

# *The Light of Christ*



*A devotional resource for  
Advent and Christmas 2017*



## Introduction

This year we are thinking about the Light of Christ in Advent and the Christmas Season. We celebrate the light of Hope, Peace, Love and Joy. We are grateful to all those who have contributed material and worked to make this booklet possible.

The first page of the booklet has a hymn written largely by Ruth Midcalf to be sung at any time in the season and the back cover has an image by Tracey Darling bringing together all the themes pictorially. This could be used for contemplation or you may even like to create your own image. The central pages are written by children, they are timeless, special and suitable for reflection on many occasions.

The cover has candles with reflected flames reminding us that we are all called to be light in dark places echoing the Light of Christ.

We have included a candle lighting liturgy. The same themes are used in the ALL WE CAN material for the season which could be used by churches in place of the suggested offering in this booklet. <http://allwecan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Advent-resources-2017.pdf>.

Many bible readings reflect our themes but some you may like to use each week are:

**Hope**            1 Peter 1:3-4

**Peace**            Isaiah 52:7

**Love**             John 15:9-12

**Joy**                Luke 2:10

Aside from the candle lighting liturgies the entries are not dated. For those people who like to read a portion of the bible every day we have included the entries from the Methodist Prayer Handbook. This also includes songs from Singing the Faith which is a good resource for private devotion.

May you all be blessed as you travel through this incredible season.

## **IN OUR WAITING + OUR LONGING**

**(to be sung to 'Angel Voices' StF 39, H&P 484)**

In our waiting and our longing  
Fill us with your Light  
Gracious God, who comes among us  
In our darkest night  
That, as our path becomes clearer.  
He'll draw nearer  
With fresh sight.

In our waiting and our longing  
Fill us with your Peace  
Gracious God, who comes among us,  
May our love increase.  
Love for you and for each other  
Not to smother,  
But release.

In our waiting and our longing  
Fill us with your Hope  
Gracious God, who comes among us  
Show us how to cope  
And, through challenge, change and healing,  
Keep revealing  
Your Love's scope.

In our waiting and our longing  
Fill us with your Joy  
Gracious God, who comes among us  
Fear and hurt destroy  
Make our worship of you heartfelt  
Barriers melt  
Lives employ.

God of Light, Peace, Hope, Joy, Wholeness  
Guide us through each day  
That we may take each step with You  
Following Your Way  
Thankful for the gifts You give us  
In Faith and Trust  
Let us Pray.

***Ruth Midcalf / Alison Parker (2017)***

# First Candle - The Candle of Hope

Sunday 3rd December



**Leader:** Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord

**All:** Thanks be to God

**Leader:** Today is the First Sunday of Advent, in which we remember the hope we have because of Christ.

God told Abraham that through him all the nations of the world would be blessed, because he trusted him. People long ago spoke of the coming of Christ, of how a Saviour would be born, a king in the line of King David. He would rule the world wisely and bless everyone everywhere. We too believe in God's promise to send Jesus again to this world to be king of all the earth.

*(A person lights the First Candle, the Candle of Hope)*

Hope is like a light shining in a dark place. As we look at the light of this candle we celebrate the hope we have in Jesus Christ.

**Leader:** Let us pray:

**All:** God of Abraham and Sarah and all the leaders of old, you are our Father too. Your love is revealed to us in Jesus Christ, Son of God, and Son of David. Help us in preparing to celebrate his birth, to make our hearts ready and to place our hope in you. Help us today and every day to worship you, to hear your word, and to do your will by sharing your hope with others. We ask it in the name of the one who was born in Bethlehem. Amen.

<b>Week beginning 3 December – 1<sup>st</sup> of Advent</b> <b>– God’s Word at Work</b>			
Sunday 3 Dec	Mark 13: 24-27	Singing the Faith 317 (At the name of Jesus)	Psalm 80
Monday 4 Dec	1 Thessalonians 1: 1-10	Singing the Faith 418 (We have a Gospel to Proclaim)	Psalm 131
Tuesday 5 Dec	1 Thessalonians 2: 1-8	Singing the Faith 445 (He came to earth, not to be served)	Psalm 132
Wednesday 6 Dec	1 Thessalonians 2: 9-13	Singing the Faith 503 (Love divine, all loves excelling)	Psalm 133
Thursday 7 Dec	1 Thessalonians 3: 1-5	Singing the Faith 623 (A safe stronghold our God is still)	Psalm 134
Friday 8 Dec	Song of Solomon 2: 1-4	Singing the Faith 199 (Glory be to God on high)	Psalm 45
Saturday 9 Dec	1 Thessalonians 3: 6-13	Singing the Faith 457 (Author of faith, eternal Word)	Psalm 136: 1-9

We pray for those in the world who live with fear and uncertainty, in areas where conflict and war is tearing lives apart. For those who struggle on a daily basis to keep their family safe, and together.

