



Advent 2025

Church resource

christians
against
poverty

CAP

Advent resource for churches

For many, Christmas is a time of joy and plenty. But what about those in debt and poverty, for whom it's a time of hardship and struggle? The season's promise of great joy to all people can ring hollow for those finding themselves in a financial wilderness with no guiding star to lead them.

This Advent, we invite you to focus on the heart of the Christmas story: Jesus coming into our world as a vulnerable baby, born into humble circumstances. By choosing to be born into scarcity, he shows that God is not a distant king, but one who knows our deepest needs and brings hope to the places we need it most.

How to use this resource

We've designed a four-week series of short reflections that connects the Advent narrative with contemporary experiences of UK poverty and what we as CAP understand as our biblical mandate. Each reflection is designed to be used for each of the four Sundays of Advent, whilst also being adaptable for other church settings, such as:

- Blessed thought in a staff meeting
- Small group gatherings
- Meeting openings for ministry leads or volunteer teams
- Church prayer meetings

We invite you to build upon these reflections with your own thoughts and discussions to create a more personal and in-depth message tailored to your church.



Photo by Tom Price

Your church's Christmas collection

We've tried to illustrate what the reality of UK poverty looks like through Jade's story. Mum-of-three Jade was locked in debt and poverty until a local church came alongside her with love and support, met practical needs like providing her with essential food aid, and helped her to get out of debt. More than that, they restored the dignity of being able to provide for her children again. Every act of kindness from the people at Holy Trinity Church led Jade to discover a God who loves her and her family unconditionally – and her life is forever changed.

Holy Trinity Church were able to offer Jade free debt help through their partnership with Christians Against Poverty (CAP). You're welcome to use this Advent resource freely, without making a donation to CAP. However, if your church would like to consider selecting CAP as its Christmas collection charity, you can find more information about our Christmas appeal, including a video of Jade describing her journey to faith, at:

capuk.org/christmas-churches-2025



Week 1: Jesus, our hope

It's the first Sunday of Advent, a time when we get ready for Christmas. But Advent isn't just about counting down to presents and holidays – the word 'advent' means 'arrival', and it's a time of waiting and hoping for the arrival of Jesus. We remember how God's people waited for thousands of years for the promise of a Saviour, someone to rescue them.

For many people in the UK today, **waiting** and hoping is part of their daily life. They are waiting for a GP appointment, for a payment to clear, or for the next food delivery to arrive. However, for people experiencing poverty, this waiting isn't a passive experience, but is full of constant stress, making them feel **lost** and stuck.

This kind of waiting can lead to a **loss** of hope. This is something we as a Church believe God cares about deeply. Confronting poverty, restoring dignity and offering **hope** is at the heart of Jesus' mission, and therefore is at the heart of the mission of the Church. The Bible is clear about God's people's responsibility to help those in need.

'There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open handed toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.'

Deuteronomy 15:11

The Bible should inspire and shape a compassionate **response** to poverty in us. Our church's collective mission is to enable people to discover Jesus' love and mercy for them, through our caring and supportive community. We want to offer people the good news that our souls can find rest, relationships can be restored, and that there is freedom from the mental, emotional and material chaos that financial and other storms can bring.

‘I dreaded payday – people would be ringing to demand their money, and I had to explain that there was literally nothing left. I was so anxious that bailiffs would turn up that I kept the door locked and never answered it... Sitting on my daughter’s bed with Christmas fast approaching, I thought, “I can’t do this anymore”.’

Jade, mum of three, now debt free and passionately following Jesus, thanks to the Christ-centred support of her local church who deliver debt help in partnership with CAP

This Christmas, there are families who face rising costs and find themselves in serious debt. Some people have been forced to make decisions over whether to heat their home or provide food for their families – a terrifying situation. Families like these need an ‘advent’: they need the arrival of **good news**.

Thankfully, Jesus did not make his mission a secret, but made it clearly known: to bring good news to the poor and set the oppressed free (Luke 4:18-19).

This is good news indeed! Our church can be a part of making this offer known, by sharing the hope we have in Jesus with those individuals and families in our local area who are struggling. By praying, serving and working together as a church community, we believe God can use us to bring real, lasting change that glorifies him.

Prayer points

- Pray for individuals and families in the UK facing food scarcity this Christmas, that they would find the help and hope they need.
- Pray for churches that deliver help, advice and support to low-income families and people in debt and poverty, that God would give them the strength and resources to continue their mission.



Week 2: Jesus, our peace

Welcome to the second Sunday of Advent. Our theme this week is peace. When we think of peace, we might think of a quiet, calm moment. But the peace that Jesus promises us is more rooted and sustaining than that. The Hebrew word for peace is 'shalom', and it means wholeness, completeness. Imagine it as an entire orchestra playing perfectly in tune and in time with each other.

Many people experiencing life's storms are **robbed of peace**. It is instead replaced by a relentless cycle of stress and high anxiety. People are preoccupied with whether their electric meter will last long enough to keep the lights on; parents are concerned with whether they can stretch the food to feed the whole family; individuals calculate whether they can afford the bus fare without going into arrears.

'Like every parent, I just wanted my kids to have a normal Christmas, without the worry.'

Jade, mum-of-three, was just one parent experiencing anxiety at Christmas as she struggled to make ends meet

The gospel of peace doesn't just inform our mission, it stands at the very heart of how we actively serve and support others as a church. When we help someone by meeting a need, like offering a meal to someone who is struggling to buy food, we are **sharing the peace** of the gospel with them in a very practical and real way. Often, when life is anything but peaceful, we need someone to walk through the storm with us; that in itself is a powerful enough act to bring peace to a turbulent situation.

