

Create your own Advent prayer chain

We hope that this Advent prayer chain will help you to create a decoration in time for Christmas and to cultivate a sense of waiting with hope as your journey towards Emmanuel, God with us!

We invite you to create a prayer chain by making one loop of the chain each day in Advent, taking a few moments every day to reflect and pray for what we are all waiting for – for God's vision for the world to be realised.

We've offered a prompt or question for each day of Advent and encourage you to write a prayer or draw a picture on each link of your prayer chain and connect it to the link from the previous day. By the end of Advent you will have a Christmas decoration linking together all your hopes and prayers for God's world.

You will need:

- Some A4 pieces of paper
- A ruler and scissors to cut a 1.5cm strip each day
- Pens or pencils
- Glue stick or sticky tape
- Five minutes every day of Advent!

Find out more about our Christmas appeal at caid.ie/ChristmasAppeal

Advent waiting

Although Advent is traditionally a time of waiting, the busyness of modern life and preparing for all the trappings of Christmas means that this doesn't usually feel like the case. But 2020 has been far from a usual year. For many people, there has been a lot of waiting: waiting for news, waiting for jobs, waiting to hold loved ones close, waiting and watching for the new normal. Such waiting has been hard.

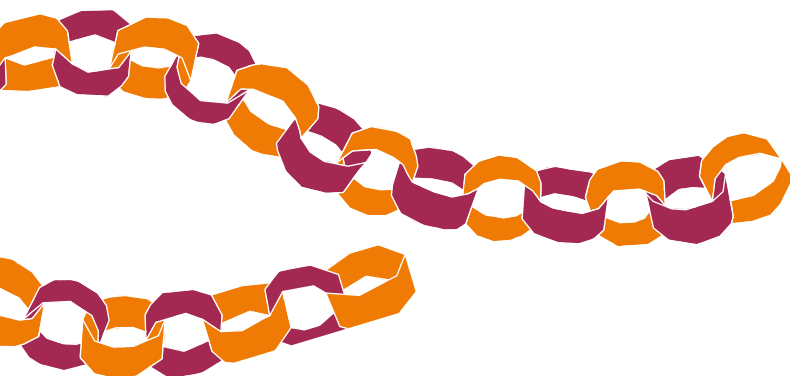
Our Christmas Appeal highlights the story of Mekonnen, who alongside his community in Ethiopia, is waiting and watching for the rains to come so he can water his cattle. He, like millions of people around the world, is still waiting for climate justice.

The year of 2020 was due to be a crucial year for climate justice, but the UN climate conference that was to be held in November in Glasgow has been postponed until 2021. People in vulnerable and marginalised communities are bearing the brunt of the climate crisis – 2021 must be a turning point.

We invite you to pray with and for all those waiting for climate justice as you create your prayer chain this Advent. Since Advent starts on Sunday 29 November there are 26 links in our advent prayer chain.

We also encourage you to sign up to our virtual prayer chain to join with those praying around the world for climate justice in the lead up to COP 26. Our watching and waiting in prayer is more important than ever.

caid.ie/PrayerChain



Sunday 29 November – Link 1:

'From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him.' Isaiah 64:4. Write out this verse or draw a picture about it on the first link of your prayer chain. We wait for God together this Advent.

Monday 30 November – Link 2:

Pray with all who are waiting for equality and justice, with the millions of people whose lives were already poor who are seeing their lives become even harder as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Write a prayer for equality and justice or draw a picture on your link and connect it to link 1.

Tuesday 1 December – Link 3:

Pray with all who are waiting for the end of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Colour your prayer chain link in red today as you pray with the 38 million people across the world who are living with HIV on World AIDS Day, many of whom are also more vulnerable to the effects of a changing climate.

Wednesday 2 December – Link 4:

Pray with all who are waiting for somewhere to call home, with those who are seeking refuge. We remember each Advent and Christmas how Jesus spent the first part of his life as a refugee in Egypt to escape the violence of Herod's reign (Matthew 2:13-18).

