

# spill the beans

worship and learning resources for all ages

issue 49

advent, christmas  
and epiphany

3 december 2023 to  
11 february 2024



*word & world*

A resource with a Scottish flavour for  
Worship Leaders, Sunday Schools, Junior  
Churches and Youth Leaders.

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# introduction

Welcome to the first in a series of eight issues of *Spill the Beans* through which we will be taking an alternative journey through the Scripture over the next two years. Having spent the last year with The Women's Lectionary, and not at the beginning point of either the Revised Common Lectionary or the Narrative Lectionary, this was an opportunity for thinking about a different way to engage the Scripture with a contemporary setting.

## Word And World Lectionary

Members of the *Spill the Beans* Resource Team took time out earlier this year to consider the way forward and with enthusiasm embarked on creating our own two year lectionary. We had past experience with our "Path Less Travelled" lectionary in 2018-19 which was inspired by user feedback.

This time we decided to deliberately and methodically to engage Word and World using the device of special days and themes. For instance, using United Nations' focus days, or saints days, or particular festivals. We have shaped these into short thematic series. We would encourage engagement both with the Scriptural texts for each day and to use this as an opportunity for your congregation to engage with some of the international themes that arise.

This is a different approach for us and we hope it will be inspiring to you in your worship as we pray it will be for us as we lead worship in our own settings.

We have decided to keep the format for the layout of the issues as we have used in the past year, and to encourage the development of intergenerational worship.

## Intergenerational Worship

*Spill the Beans* has always been rooted in the power of story telling. Story binds generations together. In that shared bond of story lies the creative space for building relationships between generations. Using different ways to engage with the story recognises the variety amongst us all: some learn by listening, others by doing, others by creating. All are valuable and a part of our shared worship of God.

We are encouraging you to experiment as we will be doing with ways to worship intergenerationally in an authentic and inclusive manner. To that end we are still providing a rich variety of resources but grouped by how they help us **'tell the story'**, **'explore the story'**, and **'live the story'**. Mix and match, rewrite, contextualise for your own setting, try something different, and have fun with it! Please do give us feedback.

There are many resources online to help think more deeply about intergenerational worship. A simple but very helpful summary is provided by the Methodist Church, copied below.

### Intergenerational worship IS about:

- **building relationships**—offering a key time for people to get to know each other better and build a sense of connection;
- **a time of worship and learning that is offered in a simplified and participatory way**—simple does not mean shallow; rather it enables everyone to contribute and receive in a meaningful and appropriate way;
- **providing an inclusive experience and a sense of belonging**—helping everyone of all abilities to feel part of the body of Christ, whatever their experience;
- **being a bridge**—not only between ages but also for those who are exploring what being part of a church means. This relaxed service style can provide a comfortable place for some to discover more about Christianity;
- **encouragement, nurture and inclusiveness**—it is a means by which faith can grow and, in turn, inform life-making or life-changing decisions;
- **exploring vocation**—an opportunity to discover and develop gifts and calling.

### Intergenerational worship is NOT about:

- limiting the richness of resources used;
- oversimplifying the message or adding a children's talk into the 'usual' service;
- unstructured and chaotic worship;
- children having token responsibilities for roles and participation;
- limiting potential to explore faith and discipleship together;
- nuclear families exclusively worshipping together.

## Information

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Editor: Peter Johnston      peter@spillbeans.org.uk  
 Chair: Roddy Hamilton      roddy@spillbeans.org.uk  
 Admin: Julie Mackie      admin@spillbeans.org.uk  
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Sleepless Nights Publications



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# the team

If you would like to find out how you could be part of the team, please contact either Roddy or Peter (see previous page).

The contributors from the Spill the Beans Resource Team producing this issue included:

Amy Bender	Peter Johnston
Keith Blackwood	Jo Love
Ruth Burgess	Nikki Macdonald
Liz Crumlish	John Murning
Shuna Dicks	Scott Paget
Conor Fegan	Tanya Webster
Roddy Hamilton	Mary Whittaker
Karen Harbison	Rachael Wright
Mary Henderson	

## Key to Abbreviations

In the worship ideas section the following abbreviations may be used to indicate different sources of worship music:

ATAS	All the Assembly Songs You'll Ever Need
CG	Common Ground
CH4	Church Hymnary, 4th Edition
GTG	Glory To God: The Presbyterian Hymnal
JP	Junior Praise
MP	Complete Mission Praise
STF	Singing The Faith
SGP	Songs of God's People
WGP	Wild Goose Publications

