

COLLECTED  
PRAYERS  
FOR ADVENT,  
CHRISTMAS  
AND EPIPHANY  
FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP

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# Introduction

'Hi Nick. Do you have something among your many prayers on the subject of Mary . . . of Joseph . . . of Advent expectation . . . of the shepherds . . . of the magi . . .?' So I could continue. I've lost count of the number of phone calls, letters or emails I've received along just such lines from friends, colleagues or readers seeking inspiration concerning a particular theme. And it's always good being able to help if I possibly can. The trouble sometimes, though, is knowing where to look. Yes, I think, I'm sure I wrote something on that somewhere, but where was it exactly? With numerous prayer and study books now in print, it's difficult to remember in which of them a particular prayer appears, so I end up thumbing through one after another before I finally track it down. What I really needed, I decided, was all the prayers of a particular type organised in one place, and so was born the series of which this book is the second, alongside collected intercessions and collected prayers for Lent, Holy Week and Easter.

Here you will find in a single volume all of the prayers for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany I've written over the years, many of them revised and adapted for public worship through the addition of congregational responses. They are arranged under the themes of Approach, Praise, Confession, Thanksgiving, Petition and Intercession, with the addition of closing and reflective prayers, and a short section for Christingle. The aim is to offer an easy-to-use resource that will offer help and inspiration to all those entrusted with leading public prayer during this special time of year.

If this compilation helps you to articulate more fully something of the wonder of these much-loved seasons, then it will more than have served its purpose.

*Nick Fawcett*

ADVENT

# First week of Advent

## *Approach*

1

Lord Jesus Christ,  
we have come to worship you in this glad season of Advent,  
a season of expectation,  
of celebration,  
and, above all, of preparation.  
We come now, because we want to be ready –  
ready to give thanks for your coming,  
to recognise the ways you come to us now,  
and to welcome you when you come again.  
Open our hearts as we worship you,  
so that all we share may give us a deeper understanding of this season  
and a fuller experience of your love.  
Amen.

## *Praise*

2

Loving God,  
we rejoice in this season of good news and goodwill;  
we celebrate once more the birth of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
the Prince of Peace,  
the Lord of lords,  
the Word made flesh,  
and we praise you for the assurance of his final triumph.  
For your coming through him,  
and promise to come again,  
**Lord, we worship you.**

We rejoice at your coming among us through Jesus,  
bearing our flesh and blood,  
living our life and sharing our humanity,  
entering our world,  
and walking our earth.  
For your coming through him,  
and promise to come again,  
**Lord, we worship you.**

We rejoice at your suffering and dying among us,  
 your victory over death,  
 triumph over evil,  
 and promise that the kingdom will come.  
 For your coming through him,  
 and promise to come again,  
**Lord, we worship you.**

We rejoice at the wonder of this season,  
 its message of love and forgiveness,  
 its promise of peace and justice,  
 and the gift of life everlasting of which it speaks.  
 For your coming through him,  
 and promise to come again,  
**Lord, we worship you.**

Loving God,  
 we rejoice again in this season of good news and goodwill,  
 and we look forward to that day when the Jesus of Bethlehem will be the  
 Lord of all.  
 For your coming through him,  
 and promise to come again,  
**Lord, we worship you.**  
 Amen.

**3**  
 Loving God,  
 we praise you again for this season of Advent,  
 this time of preparation, thanksgiving, challenge and reflection.  
 Open our hearts to all you would say now,  
**and help us to listen.**

We praise you that in fulfilment of your eternal purpose  
 you came to our world in Christ,  
 revealing the extent of your love,  
 showing us the way to life,  
 allowing us to know you for ourselves.  
 Open our hearts to all you would say now,  
**and help us to listen.**

**20**

Eternal God,  
remind us that you alone truly know the future,  
your promises of old having found fulfilment in Christ,  
the message of the Law and prophets being vindicated by his birth,  
death  
and resurrection.

Help us,  
remembering all you have so faithfully done,  
to trust in all you will yet do,  
confident that, in the fullness of time,  
your purpose will be accomplished  
and your kingdom will dawn.  
Amen.

**21**

Almighty God,  
we've no problem with praying for the dawn of your kingdom,  
for words are easy enough to say,  
but when it comes to bringing it closer here on earth  
it's a different story,  
for suddenly it involves us as well as you –  
our willingness to serve,  
to love,  
to give  
and to sacrifice.  
We back away,  
afraid of what that might demand and cost,  
yet you have made clear in Christ that this is what true discipleship means:  
not just proclaiming your kingdom but helping to build it,  
working in whatever way possible to accomplish your will,  
here and now.  
Give us a vision not just of the future but also of the present.  
Show us what you would have us do  
and help us to do it,  
so that when we pray 'Your kingdom come',  
we may truly mean it.  
Amen.