God uses his Church to reach out to others with his peace. Churches around the UK run food banks, create warm spaces for people to gather, and host friendly community touchpoints and ministries. For those of us who have been part of the Church for a while, we may have grown used to them, to almost expect them. I propose we don't just regard these simply as services churches provide, but **reframe and reconsider** them as acts of peace – showing God's love in action, bringing people from a place of isolation or tension to a place of stability and hope.

'For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'

Isaiah 9:6

When Isaiah (9:6) looked forward to the arrival (advent) of Jesus, he described him as the 'Prince of Peace'. This is a peace that goes way beyond a calm moment or personality trait. When Jesus sent out his disciples, he told them to 'speak peace' into the homes they entered (Luke 10:5).

As a church community, we are offered the privilege to carry this same presence and join in with this **sacred ministry of peace**. We can actively participate by helping to bring peace of mind and freedom to families weighed down by poverty, guiding them towards experiencing the 'forever peace' of knowing Jesus.



Prayer points

- Pray for all those who feel weighed down by worries, stress and finances, that they would find peace and hope through Jesus Christ.
- Pray for the churches in our communities that are serving people experiencing poverty, that God would provide all they need to be a **beacon of peace**.



Week 3: Jesus, our joy

Today is the third Sunday of Advent, and our theme is joy. Christmas is often a time of great joy, with bright lights, festive music and making special memories with loved ones. It can also be a difficult time of year, compounding feelings of loneliness, financial difficulties and the stress of meeting expectations.

For families **trapped** in poverty, the extra costs of Christmas can feel overwhelming, and the fear of not being able to provide for a joyful Christmas for their children can steal their joy. Families may be worrying daily about being able to put a meal on the table, let alone buying Christmas presents. A season that should be marked by joy, connection and celebration can instead be marked by anxiety and shame.

'I always made sure my kids had something to eat, but sometimes this meant going without food myself.'

Mum-of-three Jade was forced to choose between paying the bills and feeding her children, so she sometimes went without food herself

But the good news of the gospel is a message of **unstoppable joy**! It's the joy that the shepherds felt when they heard about Jesus' birth. In Matthew 1:23, the arrival of the promised one brings joy as it fulfils the prophecy that Jesus is 'Emmanuel', God with us!

'Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.'

Isaiah 7:14

This message empowers people to look at their future with excitement instead of fear – a beautiful witness to God's love and power. As a church, we get to walk alongside people on these journeys, and it is a privilege. This Advent, let's consider how we play a part in bringing the joy of Christmas to others.

This joy isn't based on what we have, but who we know. And this joy is meant to be **shared with others**. God being with us means that we have the joy of knowing we are loved, forgiven and not alone. As it says in Psalm 16:11, 'You will show me the path of life; in your presence is fullness of joy'.



'You will show me the path of life; in your presence is fullness of joy.'

Psalm 16:11

'I'm actually looking forward to Christmas this year – I can't wait to celebrate Jesus' birth with my children, free from worry.'

Jade, now debt free and following Jesus, thanks to the love and practical support of those at her local church, Holy Trinity

Prayer points

- Pray that the true joy of the Christmas story would break through for people and families in our area this season.
- Pray that as a church, through our **collective action**, we can help bring joy and freedom to the people around us.



Week 4: Jesus, our love

We've reached the fourth and final Sunday of Advent. Our journey has been about waiting with hope, finding peace and embracing joy. Today, we focus on the greatest theme of all: love. The Christmas story is the ultimate act of love – God's love for the world, expressed in the gift of his son, Jesus.

This love is not just a feeling – it's a call to action. As we read the gospels, we see that Jesus loved people through the way he served them, particularly **paying attention** to those who were forced towards the edges of their communities.

As 1 John 3:17-18 says, 'How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses to help? ... let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.' It's the most simple way we can embody the character of Christ and adopt his mission as our own.

You may have heard it said that the Church is the 'hands and feet of Jesus', offering practical help, a listening ear and a caring community to people who feel lost and alone. This is our mission here at this church.

When we read in Genesis how God chose to create humans in his image, we conclude that everyone deserves to be **treated with dignity**, and to experience the 'life to the full' that Jesus promises. A full and free life is something that poverty steals from people. We see different ways human dignity is distorted throughout the Bible's timeline, but see the promise of it being fully restored in Revelation.

God invites us to join this **holy and shared mission**, providing us with an opportunity to embody God's love. Let's expand our thinking about giving as more than a financial transaction or sacrifice of our time or skills, but as a sacred act of trust and partnership with a powerful love, a love that makes itself known through Christ and his Church. In this way, our giving becomes an intentional practice of faith that shapes us and the world around us.

'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'
Revelation 21:4

Jesus' birth was the beginning of a story of hope, peace, joy and love that continues to this day. As a church, by supporting those around us, we are continuing that story. We are showing that the **love of God is powerful** enough to change lives and bring freedom to those who are trapped.

'My journey out of debt was also my journey to discovering God's love for me and my family... I'd love to share with you how Jesus has changed my life.'

Jade

Jade was supported out of debt thanks to the support of a local church, Holy Trinity, who deliver a free debt help service in partnership with Christians Against Poverty (CAP). Find out more through capuk.org/christmas-churches-2025.

Prayer points

- Pray that we would be moved to love others in a practical way, just as God loves us. Pray that God would inspire us with **divine creativity** to find new and exciting ways to do this as a church community.
- Pray that local churches' work and reach would continue to grow to those in their area trapped in poverty and debt.

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