We pray for those who do not have the basic things which we take for granted, clean water, fresh food, shelter and security.

Grant us empathy, so that we may support them in prayer, and in practical ways where we can.

We pray that they will know the hope the world has in you.

***Let there be hope shared among us***

***Ann Walker***

Light,  
Is a symbol of,  
God's love,  
Here,  
Today and forevermore.

***Lynda Izzard***

**'Hope in Darkness'**

People facing fear, starvation, death and an unknown future. Lord, our world at the moment seems to be one of darkness and despair. Hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, wild fires, war and death, all have torn people from the arms of the ones they love, from places they call home. What is their hope? Where does their future lie? To whom can they trust their lives?

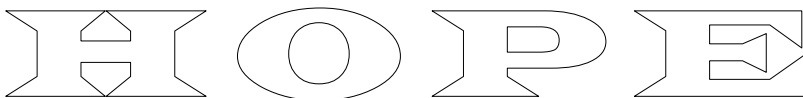
Jesus said "I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life" (John 8: 12).

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Hebrews 11: 1).

Lord give us faith to trust in you and your promise that you will bring Light into the darkness of our world and give us the strength to work constantly to bring your hope to those in despair.

Amen

***Paddy Jose***



(colour these letters if you wish)

## A Bag of Hope

Where do you find hope? Is it in the glory of God's nature or the hug from a friend, a letter in the post, laughter of a child or a word from scripture?

The plastic carrier bag is slowly disappearing from our world, is this why I used the title 'A bag of hope'? Is it because it shows we are taking better care of the planet entrusted to us, it could be, but no. It is that most weeks I see what hope the contents of a simple plastic bag can bring to others in need.

Foodbanks are common place in our world today. It is sad but true that there are many in our community that struggle to feed their family. However a foodbank is not a place of despair and sadness but a place where Hope and Love flourish. It is true that many people enter feeling a sense of despair and failure, but following a drink and a listening ear with a volunteer, another person will appear with food for them to feed their family. Reactions to these bags of provisions are many, but tears, smiles and relief are common place. I never realised that hope could be given in the simple act of putting a toilet roll, a box of cereal and a few tins into a bag.

We are frequently told, we will never know what our help means, as they leave with their bags of hope, knowing that people have cared, listened and offered prayer and given them hope.

I never imagined a plastic bag could be a symbol of hope, take a look around you today and look for other unusual signs of hope.

*Jennifer Pitt*

### **Psalm 33:20-22 (NIV)**

<sup>20</sup> We wait in hope for the LORD;  
he is our help and our shield.

<sup>21</sup> In him our hearts rejoice,  
for we trust in his holy name.

<sup>22</sup> May your unfailing love be with us, LORD,  
even as we put our hope in you.

Lord, I asked where is the hope in this day?  
As I prayed in my normal pattern.

“In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us” He said.

*(From the Benedictus)*

My mind cavorted like playful uncontrollable purposes or clumping elephants,  
things to do fought with griefs observed and carried for space in my thinking.

Lord, I asked where is the peace in this day?

Voices of expectation clamoured and clashed,  
disappointment drummed through my skull.  
Chords of obligation bound me.

“In my tender compassion I am come to break into your life again”

I have come to be the Light of dawn for you this and every day.

The Light of hope  
The Light of peace  
The Light of love  
The Light of joy

For a moment the clamouring ceased. The moment with my limitless God was enough.

***Alison Parker***



## Second Candle - The Candle of Peace

**The prophets who foretold the birth of Jesus**

Sunday 10th December

**Leader:** Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord

**All:** Thanks be to God



**Leader:** Today is the Second Sunday of Advent and we will light the Candle of Peace.

Last Sunday we lit the First Candle in our Advent Wreath, and celebrated the ancient faith leaders; this First Candle reminded us of our hope in Christ. We light it again as we remember our Saviour, born a king in the line of King David. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and we believe that he will come again to fulfill all of God's promises to us, to rule the world wisely and bless all nations.

*(A person lights the First Candle, the Candle of Hope)*

Today we light the Second Candle of Advent, the Candle of Peace. We remember the prophets who spoke of the coming of Christ, of how a Saviour would be born, a king in the line of King David. The prophet Isaiah called Christ "the Prince of Peace". They told us how he would rule the world wisely and bless all the nations.

When Jesus came he taught people the importance of being peace-makers. He said that those who make peace shall be called the children of God. When Christ comes to us he brings us peace and he will bring everlasting peace when he comes again. We light the Candle of Peace to remind us that Jesus is the Prince of Peace and that through him peace is found.

