

Supporting the world church during Advent

When you reach the final week of readings or the final stage of the procession, please ask members of your congregation to donate one of the *Life-giving gifts* that they have heard about. Collection envelopes are available.

You can order as many as you need by calling 0845 273 1701.

Sending your church's gifts to USPG

1. Empty all collection envelopes and add up the total amount of money
2. Write a cheque for this amount made payable to 'USPG'
3. Fill in the form at the back of the *Life-giving gifts* catalogue
4. Send the empty collection envelopes, cheque and completed form to:

FREEPOST RRKT-LTLB-LSUS

USPG: Anglicans in World Mission

200 Great Dover Street

London SE1 4YB

USPG Ireland

Inis d'or

Gobadruish, Mohill

Co. Leitrim

A final prayer and blessing

May mercy and truth be our guide and peace be a pathway for our feet.

Amen.

May we never be shaken in our resolve to uphold your truth and live generously.

Amen.

May your promise, O Lord, to raise the poor from the dust and turn the fortunes of the needy upside down, be fulfilled in our time.

Amen.

May we whom you call to your service seek to establish justice on earth that we may be inheritors of your kingdom.

Amen.

May the blessing of Almighty God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit be upon us.

Amen.

STAGE 1/WEEK 1 (from the church door)

Responsory

The Word of life which was from the beginning

We proclaim to you

The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining

The Word of life which was from the beginning

The Annunciation: Luke 1.26-38

(Lectionary: Advent 4, 3rd Service)

Bible notes

Nothing is impossible with God! Startling news is met with humility, and God's gift of his Son begins with a human response – Mary says “yes”, despite fear and lack of knowledge. The journey of faith begins with responding generously to the love of God in action.

In the church of today, set in many different situations, God is at work and people are responding despite fears and often with little or no resources to even begin. What are we able to do in our situation to respond to the overwhelming and generous love of God? How do we say ‘yes’? How do we help others say ‘yes’?

Prayer

Almighty God, you looked on the meekness of Mary, the mother of our Lord, and inspired her to sing of that time when the hungry would be fed and the humble lifted high. Give us your Spirit's guidance that in following in Jesus' way, we may be humble and just for his dear name's sake. Amen.

Suggested hymns/songs

When the Angel Came to Mary, The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came, Long Ago Prophets Knew, Here I am to Worship

Share the Word - Ten Bibles £8/€12

Bibles in Tanzania are scarce and expensive. A USPG-supported project run by the Diocese of Kondoa is making sure that young people can own a Bible of their own. Your gift will help the church provide young people with Bibles so they can develop their faith through the study of God's Word



STAGE 2/WEEK 2 (from halfway down the nave)

Responsory

The Word of life which was from the beginning

We proclaim to you

The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining

The Word of life which was from the beginning

The Journey to Bethlehem: Luke 2.1-5

(Lectionary: Christmas Day Set 1)

Bible notes

Luke gives us the background to this strange journey. Not only is Jesus' birth imminent, but difficulties are added by the need to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Journeys are so much a part of the life and ministry of Jesus, and this part of his story begins here.

Today people are still called to leave behind the familiar and set out in God's service. From Paul's great missionary journeys to the present day, God is made known when people join in God's work wherever he may lead them. Along their journey, the Holy Family would have relied on others to meet their needs - food and shelter. How can we lift our eyes beyond our local church and community?

Prayer

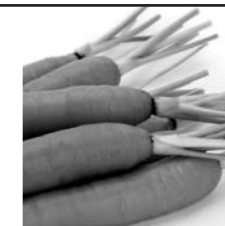
Everlasting God, in every generation you raise up those who know the hope of the gospel in their hearts. Inspire us by your Spirit to show the light of Christ throughout the world. Give us, we pray, a bigger vision of your mighty purposes, and lift our eyes to look beyond our limited horizons to the world your Son Jesus came to save, for in his name we pray. Amen.

Suggested hymns/songs

O Little Town of Bethlehem, Little Donkey

Going organic - Grow your own veggies kit £10/€15

A USPG-supported organic garden project run by the Anglican Church in Uruguay is helping to feed impoverished families in the small town of Progreso. Your gift will help the church maintain the garden, which grows vegetables such as carrots and potatoes, as well as provide families with training in nutrition, composting and agricultural techniques.



STAGE 3/WEEK 3 (from the front of the nave)

Responsory

The Word of life which was from the beginning

We proclaim to you

The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining

The Word of life which was from the beginning

No Room at the Inn: Luke 2.6-7

(Lectionary: Christmas Day Set 1)

Bible notes

With the town full of visitors, Jesus is born with just the barest minimum of shelter. Some small compassion made this possible. It is extraordinary that the King of Kings finds no earthly home, and the Incarnate Lord sets out on his human life in circumstances so demeaning. The stable scene is so familiar – and so we can lose some of the impact from Luke's narrative.

In a world of plenty, where some are in luxury, many have no home or are dispossessed or in extreme poverty. God's own generosity and justice are outraged! How can we be partners in God's new creation – the coming kingdom – where the hungry are fed and humble lifted high? How can we

offer some small compassion to others who have so little?

