**Advent Guided reflection – Week 1**

**Introduction and The Candle Of Hope**

**Teacher notes** (This resource will require you to have an Advent wreath or four candles/tealights in your classroom)

The meaning of the Christian season of Advent lies in waiting and anticipation. Schools across the world mark Advent in a way that enables children to anticipate Christmas as a Christian festival –as a celebration of the birth of Jesus and not just a time for presents.

Waiting shouldn’t simply mean wishing the time away until the anticipated thing comes, but learning to actively embrace the present as a time of hope.

In order to explore this further over the next four weeks, we are going to be looking at the themes of the traditional advent ring - **the patriarchs, the prophets, John the Baptist and Mary** – in ways that children will understand. We will be using examples of modern and traditional art to encourage the children to think about the true meaning of Advent and Christmas.

The first theme of Advent is The Patriarchs. The word comes from the Greek for father, *pater*, and for leader, *archon* – a leader of a tribe or father of an extended family group. Within the Old Testament, the term is normally used to describe **Abraham, Isaac and Jacob** – sometimes referred to as the ‘fathers of the faith’.

For the children we will talk about the first candle as the Candle of Hope, but we begin the first worship with an explanation of the Advent ring.

**Reflection**

**PowerPoint Slide 1** Play the video using the link.

Explain to the children that over the next four weeks worship will focus on Advent – the period of time before Christmas when Christians look forward to the coming of Jesus into the world. So Advent is a time of **waiting.**

The traditional way of celebrating Advent is with an Advent ring which usually has four candles set into a wreath. A new candle is lit on each of the four Sundays before Christmas. Can the children suggest why lighting a candle might make us think of Jesus coming into the world (Jesus as the light of the world) Each candle on an Advent wreath represents something different.

**Powerpoint slide 2** If you have made your own Advent wreath, you may wish to light the first candle and say these words (you may wish to build the words each week as the additional candles are lit):

***As we watch and wait for the coming of Jesus,***

***We remember that he came to bring:***

***Hope where there is despair,***

***Peace where there is violence,***

***Love where there is hatred,***

***Joy where there is sorrow,***

***And light where there is darkness.***

**PowerPoint Slide 3** Explain that today we are going to think about the

Start of Advent. This is marked by the lighting of the first candle – the candle of hope. Ask the children what they hope for in the weeks before Christmas. Ask them what they think Christians across the world may hope for every year at the start of Advent.

**PowerPoint Slide 4** Explore the question **-** What is hope? Ask the children to give you a definition of what hope is. Explain that sometimes the idea of hope is to **wish** for something but **without any certainty that it will actually happen. You may want something very much but have no guarantee that it will come true.**

**PowerPoint Slide 5** We are going to listen to a story about a boy living in a difficult and sad place. As you listen, think about the hope that we see in the story. (Play the film and read along)

Suggested questions after the film - What sort of place is the boy living in? Why is the garden so special for him? What did he hope for when he planted and watered the shoot? Does he share the same hopes as the little girl? Do the soldiers change their feelings about hope? How can having hope change people? Why do you think having hope is so important?

**PowerPoint Slide 6** The story shows us that having hope is important and, even in the hardest situations, we can be hopeful. Hope in the Bible is something different to wishing. The word “hope” in the Bible means to look forward to something with a feeling of confidence that it will happen. Christians have hope because of God’s promise –to send his son to Earth to teach the world how to love one another and create a better world. God tells us that Jesus would come to bring us hope, fulfilling all the prophesies. That is what the Candle of Hope signifies at Advent.

**PowerPoint Slide 7** There are so many reasons to feel sad when we hear the news of problems in the world at the moment, when we face challenges that seem overwhelming, when we have problems that don’t seem to have solutions. There are certainly times when we can feel hopeless. The Bible tells us that hope survives (1 Corinthians 13:13). No matter how difficult our circumstances may appear, we always can hope in God. He wants to give us hope in any situation, no matter how dark things might seem. If we have hope we can be filled with joy and peace, no matter what is going on in the world.

**PowerPoint Slide 8** After a very difficult year on Earth, it can be good to pause, pray, or reflect on the candles of hope in the [Advent](https://www.crosswalk.com/special-coverage/christmas-and-advent/the-beautiful-meaning-and-purpose-of-advent.html) season during which Christians across the world look forward to the celebration of Jesus’ birth – God’s promise coming true. The Advent candle of hope gives us the chance to focus on this kind of hope. It's a chance to remember the hope God offers to the world, and that He will give us through the birth of Jesus.

**Prayer and reflection** We are going to finish with a prayer. If you would like to join in, please say Amen at the end.

**Father, I thank You that I can hope in You. In every situation and every problem that I am going through, I celebrate the hope that I have in You. I trust that you will make things better in the world and I will stay hopeful, knowing that you are there for me today and always. Amen.**

