

# starters for Sunday

## *Second Sunday of Advent*

### *Standing on the Outside*

**4 December 2016**

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank ALTERnativity for their thoughts on the second Sunday of Advent.

#### **Contents**

Introduction .....	2
Isaiah 11: 1-10 .....	2
Psalms 72: 1-7, 18-19 .....	3
Romans 15: 3-13 .....	3
Matthew 3: 1-12 .....	3
Sermon Ideas .....	4
Time with Children.....	5
Activities/Crafts for Messy Church and Children's Clubs.....	6
Prayers.....	6
Musical Suggestions .....	10
Dialogues, other readings, dramas.....	11
Additional Resources.....	12



## Quick Guide...

*Helping people prepare for reading the Bible in worship can make a real difference. Overcoming nerves, reading in ways suitable to the text, speaking clearly etc.*

You may wish to email these three links to the people reading Scripture on Sunday to support them in their involvement in worship: [Managing your nerves](#); [Creative readings](#); [Worship at the Lectern](#)

### Introduction

The Starters for Sunday, Advent 2016, are provided by Trustees and Supporters of ALTERnativity whose focus is to develop resources around “Just God, Simply Christmas”. We explore issues around Christmas relating to injustice, inequality and exclusion, both locally and globally, and provide resources for individuals, churches and community groups, to help them explore these issues, through prayer, worship and action. Our latest resources reflect our concerns - which are also reflected in our suggestions for Advent and Christmas services in these Starters for Sunday. The first new resource is “Loneliness – who cares? Simply connecting at Christmas.” - an adaptable resource pack of ideas and shared stories exploring loneliness, particularly at Christmas. It is currently being piloted in two Church of Scotland congregations. The second resource is a Family Box put together in collaboration with the team from Spill the Beans. It is modelled on our very successful Advent Star Boxes and contains ideas and activities for children and adults to enjoy each day throughout the period of Advent, again involving prayer and action. For further information on what we do please go to our [website](#).

### Week 2 theme: Standing on the Outside

#### [Isaiah 11: 1-10](#)

At the beginning of this passage we are told that the Messiah, who is to come, will be of David’s dynasty – a strong shoot, tough new growth on the healthy tree of the house of David. Verses 2 and 3 detail “fruits” which he will grow which are all gifts from God’s Spirit. In the second half of this passage, the writer establishes the Messiah’s work in restoring peace between humanity and creation. However, what he describes in terms of nature relates to humanity also – and points to a new age in which the strong will live peacefully with the weak (verse 6), ruthless



exploiters of the poor and needy will change their habits (verse 7) and the vulnerable will be immune from danger (verse 8). Verse 9 sums it up – there will be no more ill treatment or corruption. In this new world characterised by justice, righteousness and peace, and ruled by the Messiah (of David’s lineage) the “world shall be full of the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea.”

### [Psalm 72: 1-7, 18-19](#)

The chief emphasis of this psalm is on God’s concern for social justice, the relief of those in need, and the crushing of the oppressor. This is a kingship psalm, possibly used at enthronement festivals; and in verse 1, the word translated “justice” does not reflect that the original Hebrew word is plural – the psalmist is praying that God will give the king the power to do acts of justice. The psalm asks for shalom –wholeness between humanity and the rest of creation, and the restoration of justice and deliverance to those who are oppressed.

### [Romans 15: 3-13](#)

In this passage towards the end of Paul’s letter to the church in Rome, Paul is making one last appeal for unity within the Church. There is the need for unity between those weaker and those stronger in their faith; and between those who are Jewish and those who are not. Paul backs up his appeal with references to four passages which he quotes from the Greek version of the Old Testament. One of these is Isaiah 11: 10 (see above).

He blesses the people in the Church in Rome in verse 13, using words which evoke the strength and wonder of the Christian faith which should bind them together – hope, joy, peace, faith, and power.