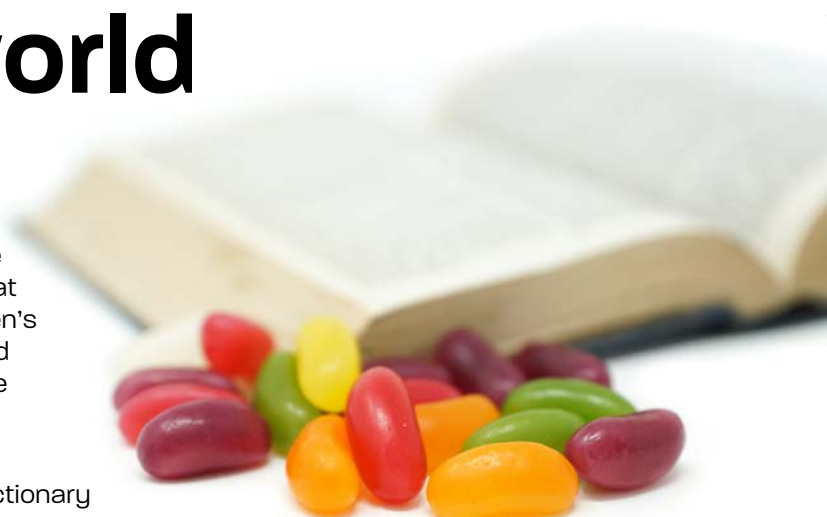


# word and world

## New Lectionary December 2023—November 2025

Members of the Spill the Beans Resource Team have been exploring ideas on what to do following our year with The Women's Lectionary. As we are mid-stream in both Revised Common Lectionary and Narrative Lectionary, we decided to take the opportunity to do something different.

This is our second foray into creating our own lectionary following The Path Less Travelled in 2018/19. The inspiration for this new plan was to connect the worship of the church more systematically with events that are happening around and outside the church. This includes 'national' or 'world' days, particular seasonal events and people. We are excited at the opportunity this may give us to engage with other events. Some are very serious such as International Holocaust Memorial Day, while others may inspire some fun such as National Ice Cream Day and one close to our hearts... Jelly Bean Day!



Note that we are still fine tuning this, but the following table will give you the main basis of where we are planning to journey for the two years from Advent 2023.

As always, this is invitational, and you are welcome to join us as and how is right in your own setting. We pray it is a jumping off point for your own engagement of Word and World.

Date	Liturgical	Theme	Primary Text	Support Text	Links/Notes
<b>YEAR 1</b>					
3 Dec 23	Advent 1	Equality, Diversity, Inclusion	Isaiah 40:1-11	Matthew 8:1-4	Abolition of Slavery (2 Dec)/Persons of Disability
10 Dec 23	Advent 2		Malachi 3:1-7	Galatians 5:13-14	Human Rights Day
17 Dec 23	Advent 3		Isaiah 16:2-5	Luke 1:5-25	International Migrant's Day (18 Dec)
24 Dec 23	Advent 4	Christmas	Isaiah 9:2-7	Luke 1:39-56	
25 Dec 23	Christmas Day		Luke 2:1-20	1 John 4:7-9,13-21	
31 Dec 23	Christmas 1		Matthew 2:1-15	Micah 5:1-5a	
7 Jan 24	Epiphany 1	Unwrapping	Luke 1:1-4	John 1:19-31	Beginnings, setting up calendars, Orthodox Christmas
14 Jan 24	Epiphany 2		Luke 4:16-30	Psalms 119:97-108	Flourishing, St Mungo
21 Jan 24	Epiphany 3		Luke 6:20-26	Psalms 1	Blessings, use "A Man's A Man" by Robert Burns
28 Jan 24	Epiphany 4		Luke 8:16-18	Jonah 1:1-17	Lighting, Up-Helly-Aa (30 Jan)
4 Feb 24	Epiphany 5		Luke 8:22-25	Psalms 139:1-12	Calming, World Cancer Day
11 Feb 24	Transfiguration		Luke 9:10-17	2 Kings 5:1-6	Feeding, International Day of Women/Girls in Science
14 Feb 24	Ash Wednesday	Social Justice	Luke 11:37-44	Isaiah 55:6-11	Valentine's Day
18 Feb 24	Lent 1		Isaiah 58:6-12	1 Samuel 21:1-6	World Day of Social Justice (20 Feb)
25 Feb 24	Lent 2		Luke 6:27-36	1 Peter 3:8-14	
3 Mar 24	Lent 3		Luke 7:1-17	Psalms 68:4-10	Whuppity Scoorie Day (1 Mar)
10 Mar 24	Lent 4		Luke 7:36-50	Micah 7:14-20	Mothering Sunday, International Women's Day (8 Mar)
17 Mar 24	Lent 5		Luke 8:26-39	Psalms 102:1-6,18-22	International Day of Happiness (20 Mar), Red Nose
24 Mar 24	Palms/Passion	Holy Week	Matthew 21:1-11	Psalms 22:1-11	
25 Mar 24	Monday		John 15:1-13	Psalms 36:5-11	The true vine
26 Mar 24	Tuesday		John 16:4b-24	Psalms 74:1-14	Work of the Spirit
27 Mar 24	Wednesday		John 17:1-11	Psalms 70	Praying for friends
28 Mar 24	Maundy Thurs		John 18:1-12	Psalms 116:1-2,12-19	Betrayal and arrest
29 Mar 24	Good Friday		John 19:1-30	Psalms 40:1-14	Jesus and Pilate
30 Mar 24	Holy Saturday	Resurrection and New Creation	John 19:38-42	Psalms 31:1-5	Jesus' burial
31 Mar 24	Easter Day		John 20:1-18	Psalms 18:16-21	Jesus and Mary in the garden
7 Apr 24	Easter 2		Isaiah 40:21-31	Matthew 6:25-34	Holy Humour Sunday, World Health Day
14 Apr 24	Easter 3		Isaiah 51:1-18	Matthew 13:24-29	National Gardening Day
21 Apr 24	Easter 4	Joy	Isaiah 61:1-11	Matthew 20:1-16	Mother Earth Day, Jelly Bean Day (both 22 Apr)
28 Apr 24	Easter 5		Psalms 30	Romans 12:9-21	International Dance Day (29 Apr), Beltane's Day (1 May)
5 May 24	Easter 6		Psalms 16	1 Peter 1:3-12	World Laughter Day, St Catherine of Siena (29 Apr)
12 May 24	Easter 7	Christian Aid	Acts 1:15-17,21-26	1 John 5:9-12	RCL readings used this week to link to Christian Aid
19 May 24	Pentecost		Acts 2:1-21	2 Samuel 6:14-19	World Baking Day (home bakes to raise money for work of Christian Aid)

