

Local churches across the Anglican Communion are reaching out to the world's poorest communities in practical and life-changing ways.

USPG: Anglicans in World Mission needs your prayers and donations in order to support this vital church work.

The Life-Giving Gifts descriptions in this resource provide examples of the kind of work you will be supporting through your donation.

All the gift examples are actual pieces of work carried out by the local Anglican Church for which they have asked for financial support through USPG.



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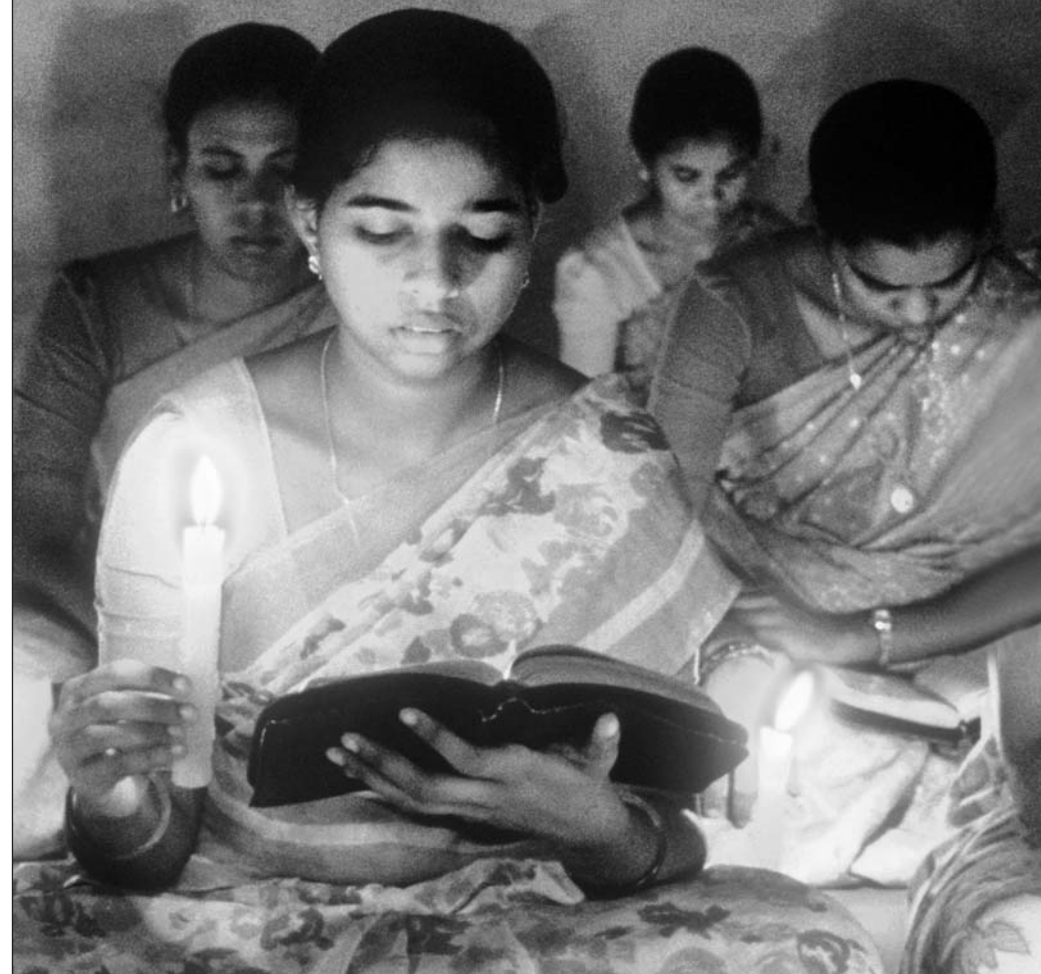
LIFE-GIVING GIFTS

Are you looking for inspiration when it comes to buying gifts for friends or family members this Christmas?

Instead of socks and smellies, why not give them a gift with a difference – a Life-Giving Gift? To order your gifts, please visit www.lifegivinggifts.org or call 0845 273 1701 for a free catalogue.

All photos: USPG/Leah Gordon
The photos in this leaflet are for representation purposes only.

Christ, Be Our Light



ADVENT RESOURCE 2008

Christ, Be Our Light is the title of a powerful Christian song by Bernadette Farrell. It draws together our hope in Christ, and our prayers for the needs of our world. 'Christ, be our light' is also an appropriate hope to celebrate during Advent and Christmas.

Please use the words and music in this worship resource to celebrate Christ's coming this Advent, so that together we might pray 'Christ, be our light.'

SONG: Christ, Be Our Light

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
Light for the world to see.

Refrain

Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has pow'r to save us.
Make us your living voice.

Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others.
Shared until all are fed.

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
Walls made of living stone.

Many the gifts, many the people,
Many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
Making your kingdom come.

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compassion' and 'Father of lights'
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'O Lord, you have set before us the
great hope' and 'Holy Jesus, to
deliver us from the power of
darkness you humbled yourself'
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WEEK 1



SONG: Christ, Be Our Light

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
Light for the world to see.

Refrain

Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.

REFLECTION

Advent is a time of expectant watching in the darkest days of our northern year. We are waiting for the light of Christ to dawn. As these bible verses suggest, the coming of Christ will expose with sharp clarity the dark places of the world into which he comes – but will also wake us from sleep – like the sun bursting through our windows on a bright morning. As 'children of the light' we will be energised to respond to our world's deepest needs. Yet already a glimmer is breaking through the darkness: wherever the church seeks to bear witness in its life to 'all that is good and right and true'.