*(A person lights the Second Candle, the Candle of Peace)*

Peace is like a light shining in a dark place. As we look at this candle we celebrate the peace we find in Jesus Christ.

**Leader:** Let us pray:

**All:** Lord Jesus, Light of the World, the prophets said you would bring peace and save your people from trouble. Give peace in our hearts at Christmastide. We ask that as we wait for you to come again, that you would stay with us. Help us today, and everyday to worship you, to hear your word, and to do your will by sharing your peace with each other. We ask it in the name of the one who was born in Bethlehem. Amen.

<b>Week beginning 10 December – 2<sup>nd</sup> of Advent – The Return of Christ</b>			
Sunday 10 Dec	Mark 1: 1-8	Singing the Faith 233	Psalm 85
Monday 11 Dec	1 Thessalonians 4: 1-12	Singing the Faith 242 (A new commandment I give unto you)	Psalm 135: 1-7
Tuesday 12 Dec	1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18	Singing the Faith 335 (Rejoice, the Lord is King!)	Psalm 135: 15-21
Wednesday 13 Dec	1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11	Singing the Faith 637 (Soldiers of Christ arise)	Psalm 137: 1-7
Thursday 14 Dec	2 Thessalonians 1: 1-12	Singing the Faith 177 (Lo, he comes with clouds descending)	Psalm 138
Friday 15 Dec	2 Thessalonians 2: 1-3a, 13-17	Singing the Faith 550 (Forth, in thy name, O Lord, I go)	Psalm 139
Saturday 16 Dec	2 Thessalonians 3: 1-17	Singing the Faith 596 (Now let us from this table rise)	Psalm 140: 1-7

We pray for those in power, who make decisions that affect millions of lives.

Speak to their hearts, may they be true to those they represent and honourable in the decisions they make. May they treat others justly, and strive for excellence in all they do.

We pray that the choices they make will bring peace to broken lives and communities.

We pray for your peace, which surpasses all understanding.

***Let there be peace shared among us***

***Ann Walker***

# Peace

Is it when you shut the door and have time to enjoy the quiet, or is it found when you can sit by the river watching a fishing float bobbing up and down?

Do you enjoy a walk in the countryside listening to the birds, or a seat near the beach listening to the sound of the waves?

Can you shut your eyes where you sit and ignore the noise of traffic, the children playing, or the sound of a radio?

Do you experience peace digging the garden or allotment?

## **John 16:33 (NIV)**

<sup>33</sup> “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Just as people can feel lonely in a crowd, so we can also feel the inner peace that God gives us when we are in the midst of turmoil.

## **Psalms 29:11 (NIV)**

<sup>11</sup> The LORD gives strength to his people;  
the LORD blesses his people with peace.

*Gill Lawson*

PEACE

## Emmanuel Now

God, make us ready for our celebration,  
Praising your Son for his heralded birth.  
Glory on high, as the angels proclaimed it,  
Peace to all peoples and nations on earth.

God, help us open our hearts to the other,  
Feeling the pain of your unequal world.  
As in the old times the prophet proclaimed it,  
Justice like rivers the sign of your rule.

God, call us now to be part of your purpose,  
Seeing your world as you made it to be:  
Living your kingdom as Jesus proclaimed it,  
Your restoration, where love is the key.

God, be our Peace sign, as Christ in the manger;  
God, roll down Justice in strength and in power;  
God, come Restore us, your Spirit inspiring;  
God, be God With Us, Emmanuel, now.

Words: © September 2016 Tony Law.

May be used freely in worship.

Metre: 11.10.11.10.

Suggested tune: "Epiphany" (StF 595) (H&P 700)

This was sung when we met to prepare material together.  
Tony Law gave us permission to use it any way we liked.

# Expectations

Early next year a child will be born.  
A child of a future king.

Already there is speculation, will it be a boy or girl and bets being taken on names to be given and when the child arrives in the sterile ward of a Private Hospital, the press will be waiting, cameras and microphones ready to announce the arrival of a new prince or princess and the country who wait in anticipation will rejoice.

It wasn't like that, that night in Bethlehem.

The baby for whom the world was waiting, slipped unknown into the mess, muck and danger of an animal stall. A child who was already King.

For Mary there was no uncertainty of name or gender just the pain and anxiety of birth.

God didn't use the press to spread the news, but angels, shepherds and a spectacular star to guide the seekers.

One baby will have a life of privilege in the world's eye, the other a life of danger, poverty and ultimate rejection in the relative obscurity of Palestine.

As we prepare to welcome and to worship the Christ child this Advent and Christmas let us pray that the love, hope, joy and peace brought by the little baby in Bethlehem might reach our battered and desperate world and bring healing.

