

The Extraordinary Gift of Hope: Advent Reflections

Hope is a constant need for the human condition. Without it there is no progress, no moving on. Through Advent there is hope in each day, combined with an expectation of something worthwhile. As we enter Advent with expectation and preparation, our prayer is that you will be filled afresh with the hope we find in Jesus. (N.B. This reflection involves the lighting of a candle.)

Advent 1 – The Sweetness of Hope



God's promises are made to last. They show God's care for humankind, God's desire that all will be well, even – perhaps especially – when we have become resigned to the way things are, when we no longer seek or expect things to change, when change seems impossible in human terms.

Read: Genesis 17: 4–6

God enters into a covenant with Abraham which is transformational. He is given a new name and a promise of something beyond what he can probably imagine. The boldness of this promise, that from a couple who are unable to have a child many nations will come, sows a seed of hope which only God can bring into reality.

God's covenant is a long-term commitment.

The Psalmist writes: 'How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!' (Psalm 19: 103)

Where do you need to see hope right now? Which of God's promises do you need reminding of in this Advent season? The sweetness of hope is written in God's words.

In Ethiopia, All We Can is supporting families to set up their own honey business. Hope is truly very sweet. This support provides the family with the materials they need to build a beehive as well as training in bee-keeping.

Equally, MWiB is currently supporting the *Comedor Juan 6:35** in Tijuana, Mexico – a café where migrants trapped at the Mexico-US border can find not only hot food and drinks, but education classes and a safe, social meeting space. *John 6: 35: 'Jesus said, "I am the bread that gives life..."'

Hope has a long-term impact.

The hope of Abraham and the hope of families in Ethiopia and migrants in Mexico is resilient. In the face of obstacles, there is a sweetness to God's promises. God will not leave us.

As you light your candle today, ponder how Abraham was transformed by God's covenant.

Light your candle

Pray: May this candle be a reminder of the sweetness of hope. How sweet Lord are your words. Fill me afresh with the enduring hope I find in you. Amen.



Written jointly by MWiB and All We Can, these reflections were originally printed in the Methodist Recorder, 27th November 2020. Our hope is that as you read, reflect and pray, you will get a glimpse into the life-transforming work of All We Can, an international development charity working to transform the lives of people living in marginalised communities around the world, and Methodist Women in Britain, a charity within the Methodist Church focusing on tackling issues of social justice and empowering women in churches and communities around the world. To find out more, visit:

www.mwib.org.uk www.allwecan.org

The Extraordinary Gift of Hope: Advent Reflections

Hope is a constant need for the human condition. Without it there is no progress, no moving on. Through Advent there is hope in each day, combined with an expectation of something worthwhile. As we enter Advent with expectation and preparation, our prayer is that you will be filled afresh with the hope we find in Jesus. (*N.B. This reflection involves the lighting of a candle.*)

Advent 2 – Hope Grows



Signs of hope can come from unexpected sources. This year has challenged many across the world, but so often small signs – a little practical support, an encouraging word – can provide renewed optimism and energy. Be prepared to be surprised in hope.

Read: Isaiah 9: 6 and 11: 1–3

The prophet Isaiah foretold of the Messiah. The one coming whose royal lineage will be listed. A shoot will grow.

Have you seen many people taking up new hobbies during this time of staying at home? Baking and gardening seem to have become firm favourites. If you have ever grown something from a seed then you will recall the elation of seeing the first signs of sprouting as a shoot appears from the soil. It is so full of hope and potential.

There is a fragility in this depiction of hope in the Messiah; coming in the form of a child and as a shoot. The hope may come in a fragile form but it will grow and deepen. Its roots spread and from a branch there will be fruit.

‘A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a branch will bear fruit.’ Isaiah 11: 1

Where would you like your roots to be deepened? Are their signs of emerging hope in your life? Where do you need God’s nurturing most today?

All We Can is working in India where, due to changing weather patterns, producing food and crops in ways that are resistant to the effects of climate change is critical for families’ food security and income. The fragile hope in shoots which will bear fruit is a very real experience.

In Zimbabwe, a group of widowed women are learning to make and sell bricks, with funding from MWiB enabling them to buy essential equipment including moulds, cement, and wheelbarrows. The money they earn will provide food and clothing for their children, and enable them to attend school.

Hope is growing in India and Zimbabwe in very practical ways.