Scripture: Ephesians 5: 8-14

PRAYER

O Lord,
You have set before us the great hope
that your kingdom shall come on earth,
and have taught us to pray for its coming:
give us grace to discern
the signs of its dawning,
and to work for the perfect day
when your will shall be done on earth
as it is in heaven:
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**
(Percy Dearmer)

Give a gift with a difference - a LIFE-GIVING GIFT: Lay Leader Training - £12/€15

Swaziland faces many hardships, including one of the world's highest HIV infection rates. The work of the church in response to this crisis has been severely hampered by a shortage of leaders. Your gift could help mobilise the church by funding a lay leader's two-year training course.



WEEK 2



SONG: Christ, Be Our Light

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has pow'r to save us.
Make us your living voice.

Refrain
Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.

REFLECTION

It may seem strange that one of the most beloved of Advent readings – this celebration of the birth of the Prince of Peace – should originate from one of the darkest periods of Old Testament history. Isaiah 9 probably stems from the time when Israel was suffering savage military oppression at the hands of the Assyrian Empire. People were indeed living in 'a land of deep darkness'. Yet it is into this extreme darkness that the prophet Isaiah speaks – so sure of God's saving power that he can use the past tense: 'a child has been born for us'.

Scripture: Isaiah 9: 2, 6-7

PRAYER

God of tender compassion and mercy,
whose Son is the morning star
and the sun of righteousness:
let him shine in the darkness
and shadows of this world,
that we may serve you in freedom and peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

LIFE-GIVING GIFT: Youth Exchange Placement – £19/€24

For more than two decades, Sri Lanka has been scarred by a bitter civil war arising out of ethnic tensions. Your gift could help send one young person on a ten-day exchange programme, giving them the opportunity to share their life experiences and build bridges of understanding.



WEEK 3



SONG: Christ, Be Our Light

Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others.
Shared until all are fed.

Refrain
Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.

REFLECTION

Matthew's vision of the church is like a city set on a hill whose light cannot be hid. That is both an exhilarating and frightening picture. The visibility of the church offers opportunity for witness and service. Yet visibility also means that a church's failings are apparent. John's Gospel tells us that Jesus said: 'I am the light of the world.' Matthew is here more daring still. 'You – Jesus' disciples – are the light of the world.' It is through us that the world will be able to glimpse something of Jesus. But if we fail to live up to our vocation then the responsibility for obscuring the light of Christ rests with us.

Scripture: Matthew 5: 14-16

PRAYER

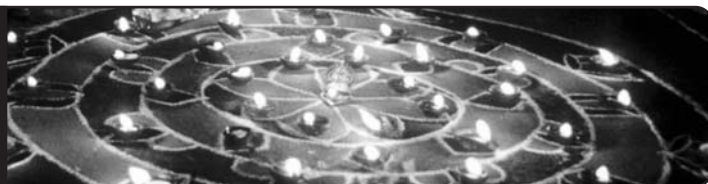
Father of lights,
from whom comes every good and perfect gift:
keep us in the light of Christ,
to shine in your world,
that all may believe in you
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

LIFE-GIVING GIFT: Emergency Kit – £15/€19

In times of emergency, people often turn to the church first for practical support. Your gift could help provide food, blankets and cooking utensils for a family coping with the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster.



WEEK 4



SONG: Christ, Be Our Light

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
Walls made of living stone.

Refrain
Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.

REFLECTION

1 Peter both explores and transforms Old Testament understandings of nation, temple and priesthood. Being built into a 'house' we are privileged to offer shelter to God, as well as to those who God stands alongside. To become 'a royal priesthood' is both an immense honour and an awesome challenge – for both priests and kings must live not for themselves alone but for others. So we have been pulled out of darkness to share God's marvellous light with others.

Scripture: 1 Peter 2: 4-5, 9-10

PRAYER

Kindle, O Lord, in our hearts, we pray, the flame of that love which never ceases, that it may burn in us and give light to others. May we shine forever in your temple, set on fire with that eternal light of yours, which puts to flight the darkness of this world; in the name of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. **Amen** (St Columba)

LIFE-GIVING GIFT: Water, Gas and Electricity - £26.50/€33.60

San Esteban Hostel, in Uruguay, provides accommodation, counselling and fellowship for people who are HIV-positive and homeless or living in poverty. As residents make that important first step of re-integrating into society, your gift could help the hostel pay its utility bills for one week.



CHRISTMAS DAY



SONG: Christ, Be Our Light

Many the gifts, many the people,
Many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
Making your kingdom come.

Refrain
Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.

REFLECTION

On Christmas Day we receive the greatest gift of all – God's gift of a new world, through the birth of the one who is the 'light of the world'. Paul's words in 2 Corinthians take us back to God's first words in Genesis: 'Let there be light.' From this beginning, Creation blazed into being. Since then the light may seem to have become dull and dim, but at Christmas time we are invited to discover just how brightly God's glory shines in the face of Jesus Christ. In this baby born in Bethlehem, creation's goal is at last accomplished. Let us celebrate – and help make God's new world a reality for our time.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4: 5-6

PRAYER

Holy Jesus, to deliver us from the power of darkness you humbled yourself to be born among us and laid in a manger. Let the light of your love always shine in our hearts, and bring us at last to the joyful vision of your beauty; for you are now alive and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. **Amen**

LIFE-GIVING GIFT: Somewhere to sleep - £10.00/€13

With the aim of giving young people the best possible start in life, the church in Malawi is helping to provide secondary education. Your gift could help with the building of a new dormitory for Malosa secondary school, enabling its boarding students to benefit from a good night's sleep.

