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| Reading | Through him, all things were made; without him, nothing was made that has been made. John 1 v 3 |
| Reason for hope & joy | It's an amazing thought that Jesus was there helping to create our beautiful world. 'The Father is the architect, and Jesus is the plan'. Jesus came to the world he had helped to create - as our Creator, but also as our healer - and by his actions during his life on earth, he gives us a glimpse of the hope-filled future. |
| Action | Watch and listen to Hillsong - What a Beautiful Name https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pKqYAheOyrg |

| | FRI 4TH DEC | SAT 5TH DEC |
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| Reading | In him was life, and that life was the light of men. John 1 v 4 | BE CONNECTED ON SATURDAY |
| Reason for hope & joy | If you believe in Jesus, he gives you life. Not just life that means you exist, but life from a relationship with God, life as it was meant to be - a life full of hope, joy, peace. God's words to us bring life and light - if they are absent, there is darkness. | One of the best ways to connect with people in a time when you are unable to plan to meet up is to phone them up. Today, why don't you phone someone who you haven't been in touch with for a while. Set the time aside deliberately, and ask God to bless your conversation as you share your lives together in this way. |
| Action | Today's verse has so much hope and joy in it! Why not commit to learning it this weekend? Write the verse somewhere you will see it regularly - you could illustrate it or use it as a screensaver. | If your friend is a Christian, why not pray together about what you have chatted about at the end of the phone call. |

SUN 6TH DEC

RESTING IN GOD

Today is Sunday, the day God gave us as a Sabbath day of rest. Find a quiet place and spend some time "resting in the shadow of His wings."

Use the words and pictures in the video as a prayer, to respond with adoration to the wonderful truths from this week's readings. (If you would prefer to do this in quietness, you can mute the sound as the lyrics appear in the video.)

With the songwriter, let's say "**So will I**"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2U7ffUM5Ec>

| | MON 7TH DEC | TUES 8TH DEC |
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| Reading | The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. John 1 v 5 | There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all people might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. John 1 v 6-8 |
| Reason for hope & joy | God has broken into our darkness with his light. He took the initiative. The darkness cannot win - we can live in that light. The light God shines - the word he speaks - is Jesus. | Like John, we must point to Jesus. We are just the witness. Today, don't make it all about you and don't get upset when you don't get the limelight. Point to him, and be a joyful, hopeful, witness. |
| Action | Pray for those places which you think are dark in your life and pray for Jesus to shine there. Light a candle either in your mind or literally. Video: Light of the World https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-MmRGSEG2LM | Lord, help me not to be consumed with my agenda, but to be on your agenda and point others to you, through my words of hope and my character of joy. Video: All to Jesus I surrender https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7x2lpLSfq8 |

| | WED 9TH DEC | THUR 10TH DEC |
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| Reading | The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. John 1 v 9 | He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. John 1 v 10 -11 |
| Reason for hope & joy | Advent reminds us that Jesus is coming again. This is not the end of the story! Jesus is the bridge from Heaven to Earth, and we are citizens of both Earth and Heaven. Let's live this day to the full as citizens on earth, but with the perspective of eternity. | Sometimes we don't see Jesus in our lives, or where he is working. God promises the gift of his Holy Spirit to help us recognise him and where he is at work. Today, why not ask the Holy Spirit to open our spiritual eyes and to fill us with hope and joy where we see him at work. |
| Action | Father God, I thank you that today you are with me - you will watch over my life today and I am not alone. Thank you for the hope of eternity, and help me to get things in the right perspective and set my heart on the right things. Amen. Video: Christ Our Hope https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oibli1rz7mw | Write down things and places that you have been praying for and feel God is not working in. Put in an envelope and put today's date on it. Why don't you tuck it in amongst your summer clothes so you will find it in a few months' time...committing the things to God as you do so. |

| | FRI 11TH DEC | SAT 12TH DEC |
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| Reading | <p>He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.</p> <p>John 1 v 11-12</p> | <p>Be Connected on Saturday</p> <p>Today, outside Emmanuel Church, there will be an Advent trail.</p> <p>Ask someone to come and take part with you, and follow the path around the outside of the church.</p> <p>Spend time together connecting all the letters that you find into a message that is true for all of us this Christmas time.</p> <p>Why not bring up a flask of hot drink and some treats to eat, and enjoy a festive time of connection with a friend, using this as your focus.</p> |
| Reason for hope & joy | <p>This is what his advent, his arrival, is all about: giving us the right to become children of God. Relating to God is not complicated or hard. It is as simple as a child relating to her father.</p> | |
| Action | <p>Meditate on the fact that you are a child of God. You are loved by the Father, and under his loving care.</p> <p>Read 1 John 3 v 1 'How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!' God does not tolerate us, he wants to lavishly love us. This is why Jesus came - so that the relationship of love could be mended.</p> <p>Stop and pause today at regular intervals to reflect that you are loved.</p> | |

| SUN 13TH DEC |
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| <p>Resting in God</p> <p>2020 has been a challenging year. What have been the hard / dark times? Write a list. Light a candle. Watch the flame flicker into life. Looking back over the list, use a highlighter to notice where you have seen God at work.</p> <p>Rest in the love of God and invite him to be the light in your world, bringing hope into the situations you listed as you listen to “All who are thirsty”</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=coWRDjX02pU</p> |

