



**'Blessed are the
peacemakers,
for they will be
called children
of God.'**

Matthew 5:9

Be a peacemaker this Christmas

Jesus said 'Blessed are the peacemakers'. But as we look around at the state of the world, it's easy to wonder, 'Where are they?'

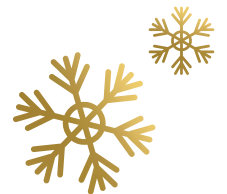
Now more than ever, we need peace. If current trends persist, by 2030 more than half of the world's poor will be living in countries affected by high levels of violence.

At Christian Aid, we know that peace on earth is possible. We are working with partners on the

ground to make peace happen, in ways big and small. These are the frontline peacemakers and they are already transforming lives.

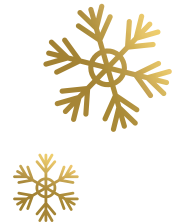
This Christmas, you can be a peacemaker too. Use the resources in this pack to encourage your congregation to reflect, pray and build peace over Advent and Christmas.

From Advent candle liturgies to sermon notes, there are plenty of resources to work with.





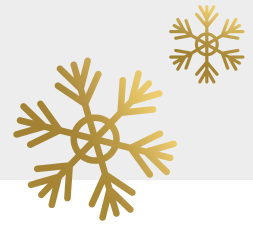
These resources are flexible for you to use in the way that works for your church and your context. These resources were written by members of Christian Aid's worship and theology collective.



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Order your Christmas resources at caid.org.uk/christmas-resources



This liturgy for lighting the candles on your Advent wreath helps your church to reflect on being peacemakers this Christmas. Please feel free to adapt, extend or abbreviate the liturgy according to what works in your context.

First Sunday in Advent

Old Testament characters
matriarchs and patriarchs
tell their stories of violence and bloodshed
inviting us to remember and confess
the shadow-side of what it is to be human.

And so we light the first candle to say sorry
for the times when we have hurt others.

**May we turn from violence to peace
and become peacemakers this Christmas.**

Second Sunday in Advent

The prophets raise their voices
daring to speak truth to power
telling stories of symbolic actions
inviting us to join them on a journey
that turns swords into ploughshares.

And so we light the second candle as a marker
of our commitment to walk in the light.

**May we turn from violence to peace
and become peacemakers this Christmas.**

Third Sunday in Advent

A rugged man called John
calls us out from the centre
to go to the very margins of society
inviting us to repent, to turn around
daring us to risk a new adventure.

And so we light the third candle as a challenge to
ourselves to follow God's call out into the margins.

**May we turn from violence to peace
and become peacemakers this Christmas.**

Fourth Sunday in Advent

A pregnant teenager called Mary
hears the voice of God and answers yes
her song recounted through the generations
inviting us to sing our songs for justice
rejoicing as the hungry are filled with good things.

And so we light the fourth candle to raise our
voices joining in with the younger generation in
their songs of freedom.

**May we turn from violence to peace
and become peacemakers this Christmas.**

Christmas Eve/Christmas Day

A baby, called Jesus,
small and vulnerable, is born
wrapped in cloth and laid in a manger
inviting us to kneel in awe and wonder
and fall in love with the Prince of Peace.

And so we light the fifth candle as a sign of our
love; our yes to God's invitation to live out the
peace of Christ.

**May we turn from violence to peace
and become peacemakers this Christmas.**

Call to worship

In these days of violence and conflict
We walk towards the birth of peace
We are taking steps to peace

In these days of pain and suffering
We walk towards the birth of healing
We are taking steps to healing

In these days of deepening darkness
We walk towards the birth of light
We are taking steps to light

In these days of Advent
We walk towards the birth of God
We are taking steps to Christmas

Introducing the word

As we walk towards the birth of God and the manger of the Prince of Peace, we are invited in our worship to consider how we might take practical steps towards becoming a peacemaker this Christmas, for many live in a dark and troubled world; many live longing for the dawning of peace, waiting for the light.

Longing for light is the nature of Advent. So perhaps we ought not to rush in the lighting of our candles. Perhaps for a moment longer we should wait and listen for that longing for justice and peace that was envisioned long ago by the prophet Isaiah. And this is what he said.

We have suggested lighting the Advent candles later in the service as part of the worship. If you would prefer to do this at the beginning that would also work.