***Paddy Jose***

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***Lynda Izzard***

## Third Candle - The Candle of Love

### John The Baptist

Sunday 17th December

**Leader:** Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord

**All:** Thanks be to God



**Leader:** Today is the Third Sunday of Advent and we will light the Candle of Love.

Last Sunday we lit the Candle of Peace. We light it and the Candle of Hope again as we remember Jesus, born in Bethlehem, our hope and our peace.

*(A person lights the Candles of Hope and Peace)*

Today we light the Third Candle of Advent, the Candle of Love. In their old age God gave to Zechariah and Elisabeth a son called John. John spoke to the people bravely in the desert ignoring his own comfort and prepared to die for what he believed. John taught that we should share what we have with others, treat each other kindly and show God's love. He did this because he cared for people and wanted them to turn back to God and find his forgiveness.

*(A person lights the Third Candle, the Candle of Love)*

Love is like a candle shining in a dark place. As we look at the light of this candle we celebrate the love we have in Christ.

**Leader:** Let us pray:

**All:** Lord God, Your witness John the Baptist grew up strong in spirit and prepared people for the coming of the Lord. He loved your people and baptized them in the River Jordan to wash away their sins. Help us to have the same love that we would be witnesses to him and spread the good news of your love. As Christmas draws closer day by day, help us to be ready to welcome him. Amen

<b>Week beginning 17 December – 3<sup>rd</sup> of Advent – The Lord is Near</b>			
Sunday 17 Dec	John 1: 6-8, 19-28	Singing the Faith 593 (Lord, enthroned in heavenly splendour)	Psalm 126
Monday 18 Dec	Isaiah 40: 1-11	Singing the Faith 197	Psalm 141: 1-5
Tuesday 19 Dec	Lamentations 3: 22-33	Singing the Faith 208	Psalm 142
Wednesday 20 Dec	Joel 3: 9-16	Singing the Faith 210	Psalm 143: 1-11
Thursday 21 Dec	Isaiah 62: 1-12	Singing the Faith 188 (There's a light upon the mountains)	Psalm 144
Friday 22 Dec	Isaiah 2: 1-5	Singing the Faith 181	Psalm 145: 1-7
Saturday 23 Dec	Proverbs 8: 22-31	Singing the Faith 183 (Praise to the God who clears the way)	Psalm 145: 8-21

We pray for our own church communities, remembering especially today .....

We pray for our circuit, for all who hold particular roles and have to make decisions that affect us all.

We pray for our local communities holding before God those we know to be in need of his touch.

We thank you for placing us in worshipping communities. Strengthen us in times of challenge and shake us out of our complacency and excuses, so that we can support each other in service, and encourage each other in worship.

We pray that our love for one another will shape our worship here.

***Let there be love shared among us***

***Ann Walker***

*These reflections were written by a small group of children aged 8 and 9. I had a session with them on 'How to meditate and write a short reflection on what you thought God was saying to you.' The theme, as you will see, was The Light and Love of God. There was music in the background and it was held in a darkened room with candle light.*

***June Hardcastle***

*God's love flows*

*Like a river of goodness in us.*

*Share it.*

*Let your light shine on others who have life like a bitter taste.*

*Give them the breath of your love*

*by joining with the angels and the holy fathers.*

*Let love flow through you.*

*Feel its comfort.*

*By Louis*

*I feel that God's light is with me.*

*I feel that I am pouring out all my worries*

*Because when I feel His light I hear Him say*

*"always keep open the doors of your heart."*

*By Ankita*

*A feeling of relaxedness over me*

*Like a slow dance.*

*Calm flickers of light.*

*That is how*

*An angel comes to bless you*

*With caring love.*

*With peace.*

*In the candle light.*

*By Ryan*



*There is no darkness.  
Each star has light  
That burns in the night,  
And like the love of God  
It never stops shining.*

*God says to each of us  
"You are a star"  
It is happening NOW.  
By Dayna*

*When June said  
"Close your eyes."  
I felt as light as a feather  
I felt so, so calm  
And so, so bright that  
I thought  
"I am transparent."  
That was the Peace of God.  
By Daniel*

*Relaxed like bedtime  
On soft pillows.*

*Warm like  
A burning flame.*

*Calm like  
A river in a hot country.*

*Candles and quiet do that.  
And God.  
By Shaquille*

*Yellow dots,  
Flickering in the dark  
Like wavy candle flames.*

*It is an angel walking towards me,  
Saying  
"Don't ever give up on your work.  
God's light is with you."  
by Bradley*

*God's light always lights up my  
heart.  
It keeps me warm like sunshine.  
It shines like a diamond.  
It never leaves me behind.  
By Ethne*

Loving Father in this your world of beauty, generations have sown hate, destruction and despair, for this we are truly sorry.