Date	Liturgical	Theme	Primary Text	Support Text	Notes
26 May 24	Pentecost 1	Witness and Journey	Exodus 3:10-17	Matthew 28:16-20	
2 Jun 24	Pentecost 2		Genesis 20:1-13	Acts 21:1-6	
9 Jun 24	Pentecost 3		Exodus 34:4-8	1 Samuel 3	St Columba
16 Jun 24	Pentecost 4	Refugees and Asylum Seekers	Exodus 2:1-10	Luke 15:11-32	Father's Day
23 Jun 24	Pentecost 5		Exodus 5:1-14	1 Corinthians 4:1-13	World Refugee Day (20 Jun), International Widow's Day
30 Jun 24	Pentecost 6	Stories of Travelling	John 4:1-15,28-30,39-42	1 Kings 17:7-16	Hospitality
7 Jul 24	Pentecost 7		Matthew 15:21-28	Hebrews 13:1-3	Encounters with strangers
14 Jul 24	Pentecost 8		Leviticus 25:10-12,35-41	Galatians 3:26-28	Towards equal opportunities
21 Jul 24	Pentecost 9		Mark 2:18-28	Genesis 2:1-2	Holidays and refreshing Sabbaths, Ice Cream Day
28 Jul 24	Pentecost 10		Psalms 139:1-12,23-24	Romans 8:31-39	God with us on the journey
4 Aug 24	Pentecost 11		1 Kings 19:1-8	Mark 8:1-9	Food for the journey
11 Aug 24	Pentecost 12		Psalms 71:16-18	Ephesians 4:11-16	Journey from youth to age, Inter. Youth Day (12 Aug)
18 Aug 24	Pentecost 13		Telling Our Stories	Deuteronomy 6:20-25	John 9:13-25
25 Aug 24	Pentecost 14	Exodus 12:21-28		Acts 26:1,9-18	
1 Sep 24	Pentecost 15	Jeremiah 29:1-14		Philippians 4:10-20	World Letter Writing Day, Amnesty International Write for Rights
8 Sep 24	Pentecost 16	Peacemaking	Leviticus 26:1-6	Matthew 5:9	World Suicide Prevention Day (10 Sep)
15 Sep 24	Pentecost 17		Psalms 34	Colossians 3:12-17	International Day of Democracy, Hildegard De Bingen (17 Sep)
22 Sep 24	Pentecost 18		John 14:25-31	Philippians 4:4-9	International Day of Peace
29 Sep 24	Pentecost 19	Environment and Harvest	Deuteronomy 16:9-15	James 2:14-26	World Heart Day, building up to Sukkot
6 Oct 24	Pentecost 20		Psalms 126	Joel 2:15-19	Restoring the environment
13 Oct 24	Pentecost 21		Exodus 16:9-16	2 Corinthians 9:6-15	World Food Day
20 Oct 24	Pentecost 22	Faith Heroes	Hebrews 12:1-2	Hebrews 11:8-22	
27 Oct 24	Pentecost 23		Hebrews 12:1-2	Hebrews 11:23-28	
3 Nov 24	Pentecost 24		Hebrews 12:1-2	Hebrews 11:29-40	All Saints Day (1 Nov), link to any local saints
10 Nov 24	Pentecost 25	Hope	Job 17:1-5,11-16	Matthew 12:9-21	Remembrance Sunday, World Kindness Day (13 Nov), St Machar, St Gerardine
17 Nov 24	Pentecost 26		Lamentations 3:19-24	Romans 8:18-25	St Margaret (16 Nov), International Student's Day
24 Nov 24	Reign of Christ		John 3:11-21	Isaiah 42:1-10a	
<b>YEAR 2</b>					
1 Dec 24	Advent 1	Incarnating Love	Isaiah 11:1-9	Luke 5:12-13	World AIDS Day, St Aiden of May
8 Dec 24	Advent 2		Mark 1:1-8	Isaiah 2:2-4	International Anti-Corruption Day (9 Dec)
15 Dec 24	Advent 3		Isaiah 35	Galatians 5:13-16	
22 Dec 24	Advent 4		Luke 1:26-38	1 Corinthians 13:1-13	
24/5 Dec 24	Christmas Eve/Day		Luke 1:46-55 Matthew 1:18-25	Romans 13:11-12 1 John 3-11	
29 Dec 24	Christmas 1	Holocaust Memorial	John 1:1-14	Isaiah 43:1-7	Donald Caskie (died 27 Dec 1983)
5 Jan 25	Christmas 2		Daniel 2:8-23	Matthew 2:1-6	Thomas Aikenhead (died 8 Jan 1697)
12 Jan 25	Epiphany 1		Luke 11:14-28	Nehemiah 5:1-13	Awareness of evil
19 Jan 25	Epiphany 2		Exodus 1:15-22	Mark 9:42-48	Slaughter/protection of innocents, Jane Haining
26 Jan 25	Epiphany 3		Isaiah 61:5-11	Mark 15:33-34	International Holocaust Memorial Day (27 Jan)
2 Feb 25	Epiphany 4	Rediscovering Jesus	Luke 2:41-52	Proverbs 3:1-10	Jesus the Jew, Candlemass, Groundhog Day
9 Feb 25	Epiphany 5		Matthew 13:1-3,10-17	2 Samuel 12:1-7a	Jesus the Storyteller
16 Feb 25	Epiphany 6		Luke 4:38-41	Ezekiel 34:11-16	Jesus the Healer
23 Feb 25	Epiphany 7		Mark 6:45-52	Mark 8:11-14	Jesus the Wonder Worker
2 Mar 25	Transfiguration		Matthew 16:13-20	John 20:30-31	Jesus: the Christ?