Thursday 3 December – Link 5:

Pray with all who are waiting for the relentlessness to stop, with those living in refugee camps who have also faced the challenges of climate change as well as the coronavirus pandemic. For example, as the first cases of the coronavirus were discovered in Cox's Bazaar refugee camp, Bangladesh was also facing incoming Cyclone Amphan.

Friday 4 December – Link 6:

Pray with all who are waiting for respite, for all who have had to dig down deep to cope with challenge after challenge this year. That may include praying for yourself. Peace to you, if so.

Saturday 5 December - Link 7:

Pray with those who are waiting for rain, for all who have had to dig down deep to find water. 'We pray for rain, but when there's no rain, we have to dig,' Mekonnen, a pastoralist farmer in Ethiopia explains. Digging for water can be difficult and dangerous work. Visit caid.ie/ChristmasAppeal to see how we are supporting those facing drought in Ethiopia.

Sunday 6 December - Link 8:

'Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.' Isaiah 40:1. Write out or draw something to represent this verse on your prayer chain link. Pray with all who wait for comfort in their grief or longing this Advent and Christmas.

Monday 7 December – Link 9:

Pray with all who are waiting for climate justice. The climate crisis is largely caused by rich greenhouse gas emitting countries, and yet poor countries with low emissions are already feeling the dire, difficult and devastating consequences.

Tuesday 8 December – Link 10:

Pray with all who wait for a zero-carbon world, lament with them the role and practices of rich, developed countries in causing the climate crisis, including the extraction of fossil fuels and exploitation of natural resources.

Wednesday 9 December – Link 11:

Pray with those who are waiting for the hungry to be filled with good things. Food shortages due to the coronavirus pandemic and climate change could lead to a doubling of the number of people facing acute hunger this year to more than a quarter of a billion.

Thursday 10 December – Link 12:

Pray with those who are waiting for connection. Give thanks for how communities and churches have come together this year to look out for and after each other. Pray with anyone who is on the edge or the margins of such connection, particularly at Christmas time.

Friday 11 December – Link 13:

Pray with those who are waiting for their basic human rights to be realised and protected on this UN Human Rights Day. Pray for all those whose rights have been made vulnerable because of coronavirus pandemic and the climate crisis.

Saturday 12 December – Link 14:

Pray with all who wait and groan with creation (Romans 8:22-27). Pray that lessons learned across the world this year including our closer connections with nature will help us to tackle the challenges of the climate crisis.

Sunday 13 December – Link 15:

'He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly.' Luke 1:52. Write or draw this verse from Mary's Magnificat on the link for today and pray with all who wait for the day when their voice is heard and heeded.

Monday 14 December – Link 16:

Pray with all who wait for the support to lift themselves out of poverty caused by the climate crisis. Praise God for Christian Aid partner BRACED in Ethiopia who provide seeds, animals, fodder and a community savings group to communities in Ethiopia.

Tuesday 15 December – Link 17:

Pray with all who wait for a reliable and close water supply like the pond that Kawite's community now has easy access to in Ethiopia. She shares, 'The pond is not only for me. It has changed the life of this village.' Thanks be to God. Find out more about Kawite at caid.ie/ChristmasAppeal

Wednesday 16 December – Link 18:

Pray with all who wait for a better possible world. Take a moment to think about the world as it could be, if it were filled with God's love and justice. Write or draw on your prayer chain link some of your ideas and prayers for this better world.

Thursday 17 December – Link 19:

Pray with all who wait for the meek to inherit the earth. Pray that the different kind of power demonstrated in Advent and Christmas will inspire our prophetic presence in the world. The kind of power found in 'setting aside privilege, finding God in the smallness and vulnerability of a baby in a womb'. (Rachel Held Evans)

Friday 18 December – Link 20:

Pray with all who wait with hope this Advent. 'Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are anger and courage: anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are.' (Attributed to Augustine Bishop of Hippo)

Saturday 19 December – Link 21:

Pray with all who wait for the day when their 'dream that will not die' is realised. Listen to our recording of the carol written for Christian Aid *When Out of Poverty is Born* at caid.ie/ChristmasChurch How might we help prepare for that day?

