

UNSETTLED ADVENT - SESSION 3

READING

The Birth of John the Baptist

⁵⁷ Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. ⁵⁸ Her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

⁵⁹ On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. ⁶⁰ But his mother said, 'No; he is to be called John.' ⁶¹ They said to her, 'None of your relatives has this name.' ⁶² Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. ⁶³ He asked for a writing-tablet and wrote, 'His name is John.' And all of them were amazed. ⁶⁴ Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God.

(Luke 1:57-64, NRSVA)

CLOSING PRAYERS

Three candles are lit

A: This our third advent candle

B: More lights shining in the darkness as Christmas gets closer

C: And however dark the night gets, the light of Christ in us will never be extinguished

A: Glory to Christ, Son of Mary;
born a child, you are one with us.

ALL: Glory to God in the highest.

B: Glory to Christ, Son of David;
born to rule, you reign in our hearts.

ALL: Glory to God in the highest.

C: Glory to Christ, Son of man;
born to save, you are the light of the world.

ALL: Glory to God in the highest.

A: Blessed are you, God our Father,
through your Son the Christ. His name is Jesus.

ALL: God is with us. Praise the Lord.

B: Jesus came and shared our life.

ALL: God is with us. Praise the Lord.

C: Jesus is our King on high.

ALL: God is with us. Praise the Lord.

A: Let us praise the Lord, the God of Israel!

He has come to the help of his people and has set them free.

B: He has provided for us a mighty Saviour,
a descendant of his servant David.

C: He promised through his holy prophets long ago
that he would save us from our enemies,
from the power of all those who hate us.

**ALL: God said he would show mercy to our ancestors
and remember his sacred covenant.**

A: With a solemn oath to our ancestor Abraham
he promised to rescue us from our enemies
and allow us to serve him without fear,

**ALL: that we might be holy and righteous before him
all the days of our life.**

B: "You, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High God.
You will go ahead of the Lord to prepare his road for him,
to tell his people that they will be saved by having their sins forgiven".

**ALL: Our God is merciful and tender.
He will cause the bright dawn of salvation to rise on us
and to shine from heaven on all those who live in the dark shadow
of death,
to guide our steps into the path of peace.**

C: Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are yours, now and forever. Amen

**ALL: Lighten our darkness, Lord, we pray,
and in your great mercy defend us
from all perils and dangers of this night,
for the love of your only Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

A: Lord, it is night.

B: We rest in you. We pray for deep sleep, and joy in the morning.

C: For Christ, God with us, has come to us and remains with us forever.

WEEKLY CHALLENGES

1. Practice being 'mute' in one conversation: listen to what the other person is saying, ask follow-up questions and let them hear themselves think. Avoid the temptation of story ping pong (responding to a story they tell you with a story of your own) or giving your opinion..
2. Think about the traditions you take for granted. If someone asked you to explain them and their meaning, could you? Imagine you bring someone to your church who has never been before and think about what might feel strange to them that is unwritten code to you. Can you imagine changing any of these things?
3. Make a list, spider diagram or drawing of all the people you hear from in church (or your school or workplace or another group you belong to) then another of all those you don't. Do you see a pattern? Who talks most and why? What might happen if that changed? Choose someone you'd like to hear more from and start a conversation with them.
4. Find out what your name(s) mean and why you were given it/them and be prepared to share this with the group. Do you like or dislike your name(s)? Is there a name you would prefer?
5. Make a list of the following: things I really care about, things I would love to be chosen to do, things I long to change or transform. Now compare your list to how you actually spend your time, energy and money. What do you discover? Is there one change you could make to ensure more of your energy goes towards what you really care about?