*Reflective prayer***105**

Living God,  
 I thought I'd responded,  
 that I'd professed my faith and offered my commitment,  
 but I hadn't,  
 not fully,  
 not as you wanted me to.  
 I'd offered a part of me,  
 but the rest was still firmly mine,  
 ring-fenced,  
 not to be disturbed,  
 kept quietly away from any challenge you might bring.  
 I was ready to serve,  
 so long as your goals were mine;  
 ready to follow,  
 so long as our paths coincided,  
 but the thought of loving proving costly,  
 discipleship bringing demands,  
 well, quite simply I pushed it aside,  
 hoping that what I couldn't see I could safely ignore.  
 Only I couldn't,  
 for instead of having a foot in both camps,  
 I didn't have one in either,  
 life lived neither fully for me nor for you.  
 Forgive me, Lord,  
 and teach me to consecrate myself wholly to your service:  
 to be used as you would use me,  
 to serve as you would have me serve,  
 confident that though I may not have the resources needed,  
 your strength will see me through.  
 Amen.

*Closing prayer***106**

Go now in joy and peace,  
 and the blessing of Jesus Christ –  
 Light of the world and Light of life –  
 be with you this day and for all eternity.  
 Amen.

139

Gracious God,  
teach us that your coming into the world was not without cost;  
that you gave of yourself,  
surrendering your life to bring us light.  
Help us,  
as we celebrate your birth,  
to remember also your death  
and to be ready in turn to give as well as receive  
in the service of your kingdom.  
Amen.

*Reflective prayer*

140

We sang carols, Lord, and offered our worship.  
We sent cards and handed out presents.  
We ate, drank and made merry,  
celebrating,  
giving thanks,  
rejoicing in another Christmas season.  
Only then we saw the scenes on the news,  
the report in the paper,  
the faces on the poster –  
images of drought and famine, hunger and disease:  
bellies swollen,  
limbs protruding,  
eyes glazed over in dull despair,  
bodies limp and lifeless –  
and we knew that *you* were not rejoicing,  
but crying out for help,  
calling us to respond from our plenty to their need,  
to give to you through giving to them,  
to celebrate Christmas by helping others to celebrate life.  
How could we forget, Lord?  
How could we celebrate the greatest gift ever given in self-indulgence,  
extravagance,  
greed;  
our worship saying one thing,  
our lives another;  
good news for all turned to good news for us.

Forgive us,  
 and teach us to make room for both:  
 to sing carols and offer worship,  
 to send cards and give presents,  
 to eat, drink and be merry,  
 but also to reach out to a world in need  
 and to respond in love.  
 Amen.

### *Closing prayers*

**141**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
 build your kingdom here on earth.  
 Lord hear us,  
**graciously hear us.**

Saviour Christ,  
 rescue your people.  
 Lord hear us,  
**graciously hear us.**

Light of the world,  
 scatter our darkness.  
 Lord hear us,  
**graciously hear us.**

Prince of peace,  
 heal our wounds.  
 Lord hear us,  
**graciously hear us.**

Lamb of God,  
 have mercy upon us.  
 Lord hear us,  
**graciously hear us.**

Word made flesh,  
 make us new.  
 Lord hear us,  
**graciously hear us.**

*Confession*

**162**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
we recall today how you entered your world  
and the world did not know you;  
how you came to your own people,  
and they would not receive you;  
how you were born in Bethlehem,  
and there was no room for you in the inn.  
From the beginning it was the same old story –  
your love rejected,  
your grace ignored.  
**Lord have mercy,  
and teach us to receive you with gladness.**

We remember that you came to set people free  
and to offer a new relationship with God –  
breaking down the barriers that keep us apart,  
bearing the price of our disobedience,  
opening up the way to life.  
Yet we remember, too, that though some listened for a moment,  
few followed you to the end.  
Time and again it was the same old story –  
your love rejected,  
your grace ignored.  
**Lord have mercy,  
and teach us to receive you with gladness.**