Sunday 20 December – Link 22:

'For nothing will be impossible with God.' Luke 1:37. Write or draw these words from the Angel Gabriel to Mary on your link for today. Pray for the faith to believe, wait and hope for the seemingly impossible to be realised in our world. To the glory of God. Amen.

Monday 21 December – Link 23:

Pray with all who wait in silence. Take time this week to slow down and sit in silence. Allow the anticipation of Advent space to surface, time for 'clearing our hearts and our minds a bit so we really can see clearly when Jesus arrives, and feel fully the impact of his coming.' (Dr. Rowan Williams) Perhaps your prayer chain link can remain clear of words or pictures today.

Tuesday 22 December – Link 24:

Pray with all who wait for a new start this Christmas. Give thanks for Kumana in Ethiopia who, with Christian Aid's help, has found a new start as an entrepreneur, making soap from aloe-vera, a drought resistant plant thriving in the changing climate. Pray with all who need a new start because of coronavirus and the climate crisis. Visit caid.ie/ChristmasAppeal

Wednesday 23 December – Link 25:

Pray with all who wait for wisdom, for all the leaders of the world as they respond to the challenges and opportunities of the coronavirus pandemic. Pray they would work together to reimagine and reconfigure a world built back with justice.

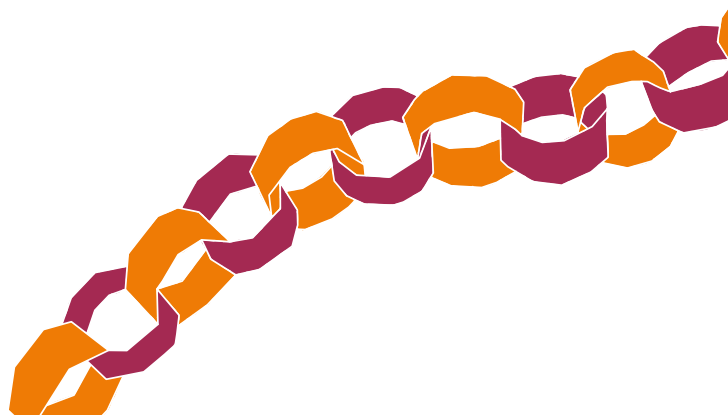
Wednesday 24 December – Link 26:

Pray with all who wait for peace this Christmas Eve, for all who are living in contexts of violence and conflict across the world. Join the ecumenical vigil for peace in the Middle East that takes place on the 24th of every month.

Thursday 25 December – Christmas

'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.' Luke 2:10. The waiting is over. Love came down at Christmas, the hope of the world wrapped in swaddling bands. Emmanuel, God is with us.

Enjoy your prayer chain today and through all twelve days of Christmas. May it remind you of the love that builds hope across the world.



Prayers and activities for each week of Advent

Advent 1 – An Ethiopian Advent

Activity

Locate Ethiopia on a world map and work out how far you are from Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia.

Find out when Christmas is celebrated in Ethiopia.

Advent lasts a lot longer in Ethiopia. Many people in Ethiopia take part in a special fast during Advent that lasts for 43 days. It is known as the 'Fast of the Prophets'.

Let us pray with our sisters and brothers in Ethiopia as we set out on our Advent journey.

Points for prayer

Pray with Kawite, Mekonnen and Kumana and who we will learn about this Advent

While they may seem far from us and in a very different season from the depths of winter here, they are living through the same coronavirus pandemic.

As well as the pandemic they are also facing the difficulties of drought caused by climate change. In Ethiopia, and around the world, people living in poverty are on the frontline of the climate crisis.

Families are losing water, food, homes and livelihoods. Every day, they walk further, dig deeper, work harder, and build stronger to survive. Unrelenting. Determined.

Remember them in your prayers this Advent.