We humbly ask that you will give us the passion to right these wrongs, for from every small act we perform, your love will spread. Help us to be a Light in the darkness and take opportunities to turn

Hate to Love  
Sorrow to Joy  
Anger to Peace  
Despair to Hope

A better world is ours for the taking, inspire us to take your love and to act as well as pray.

Amen

### **Love –**

The more you give, the more you have, the more you receive. So today give a gift of love to someone else. You may be surprised how little it costs you and what you receive in return.

***Jennifer Pitt***

My Grief is in a Trinket Box  
That sits upon the shelf  
I take it down and look at it  
When sat alone, all by myself.

My grief is like a howling gale  
A wasteland wind, a desert parched.  
It's crashing rain, and constant pain  
That scour my beating pulpy heart.

I take that messy fleshy heart  
And put it gently in its place  
In trainer box that held his shoes  
There on the shelf where dreams are safe.

I take it down and put it back  
I open it or leave it closed.  
My precious grief, the fruit of love  
Upon the shelf in boxed repose.

***Helena Flint*** 28.11.16

Dear Lord,

How wonderful it is to be able to live in your beautiful creation.

Father we open our eyes in the morning and behold the autumn colours on the trees; we can see the damp morning mist; a skein of birds flying by.

Everything preparing for the cold to come.

But Lord, it is only resting.

Already under the ground we see that the bulbs are producing shoots, and soon it will be spring again.

New life rising from apparent death.

Just like Jesus rose from apparent death.

Lord this miracle happens every year.

We marvel at how your amazing love triumphs over everything, even death.

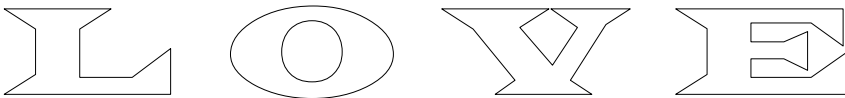
Help us dear Father, to be quiet and still, and feel your love flowing through us, giving us fresh strength, new youth, healing and confidence.

For your love is life to us.

Help us to allow your love to flow through us to others, that they too may feel that life-giving draught refreshing them, and they too will know that you love them with an everlasting love.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Kim Kelly



Oh, how wonderful it is to know that we belong to you, the everlasting Trinity of love and power.

We are filled with love and joy when we contemplate you, almighty one.

How could anyone not be overawed at the thought that the unimaginable maker of the universe loves us, even us?

For Lord, you are love itself.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in an eternal loving embrace, dancing together, for ever glued together by love.

But you did not have enough to love, so you made us so that you could love us too.

And you came to live among us so that we can get to know each other better.

What a joyful prospect - getting to know you!

Help us to recognise you when we see you, please Lord, help us to feel that thrill when we know it is really you who we are speaking to.

We worship you, oh Lord God Almighty, we will worship you for ever.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

***Kim Kelly***

O, Glorious One, we love you beyond all measure.

We love you because you first loved us.

We do not feel worthy of your love, for we are always tempted to get it wrong.

Why would a being so wonderful as you bother with us?

We do not understand.

But you do love us, dear Lord.

What a mystery.

Despite all our faults, and the ways we let you down, you do love us.

You love us so much that you allowed your precious Son to go to that awful cross and die a terrible death for us, so we could be saved from ourselves and appear before you, our merciful heavenly father, clean and blameless.

Thank you fear Lord, without you we are indeed lost.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

***Kim Kelly***

# Fourth Candle - The Candle of Joy

## Mary the Mother of Jesus

Sunday 24th December



**Leader:** Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord

**All:** Thanks be to God

Last Sunday we lit the Candle of Love. We light it and the Candles of Hope and Peace again as we remember that Jesus, born in Bethlehem, will come again to fulfill all of God's promises and bring us everlasting peace and joy.

*(A person lights the Candles of Hope, Peace, and Love)*

Today we light the Fourth Candle of Advent, the Candle of Joy. When the angel Gabriel told Mary that she would have a special child she was filled with joy. She sang a song that began with the words: "My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour." Just as the birth of Jesus gave great joy to his mother, so his coming to our world gave joy to those who had no joy before. He healed them and gave them hope and peace when they believed in him.

From hope, peace, and love grows joy.

We light the Candle of Joy to remind us that when Jesus is born in us we have joy and that through him there will be everlasting joy on earth.

*(A person lights the Fourth Candle, the Candle of Joy)*

Joy is like a light shining in a dark place. As we look at this candle we celebrate the joy we find in Jesus Christ.

**Leader:** Let us pray:

**All:** Thank you God for the joy you give us. We ask that as we wait for all your promises to come true, and for Christ to come again, that you would stay with us. Help us today, and everyday to worship you, to hear your word, and to do your will by sharing your joy with each other. We ask it in the name of the one who was born in Bethlehem. Amen.