We know we are no better,  
each of us guilty, day after day, of spurning your guidance,  
forgetting your goodness  
and abandoning your way.  
We talk of commitment,  
but our faith is weak;  
we speak of following you,  
but follow only our own inclinations;  
we claim to be a new creation,  
but it is the old self that still holds sway.  
Time and again it is the same old story –  
your love rejected,  
your grace ignored.  
**Lord have mercy,  
and teach us to receive you with gladness.**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
 we marvel that, despite it all –  
 the world's hostility and our own faithlessness –  
 still you reach out in love,  
 never giving up,  
 refusing to write us off.  
 We thank you that you are always ready to offer a fresh start,  
 a new beginning,  
 to anyone willing to receive it.  
 Come what may, it is the same old story –  
 you continue seeking us out,  
 however often we thrust you aside,  
 your love rejected,  
 your grace ignored.  
**Lord have mercy,**  
**and teach us to receive you with gladness.**  
 Amen.

163

Forgive us, Lord,  
 for we struggle to grasp the wonder of your love,  
 the miracle of what you have done in Christ.  
 Lord, hear us,  
**graciously hear us.**

We lose sight of the reality that you lived and died among us,  
 walking our earth,  
 sharing our humanity.  
 Lord, hear us,  
**graciously hear us.**

We forget that the stable at Bethlehem was the start of something  
 that would change history for ever,  
 its impact still reverberating around the world today.  
 Lord, hear us,  
**graciously hear us.**

We fail to understand the way you can work in our lives,  
 how small beginnings can yield unexpected results  
 out of all proportion to our faith.  
 Lord, hear us,  
**graciously hear us.**

**291**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
in a world where so much holds people captive,  
denying the life and light you long to give them,  
bring an end to the darkness.  
Comfort those who grieve,  
support those who suffer,  
provide for those in need,  
and strengthen the weak in body, mind or spirit.  
Encourage all who work to disperse the gloom,  
and inspire us and others to respond in turn,  
so that there may be laughter after tears,  
delight after despair,  
and sunshine after shadow.  
Amen.

**292**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
light of the world,  
shine again upon us we pray,  
and illuminate the darkness of this world  
through your life-giving grace.  
Amen.

**293**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
may the flame of faith burn brightly within us,  
and your light shine in our hearts,  
so that we, in turn, may bring light to others,  
to the glory of your name.  
Amen.

**294**

Reach out, Lord, into our world,  
and cause your light to shine.  
Where hatred brings war,  
disaster causes devastation,  
injustice leads to poverty,  
intolerance breeds violence,  
disease creates despair  
and life entails suffering,  
be there in the darkness,  
restoring joy, faith, hope and love.  
Amen.

**295**

Thank you, Lord, for being with us in our darkness,  
your light continuing to shine through trouble and tragedy,  
turmoil and tears.

Break through where shadows still linger,  
into our doubt and disbelief,  
our disobedience,  
our flawed commitment and weakness of will.  
Illuminate all through the radiance of your love.  
Amen.

**296**

Light of the world,  
shine wherever there is darkness today.  
Where there is pain and sorrow,  
may the brilliance of your love bring joy.  
Where there is sickness and suffering,  
may your healing touch bring sunshine after the storm.  
Where there is greed and corruption,  
may your radiance scatter the shadows.  
Where there is hatred and bitterness,  
may your brightness dispel the clouds.  
Amen.

**297**

Shine afresh into the darkness of this world, Lord,  
and disperse the shadows of sorrow,  
hurt,  
hatred,  
violence  
and war.  
Break into the night-time of evil and injustice,  
and usher in a new dawn.  
Illuminate all in the sunshine of your love.  
Amen.

**298**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
shine afresh into our hearts,  
so that even where all seems bleak we may find reason to celebrate,  
cause to rejoice.  
Come into the darkness of our world,  
its hatred, suffering and evil,  
and somehow, through your grace,  
work within such things for good.  
Amen.

*Reflective prayer*

**299**

Lord,  
there is so much I don't understand,  
so much that, if I'm honest, troubles me:  
questions concerning evil and suffering,  
the nature of truth and authority of Scripture;  
uncertainties concerning the origins of life and our ultimate goal;  
doubts over matters of creed and doctrine,  
even sometimes your very existence.  
I don't question lightly, far from it,  
for such things strike at the heart of my faith,  
threatening everything I believe –  
or, at least, everything I'm meant to believe –  
yet I can't help it,  
for there's no use pretending,  
no point claiming everything is all right when it clearly isn't.  
I might fool others,  
but not you,  
or me,  
so where would that get us?  
No,  
I can only continue searching,  
looking for answers for as long as it takes,  
trusting that one day, in your own time,  
the quest will be over,  
the journey complete,  
the understanding I seek finally granted.