



Introduction: Advent, a time of waiting

Advent is a time of dual anticipation. As we wait for the birth of Christ celebrated at Christmas, we also wait for the second coming of the son of God, for Jesus' return.

In the midst of preparing ourselves for Christmas, as we purchase gifts and fill our homes with festive decorations, it is easy to forget that the living God also asks us to prepare the way for Christ's return. This is a great promise, but also a great challenge.

How might we prepare for Jesus' return?

How would we want Christ to find us?

How might we build the Kingdom of God here on earth today as a sign and a prophecy of the Kingdom to come?

The following prayers and reflections are intended to aid our preparations through Advent. Each week focuses on a different way we might prepare for the coming of Christ, and provides stories, prayers and actions based on the lectionary readings for Advent. You may wish to use them for your own personal study, for group bible studies, or perhaps to guide sermons you may be writing during Advent.

Week Two: Bringing Peace

Bible readings

[Isaiah 40: 1-11](#)

“A voice cries out:

‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,

make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”

Isaiah 40: 3 (NRSV)

[Psalms 85: 1-2, 8-13](#)

“Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;

righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,

and righteousness will look down from the sky.

The Lord will give what is good,”

Psalms 85: 10-12 (NRSV)

Reflection

1. The Old Testament reading prophesies the coming of John the Baptist, and his ministry as one preparing the way for the Lord. What does it mean to prepare the way for someone who is more powerful than us?
2. The psalmist promises that God will bring words of peace to his people. What might the peace that God promises his people look like in our world today?
3. In the psalm a world is envisioned in which ‘love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other’. What are the different ways you see these values interacting?
4. What role does constructing peace have in preparing the way for the Lord?

Building Peace

This year the world took a significant step towards peace. A text for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was agreed at the United Nations. It has been signed by 53 states so far.¹ The Treaty, once it enters into force, makes nuclear weapons clearly illegal under international law for the first time, and outlines steps for their total elimination.

On the 10th December the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) will be presented with the Nobel Peace Prize 'for its work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition on such weapons'. Two people will accept the prize on behalf of the group: Beatrice Fihn ICAN's executive director, and Setsuko Thurlow one of the hibakusha (a survivor of the nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima).

Setsuko Thurlow along with many Hiroshima survivors has waited for many years to see a world free from nuclear weapons. On the day the bomb dropped, Setsuko was thirteen-years old. As a member of The Student Mobilisation Program she was helping at an army headquarters about a mile from where the bomb was dropped. She escaped from the ruins of the building in which she had been. Many of her classmates were unable to escape and burned alive in the ruins. Over the next few days and months she was surrounded by the dead and the dying, with little medical attention. Amongst those who she saw die were her sister and four-year old nephew.

¹ For the most recent number check this web page - <http://www.icanw.org/status-of-the-treaty-on-the-prohibition-of-nuclear-weapons/>

She states that “the image of my little nephew, Eiji representing the innocent children of the world, compels and drives me to continue to speak of Hiroshima, no matter how painful it may be.”

Throughout her life Setsuko has worked to educate and mobilise the public on nuclear weapons, determined that they should not forget the human cost of such attacks. Setsuko’s actions are an example of what it might mean to prepare the path for the Lord. She has worked her whole life to build a more peaceful, nuclear-weapon-free world.

Setsuko Thurlow said of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons:

“I’ve been waiting for this day for seven decades. And I am overjoyed that it has finally arrived. Nuclear weapons have always been immoral. Now they are also illegal. Together, let us go forth and change the world.”²

² <http://www.icanw.org/setsuko-thurlow/>

Prayer

A voice cries out “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord”.

We live in a world troubled by conflict,

Where concern for power and prestige often dominates.

We long for the day when people will beat their swords into
ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

We thank you Lord that we have come one step closer to that
through the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

We pray that our leaders may be given the vision to work
constructively towards a more peaceful world

And that we in our daily lives may build a future in which nations will
no longer take up swords against one another.

We ask all this so that we may make straight the highway for your
coming.

Amen.

Action

**Join Churches and communities calling for a nuclear
weapons free world.**

Watch and share our video and take action by signing our petition:
www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/nuclearban



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CHURCHES WORKING
FOR PEACE & JUSTICE