Soon Lord, we will celebrate the most wonderful thing of all - the birth of Jesus our Lord.

We know he is coming, born of a humble maiden, a teenager.

Soon he will be here, wonder of wonders, Lord of all creation in a stable with the animals.

How blest were those oxen, asses and sheep too probably.

Dear God, how awesome a sight!

Help us to feel the wonder of Christmas, the joy of your birth into your own creation.

King of Kings, Lord of Lords, come to taste our life, come to join us on this tiny blue planet which none the less is full of your marvels.

Come and lift us up, lift us up with you, Jesus.

Let us feel you amongst us, transforming us with your healing touch, so that we shall know that what we hope for is real.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

***Kim Kelly***

## **Travelling Mary**

I got out the nativity set and Mary had gone missing. She and the donkey had gone trotting off.

Then I remembered that the two of them had been travelling about the families of Oakridge.

They had gone in a recycled shoe box with no protection aside from a prayer and some instructions to pass them on to the next family on the list at the end of their stay in each home.

Had they returned to the church so that the miracle of birth could be re-enacted? Had Jesus been born in the people along the way as they travelled?

Had joy come to the houses where they were welcomed?

Had they witnessed griefs and discord?

Had the heart of Mary, and her son Jesus been shot through with the pain of lives struggling to glimpse something new and different this year?

***Alison Parker***

<b>Week beginning 24 December – 4<sup>th</sup> of Advent and Christmas</b>			
<b>– Christ is Born</b>			
Sunday 24 Dec	Luke 1: 26-38	Singing the Faith 213 (O little town of Bethlehem)	Psalm 89: 1-4, 19-26
Monday 25 Dec	Luke 2: 1-20	Singing the Faith 195 (Christians, awake, salute the happy morn)	Psalm 110
Tuesday 26 Dec	Acts 7: 51-60	Singing the Faith 188 (There's a light upon the mountains)	Psalm 13
Wednesday 27 Dec	John 21: 19b-25	Singing the Faith 366 (Thou hidden source of calm repose)	Psalm 117
Thursday 28 Dec	Matthew 2: 13-18	Singing the Faith 218 (Unto us a boy is born!)	Psalm 124
Friday 29 Dec	Isaiah 11: 1-9	Singing the Faith 199 (Glory be to God on high)	Psalm 96
Saturday 30 Dec	Revelation 21: 1-8	Singing the Faith 202 (Hark! The herald-angels sing)	Psalm 128

We pray for those who struggle with illness, frailty and loneliness.  
 For those who are grieving, isolated or depressed.  
 For those whose relationships are broken.  
 In our prayer diary we are asked to pray for...

Lord you know our needs, spoken and unspoken. In the silence we think of  
 others known to us.

In all our struggles, you are there. Make us sensitive to the difficulties that other  
 people face so that we are able to support each other through hard times.

We pray for the opportunity to bring your joy into the lives of others.

***Let there be joy shared among us***

***Ann Walker***

## The Last Candle - The Birth of Christ



### Christmas Day

**Leader:** Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord

**All:** Thanks be to God

**Leader:** Today is Christmas Day , in which we remember the hope we have in Christ. Today we light again the candles of hope, peace, love and joy.

*(Each candle will be lit as the reader speaks)*

**First Candle** We speak of hope - because God keeps his promises to us.

**Second Candle** We work for peace - because Jesus is the 'Prince of Peace' and he calls his children to work for peace in his name.

**Third Candle** We show love - because Jesus gave everything for us and led us to know the forgiveness of God.

**Fourth Candle** We share joy - because the Holy Spirit fills our hearts and minds letting us know God is with us.

**Last Candle** (Christmas Day) Now we light our last candle to remember the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As the prophets promised so long ago, you have come to us once again; and with the shepherds, we are filled with wonder and amazement.

*(Light the white Christ candle now)*

Lord, you come as a tiny, fragile baby; yet we know that you are God and you are with us. May the flame of this candle remind us that you are the light of the world and that if we follow you, we will never walk in darkness, but will have the true light of life.