Date	Liturgical	Theme	Primary Text	Support Text	Notes
5 Mar 25	Ash Wednesday	Health and Wellbeing	Matthew 6:1-6,16-21	2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10	Wellbeing
9 Mar 25	Lent 1		Romans 12:1-8	Proverbs 16:21-24	Self Care I
16 Mar 25	Lent 2		Romans 12:9-21	Psalms 1	Self Care II
23 Mar 25	Lent 3		John 6:35-40	Proverbs 3:5-8	Food
30 Mar 25	Lent 4		Hebrews 4:1-11	Matthew 11:28-29	Rest, Mothering Sunday
6 Apr 25	Lent 5		1 Timothy 4:6-16	Isaiah 40:25-30	Health
13 Apr 25	Palm/Passion	You want it darker	Mark 11:1-11	Isaiah 52:13-53:12	The Gate
14 Apr 25	Monday		Mark 11:15-19	Isaiah 48:6-11	The Temple Courtyard
15 Apr 25	Tuesday		Mark 11:12-14,20-25	Isaiah 34:1-4	The Mount of Olives
16 Apr 25	Wednesday		Mark 14:1-11	Isaiah 61:1-4	The Home at Bethany
17 Apr 25	Maundy Thurs		Mark 14:12-16	Isaiah 53:7-12	The Upper Room, Gethsemane
18 Apr 25	Good Friday		Mark 14:43-15:41	Joel 2:1-2	The Hill, Golgotha
19 Apr 25	Holy Saturday		Mark 15:42-47	Psalms 22:27-31	The Tomb
20 Apr 25	Easter Day		Mark 16:1-8	Luke 24:13-35	The Garden (use Emmaus story for an evening service)
27 Apr 25	Easter 2	Community Wellbeing	John 21:1-14	Mark 1:16-20	Back at the Beginning I
4 May 25	Easter 3		John 21:15-21	Mark 14:66-72	Back at the Beginning II, Mental Health Awareness Week, death of David Livingstone (1 May 1873)
11 May 25	Easter 4		Acts 9:36-43	Revelation 7:9-17	Christian Aid Week
18 May 25	Easter 5	Creative Communities	Micah 6:6-8	1 Corinthians 12:4-14	The Why Behind the How
25 May 25	Easter 6		Colossians 3:12-17	Micah 6:6-8	Creative People, death of Thomas Chalmers (31 May 1847)
1 Jun 25	Easter 7		Ephesians 5:1-20	Micah 6:6-8	Creative Living
8 Jun 25	Pentecost		Galatians 5:13-26	Micah 6:6-8 Acts 2:1-13	Creative Spirit
15 Jun 25	Pentecost 1	Thankful and Grateful	Psalms 100	Romans 5:1-11	Father's Day, National Beer Day
22 Jun 25	Pentecost 2		Psalms 118	1 Thessalonians 5:12-24	International Picnic Day (18 Jun)
29 Jun 25	Pentecost 3		Psalms 145	2 Corinthians 4:7-18	Death of George MacLeod (27 Jun 1991)
6 Jul 25	Pentecost 4		1 Chronicles 16:8-36	Romans 11:33-36	Thank You Day
13 Jul 25	Pentecost 5	Crossroads of Culture and Faith	Psalms 95	Luke 2:22-32	Music, St Swithin
20 Jul 25	Pentecost 6		2 Chronicles 1:1,7-13	Luke 3:7-18	Politics, St Thnew
27 Jul 25	Pentecost 7		Exodus 31:1-11	Luke 6:43-45	Art
3 Aug 25	Pentecost 8		2 Samuel 12:1-9	Luke 9:1-6	Literature
10 Aug 25	Pentecost 9		Song of Songs 2:8-17	Luke 12:49-53	Poetry
17 Aug 25	Pentecost 10		1 Kings 4:29-34	Luke 17:11-19	Science
24 Aug 25	Pentecost 11		1 Samuel 8:1-21	Luke 20:20-26	Civic Space, death of George Matheson (28 Aug 1906)
31 Aug 25	Pentecost 12		Prayer	Jeremiah 20:7-18	1 Samuel 1:1-18
7 Sept 25	Pentecost 13	Luke 10:1-9,17-21		1 Samuel 2:1-10	Thanksgiving
14 Sept 25	Pentecost 14	Genesis 32:3-21		Luke 18:1-18	Protection
21 Sept 25	Pentecost 15	John 17:10-26		Luke 2:36-38	Intercession
28 Sept 25	Pentecost 16	2 Samuel 12:15b-23		Psalms 98	Unanswered
5 Oct 25	Pentecost 17	Reforming Our Faith	Psalms 96:1-9	1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 14:26	Songs and Liturgy
12 Oct 25	Pentecost 18		Ecclesiastes 3:1-8	Matthew 22:34-39	Times and Priorities
19 Oct 25	Pentecost 19		Joshua 10:36-43	2 Timothy 3:14-17	Lectionaries
26 Oct 25	Pentecost 20		Exodus 3:1-10	Ephesians 3:14-20	Experiences of God, Reformation Day (31 Oct)
2 Nov 25	Pentecost 21	Christ on the Edge	Mark 12:41-44	Deuteronomy 24:17-22	All Souls Day
9 Nov 25	Pentecost 22		Matthew 5:38-44	Genesis 22:1-14	Remembrance Sunday
16 Nov 25	Pentecost 23		Luke 10:25-37	Deuteronomy 10:17-22	Home Made Bread Day (17 Nov), St Margaret of Scotland
23 Nov 25	Reign of Christ		Mark 10:17-21	Luke 12:13-21	Stir Up Day, death of James Hogg (21 Nov 1835)

