

GROW IN ADVENT

Watching, Waiting and Praying

Waiting. Maybe not our favourite activity? Even in this season when we've brought Christmas celebrations so far forward in our impatience that we can tire of the whole thing before the actual day has even arrived, the Advent calendar teaches children the waiting game. The whole season of Advent helps us to rediscover the art and blessing of waiting.

God's people had been waiting for centuries for the prophesies of rescue to come to pass.

We might be waiting for signs that God is at work in the world, longing for evidence of his Spirit bringing people back to the Father. We might be impatiently waiting for the fruit of our prayers; for signs that God still cares, that we can trust him over a difficult situation or a hoped- for healing.

There is a wonderful line in the song 'Sovereign' that we've been singing this season in our 10.30 services: "You are working in our waiting." We might say that with God, the journey is as important as the destination.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPkMbhydU9I>

The act of watching, waiting and praying is good for the soul. It makes us keep close to the coat tails of the One who will guide us: in our frustration we seek him; rail at

him; wrestle with him; throw down our human schemes and admit defeat, finding

November 2016



peace in the most unexpected place: surrender. If answers came swiftly, we would have no need to linger with the father but would skip away like spoiled children who get the thing they want but who leave with hearts impoverished.

Prayer = watching and waiting. Waiting in the Father's lap rather than trying to solve everything our way. Watching to see what God is doing, what He is saying.

How could you do more watching and waiting this Advent: in other words, more praying?

Times to pray together as a body at CCD: Mondays and Tuesdays at 9.15; Wed at 7.00 am. All at church for 30 minutes. Try it once and be surprised by the blessing.

Seek

Watch out for our big prayer adventure in January 2017! One week. People praying at Christ Church. 24/7 for 168 hours. 15-22nd January. Watch out for how you can get inspired and get involved.

<https://www.24-7prayer.com/>

Advent readings and challenges:

ACT: Bringing the Bible to life: Sign up and the Bible Society will send you 3 challenges each day from which you can pick one random act of kindness to perform.

<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/adventchallenge/>

READ: Explore App: sign up to this free download and receive daily readings and questions on your phone

<https://www.thegoodbook.co.uk/explore-app>

COLOUR: *Images of grace* by Jacqui Grace. Colour an illustrated Bible verse each day: perfect for developing serenity!

<https://www.thegoodbook.co.uk/images-of-grace>

SHARE: *XTB Christmas Unpacked*

Bible discovery for the season for children and families.

<https://www.thegoodbook.co.uk/xtb-christmas-unpacked>

Advent service themes:

Sun 27th Nov: Wait

Sun 4th Dec: Join

Sun 11th Stand

Sun 18th Watch

Sun 25th Begin

Sun 1st Jan Live

Book a time to watch and wait:

Choosing to do the opposite (watching and waiting) of what many of us are doing at this time of year (running round like headless chickens) is both invigorating and conversation starting.

See the attached article by Deb Turpin about her first experience of a Quiet Day.

You can book a place at an organised retreat; go to a retreat centre for your own quiet time; block out time in the diary for an hour's walk or share with a

friend by taking it in turns to babysit each other's children for a couple of hours.

(N.B Women's Retreat Day 2017 details coming soon.)

Spending time together

Men and Women's events: We have had a programme of events for both over the last few years. The aim is to grow connections across people of all ages and congregations, and also to provide you with a series of events to which you can invite friends and family who you would like to meet church folk in an enjoyable and non-threatening setting. What have you found helpful? What are good things to invite others to? We welcome your feedback and your thoughts for the future. Even if you haven't attended any events, it would be helpful if you filled in a questionnaire.

Please fill out the questionnaire attached, and send to me by December 1st.

Spreading joy

DIY Nativity: Get together with a group you belong to, or a group of friends or family, and create your own nativity scene. You could use dressing up, lego,

icing, toys, junk modelling- whatever inspires you. Take a photo and send it on your chosen day to me, along with a sentence saying "What Christmas means to us."

Sign up to choose which day you will send me the photo, and I will put one on the church facebook page and web site each day in December. We will show all the photos at the Crib Service and Christmas Day. Why not have a go with your home group/ family/ a club you belong to/ neighbours/ friendship group.

Questions? Feedback? Ideas to share?
Please contact me
anitadobson@christchurchdownend.com
or 07753233950

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Anita". The script is cursive and fluid.