| | MON 14TH DEC | TUES 15TH DEC |
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| Reading | Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. John 1 v 12-13 | The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1 v 14 |
| Reason for hope & joy | Being born of God transforms our fears, our relationships, our behaviour, our prayers and our future. But always remember: we don't start with changed behaviour, relationships, fears or prayers. We start by believing we're the children of God through the Son of God. This is what changes everything else. The advent of Jesus changes our lives because it changes our status. Jesus makes us children of God! It was his choice - we would never have made that choice. | Jesus moved into our neighbourhood. He didn't stay in a remote palace, but entered our life story. In our moments of despair, when all hope looks lost, we can look to Jesus. He is in our neighbourhood. God is among us wherever we are right now. God will deliver us. |
| Action | Meditate on these verses again, learning them by heart or letting them sink into your mind and spirit. | Video: Living hope https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f2FXxDVO6w |

| | WED 16TH DEC | THUR 17TH DEC |
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| Reading | The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son. Generous inside and out, true from start to finish. John 1 v 14 (MSG) | John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying 'This was he of whom I said 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me'. ' John 1 v 15 |
| Reason for hope & joy | In the place where we are stressed, God is with us to reveal his glory. "We're all in the same boat," we sometimes say to one another.. Jesus says to us 'I'm in your boat. The problem you face, you don't face alone. I'm with you. Look for my glory in this situation, for my grace and truth' | John the Baptist says that Jesus has 'surpassed' him (he is better than him) - despite coming after him - because Jesus was there from the beginning. Jesus was in fact the fulfilment not only of John's prophecy, but of all the prophecies from the Old Testament - John was the last of the prophets. And remember - Jesus did not come simply to bring us a message from God - he himself is the message! |
| Action | Lord, thank you that I am not alone and I'm in your boat. Help me to see your grace, truth and glory this day. | See amid the winter's snow - Born for us on earth below - see the tender Lamb appears - Promised from eternal years. Thank you Father God for Jesus! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0uxSVtG230 |

| | FRI 18TH DEC | SAT 19TH DEC |
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| Reading | <p>Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying 'This was he of whom I said 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me'.'</p> <p>John 1 v 12 -15</p> | <p>Be Connected on Saturday</p> <p>Christmas is a time for good things to eat, and it's almost as much fun to make them as to eat them.</p> <p>Do you know that you can post a parcel of edible treats for under £3?</p> <p>Why not do some research and find something very special that you would enjoy baking and creating. (Of course, treats don't have to be edible....)</p> <p>Then package it up and send it to a loved one who you won't be able to treat to a meal in the way you would have liked this Christmas time.</p> <p>Or you could make a plate of goodies and leave it as a surprise on the doorstep of someone from church who you would like to show love to today.</p> |
| Reason for hope & joy | <p>Many religions involve humans trying to reach God. But Christianity involves God reaching down to us - by taking on a human form and meeting us where we were at. Jesus understands our every weakness because he became a man, but because he is God, he is able to rescue us from that weakness. How amazing.</p> | |
| Action | <p>Reflect: 'The Son of God became the Son of Man, so that the sons and daughters of man might become the sons and daughters of God'.</p> | |

| SUN 20TH DEC | |
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| <p><i>"All for love's sake became poor."</i></p> <p>This week, we have focused on the Word - Jesus - becoming flesh and dwelling among us. It is such a familiar part of the Christmas story that Jesus was born as a baby. Take some time now to really look at this with new eyes and to make it personal. The one who created and sustains the whole universe gave up all that glory and power and freedom to be born as a helpless and vulnerable baby for you. He is God's answer to your heart's cry. How he loves you!</p> | <p><i>"The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight."</i></p> <p>Take some time to talk to God about your response to this. Thank him in wonder for what he gave up for you; confide in him your fears and know that he understands; praise him for the hope it gives you to know that he has come to save you.</p> |

| | MON 21ST DEC | TUES 22ND DEC |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Reading | From the fulness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. John 1 v 16 | For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. John 1 v 17 |
| Reason for hope & joy | John uses extravagant language here to help us to try to grasp the wonder of God's gift in Jesus. In God's 'fulness' we have 'all' received grace. God has never held back the fulness of all his good gifts - including grace that saves us from punishment - but has always longed for a full and perfect relationship with his creation. No-one is excluded. | God's law through Moses set a standard - but it was one we could never meet without help. Jesus perfectly fulfils the requirement of that law, and, through grace, he helps us to do so too if we put our faith in him. He not only paid the price for us through the cross, but because he is now alive, he continues to help us fight back against our fears of not being good enough by the truth of his grace. Hallelujah! |
| Action | John 3 v 16 tells us 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life'. The gift of eternal life and forgiveness is available for everyone. Pray today for someone who you would love to understand the truth. | Try to think of a way in which the precious gift of grace has made a difference to your life - and tell someone about it |

| | WED 23RD DEC | THUR 24TH DEC |
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| Reading | No-one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. John 1 v 18 | From the fulness of his grace, we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No-one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. John 1 v 16-18 |
| Reason for hope & joy | This verse tells us that the Father and Son are side by side, in the closest of relationships. What can we learn from this? That the driving force in the universe is love and that we too are called into loving relationship with each member of the Trinity - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. | At the end of this passage, we read that Jesus 'has made (God) known'. It's hard sometimes worshipping a God we can't see. But praise God for Jesus - the man who was God - who came to show us what God is like! What a precious gift God gave us when he chose to send his Son to earth. |
| Action | The story of God coming to earth in Jesus is such a good picture of God's love, but our lives are full of other pictures of that love! Write a list of ways in which God has shown that he loves you in recent days. | As you come to the end of this Advent journey and head towards Christmas Day, look through the verses in John that we have read, and reflect on what has particularly stood out for you in your walk of faith. Hark the Herald Angels Sing: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_iLXNSIaYc |