Note that the double-lined breaks in the table delineate between issues.





# comfort, comfort

## Advent 1

Sunday 3 December 2023

## Theme

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

## Word

Isaiah 40:1-11

Matthew 8:1-4

## World

International Day for the  
Abolition of Slavery

*tell the story*

## Bible Notes

In recent years there has been widespread movement towards making reparation for the horrors of slavery, and much campaigning for the public acknowledgement of today's institutions and properties that owe their existence to money generated on the backs of the slave trade. In Britain, trading was abolished in 1807 and slavery itself abolished in 1833. It is worth remembering that those, at the time, who owned slaves received compensation for their loss.

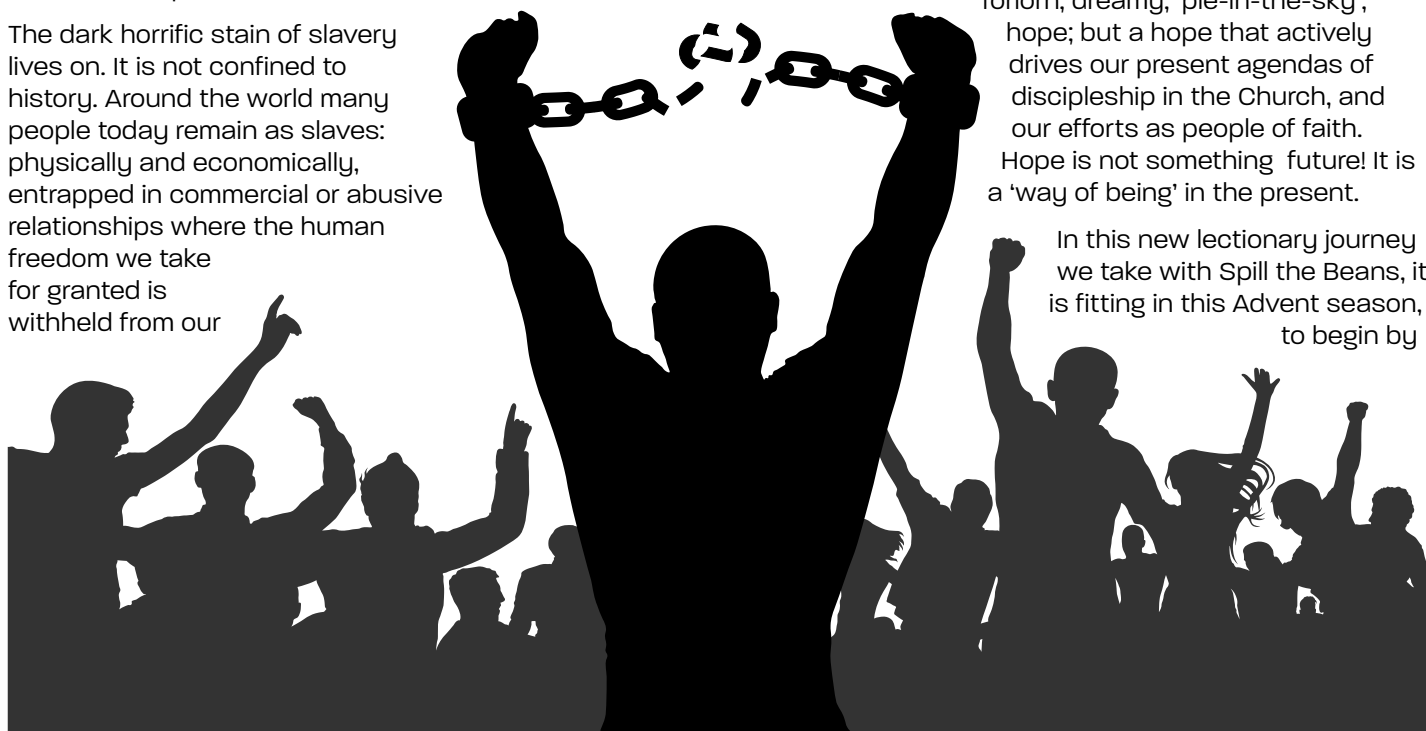
The dark horrific stain of slavery lives on. It is not confined to history. Around the world many people today remain as slaves: physically and economically, entrapped in commercial or abusive relationships where the human freedom we take for granted is withheld from our

brothers and sisters. Physical chains are not the only tools used to hold people as the prisoners of others or indeed corrupt systems.

