

## ADVENT WEEK 1 - HOPE IN JESUS

**Joy to the world, the wait is over! The birth of Jesus ends the long wait for justice as an inextinguishable light joins us in the darkness.**

### READ

#### OLD TESTAMENT

For the Old Testament reading we explore Isaiah's prophesy for the coming King in Isaiah 9.2-7.

The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light.  
They lived in a land of shadows,  
but now light is shining on them.  
You have given them great joy, LORD;  
you have made them happy.  
They rejoice in what you have done,  
as people rejoice when they harvest their corn  
or when they divide captured wealth.  
For you have broken the yoke that burdened  
them  
and the rod that beat their shoulders.  
You have defeated the nation  
that oppressed and exploited your people,  
just as you defeated the army of Midian long  
ago.  
The boots of the invading army  
and all their bloodstained clothing  
will be destroyed by fire.  
A child is born to us!  
A son is given to us!  
And he will be our ruler.  
He will be called, "Wonderful Counsellor",  
"Mighty God", "Eternal Father",  
"Prince of Peace".  
His royal power will continue to grow;  
his kingdom will always be at peace.  
He will rule as King David's successor,  
basing his power on right and justice,  
from now until the end of time.  
The LORD Almighty is determined to do all this.

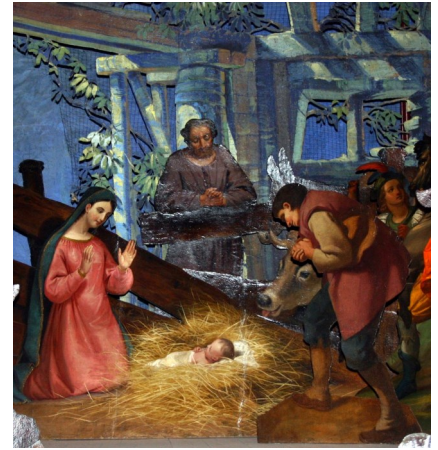
#### NEW TESTAMENT

For the New Testament reading we join with Simeon in celebrating the arrival of Jesus and God's promised salvation in Luke 2.29-32.

"Now, Lord, you have kept your promise,  
and you may let your servant go in peace.  
With my own eyes I have seen your salvation,  
which you have prepared in the presence of all  
peoples:  
A light to reveal your will to the Gentiles  
and bring glory to your people Israel."

## REFLECT

Thinking back to the start of advent and our reading in Week 1, we remember the verse from Habakkuk asking “how long, Lord?” Simeon had been asking that question too. He was a Jewish priest, and the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die before he saw what they had all been waiting for – the child of Isaiah’s prophecy, the Prince of Peace, the Messiah.



40 days after Jesus’ birth, Mary brings the baby Jesus into the temple (an act commemorated by Christians on the 2nd February as the feast of Candlemas). Simeon was inspired by the Holy Spirit to be in the temple on that day, something special was going to happen, and as soon as he laid eyes on Jesus he knew that long, long wait was over. The Son of God, the light of the world, the Messiah, had arrived.

As we begin to gather to celebrate Christmas and the birth of Jesus into the messiness of human life, God’s ultimate mission of rescue that, through the incarnation of Jesus enters its final stages, is also challenge and an invitation to us to participate through the pursuit of fairness and justice. Which brings us back to the question we asked at the very beginning of Advent - what are we waiting for?

## PRAY

Heavenly Father and Almighty God,  
Fill us, our families, our neighbours and our communities  
with joy and love this Christmas.

May Christmas kindle in us a fire for justice,  
may the light of your Son Jesus Christ shine in our hearts,  
our words and our deeds,  
and may the joy of his birth lighten even the darkest of places.

Amen

## ACT

Trying to achieve fairness and justice might seem like an overwhelming or intimidating task, but you’re not alone - God is with and in all those who show love to their neighbour. Fairness and justice are acts of love, and what is Christmas if not the joy of God’s ultimate act of love - sending his Son Jesus Christ to us.

As we prayed above, how can we show the light of hope and love shown through Jesus’ birth in our words and our actions to our neighbours, and challenge the injustices that cause them harm? And if you struggle to accept that love for yourself, could you open up to someone you trust to explore why?

If you’re ready to start the pursuit of justice in our community and to challenge those injustices, why not consider getting involved in community organizing, perhaps through Citizens Cymru. The Diocese is partnered with them to campaign, fight and achieve justice in and for local communities across Wales, from welcoming refugees to achieving the living wage for all, and many of our churches and deaneries are local members. You can find out more at [citizensuk.org/chapters/cymru-wales/](http://citizensuk.org/chapters/cymru-wales/)