

An Advent Candle Liturgy introducing A Methodist Way Of Life

During Advent we are being encouraged to focus on the new Connexional material inviting us to rediscover what it means to be Methodist people. There was meant to be a liturgy written but it hasn't appeared, so I've had a go at writing something using the Advent themes if churches want to use it or folk want to light candles at home.

Advent Sunday: November 29 to be done at home

On the first Sunday of Advent we remember that God calls us to be his people. We light the first candle in Advent to commit ourselves in an uncertain world to watch and wait for God's light to come in Jesus.

God who comes in Jesus, we thank you today for your call on us to be the people called Methodist in our Circuit and in our church. As we look towards Christmas we commit ourselves to worship, to watch, to wonder and to be the light in our communities.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer. Jesus, Saviour of all, come to us again. Amen.

Sunday December 6: Advent 2

On the second Sunday of Advent we remember that God shares good news through prophets and preachers and people who simply share good news around us. As Methodist people, we are called to worship, to pray daily, and look and listen for God in Scripture and in the world. We light the second candle to commit ourselves to the things that Methodists have always used to help people grow in faith: lively worship, faithful prayer, regular bible reading and looking for the Kingdom all around us.

God who comes in Jesus, we thank you today for the prophets amongst us. We thank you for the promise of new beginnings and the challenge of your words which call us to radical discipleship. As we look towards Christmas we commit ourselves to a life that is full of praise and trust in your eternal promises.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer. Jesus, Saviour of all, come to us again. Amen.

Sunday 13 December: Advent 3

On the third Sunday of Advent we remember the message of John the Baptist to change our ways and prepare for the way of the Lord. He called for religiosity to be less narrow to think less about rules and more about making sure all are valued.

As Methodist people, we are called to care for ourselves and those around us, to learn more about our faith and to practice hospitality and generosity. We light the third candle to commit ourselves to relearning what putting our faith into practice means, that through our conversations about what we believe, our churches will be centres of care, sensitivity and welcome for all, and to commit ourselves to be prepared to change when we are confronted by God's word brought to us.

God who comes to us in Jesus, we thank you today for those who remind us to look after ourselves and others, for our bible study groups and times of reflection, and for your call to be inclusive as you open your arms to include everyone.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer. Jesus, Saviour of all, come to us again. Amen.

Sunday 20 December – Advent 4

On the fourth Sunday of Advent we remember the visit of the angel Gabriel to the teenager Mary. Mary is to bear God's son and is overwhelmed with the possibilities of a new world happening soon. She sings a new song heralding an upside down Kingdom.

As Methodist people, we are called to serve others wherever they are, to lift up the lowly, to care for creation and to challenge injustice. We light the fourth candle to commit ourselves to being open to respond to God's call on us to say yes, even if we aren't sure what we can offer will make much difference. Methodists believe in all member ministry. We all have gifts to share and Gabriel reminds us that God always spots potential! How will we open our hearts and our hands as Christ is born this year? Maybe we are just who is needed.

God who comes to us in Jesus, we thank you today for angelic interventions in life, for those who encourage us to say yes, who give us a bigger picture, who make it clear that the promises of God are much greater than we can imagine. We might say "how can this be?" but with you O God, all things are possible.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer. Jesus, Saviour of all, come to us again. Amen.

Christmas Day

As Christmas, the moment of incarnation dawns, we receive the Christ child just where we are. Jesus was born in mess and chaos and this year Christmas will be different for people, but maybe the message he comes into our darkness and confusion and disappointment and in the middle of a pandemic of which we are now very tired, is amazing and timely good news. Shepherds hear the news and rush to experience it for themselves. They must have then told others about it! Methodist people believe in evangelism, telling the good news of Jesus. As Methodist people we are called to speak of the love of God which comes down to us, to tell the story in words people can understand and to take every opportunity to share faith with others. We have good news of great joy for all the people: this day is born a Saviour, he is Christ the Lord! We light the Christ candle at Christmas 2020 to celebrate that the light shines in the darkness and the darkness shall never put it out.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer. God who has come to us in Jesus abide with us today and always. Help us to be embodiments of good news so others may know you in us and through us. Amen

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