### [Matthew 3: 1-12](#)

John the Baptist bursts on the scene with single-minded intent. He demonstrates in every way, the message he shouts from his home in the desert: he is separate from the cities and towns where people have turned away from worshipping God; he dresses with stark simplicity; he endures a minimalist diet (!) because his real food and drink are to do the will of God. People (even Pharisees and Scribes) come to hear him. He tells them that they have strayed far from the rule of God, and that God’s Kingdom is near at hand. They are to repent, and even those who



rely on their righteous status will not escape punishment if they do not repent. And he tells them of the coming of one greater than he is- who will baptise with fire and the Holy Spirit and not just water. He is the powerful outsider who has looked in on them and found them totally wanting.

## Sermon Ideas

### 1. Made to Stand on the Outside

- A) Intro – are you looking forward to Christmas, and what in particular do you like about the preparations?

(talk about them/ get the congregation to indicate liking or not – e.g. wave a magazine special with all its advice, or even one of the free magazines given out by supermarkets, urging us to buy their food and cook it! Talk about buying and wrapping gifts, meeting friends and family, letters to Santa, or the ubiquitous round robin letter, decorating tree, going to church – especially as Christmas Day is a Sunday this year (!!)

Ask – is it all too much? What would you miss out?

- B) Remind them of last year's John Lewis Advert where an old man alone on another planet was spotted by a young girl looking through her Christmas gift - a telescope. Ironically perhaps, she sent him a telescope so he could see her.

He was certainly on the outside looking in! Who can they think of who are on the outside looking in to our world today? (those with money difficulties, homeless, ill, bereaved, refugees/asylum seekers, folk separated from family, too old to travel and far from home...)

- C) Look at the readings from Isaiah 11, and the Psalm. Compare those identified in B) above, with those the prophet and psalmist discuss in these passages whose situations are causing God concern.

- D) What can we do differently to celebrate Jesus' birth to ensure that everyone can be included in the celebration? What is the least we must do to be true to what God says his kingdom should be like?



## 2. Choosing to Stand Outside

- A) Intro – have you ever chosen to stand outside a group? e.g. supporters of a different football team; fear that you could not do what the group is there to do (climbing, running, playing chess, bridge...); political group you disagree with; a group with people in it that you don't like.
- B) John the Baptist chose to stand outside several groups including the religious establishment and the people who were leading hedonistic lives, careless of the needs of others – cite his clothes, diet, place of living and preaching.  
Who was he in his own eyes do you think? Do you think he staged this deliberately for impact?
- C) Describe the prophetic line he is in accord with – Isaiah 11; Psalm; Amos etc Detail what messages the prophets were carrying from God to the people. John also condemned ill treatment of the vulnerable and weak; and also predicted the coming of the Messiah to bring in God's Kingdom of justice, peace and righteousness.
- D) What does this say to US this Christmas? Where do WE stand in relation to where John the Baptist chose to stand? Are we closer to John, or to the Pharisees who came to check him out in terms of danger to them, or to those who heard his message, repented and were baptised???
- What, if anything, should we stand outside of this Christmas?

## Time with Children

### Christmas across the world

- How is Christmas celebrated in... [research a country with which you have ties or have someone who has lived elsewhere tell of their celebrations]
- Similarities and differences
- Look at countries where Christians are in a minority – how would that feel? What might other children think watching the celebrations? What would we like them to think?



## Activities/Crafts for Messy Church and Children's Clubs

### The Perfect Christmas

- Using pictures from magazines make collage of ideas for Christmas celebrations  
[lots of glue, newsprint, marker pens and messy stuff]
- Does everyone agree what would be fun/good to do? Does it matter that we have different ideas?
- What happens to children whose families cannot afford all this?