The 2nd of December is the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery. We know we have a long journey yet to travel if this world, and our societies, are to be places that reveal true Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. As God's people, we live in hope for this day. Not a

forlorn, dreamy, 'pie-in-the-sky', hope; but a hope that actively drives our present agendas of discipleship in the Church, and our efforts as people of faith. Hope is not something future! It is a 'way of being' in the present.

In this new lectionary journey we take with Spill the Beans, it is fitting in this Advent season, to begin by



acknowledging the stain on humanity that was and is 'slavery', and generate in our worshipful reflection, a hope-filled intention to be a world in which such horror cannot happen.

Be it physical slavery, or other forms of oppression that people describe as like being a 'slave' to their circumstances, whenever people are not free to experience life as God intended, it is a source of deep regret for God, and should be the target of our work: to establish God's justice into the human condition.

Some conditions that people suffer can result in ostracism and distrust, being cast out and rejected: leprosy being an example for some people in the past, and inspiring Jesus' healing of those rejected by others. Jesus' model of re-remembering people through healing into society is a challenge to those who would seek to use the condition or status of a person to pre-judge them and their actions.

The Isaiah passage today is not an attempt to explain away bad things that happen. Instead, it acknowledges that true human experience cannot protect us from hardship and challenge. It also acknowledges that for some, the experience of hardship is deeper and more troubling than it is for others.

Alarmingly there are some people, and even denominations of the church, that associate bad things happening to a person with their punishment by God for sinfulness. This is simplistic at best, downright wrong and damaging at worst. What the passage does reveal, is that God remains accessible even through difficult times. There is much in life that withers and perishes with the seasons of life. In some ways that is a good thing as it means the blights on the human condition can be overcome and annulled. Yet sadly in our human world it is often the case that we lurch from one injustice to the next.

Through it all, however, Isaiah reminds us God is the constant; and God's peaceable and just kingdom is the constant objective for God to establish in the World—fueled by the Spirit, established by the Son, and carried forward by the Church and its people.

Advent is a season to reengage with the revelation of God. The readings, and our engagement with them, allow for a vivid tableau to be created. A model of life where people have the freedom to know the best that life has to offer, and are not held back by others, or systems, that destroy the human experience.

Advent is a season in which many people find it easier to see and engage with God. For some it is a seasonal thing. Isaiah gives us today, the image of the 'tender' God. May the experience of 'Emmanuel—God with us', become more and more the common experience known by humanity in day-to-day life.

## Story Retelling

### On The Level

#### *Musings from the man healed of leprosy by Jesus.*

He did it because he wanted to!  
He wanted to help me.  
He wanted me to be well,  
to be clean, to be free.  
After all the years of being shunned and shut away.  
What had I done wrong?  
Was this a punishment?  
No one had touched me in years.  
Not that I could have felt it  
the way I can now!  
It's so strange, the tingling of skin again  
without all the numbness.

When I was ill,  
I often thought of Isaiah,  
way before this Jesus man was born.  
Isaiah calling out for a way through the desert,  
a way made easy for people to get to God,  
to see God.  
Bring the valleys up  
and the mountains down, he said!  
Put everyone on the level  
and let them see God's glory.  
But people are so fragile, he said,  
like grass withered by the wind,  
like flowers scorched by the sun.  
We don't last like God lasts.  
How true.  
I never thought I would last even this long,  
in this diseased body of mine.

But then he said to us fragile people,  
"Lift up your voice! Don't be afraid!"  
That's what he said, from long ago,  
ringing in my ears—  
"Lift up your voice! Don't be afraid!"

So, I took him at his word when I saw Jesus.  
And Jesus never said a word to me  
about sin or punishment  
or that I needed forgiveness  
or that I did or didn't deserve to get well.  
All he said was yes.  
Yes, he wanted to help me,  
he was able to help me,  
he was going to help me.  
God took me like a lamb in his arms  
and held me close.  
Powerful and gentle, just like Isaiah said.

And surely, he said it for everyone?  
God's aspirations challenging our own—  
put everyone on the level!  
We've got a way to go on that,  
but Jesus, you are taking it to heart,  
you are with Isaiah, you are with us.



## Discussion Starters

The first Sunday in Advent is traditionally associated with the word 'hope' (along with peace, joy and love in subsequent weeks). Invite people to explore with each other what has given them a sense of hopefulness over the past week. The following questions could help unpack the examples raised:

- Who was involved in the hopeful situation?
- What was the outcome that gave you hope?
- What could be done to make that outcome more likely?

The Isaiah passage is one of hope and renewal as the prophet is encouraged and commissioned to speak out a message that will put right the wrongs that have been done in the past. This week we also remember the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, ending an atrocity perpetrated on people by others. It raises important questions for us:

- While ending a wicked action is right and good, is it enough?
- What is the interplay between hope and justice?
- What place is there for forgiveness?
- What place is there for reparation?

Much has been made in the Western World about the hopeful restoration of peace that emanated from the Peace and Reconciliation process in South African, guided by Rev Desmond Tutu. The story is much more mixed in South Africa itself where many people believe that a crucial element was missed out, it should have been Peace, Reconciliation and Justice. The ramifications of this missing element in the aftermath of apartheid are still being felt.