**All:** Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.



# WORD SEARCH

Solution at the end

A	D	V	E	N	T	E	M	H	S	H	O	P	E
X	N	H	J	Y	S	H	E	U	G	O	Y	J	D
G	Y	G	B	N	L	M	S	V	G	L	O	O	J
A	F	P	E	A	C	E	S	T	Y	Y	Q	S	X
B	M	C	T	L	J	M	I	S	U	S	N	E	C
R	N	Y	H	F	O	B	A	H	G	P	H	P	R
I	N	N	L	H	T	F	H	E	M	I	Y	H	A
E	S	H	E	E	P	W	T	P	K	R	N	M	T
L	M	D	H	L	S	U	J	H	K	I	N	G	S
J	Y	W	E	B	X	I	W	E	E	T	O	P	D
F	R	M	M	A	N	G	E	R	S	L	O	V	E
K	R	A	G	T	P	A	B	D	D	U	O	N	G
C	H	R	I	S	T	M	A	S	G	M	S	R	Y
P	X	Y	J	V	D	R	T	Y	E	K	N	O	D

- |                   |         |           |        |           |        |         |        |             |
|-------------------|---------|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|---------|--------|-------------|
| ANGEL OF THE LORD | ADVENT  | BETHLEHEM | CENSUS | CHRISTMAS | DONKEY | GABRIEL | GOLD   | HOLY SPIRIT |
| HOPE              | INCENSE | INN       | KINGS  | JOY       | LOVE   | JESUS   | JOSEPH | MAGI        |
| MANGER            | MESSIAH | MYRRH     | PEACE  | SHEPHERDS | SHEEP  | STABLE  | STAR   | MARY        |

# The Light

Once upon a time, a long time ago, four little boys were wondering what to do with their lives. The world they lived in was in turmoil, corruption, wars and disasters seemed to abound. There was no peace anywhere, everyone was sad and unhappy, love seemed to be a thing of the past and there was no hope anywhere of a better future for anyone. "Why did you give us these ridiculous names?" they asked their careworn parents. "We are a laughing stock wherever we go". The unhappy parents replied, "We thought that when you grew up and went out into the world you may be able to live up to your names and to make a difference, however small"

As the boys grew older, into young men, they thought about these words and about what they might be able to achieve. They each decided to go travelling to seek out what they could do to improve their world and the lot of the people in it. They set off in different directions with no clear idea of where they were going. They agreed to meet up in a year's time in a small town called Bethlehem to share their experiences.

They had many adventures, hardships and excitement on their travels but nothing that was going to change the way of the world into a better place. It was still bogged down in greed, injustice, disasters, wars and sadness.

They met up in Bethlehem, as planned, only to find that it was heaving with people who had travelled to their home town to be registered for the census. There was nowhere for them to spend a few days to catch up with each other and to rest before travelling home. Eventually they found an inn with some outbuildings to let. They thought that this would at least offer them shelter for the night.

There was a young family there already, attracting some attention, a mother, a father and a young baby in a manger. There seemed to be people from all walks of life, coming to view the baby, rumours of a King, a Messiah. In all their travels they had never come across anything like it.

They went in. Hope, Peace, Love and Joy surrounded the baby and they were filled with feelings they had never experienced before. At last they knew why they had their "ridiculous" names and why they had not understood their meanings before on their travels.

To take these gifts into the world they had to first find Jesus. Having found him in that humble stable, they could then go out into the world again taking the gifts of Hope, Peace, Love and Joy, together with the gift of Jesus, to bring Light into their dark world.

***Kathy Evans***

## Christmas Pause – Joy Revisited

Christ has been born again. The festivities are concluded. People have gathered to worship. There has been fun and friction as families are together more than normal.

For a week the meetings have all stopped and our home has adapted to “Chris time” again. Caring, sharing and games are the order of each day. For Christ wounded and wonderful demands that days should be full of interaction. I slow down as nights of caring steal my sleep, thankful still to have the chance to show my love. The days become gentler, more peaceful as a gracious rhythm sets in.

Act, read, reflect, pray, keep silence and give thanks says the Methodist Church. Here in the Christmas pause there is time for all this and Joy permeates my being. Thank you, God.

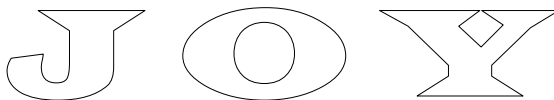
***Alison Parker***

Jesus said, 'Love one another as I have loved you.'

Love brings Hope,  
Hope gives us more personal Peace,  
Peace has it's own Joy.  
Love does so many things- Love overcomes.

With hope and peaceful joy in our hearts from our Lord Jesus, we can't help but Love.

***Marion Wales***



“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15 verse 13)”

Love; Joy; Hope; Peace.

Words frequently seen on Christmas cards, words associated with the Christmas season.

Goodwill, Comfort and Joy!

Father Christmas, elves, children round eyed and innocent at the wonder of Christmas.

A time of twinkling lights, carols, cards, presents, parties – all to celebrate the season!

But there’s the rub! Celebrate “the season”

And Jesus?

He doesn’t seem to get much mention, except in “Away in a Manger”.

A huge party ignoring His birthday.

We are challenged - where is the balance?