### Prayers

#### Opening Responses

Something is happening, someone is coming

#### Prepare the way of the Lord

Don't be afraid, he is coming with tenderness

#### Prepare the way of the Lord

Listen to him, he is speaking peace

#### Prepare the way of the Lord

He comes to give what is good; cry out good news

#### Prepare the way of the Lord

He is coming to make his home in our hearts

#### Prepare the way of the Lord

#### Closing Responses

Something is happening, someone is coming

#### What has been will pass away and all will be changed

Something is happening, someone is coming

#### The lowly will be lifted up and the mighty will be brought down

Something is happening, someone is coming

#### Love and faith will meet; justice and peace will kiss each other

Prepare a straight road in the wilderness of our lives

#### He is coming in the power and gentleness of the Spirit

© Kathy Galloway



**Collect**

Almighty God, you sent your servant John the Baptist  
To prepare your people to welcome the Messiah.  
Inspire the ministers and stewards of your truth  
To turn our disobedient hearts to you,  
That when the Christ shall come again  
To be our judge  
We may stand with confidence before his glory;  
Who is alive and reigns  
With you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**Thanksgiving**

We give thanks to you O God,  
that day after day, year after year,  
we can have absolute confidence  
in your love for us  
and in your understanding of our lives.  
We thank you that we find your faithfulness  
in your servants  
who have proclaimed, who still proclaim, who will proclaim  
the great news of the coming on earth of your kingdom –  
the kingdom where the oppressed and the marginalised,  
the poor in spirit and poor in material wealth,  
and all those who count for little in the ways of our world  
will be accepted and loved.  
And we praise you that all people – we -  
are invited to lift our heads above the trials of life  
and celebrate the sunrise of your arrival on the horizons of our world.  
Our hearts are filled with gratitude for this – the gift of the Messiah,  
the promise of the Kingdom.

**Thanks be to you, O God. Amen**



**Intercessions** (based on the reading from Romans)

Loving God who enfolds with love those on the outside  
and who knew in Jesus what it was like to be excluded  
-who befriended the despised Zacchaeus,  
the shunned prostitutes and sinners  
the untouchable lepers  
draw close to those at the edges of our communities  
and give them hope through the patience and encouragement of your people.

This advent, we remember those marginalised because of mental health issues.  
Who often suffer in silence because of stigma  
who reach out for help that is often not there because of stretched services  
who often feel bleak and helpless  
draw close to them with your wholeness  
and give them hope through the patience and encouragement of your people.

This advent we remember those marginalised because of poverty  
whose children cannot take part in Christmas celebrations because of the expense,  
who become increasingly indebted in an attempt to meet expectations  
who may have to use foodbanks for a Christmas meal  
draw close to them with your wholeness  
and give them hope through the patience and encouragement of your people.

This advent we remember those marginalised because of where they came from  
whose language is unfamiliar to us and whose customs we are strangers to  
who live with the fear of racism and violence,  
who long for separated families to be reunited.  
Draw close to them with your wholeness  
and give them hope through the patience and encouragement of your people.

God of Hope, use us, your people, as messengers to speak out for and work on behalf of those at the edges.



Give us patience and encouragement as promised  
so we might be faithful in supporting all those excluded and broken. Amen

### **Offering and Dedications**

Lord God, this is our offering to you and to your Church.

It's our way of saying yes to you and to what you are saying to us;  
it's a sign of our gratitude for the world around us, and the life within us.

We offer ourselves now in service to your Kingdom,  
for in Christ you have revealed your love for us all.

We thank you Lord God for your goodness to us,  
in giving meaning to our lives,  
and purpose to our living.

Come Lord Jesus, fill us with your Spirit,  
that we might live in you and you live in us,  
so that we can do what you would have us do.

As Christmas approaches help us, Lord God, to be calm and expectant,  
to enjoy this time of preparing.

May we budget our time as well as our money  
that we might not forget you, or ignore our neighbour.  
In our plenty keep us mindful of those who have nothing,  
in our rejoicing, keep us mindful of those who are sad.