Reading

Isaiah 9:2-7

This is the story of God
We have heard good news
We have seen a great light
Shining in the darkness
Taking steps to peace.



For an Advent service, you could leave out the reading from Luke with its introduction and response, and just use Isaiah. For a Christmas service include the following introduction and response to the New Testament reading.

The people had been waiting from the time of Isaiah to the time of Jesus, hoping and praying and working for the promised peace, but peace had not yet come.

Still the boots of warriors trampled down their hopes, still the garments rolled in blood cried out the death of innocence, still the fire of heaven's judgment waits.

And then 2,000 years ago
the Prince of Peace whom Isaiah dreamed.

Reading

Luke 2:1-20

This too is the story of God
We have heard good news
We have seen a great light
Shining in the darkness
Taking steps to peace.

Alongside a Bible reading you could also use a peacemaker story from a Christian Aid partner. Show the video of Bishop Paride Taban from South Sudan reciting his 28 words for peace which is available to download from caid.org.uk/christmas-resources



You could use these words after the video:

Today in places such as South Sudan people of justice join hands to take the first steps towards peace and continue to tell the story of God.

**We have heard good news
We have seen a great light
Shining in the darkness
Taking steps to peace.**



Prayer of confession

Lord we have heard good news
and rejoiced that peace is proclaimed upon
the earth:

But peace is more than words
and too often Lord
we may have settled for lives of peace and quiet
and not sought out the acts of peace with justice.
When warriors' boots have trampled over
people not our own, and places far from home
forgive us when we have said little and done less.

Forgive us for when garments rolled in blood
cried out the death of innocence,
when we have said little and done less.
**Cast our faults and failures
as fuel for the fire:
consumed in the crucible of heaven's judgment.
May we rise from the ashes on the earth
forged into a people for justice,
stepping up to the challenge
and into the kingdom of peace.**

Prayers of thanks

We give you thanks O, generous God,
for all you have given
to make peace in our world:
These gifts of money
our time and our talents
for our churches and for Christian Aid
and those who work in partnership with them
in places of conflict and violence.
Most of all we give you thanks
for the gift of your son
the Prince of Peace.
Amen.

Sermon

See suggested sermon notes on page 7

You could use the candle lighting liturgy from the start of this pack or the following words.



The lighting of the Advent candles

We have waited with longing for the lighting of our candles,
as others before us have waited for justice,
as people in Lebanon are waiting this Advent
for the people of the world to join them in making peace.

As we light this candle so we offer our prayers and share in our commitment to make peace this Christmas.

Prayers of intercession

God of shalom,
you welcome us into a family of peacemakers
from Abraham to Abigail,
Barnabas and the woman at the well.
Your people have taken steps to make peace,

from Diana Abbas to Bishop Paride,

Your people have taken steps to make peace.

And so we pray today for people and places caught in cycles of violence and conflict or offering hospitality to those seeking refuge.

In particular we remember _____
(include names of recent people and places that have been in the news)

And especially at this time,
we remember the partners of Christian Aid across the globe.

We pray for Association Najdeh in Lebanon and the SSCC in South Sudan, we pray for the healing that is brought to those traumatised by war.

We pray that through our partnerships our prayers, our giving, and our learning from each other there would be sanctuaries from violence and havens for healing for all who need a safe-space to rediscover their faith in peace.

These things we ask in the name of the Prince of Peace our saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

At this point in the service, you could use some of the creative prayer ideas in this pack.



Blessing

Go now on the journey to Christmas: bring glory to God in the highest and peace among all on the earth. Take steps towards justice with glad tidings of comfort. Bring glad tidings of joy on the steps you take following the Prince of Peace.
Amen.



We have a talk with slides available to download from caid.org.uk/christmas-resources. This talk tells stories of peacemakers from Christian Aid's work around the world. If you would like to make that talk into more of a sermon here are some notes to get you started. You could choose to show the Christmas Appeal video which is also available to download.

An Advent sermon – Isaiah 9:2-7

- Isaiah 9 is often read at Christmas. However, it is usual to skip verses 3-5. It is not very 'Christmassy' to think about the trampling boots of the oppressor or garments rolled in blood.
- The reality is that peace and hope have to acknowledge the pain of the conflict. Although we like to skip over the difficult parts of this passage, they are still there.
- If we are to be peacemakers we have to grapple with the conflict. 'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light,' (9:2b). The light has more meaning precisely because it comes out of darkness.
- In Advent we are waiting for the birth of Christ but also for when Christ comes again and there will be God's kingdom of peace in all the earth. Since this passage was written there has been more conflict, more bloodshed and more trauma but we still wait with hope. In the waiting, we have to deal with the trauma and darkness of conflict.

