



Advent Stepping Stones

Helping us to reflect and prepare for Christmas

We invite you to take a moment to use our Painted Stepping Stones as a way to reflect and ponder on the meaning of Advent as we step towards Christmas filled with Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

Christmas can never be cancelled because Christmas is a celebration of God's gift to us. 2000 years ago, Jesus the precious son of God, was born into the mess of a stable in a poor part of the Middle East. God, who is beyond our understanding, chose to come right into our world - which sometimes seems to be spinning out of control - and into our often messy, difficult, painful life experiences to bring us Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

As we move towards Christmas, in this time we call Advent, we invite you to take sometime to be still within the garden, to be still and remember that God unseen is with you. Advent consists of 4 weeks leading up to Christmas and in the garden you should find 4 stones painted with the themes of each week of Advent.

You can decide to do one reflection per week or to reflect on all the themes of the Advent journey in one go. If you decide to do them altogether remember to take time to be still and pause before moving on to the next stone.



Find out more about St Leonard's and St Mary's
and our Christmas Services by visiting the church Websites

stmarysdalkeith.org.uk / stleonardslasswade.org.uk

or call the Church Office 0131 663 7000

1. In this first week, let us experience the gift of



HOPE

This verse from Lamentations (3: 21-24) is written in a time of distress and turmoil.

"Then I remember something that fills me with HOPE.

The Lord's kindness never fails! ...

The Lord can always be trusted to show mercy each morning.

Deep in my heart I say, "The Lord is all I need; I can depend on him!"

Let us hold on to this HOPE that is rooted in God, over coming days.

Prayer

Gracious God, As we start our Advent journey, we cry out to you. We come to you looking for hope. When everything else we rely on fails us, our only hope is in you. When we do not understand what has happened, we hope in you. We can hope for better days because we trust you. We know you and we know you are here with us no matter what we are facing. Some of us see only darkness this time of year. Some of us find life overwhelming. Some of us are filled with Advent joy. Wherever we find ourselves today, loving God, remind us that our hope is in you. Be with us on this journey. Amen.

2. In the second week of Advent, we experience God's



PEACE

In John 14:27, Jesus said:

"I give you PEACE, the kind of peace only I can give.

It isn't like the peace this world can give.

So don't be worried or afraid."

May we find times when we can seek God's peace in the next week.

Prayer

Prince of Peace, reveal yourself to us today.

We need peace in our lives, our homes, our families, our church, and our whole world. Help us to slow down and seek out the peace you provide, so we may become peacemakers for ourselves and others. In your name, Prince of Peace, we pray. Amen.

3. In the third week of Advent, we think about



JOY

Our verse for this week from Romans 15:13 brings together the themes of the last 2 weeks and adds joy.

"I pray that God, who gives hope, will bless you with all JOY and peace because of your faith. And may the power of the Holy Spirit fill you with hope."

Too often, we think joy is something big: a special celebration, a fantastic view or a newborn baby - all can certainly bring us joy; but just as easily and far more often, we can feel joy in a hug or the squeeze of a hand, we can see joy in a smile or hear it in laughter.

Prayer

Oh God, help us to not overlook the simple joys that come into our lives daily. This week in our Advent journey, open our eyes to the joy that surrounds us. Amen.

4. As we come to the end of Advent we are called to



LOVE

We read the familiar words in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8
"Love is patient and kind, never jealous, boastful, proud, or rude. Love isn't selfish or quick tempered. It doesn't keep a record of wrongs that others do. Love rejoices in the truth, but not in evil. Love is always supportive, loyal, hopeful, and trusting. Love never fails!"

Prayer

Loving God, we learn to love from being loved by you. Your love is very practical but so difficult for us to put into practice. Today, let us live out your practical love within our relationships: in our homes, in our communities and in our churches. Remind us again how much you love each one of us and help us to share your love with others. Amen.

Our Advent journey ends - but we bring God's gifts of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love with us through into our Christmas celebration. We look through into the stable and come to the crib where Jesus, the human vulnerable baby and yet the divine God, reminds us again that he is here with us in our world. He is our Immanuel and knows us and our experiences, and he wants to journey with us if we will allow him to.

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A Christmas hymn

What Child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?

This, this is Christ, the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him praise,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!