In this season of giving and receiving,  
enable us by your grace to receive and give your love.

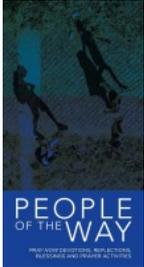
We thank you Lord God for the faith you give us,  
the love you provide that makes life wonderful,  
and the hope you offer which is not for this world alone.

We thank you the Church in heaven,  
and all those whom we loved, who are now in your presence,



Yet strangely close especially at this time of year.

With them, your family on earth and your family in heaven hear us as we say together the prayer our Lord has taught us; Our Father...



In addition to the above prayers, prepared by our contributor, other prayers may be found in *People of the Way* which is the theme for this year's Pray Now. It was also the theme for Heart and Soul 2016. *People of the Way* is available from [St Andrew Press](#).

## Musical Suggestions

### Praise

CH4 474	Hail to the Lord's Anointed
CH4 334	On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry

### Children

CH4 803	We will walk with God
CH4 792	Our God is a God who makes friends
MP 376	Jesus put this song into our hearts

### Thoughtful

CH4 284	Hope is a candle
CH4 710	I have a dream, a man once said
MP 1	A new commandment I give unto you

### Ending

CH4 286	Tell out my soul!
CH4 198	Let us build a house where love can dwell
MP 602	Sing we the King



## Dialogues, other readings, dramas

### Useful resources include

“Light Dawns” 100 meditations for public worship from Advent to Epiphany by Nick Fawcett

“Candles and Conifers” ~ Resources for All Saints and Advent edited by Ruth Burgess

### Voices from the margins (from Eildon Dyer)

#### **Voice 1: Umm Mahir: Gaza**

At the checkpoint you can wait for up to six hours. The Israeli army does not allow you to get out of the car; they shoot those who do. You must keep the windows closed even in summer. All this to protect the settlers from the Palestinians. Why not move them from our land so that we can move freely in our land and they can move freely in their land.

#### **Voice 2: Homeless man Rich: Pittsburgh**

I sit on the benches every day, all day because it seems like the place to be. In the summertime it's fun to watch the girls. Pittsburgh has the most beautiful women in the summer."

#### **Voice 3: Gideon HIV+ priest: Uganda**

It's not the condition itself that hurts (because many other diseases and conditions lead to serious suffering and death) but the stigma and the possibility of rejection and discrimination, misunderstanding and loss of trust that HIV positive people have to deal with.

#### **Voice 4: Alemalu: Dalit woman**

Because we are in this group we face a lot of caste problems. When we went to get water the high caste people said that 'now you are in a sangam you can't get water'. We have no graveyard – we have to be separate from the high caste. We have to use waste land which is very wet.



## Additional Resources

### Resourcing Mission



[Resourcing Mission](#) is host to Starters for Sunday and other key mission resources for download and purchase. Online booking is available for [Mission & Discipleship events](#). Please check back regularly, as new items are being added all the time. If there is something you'd like to see on this new site, please [contact us](#) via the website.

### Prayer Resources

These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might look for in prayers. [People of the Way](#) is available from [St Andrew Press](#).



### Music Resources

The hymns mentioned in this material are ideas of specific hymns you might choose for this week's themes. However, for some excellent articles on church music and ideas for new music resources, please check out our online music pages [Different Voices](#).

### Preaching Resources



These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might preach this Sunday. [Preachers Perspectives](#) is a resource where we have asked twelve preachers to share the insights they have gathered through their experiences of writing and delivering sermons regularly.

### Scots Worship Resources

[The Kirk's Ear](#) - Scots in the Kirk series for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and other times of the year

[Wurship Ouk bi Ouk](#) - Metrical psalms, hymns, prayers and words for worship

[Scots Sacraments](#) may give you helpful material if you are celebrating Communion or have a Baptism.

*The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to express its thanks to ALTERnativity for providing us with this Sunday's material.*

*Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.*