The darkness of conflict and the hope of peace

- If current trends persist, by 2030 more than half of the world's poor will be living in countries affected by high levels of violence.
- Children are being forced to witness atrocities; families ripped apart as they flee their homes. For millions of people this Christmas, peace seems

like an impossible dream. There are many people living with the darkness of conflict every day.

- At Christian Aid we know peace is possible. We work across the world with those experiencing conflict and we know what it takes to build peace with communities. It's not easy – but it can be done.
- Peace is broken every day, but it is also built every day through the tireless work of peacemakers like Bishop Paride Taban in South Sudan and Diana Abbas in Lebanon. (Download the talk notes and slides for more information about our peacemakers.)

A Christmas sermon – Luke 2.1-20

- For Isaiah, the promised Prince of Peace was a long way off. As we read Isaiah 9 now, we see Jesus as the child who was foretold but Isaiah was writing 700 years before the events described in Luke 2.
- In Luke 2, the angels who celebrate the arrival of the Messiah proclaim peace among those whom God favours. Looking around us at the world of the twenty-first century since Jesus' birth, we are rapidly confronted by the reality that the coming of the Prince of Peace has not yet brought the promised 'endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom.' (Isaiah 9:7)
- For Palestinians today, many of whom have been displaced including some (like Hassan's family) more than once, peace is a far-off hope.
- But peace is being built every day by peacemakers around the world. At Christmas we celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace and we look for a time when the kingdom of God comes. In small ways across the world, peacemakers like Bishop Paride are building the kingdom of God through acts of peace.
- What can we do this Christmas to be peacemakers?

Burning the boots

You will need:

- paper cut-out 'boots' (see page 10)
- pens, pencils and/or crayons
- a fireproof metal bucket/brazier
- matches and a taper
- paper 'doves of peace'
- other art/collage materials.

Give each person a paper cut-out boot. Invite them to draw images of war and violence or, for those who are reluctant to draw, to write the names of people afflicted by war onto their boots.

While you sing a suitable Advent song of peace, invite the congregation to place their boot into a fireproof bucket.

In exchange give each person a dove of peace to remember the arts therapy projects run by Association Najdeh in Lebanon, helping children like Hassan to find peace this Christmas. If there is time/space, you might invite folk to decorate their peace dove.

Health and safety

Please follow health and safety policies and regulations for your venue if you use this idea. It might be safer to gather outside for the burning of the boots or you could find other ways to symbolise fire without setting them alight!

Once the song is finished, set fire to the boots and say the following prayer:

**God of peace and justice
for whose coming we long
for whose reign we wait,
take our prayers for peace
and cast all injustice into the flames of
your judgement.
Melt us and cast us in your image once again**

**that we might become the peacemakers you call
us to be
in the name of the Prince of Peace,
Amen.**

Boots to the cross

You will need:

- paper cut-out 'boots'
- pencils/pens/crayons.

Give everyone a paper cut-out boot and ask them to draw images of war and violence and/or to write prayers for peace on the boot cut-out.

Ask the youngest members of the congregation to collect the boots. Work backwards from a cross (with the feet pointing toward the cross) and lay the footprints in a track leading to the cross.

You could also use the manger or crib instead of the cross if you have a nativity scene at your church. Why not fill the manger with our dove of peace templates and ask everyone to collect one as they lay down their boots?

You can order your doves at
caid.org.uk/christmas-resources

**Crucified God,
you draw us to yourself
and call us to give ourselves
as you gave yourself on the cross.
Accept these, our prayers for peace,
gather us together
at the foot of your cross
so we do not walk alone
and give us the courage to be the peacemakers
of your resurrected kingdom.**

A tree of peace

You will need:

- a Christmas tree
- dove of peace decoration.

Place the Christian Aid dove decorations at points around the church. Members of the congregation can choose a dove and either write a prayer, or draw a picture which speaks to them about being a peacemaker.

As a song is sung people are invited to come and hang the doves on the Christmas tree.



You can order your doves at
caid.org.uk/christmas-resources



Print several copies of this page and cut out the boots to use with our creative prayer suggestions.