- Does healing from societal sin require an element of justice?
- What are the societal sins that continue to undermine hopefulness?
- In what ways can your church be a place of hope?

# sampler



# explore the story

## Engaging The Text

**You will need: a footprint printed on a sheet of paper (enough copies for all and ideally on different coloured paper), pens, use of an aisle (or similar).**

Advent is a journey. It is a time for travelling towards the promise of incarnation: God as one of us. But who? Who will God be? Who among us shows us God?

When the Hebrews were in Babylon, they dreamt of God's return to Jerusalem. It was not going to be a quiet overnight flit, but rather a great ticker-tape parade. All creation would know. Even the landscape would change.

This week, in the echo of that longing and vision, we create a highway for God.

**Offer everyone a footprint printed on a sheet of paper. Invite people to think about the great vision of God's prophetic return to Jerusalem. Did the people imagine things would be exactly the same, or would things be different?**

Take an opportunity now to reflect using these questions as a starting point:

- Consider who you would like to join you on that journey, who would you include?
- As we are walking towards the future of God being one of us, in whom do we see God? Think of those the world often forgets, offers less importance to, makes life difficult for, is bias against.

Write these on your footprint.

**As music is played, or a hymn sung such as 'Comfort, comfort now my people', or 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord', invite people, to walk down the aisle laying down their footprint: as a symbol of including everyone into the way of justice, of hope, of incarnation, ready to meet God as one of us.**

## Hope

**You will need: newspaper, frieze paper (Advent colour purple), scissors, PVA glue, glue spreaders or glue sticks, sticky backed yellow felt or yellow funky foam, pencils.**

Ask those participating to lay out a length of frieze paper portrait wise and then have some people working on a flame shape to attach to top of paper to form candle flame. The other people should work on the letters of the word 'hope' cutting these from newspaper, either by cutting whole letter from a sheet of newspaper or by drawing letters on frieze paper and filling in with scraps of torn newspaper. Glue newspaper onto the frieze paper. This Advent candle of hope can be displayed in your worship space or another suitable space in your buildings. This craft activity can also be scaled down so that people can make individual 'hope candles' to take home with them

During this activity encourage follow up conversations on hope and signs of hope in this season of Advent. What sort of things can we do that enable God's hope to be experienced, especially by those who are often excluded?

## Comfort Cards

**You will need: A5 card folded in half to form a greeting card, Christmas embellishments (such as robins, angels, poinsettias, doves, Bethlehem scenes, candles, coloured paper/patterned paper for card making (all widely available from craft shops)), glue sticks, scissors, sticky fixer pads, fine tipped pens.**

Ask those participating to make greetings cards by sticking patterned papers to card and then adding embellishments with sticky fixers. Instead of a 'Happy Christmas' type greeting, write a message of comfort or hope inside and work with the pastoral care team to send these to those who are bereaved, lonely, sick or experiencing loss or sadness at this time. The cards could also be used as part of a Blue Christmas service your church may be holding.

The passage from Isaiah talks about God comforting the people and looking on the people with tenderness and gentleness. In the midst of the busyness of this season how can we make sure we pay attention to those who are needing comforting and tending?

## Prepare A Road Junk Sculpture

***You will need: a variety of junk (go through your recycling for cardboard boxes, tubs, food trays, tubes, plastic bottles), card, paper, scissors, sticky tape, string.***

Ask those participating to work in two smaller groups. One group should make a mountain and the other should make a road.

During the activity encourage discussions on mountains and long roads people have climbed and walked. Talk about the difference in those experiences and the change and transformation from one kind of landscape to the other. Talk about Advent as a time of preparing for change that brings hope.

## Isaiah Trail

***You will need: footprints (prepare these beforehand by drawing around a foot and write words of one verse from the Isaiah passage on each footprint).***

Scatter the footprints around your meeting space and invite those participating to find and collect the footprints and then to put them in the correct order. This is good for a mixed age range as the younger ones will be able to find the footprints and the older ones will be able to read the words and put the footprints in order. If you are doing this activity with a group made up mostly or entirely of children, just write key words from the passage and also number the footprints so that they can be placed in the correct order.

Connect with the idea of the journey of the people and our journey towards a way of living that shows hope and includes everyone.

## Proclaim A Message

Play a game of pass the whisper, gathering everyone in a circle and whispering a message into one person's ear for them to whisper into the next person's ear to see how well the message travels.

Talk about what kind of message we want to proclaim this Advent as individuals and as a Christian community.

To extend this activity, you could also discuss what makes us afraid/wary to speak out and how we can support each other in being bolder.

## Matching Pairs

***You will need: prepare a set of matching cards. Each card should have one sock or shoe on it and there should be a pair for each shoe and sock design.***

Play like you would play matching pairs.

Link to the previous activities using footprints and talk about getting ready to step out into a new season and a journey with people of all ages and from different places, a journey on which all are included.





# live the story

## Call To Worship

Don't be quiet,  
make a noise,  
a lot of it.

Advent is not a whisper,  
God's return is not murmur,  
the prophets do not mutter the news.

Mountains shift,  
valleys fill,  
roadways straighten.

All creation moves  
and we join that journey  
with songs of praise.

This is advent's invitation  
to clear our throats  
with holy songs.

Incarnation is on its way.