Prayer

Almighty God, from you all thoughts of truth and peace proceed. Kindle in the hearts of all your people a true love of peace, and guide with your wisdom the leaders of all the nations on earth, so that your kingdom may come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Suggested hymns/songs

Once in Royal David's City, Away in a Manger, Rat-a-tat-tat

Church to the rescue - One emergency kit £15/€22

In times of emergency, people turn to the church for shelter and practical support. Through USPG, your gift helps to provide food, blankets and cooking utensils for families who have lost everything, and have nowhere else to turn.





STAGE 4/WEEK 4 (from the lectern)

Responsory

The Word of life which was from the beginning
We proclaim to you
The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining
The Word of life which was from the beginning

The Birth of Christ: John 1.1-14

(Lectionary: Christmas Day Set 3)

Bible notes

John's gospel gives no story of the birth of Jesus, but what we do have is this prologue which tells of the Word, the very being of God, expressed in the human life of Jesus, God's Son. It reads as a kind of re-expression of the story of the creation in Genesis 1. So we are told of the way in which God's light conquers all darkness, and human life is lifted up.

Such dignity indeed! Yet many in God's creation are scarcely afforded the chance to live, let alone experience the opportunities of 'life in all its fullness'. How can we express in the things we do and say what we believe about the God who is Emmanuel

– God with us – creatures of his image and worth? How can our actions make this a reality?

Prayer

Eternal God, you raised fallen humanity through the child-bearing of blessed Mary: as we have seen your glory revealed in our human nature and your love made perfect in our weakness, may we daily be renewed in your image and conformed to the pattern of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Suggested hymn/songs

Joy to the World, Let all Mortal Flesh Keep Silent, Calypso Carol

Looking after mum - Help at birth £50/€75

At USPG-supported St James' Hospital in remote Mantšonyane, Lesotho, help is needed for pregnant women. The average life expectancy in the country is only 35 years for women, partly due to complications during birth. Your gift helps to pay for emergency birth assistance, giving both newborn babies and mothers the care they need.



STAGE 5/WEEK 5 (from the chancel arch or altar step)

Responsory

The Word of life which was from the beginning
We proclaim to you
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The Word of life which was from the beginning

The Adoration of the Shepherds: Luke 2.8-20

(Lectionary: Christmas Day Set 2)

Bible notes

The shepherds are the ordinary working folk, and their working day, or rather, night, is disrupted by the angel song. They are told of good news and not to be afraid. Those called to worship in today's world are sometimes set in circumstances where there is good cause to have fear. Those who share our humanity sometimes labour hard and long for very little reward.

In our response to God's generosity, how can we help build a better world? How can we find the means of letting this heavenly song be heard, 'Glory to God in the highest heavens, and on earth peace among those whom he favours'?

Prayer

Father of all, whose Son born among us was ruler over all things as Lord and King, bring all whom you have called to worship you in unity and peace. And bring all the created order to worship at his feet, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Suggested hymns/songs

While Shepherds Watched, A Great and Mighty Wonder, The Virgin Mary had a Baby Boy

Power to the people - Legal support for five people £14/€21

The Brazilian justice system is fragile and legal support is expensive. Poor families are forced to accept degrading, unjust or harmful settlements. Through USPG, your gift will help to ensure that poor people can access justice, not just those who can afford it.



STAGE 6/WEEK 6 (from the sanctuary)

Responsory

The Word of life which was from the beginning
We proclaim to you
The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining
The Word of life which was from the beginning

The Visit of the Wise Men from the East: Matthew 1.1-12

(Lectionary: Epiphany)

Bible notes

From a land far away came these people of wisdom – led by their own study of the heavens to follow a star to worship the infant King. They offer great gifts to acknowledge the great King, the presence of the divine and the foretelling of death to come. Their story has been retold through generations, echoing the mystery of truth told through word and action.

The Christian vocation is to offer ourselves in God's service. As we follow the way Jesus taught, how can we - on life's journey - give light to generations yet to come? How can we reach out to others and help them find their way?

Prayer

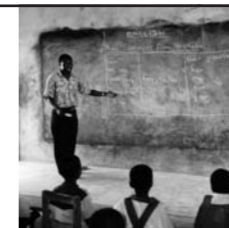
O God, you made yourself known by the leading of a star. Enlighten us with your truth, and raise up faithful witnesses, who by their life and teaching, may proclaim the truth of your salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Suggested hymns/songs

The First Nowell, As with Gladness Men of Old, O Come all Ye Faithful

Top teachers - Teacher training £40/€60

Whatever our age, we can all remember the names of the teachers that inspired us when we were young. Your gift will help USPG fund the training of teachers from Ghana's Cape Coast in effective classroom practice, so that they give children the best possible start in life.



God's Generous Journey

How to use this resource

- *God's Generous Journey* can be used on any six Sundays from Advent to Epiphany (the Lectionary references are given).
- The resource can also be used as a whole on one occasion, with all six stages.

You could use your church building to help you understand God's journey to us in Jesus his Son. Processions in church are good reminders of pilgrimage, and of how we can respond generously to others. You will find suggestions for appropriate stations during the procession on each of the attached cards.

- Alternatively, your church may wish to club together and buy a *Life-giving gift* for the world church instead of sending Christmas cards to each other.



This resource is easily photocopyable, should you wish to distribute it amongst your congregation.