We want to remember Jesus, and we want to enjoy the season.

But the dictates of society pull us and we get caught up in a whirlwind of activity.

Preparations, choosing presents, making endless lists -

whilst Jesus waits – waits for us to find time for him;

to remember that Christmas begins with Christ.

Love, joy, hope and peace are not to be found in the trappings,

but springing from God’s all-encompassing love.

Christmas - God sending His Son to be born a baby

and given the name Jesus because he saves us from our sin:

Immanuel, God with us.

That’s the real wonder of Christmas!

Father God, we ask your forgiveness because we so often approach Christmas from the wrong direction. We are caught up with the trimmings, those things which so often detract from the true meaning of Christmas. Help us to find the balance during Advent, allowing us to enjoy the season, but also come closer to you.

Loving Lord, words by Charles Wesley resonate within us. “Our God, contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man” and we find wonder, praise and adoration welling up in our hearts.

Sovereign God, all our hope is in you and we pray that this Christmastide, by your grace we will experience your wondrous love, filling us with the joy which comes from knowing you, and your peace in our hearts. Amen

*Jacqueline Simpson*



# WANTED

A reliable **star** to lead a small party westwards.  
Bright with a good sense of direction.  
No timewasters.  
Send CV to **Childtrek, Earth**.

This **light** led the wise men to a place of  
**HOPE, PEACE, LOVE** and **JOY**.

Could **We** be reliable stars for Jesus today?



Christ, our light, gives us hope, grace, mercy, peace, sanctuary, healing, truth, light, joy, understanding and love.

Lighten our darkness Lord we pray.

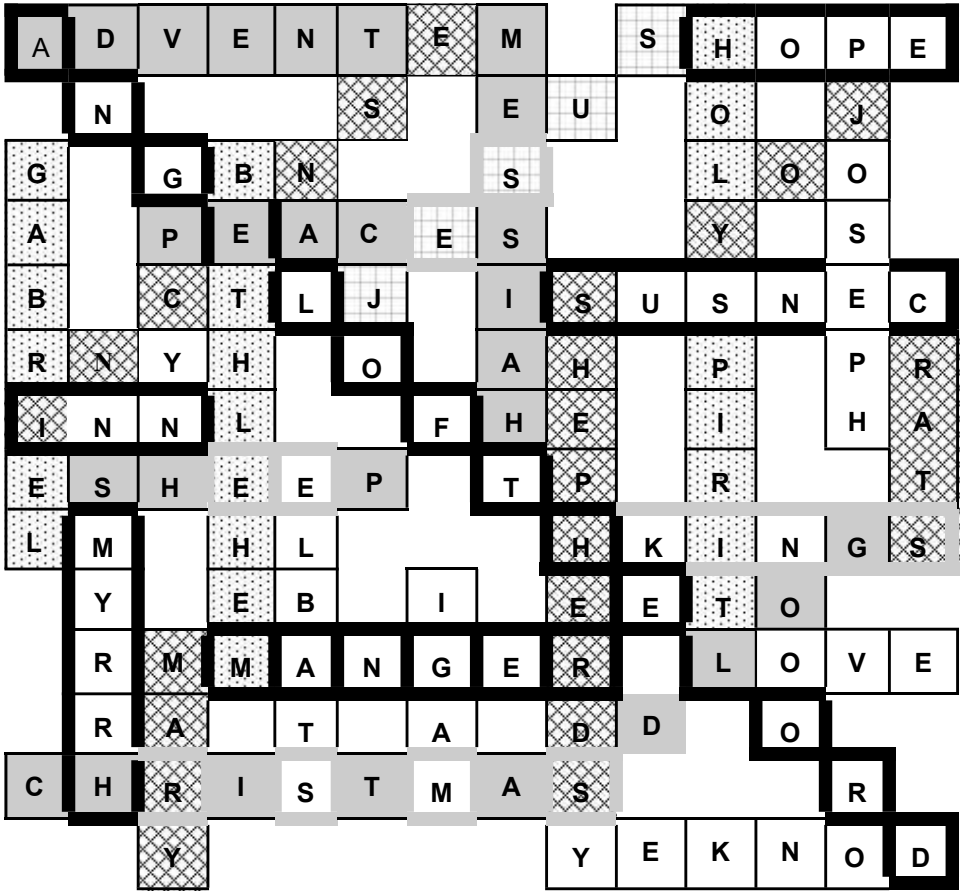
Put peace in our hands to share with others.

Put love in our hearts and let it overflow.

Put hope in our minds to know how we can be people you desire us to be.

Put joy in our eyes and words as we speak of you.

L I G H T



J O P  
 H O Y P E  
 L O V A C  
 I G H T E  
 T

*Tracey Darling*