Light your candle

Pray: Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, may this candle be a reminder that you came to us as a child as Isaiah prophesied you would. Help me to see the signs of hope growing around me. Amen.


**Methodist Women
in Britain**

**ALL
WE
CAN**
Methodist
relief and
development

Written jointly by MWiB and All We Can, these reflections were originally printed in the Methodist Recorder, 27th November 2020. Our hope is that as you read, reflect and pray, you will get a glimpse into the life-transforming work of All We Can, an international development charity working to transform the lives of people living in marginalised communities around the world, and Methodist Women in Britain, a charity within the Methodist Church focusing on tackling issues of social justice and empowering women in churches and communities around the world. To find out more, visit:

www.mwib.org.uk

www.allwecan.org

The Extraordinary Gift of Hope: Advent Reflections

Hope is a constant need for the human condition. Without it there is no progress, no moving on. Through Advent there is hope in each day, combined with an expectation of something worthwhile. As we enter Advent with expectation and preparation, our prayer is that you will be filled afresh with the hope we find in Jesus. (*N.B. This reflection involves the lighting of a candle.*)

Advent 3 – Baptised in Hope



When hope is shared it becomes stronger, and grows. And as it grows, hope brings healing, refreshment and encouragement. Like clean water in a community, its benefits are many, and far reaching.

Read: Matthew 3: 11–17

John the Baptist, the prophet who encourages us to 'Prepare the way for the Lord' (*Mark 1: 3*), knows the cleansing power of water. The baptism of repentance. He points his own followers, and all who listen, to the one who will come after him. To Jesus. The baptism that Jesus offers is powerful. A hope of redemption. A baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire. The precious water which is poured over each person being baptised ties us to Jesus' own baptism. We follow his lead.

For families that All We Can works with in rural Zimbabwe, access to safe water sources is vital if they are to drink clean water and be able to regularly wash their hands. Regular hand-washing can help to prevent the spread of deadly diseases like cholera and viruses like coronavirus. The reminder of the cleansing and life-giving nature of water is a daily experience.

In Bolivia urban migration is common, often necessitated by the privatisation of water supplies in poor rural communities. Women are especially vulnerable, often ending up living and working on the streets with their children. With money raised by Methodist women around the UK, Tabita House in La Paz is able to provide skills training and safe accommodation for displaced women and their children.

During Advent, we can all cry out like John the Baptist as we prepare for Jesus's arrival.

How do you need to be preparing for Jesus this Advent? What parts of your life do you hope to see God's redeeming love at work in?

As you light your candle, take a moment to think about the precious role of water in your own life, in the lives of families in Zimbabwe, and families in Bolivia denied access to clean water.

Light your candle

Pray: Lord, you baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire and in doing so give me a hope which only you can fulfil. Come, Lord Jesus, and flood my heart with hope. Amen.



Written jointly by MWiB and All We Can, these reflections were originally printed in the Methodist Recorder, 27th November 2020. Our hope is that as you read, reflect and pray, you will get a glimpse into the life-transforming work of All We Can, an international development charity working to transform the lives of people living in marginalised communities around the world, and Methodist Women in Britain, a charity within the Methodist Church focusing on tackling issues of social justice and empowering women in churches and communities around the world. To find out more, visit:

www.mwib.org.uk

www.allwecan.org

The Extraordinary Gift of Hope: Advent Reflections

Hope is a constant need for the human condition. Without it there is no progress, no moving on. Through Advent there is hope in each day, combined with an expectation of something worthwhile. As we enter Advent with expectation and preparation, our prayer is that you will be filled afresh with the hope we find in Jesus. (*N.B. This reflection involves the lighting of a candle.*)

Advent 4 – A Song of Joyful Hope



Songs sung joyfully in response to good news, or a hope fulfilled, are contagious. The joy is catching. Hope is affirmed.

Read: Luke 1: 46–55

Mary's song, the Magnificat, as told in Luke is so striking in its tone of joy. This young woman bears the news of her unexpected pregnancy and her new role with a spirit of gratitude. Her soul sings. Her words are filled with hope. Would you react in the same way? Mary turns a seemingly shocking and difficult scenario into one where she can say, 'from now on all generations will call me blessed.' Her joy that God would use her is tangible.