## Prayer Of Dedication

Sovereign Lord,  
we offer gifts,  
not because we are commanded,  
but because we are grateful.  
This hopeful season of Advent,  
take what we have gathered,  
the fruits of our labours,  
and help us to distribute them  
remembering your justice and equality.  
Take our very selves,  
let us be a gift  
to people in our community  
who need to trust your words of hope,  
gifts beyond all measure.  
Thanks be to God.  
Amen.

## Prayer Of Adoration And Confession

Holy God, we gather today  
like the great crowds  
that followed you.

We are aware of our place among  
the great crowds of witnesses  
coming before and after us.

We are aware of our transience, the fragile  
coming and going of people,  
of faith.

Help us to embrace this new season,  
wherever we find ourselves  
in this present moment.

Reveal your glory  
let us recognise  
'Here is your God'  
as we join together in worship today.

Merciful God,  
we recognise we are still in the wilderness,  
lost in the quagmire of slavery and inequality,  
continuing to treat people created in your image  
as worthless, second class.

We are looking for your way,  
a way of sharing equitably all the great resources  
of this beautiful planet,  
a way of respecting the fragile,  
yet resilient world.

We are sorry, not only for historic wrongs,  
but for continuing to perpetuate disparity.  
Forgive us for close-minded thinking,  
for resentful attitudes and hurtful tongues,  
for leaving undone the work of equality.  
O Lord, make us clean.

Loving God,  
you gather us as lambs in your arms  
and hold us close.  
Gently leading us,  
and we are grateful  
that we can be one among many,  
all people longing to see your glory together:  
a vision of equality we can hold before us  
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.  
Amen.

## Prayers For Others And Ourselves

Tender God,  
we lift our voices with strength,  
we come seeking  
the comfort only you can provide.

Our church buildings  
in our communities are closing, Lord.  
Parishes are reforming, reshaping,  
people are searching for some equilibrium.  
We recognise the need for change,  
but we remember the people  
worshipping in those communities.  
People who come to that space for connection,  
for comfort, for community who must find a new space.  
We hold your church in Scotland in prayer this day...  
that your will be done  
and the Spirit's reviving breath shouts:  
'Here is your God' throughout the land...

We are aware that nothing  
is beyond your power,  
and we struggle  
when suffering loved ones  
are not cured.  
Help us to recognise that physical suffering  
is not a punishment for sin.  
Help us to know in our heart of hearts  
that comfort is part of your healing touch,  
that in the darkest places,  
we find your light.  
We offer up those we know who struggle  
and those who care for them in prayer now...

Our governments have responsibility  
for distributing funds,  
for supporting those in need.  
Help officials to make wise, caring decisions  
recalling that there are people behind the numbers.  
We look to care for people in this country  
and people beyond our shores  
who are affected by decisions  
sometimes carelessly made.  
While recognising our responsibility  
in righting past wrongs,  
do not allow us to be so caught up in the past  
that we forget to think about the present.  
We pray for people in leadership today...

Illuminate this Advent season  
with hope for the coming days,  
hope for equality,  
hope for evolution,  
hope for eternity.  
Amen.

## Reflection

Comfort  
Come for it  
Come, forfeit.

Lose our grip  
give up  
our comforts  
but may we be comforted  
in times of distress  
and affliction.

Give up  
comforts  
be comforted  
in trouble.

Give up  
those things that tie us to the earth  
be comforted  
in those promises that free us for heaven.

Let go  
that which hides the kingdom  
be soothed  
by that which reveals the kingdom.

Surrender  
that which limits the word  
be released  
by the advent of God

Renounce  
the narrow way,  
be reassured  
by the wide-way of God.

Come, forfeit.  
Come for it  
Comfort  
my people,  
God is not long now.

## Reflective Prayer

God of equality,  
you raise the valleys  
and make the mountains and hills low.  
You level the rough ground and  
smooth out the rugged places.

You stretch out your hand  
and choose to cleanse us.  
Regardless of our insatiable greed,  
our refusal to acknowledge that  
you hold all life equally deserving of your love.

On this first Sunday of Advent,  
this new season, help us to recognise  
the grass in our lives, institutions, systems  
that need to wither,  
to realise anew that only you  
endure forever.

Help us to see that choice  
is often limited for those  
with unequal access to resources,  
identifying ways to give people  
the opportunity to say, 'I do choose.'

In this season of Advent  
shout your new glory,  
your hope is for all people—  
accessible to everyone!

Share the Good News!  
We are beginning the journey to  
God's in-breaking.  
Incarnation: a transforming gift  
unparalleled in its equality.  
Amen.

## Sending

Into the advent,  
into the way of God,  
into the comfort of promise  
let us travel  
as God's people  
made of hope  
and ready to believe...

God is on the way.

## Praise/Hymns

All my hope on God is founded	CH4 192 / MP 16
As the deer pants for the water	CH4 33 / MP 37
Christ is alive	CH4 422
Comfort, comfort now my people	CH4 274
For the healing of the nations	CH4 706
For your generous providing	CH4 655
Hail to the Lord's anointed	CH4 474 / MP 204
Hark the glad sound!	CH4 277 / MP 210
I have a dream a man once said	CH4 710
If you believe and I believe	CH4 771
Make way, make way	CH4 279 / MP 457
O come, O come Emmanuel	CH4 273 / MP 493
This is a day of new beginnings	CH4 526
We lay our broken world	CH4 721
When out of poverty is born	CH4 291





# sampler

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**Spill the Beans Resource Team**

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