

Jesus would be celebrated on the same date although not all Christians celebrate Jesus' birth on the 25th December.

The events that take place during Advent have developed and changed over 1400 years. Christians would have fasted during part of Advent, going without food and remembering the events leading up to the birth of Jesus. Some Christians continue to fast during Advent today. These are some of the traditions that are practiced in traditional churches during Advent:

- The Vicar or Priest will usually wear purple or royal blue clothing.
- There are no flowers used to decorate the church.
- It is usual to have an Advent crown made of evergreen plants like holly or ivy.
 - Around the Advent crown are 4 coloured candles, one is lit on each Sunday throughout Advent. The candles represent: hope, peace, love and Joy.
- A white Candle in the middle of the Advent crown is lit on Christmas day representing Jesus.
- Children make Christingles, to represent Jesus as the light of the world.
- Passages from the Bible are read out from the Old and New Testaments about the events leading up to the birth of Jesus.

Today Advent and Christmas is celebrated by Christians and non-Christians. Can you think of some of the things people do in the lead up to Christmas?

- Buy a Christmas Tree.
- Decorate a Christmas Tree.
- Use an advent calendar.
- Decorate the house.
- Light an advent candle.
- Make/buy and send Christmas cards.
- Clean the house.
- Sing Christmas carols and songs.
- Give money to charity.
- Watch school Nativity plays.
- Buy and wrap presents for others.
- Write letters to Father Christmas.
- Make sure you are not naughty, but nice.

Advent is a time when waiting is celebrated. The birth of Jesus is very important for Christians, but Christians consider the waiting to be important as well.

Time to reflect

- Do you ever think it is too hard to wait for something exciting? Why?
- Why do we get excited waiting for some events to happen?
- What does the word patience mean? Why is it helpful?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We all experience times of waiting. This morning we have thought about the things that we get excited waiting for. Advent is a season that people celebrate the waiting before they celebrate Christmas. In all that we wait for, help us to be patient. May we not miss the good times that are available now by being too excited about what is to come. *(Amen)*



12.2 Looking Forward, Looking Back: Immanuel

Back to themes

Back to Autumn

The following passage is often read out in church services during Advent. They were written hundreds of years before Jesus was born, but many Christians believe they are talking about the birth of Jesus.

Time to reflect

Which part of the Nativity story do you think the following passage is referring to?

Well then, the Lord himself will give you a sign: a young woman who is pregnant will have a son and will name him 'Immanuel.' (Isaiah 7:14 GNT)

Immanuel means God with us, Luke 1:26-38 is often read at Christmas services or acted out in nativity plays. Mary was told by the Angel Gabriel that she was going to give birth to God's son, Jesus.

Luke 1:26-33 GNT

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy God sent the angel Gabriel to a town in Galilee named Nazareth. He had a message for a young woman promised in marriage to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of King David. Her name was Mary. The angel came to her and said, "Peace be with you! The Lord is with you and has greatly blessed you!"

Mary was deeply troubled by the angel's message, and she wondered what his words meant. The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary; God has been gracious to you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord God will make him a king, as his ancestor David was, and he will be the king of the descendants of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end!"

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

Advent is a time when Christians look back to the events that help shape their beliefs. Events in history are important for all of us as they remind us of who we are and help us work out what we think is important. Help us to respect the history of all the people around us whether they are remembering the events of Advent or not. (Amen)



12.3 Looking Forward, Looking Back: Bethlehem

Back to themes

Back to Autumn

The following passage is often read out in church services during Advent. They were written hundreds of years before Jesus was born, but many Christians believe they are talking about the birth of Jesus.

Time to reflect

Which part of the Nativity story do you think this passage is referring to?

*The Lord says, "Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are one of the smallest towns in Judah, but out of you I will bring a ruler for Israel, whose family line goes back to ancient times."
(Micah 5:2 GNT)*

Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Nativity stories have Mary riding to Bethlehem on a donkey.

Luke 2:4-7 GNT

Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the town of Bethlehem in Judea,

the birthplace of King David. Joseph went there because he was a descendant of David. He went to register with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him. She was pregnant, and while they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have her baby. She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger—there was no room for them to stay in the inn.

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

Advent is a time when Christians look back to the events that help shape their beliefs. Events in history are important for all of us as they remind us of who we are and help us work out what we think is important. Help us to respect the history of all the people around us whether they are remembering the events of Advent or not. (Amen)



12.4 Looking Forward, Looking Back: King David

Back to themes

Back to Autumn

The following passage is often read out in church services during Advent. They were written hundreds of years before Jesus was born, but many Christians believe they are talking about the birth of Jesus.

Time to reflect

What stories or teachings do you think this passage is referring to?

Isaiah 9:6-7 GNT

A child is born to us!

A son is given to us!

And he will be our ruler.

He will be called, "Wonderful Counsellor,"

"Mighty God," "Eternal Father,"

"Prince of Peace."

His royal power will continue to grow;

his kingdom will always be at peace.

He will rule as King David's successor,

basing his power on right and justice,

from now until the end of time.

The Lord Almighty is determined to do all this.

Two books in the Bible that describe the life of Jesus start with a list of names linking Jesus with King David; in the Bible, David killed the giant, Goliath.

In the passage we read on Tuesday (12.2) the angel Gabriel told Mary that Jesus would be a king just as King David was, this is often included in Nativity stories or passages read out in Christmas services.

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

Advent is a time when Christians look back to the events that help shape their beliefs. Events in history are important for all of us as they remind us of who we are and help us work out what we think is important. Help us to respect the history of all the people around us whether they are remembering the events of Advent or not. (Amen)



12.5 Looking Forward, Looking Back: John the Baptist

Back to themes

Back to Autumn

Christians read many passages from the Bible that prepare them for Christmas. Over the past few days we have heard verses that Christians believe described the birth of Jesus, written hundreds of years before he was born. There is one passage that describes the coming of a person that told everybody else about Jesus' coming. The Bible describes John the Baptist as the messenger that was sent ahead of Jesus to prepare the way for him.

The Bible tells the story about the birth of John. A relation of Mary's called Elizabeth was going to have a son around the same time Mary (Jesus' mother) was pregnant with Jesus. Zechariah, Elizabeth's husband, was a priest and worked in the temple. Whilst working in a very important part of the temple, an angel visited Zechariah and told him that he and Elizabeth were going to have a baby boy, and they were to call him John. When Zechariah told the angel he needed proof because he was too old to have children, the angel said that Zechariah wouldn't be able to talk until after the baby was born. When Zechariah and Elizabeth came to name the baby, friends and family were shocked when Elizabeth said his name was to be John. In Bible times, it was the tradition to name a son after someone else in the family, but there wasn't a relative called John. When they asked Zechariah

if this was correct, he wrote "John" on a writing tablet and immediately found he could talk again!

When John grew up he became known as John the Baptist and he was described as the messenger preparing a way for Jesus. Many people will be using this time of year to prepare for Christmas. For many the preparation and build up to Christmas is just as exciting as Christmas itself.

Time to reflect

- Have you ever been excited waiting for something?
- Do you think that waiting is exciting?
- How do you feel about waiting?

Reflection (Prayer)

(Dear God)

We are grateful for the good things we have this Advent, for school, for our community, for family and friends. Help us to remember other people this Advent, may some of our actions make a positive difference to those that are in need. *(Amen)*