In Uganda, with All We Can's support, teenage mums are being helped to sing their own songs of hope. Training and materials are being provided for them to learn how to sew in order to earn a livelihood. Teenage mums becoming entrepreneurs allows them to support their families and transform their communities. In the midst of struggle, God's hope brings a song of joy.

In the Nusirat Refugee Camp in Gaza, Palestine, young deaf women are being trained in embroidery, soap-making, and other skills, providing them with an income and enabling them to live more independently. This training has been enabled by a grant from MWiB as part of its work to raise awareness of hearing impairment issues.

For teenage mothers like Mary, and the girls in Uganda and young women in Palestine, hope can be very practical. Mary does all she is asked to do to bring the Son of God into the world, whilst teenage mothers like Maureen (pictured) do all they can to learn the skills they need to support their families.

What would your song of hope sound like? Perhaps you could write down your own song. What circumstances in your life can you turn into praises of joy? Where might you feel fearful but would like joyful hope instead?

As you light your candle, think about Mary, the teenage mothers in Uganda, and the deaf women in Nusirat, and the hope which abides in each story.

Light your candle

Pray: My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour. Lord God, help me to joyfully wait in anticipation for you. Amen.



Written jointly by MWiB and All We Can, these reflections were originally printed in the Methodist Recorder, 27th November 2020. Our hope is that as you read, reflect and pray, you will get a glimpse into the life-transforming work of All We Can, an international development charity working to transform the lives of people living in marginalised communities around the world, and Methodist Women in Britain, a charity within the Methodist Church focusing on tackling issues of social justice and empowering women in churches and communities around the world. To find out more, visit:

www.mwib.org.uk www.allwecan.org

The Extraordinary Gift of Hope: Advent Reflections

Hope is a constant need for the human condition. Without it there is no progress, no moving on. Through Advent there is hope in each day, combined with an expectation of something worthwhile. As we enter Advent with expectation and preparation, our prayer is that you will be filled afresh with the hope we find in Jesus. (*N.B. This reflection involves the lighting of a candle.*)

Christmas Day – Hope of the World



The birth of a child is accompanied by hope – hope for their future, for a happy, positive life, a life that will benefit those around them in some way and bring joy. Education and training can bring these hopes to reality.

Read: Luke 2: 6–14 and Matthew 2: 10–11

Today we remember and celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ and the extraordinary gift of hope we have in him. Do you get excited still at receiving gifts at Christmas? Or do you prefer to give gifts and enjoy the pleasure the other person takes in receiving it?

On Christmas Day we remember the gift of Jesus to the world. The saviour has come. It is good news for everyone. The one of whom the prophets spoke, the long awaited Messiah, is finally born. Praises ring out, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those whom he is pleased!'

The birth of Jesus is joyfully heralded and his visitors and the gifts they bring to that lowly stable are a sign of the life Jesus will lead. A life which brings hope to the world through his death and resurrection.

There are signs of hope all around us even in the midst of global pandemics and climate crises.

Throughout this year, All We Can are sharing stories from Butagaya in Uganda, where hope comes in the form of a bicycle. For young girls like Nawalat (pictured), getting to school from her rural village entails a long walk and the chance of being turned away if she is late. The bicycle allows her the chance to fulfil her potential and get the education she needs to become a nurse.

In 2020, Empowerment Gifts from MWiB have provided an ultrasound scanner and other maternity equipment to hospitals in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In countries where infant and maternal mortality are high, this equipment will have far-reaching effects in improving the health and life expectancy of mothers and their babies.

Hope prevails. Where have you seen hope in action? What gift would you like to bring to Jesus today?

As you light your candle, think about what Jesus' birth means to you.

Light your candle

Pray: Lord Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, Son of God, thank you for the extraordinary gift of hope you are to the world. May my lips proclaim your praises as I join with the angels in singing 'Glory to God in the highest!' Amen.



Written jointly by MWiB and All We Can, these reflections were originally printed in the Methodist Recorder, 27th November 2020. Our hope is that as you read, reflect and pray, you will get a glimpse into the life-transforming work of All We Can, an international development charity working to transform the lives of people living in marginalised communities around the world, and Methodist Women in Britain, a charity within the Methodist Church focusing on tackling issues of social justice and empowering women in churches and communities around the world. To find out more, visit:

www.mwib.org.uk

www.allwecan.org