

# twelvebaskets

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## **ADVENT 2A**

4th December 2022

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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For more information <https://theworshipcloud.com/terms/free-weekly-resource>

## Opening Prayers

Dear Lord,

Thank you that you are constantly drawing each of us towards you. Not forcing or coercing, but inviting and encouraging us into deeper relationship with you.

Thank you for that which you use to prepare the way. The people and things which break down the barriers we put up. The barriers that, intentionally or otherwise, keep you out. For the wonder of your creation which humbles us, for the challenging words of a close friend which rouse us, for the kindness of a stranger which reminds us of the divinity in everything.

May I draw near to you today.

Prepare this space for me, and prepare my heart to receive what you have in store for me this Advent.

Just as John the Baptist proclaimed “repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near,” may I answer that same call, knowing that transformation comes through acknowledging that the status quo, in myself and in the world, is not as it should be.

I repent today, because the Kingdom of Heaven has come near, and with God’s grace I can bring it nearer still.

I know myself forgiven, loved and set free, by the Advent God who comes amongst us, this year and every year.

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

**You may wish to say the Lord’s Prayer in a version or translation with which you are most familiar.**

### **Hymn:**

180 STF – O come, O come, Immanuel

You might like to listen to / watch this remarkable version of this carol, recorded by Enya here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01BcaggibDw>  
*(Please note, Twelvebaskets does not own the copyright for this video – please ensure you have appropriate consent if you want to use this video in public worship or online).*

**Reading:** Matthew 3:1-12 – [Click for reading](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Opening prayers written by All We Can

## Response to the reading

Have you been walking in a popular, mountainous area recently?

Perhaps somewhere like the Lake District or Snowdonia? The paths are often made of huge slabs of stone, set into the ground to protect the landscape from erosion – just looking at them makes me think about the people involved in getting these stones there – laying them in tricky and difficult conditions must be back-breaking work.

John the Baptist is ‘preparing the way’ in the wilderness – but this isn’t a simple laying out of a red carpet, it’s hot, sweaty, difficult work.

Making space for God to come into our lives is more like an excavation: we have to overhaul the greed, selfishness and injustice in order to make room for the Prince of Peace this Advent season. That’s the work our charity partner and friends at All We Can are involved in – seeking to overcome poverty and see every person’s potential fulfilled around the world.

You could look up some stories from the All We Can website, e-newsletter or social media (@allwecanuk). You might like to watch this video summarizing All We Can’s work in Zimbabwe: [youtube.com/watch?v=wcfydw6CQc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcfydw6CQc)

All We Can goes about its work in a particularly ‘John the Baptist’ sort of way. He insists that it is not about him, but about Jesus. That is your role too – not to be ‘heroes’ in the story of tackling poverty, but to allow the people All We Can is working with, the people our giving will support this Christmas season, to be the heroes in their own story – to flourish and fulfil their potential on their own terms. It’s time to put local communities in the driving seat of their own story.

Matt 3:8: ‘Produce fruit worthy of repentance’. What does this mean to you? Perhaps it can be a challenge for us today – we cannot simply say ‘all is not right with the world’ or ‘the current way of tackling poverty is broken’. Rather, we must bear fruit that reflects that we believe it’s possible to do things a different way. As the Catholic thinker and writer Richard Rohr says: ‘the best criticism of the bad is the practice of the better’.

So your invitation is to ‘practice better’ this Advent season – as you worship, as you see friends and family, as you give presents, and as you support charities like All We Can. Thank you.<sup>2</sup>

You might like to pray this prayer:

Dear Lord, help me to prepare for your coming  
By making space and staying still.  
Help me to prepare by honest examination of myself.  
Help me to lift my face to the wind of your Spirit  
And be prepared for your coming.  
Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> Reflection written by All We Can. Do something extraordinary and give a gift that will change lives and help to build a better world where every person’s potential can be fulfilled: [gifts.allwecan.org.uk](https://www.gifts.allwecan.org.uk)

## Blessing

As I go out, into the midst of winter and the middle of advent,  
As I wait, as I prepare, as I open my heart to you,  
Lord God, Immanuel, show me something of what it means to be God-with-us.  
Come here, into my life, by your grace.

I go in grace, in hope, in anticipation,  
I step out in love,

Amen.<sup>3</sup>

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## Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

### Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December

- If you are using an advent wreath, or similar, at home today you will be lighting the second candle. If you don't have one, perhaps you can look one up online or watch a video of candles flickering on YouTube as you reflect.
- Take a moment to reflect on the difference in height between candles 1 and 2.
- Around the world, there is much inequality and some people do not have access to things we can often take for granted: clean water, a place to call home, a guarantee of the next meal or two. As we look at the two candles, flickering away, let us remember: both contain potential, and we can use what we have to help those who have less to fulfil theirs.

### Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December

- This week, take a moment to notice some fairy lights somewhere near you – perhaps in a shopping street after dark, perhaps you have some up in your house or at a neighbour's already.
- Just use this moment to pause, to look at the lights, and to think about the ways that light is breaking through in your life. It might seem small, but focus on that, and give thanks for it, for the string of lights, the line of blessings, and all you have received.

### Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> December

- Today, some traditions mark as the Saint Day for Ambrose of Milan, who served as Bishop of Milan in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. He is traditionally credited as having written the 'Te Deum' hymn, though that is now historically disputed. Perhaps today you might like to pray a modernised and translated version of the first few lines of that hymn, which is at least 1,600 years old...

*We praise you, O God : we acknowledge you to be the Lord.*

*All the earth worship you : the everlasting parent of all.*

*To you all Angels cry aloud : the heavens, and all who call the heavens home.*

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<sup>3</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker

### **Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December**

- O Come, O Come Immanuel.  
Pray this pray today. As you go about your day, try to find as many opportunities as possible to mutter, say out loud, write down, breath, or just think this simple five-word prayer: O come, o come, Immanuel.
- Notice how that prayer for a God who is with us, present to us, amongst us, changes, shapes and inspires your day.

### **Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December**

- God of all blessings,  
Thank you for the gift of food to eat,  
For the flavours and the smells,  
The energy and enjoyment I can get from the food I eat.
- I'm sorry for all the times I've taken for granted the food on my plate, the ingredients in my fridge, the ready meals in my freezer.  
And for all the other blessings I have received that I often overlook or forget to be thankful for.  
Thank you Lord, for you are good to me.  
  
Amen.

### **Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> December**

- Are you going to a Christmas Party this weekend? Or aware of someone who is? Are you making plans for meeting up with people you don't usually see at this time of year?
- Take time today to pray for people making connections, for conversations and reunions – either your own or those that will be happening in the communities and houses around you.
- Pray that God-with-us, Immanuel, will be made real this Christmas. You might like to pray this prayer for someone specific. It might be you.