

## CLOSING PRAYERS

Lord, as we wait during this Advent season,  
let us remember the one who is full of patience,  
who is not afraid of silence,  
who does not jostle for attention.  
Who slipped into Bethlehem one night, mostly unnoticed;  
who lived thirty years without headlines or hurry;  
who frequently took time alone with his patient father;  
who waited for the right time to become the suffering servant;  
who stood quietly before the noise of his accusers;  
whose silence overpowered their words;  
who died, then rose again on a quiet Sunday morning.  
Who patiently waits for us  
and who longs for us to do the same.  
Amen

**Author unknown**



A candle burns, the sign of our hope.  
God of hope, come to us again this Advent.  
May your hope live within us, burning as a light in our lives.

**David Hamflett**, from *Candles and Conifers*



## LET US PRAY ADVENT

### WEEK 1: HOPE

#### INTRODUCTION

This is the first of four weekly meetings to help us prepare to welcome the Christ child into our hearts this Christmas.

The purpose of the sessions is to offer an oasis of peace and friendship amidst the busyness of all that is going on at this time of year and an opportunity to pray and reflect together on what Christ's presence in our world of today means for us. What are the comforts and challenges of that knowledge?

As we journey together over four weeks, we will seek to deepen our relationship with the God who loves and cares for us, as we prepare to welcome the Christ child who brings the gifts of hope, peace, joy and love.

The sessions will be based around those four themes of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love and will include music; art; readings from scripture and/or spiritual writers; a period of guided prayer/reflection, with opportunities to experience different ways of praying; and some questions for discussion, to challenge us to explore our faith a little more deeply and to grow as we journey together this Advent. Each session will also end with a further short period of prayer.

*The theme of this first session is Hope.*

*Our first hope is that you will find this a welcoming space for us to pray, to imagine, to rest, and to dream as we contemplate hope in our own lives – where we find hope, what questions hope holds, and how it invites us to engage with the wider world.*

## WAITING AND WATCHING

Advent is about two comings. It's about waiting and watching for the coming of the Christ child – new life, new birth, new hope coming into our world and into our lives. It is the fulfilment of God's promises. But it's also about waiting and watching for the end times when the fullness of God's kingdom will be revealed. Both these advents signify the coming together of humanity and divinity.

We are called to prepare the way of the Lord. We watch and reflect on who we are. We live with expectancy and anticipation of God's presence in our lives.

**Michael K Marsh**, from *Interrupting the Silence*

Waiting is essential to the spiritual life. But waiting as a disciple of Jesus is not empty waiting. It is waiting with a promise in our hearts that makes already present what we are waiting for. We are always waiting, but it is waiting in the conviction that we have already seen God's footsteps. As we wait, we remember him for whom we are waiting, and as we remember Him we create a community ready to welcome him when he comes.

**Henri Nouwen**, from *Bread for the Journey*

## JOURNEYING TOGETHER

Advent is a time when the Church stands up in the face of the busyness of life and asks us to slow down, be still, and be quiet.

We are to keep awake, looking and listening for the God who is always coming to us. We are called to prepare the way of the Lord. We watch and reflect on who we are.

We live with expectancy and anticipation of God's presence in our lives. We wait for the angelic messenger that promises us that the womb of our humanity will bear a child named Jesus. Advent reminds us that waiting and watching in trusting hope are holy work.

So how do we do this?

Silence is the key. Silence is a way of waiting, a way of watching, and a way of listening to what is going on within and around us. We come to self-knowledge through stillness and silence, through attentiveness and watchfulness.

Adapted from **Michael K Marsh**, from *Interrupting the Silence*

## MEETING GOD IN THE SILENCE

In the first book of Kings, God speaks to the prophet Elijah but His voice is not to be found in the power of the hurricane, in the roar of the earthquake or in the heat of the fire. Instead, God reveals Himself in the gentle whisper of the breeze. It is here, in the quiet, that God speaks to Elijah in a small, still voice. Elijah meets God in the silence and this is where we too can encounter Him in moments of quiet contemplation.

## LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF GENTLE LOVE

Listen to your heart. It's there that Jesus speaks most intimately to you. Praying is first and foremost listening to Jesus who dwells in the very depths of your heart. He doesn't shout. He doesn't thrust himself upon you. His voice is an unassuming voice, very nearly a whisper, the voice of a gentle love. Whatever you do with your life, go on listening to the voice of Jesus in your heart.

**Henri Nouwen**

## JOURNEYING WITH HOPE

A seed in the ground. A flame in the darkness. A hand outstretched. A child in the womb. Hope starts small and overtakes us, stretching the borders of what we have known.

**Jan Richardson**, from *Walking the Way of Hope*,  
A Women's Christmas Retreat, 2017 [www.janrichardson.com](http://www.janrichardson.com)

Hope knows its own way. It is a mystery, but it has a path, an invitation, a labyrinth for us to walk. As with a labyrinth, the way of hope does not allow us to see far ahead. But this way invites us to keep walking, to dream of how the path will unfold, and to trust that what we need will come to us.

**Jan Richardson**, from *Walking the Way of Hope*,  
A Women's Christmas Retreat, 2017 [www.janrichardson.com](http://www.janrichardson.com)

## PRAYER

God of hope, be with us on our Advent journey to the stable and beyond  
Be with us in our meeting and our travelling together.  
Be with us on our Advent journey to the stable and beyond,  
our God of hope.

**John Birch**, from *The Little Book of Advent*