Candle-lighting

First Sunday of Advent: Hope for all God's people

We light this candle for all God's people, struggling to be bearers of hope in a troubled world.

God, as we wait for your promise,
Give light, give hope.

Advent 2 – Overflowing Advent

Activity

Get two bowls, one smaller than the other, and a jug of water.

Place the smaller bowl inside the larger one. Slowly pour water into the bowl until it overflows.

As you pour, notice the ripples in the water and the movement of the water as it spills over the sides of the bowl.

What are you overflowing with this Advent?

This has been a very different and difficult year for many people.

The Psalmist in Psalm 22:14 describes how he feels as being 'poured out like water'.

Pray with and for all who feel spent and drained with disappointment this Advent.

As the ripples of water in the bowls come to stillness allow yourself to sit in stillness and silence for a few moments. 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.' (Romans 15:13)

May the stillness of the water take your thoughts to a different body of water – to a community pond in Ethiopia and to the story of Kawite Koyrita.

Story



Kawite rises with the sun to gather water for her family from the community pond. In the morning light both her pregnant belly and warm smile glow in expectation.

Before the pond Kawite and her daughters travelled up to five hours every day to fetch water, and her children often missed school or went hungry.

As the burden of prolonged drought became unbearable, Christian Aid and our local partner BRACED worked alongside Kawite's community, supporting the village to build their own pond that now serves as their water source.

The community pond now saves Kawite hours of precious time she can spend at home with her family, and the other support from Christian Aid's partner BRACED has empowered her to put food on the table and build a better future for her community, her ten children, and her baby on the way.

Hope has returned to her community like a spring in the desert.

Candle lighting

Second Sunday of Advent: The prophets

We light this candle for all God's prophets confronting injustice and restoring the dream of a world of freedom and peace.

God, as we wait for your promise,
Give light, give hope.

Advent 3 – Advent Prayer Sticks

Activity

Find a stick large enough that you can lean on like a broom handle or hockey stick, etc.

Take some wool or string and wind it around your stick. You could even use some tinsel if you want to make your stick particularly festive.

Choose a (hopefully dry) December day, wrap yourself up warmly, and prepare to take a pilgrimage to the closest bit of nature to where you live, whether a local park or a tree lined street. If possible, join with a few others from your household or organise a socially-distanced walk with neighbours or church friends.

As you journey, when you find something natural on the ground that catches your interest and prompts you to pray, pick it up and weave these items onto your prayer stick using the wool/string to attach it. Only collect things that have fallen or are lying on the ground.

For example, a leaf might remind you that the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations.

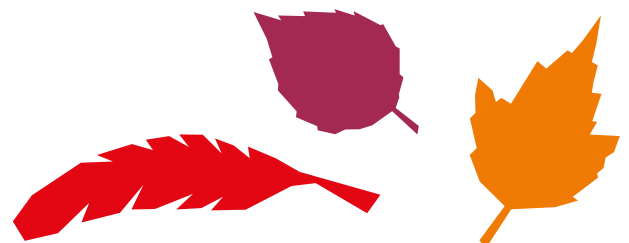
Pray for God's creation as you walk, giving thanks for the cycle of the seasons and the importance of winter.

(You can find out more about journey sticks by searching online.)

After your pilgrimage reflect on your prayer stick with someone else who has done a similar activity, either online or in person if circumstances allow.

Allow your prayer stick to feature in your Christmas decorations and serve as a prompt to pray for our amazing natural world, even in the depths of winter hibernation and in these challenging days of climate change.

A different kind of prayer stick is used as part of the worship in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. These prayer sticks come in many ornate and beautiful styles and are known as makomiya. These are typically used to lean on during long services and to help keep the rhythmic beat for singing hymns.



Story



Mekonnen is a pastoralist herdsman.

Each day he walks with his cattle to try and find water for them to drink.

It is a daily journey that he undertakes with prayer and a shovel.

'We pray for rain, but when there's no rain, we have to dig,' Mekonnen explains.

Mekonnen desperately needs a reliable water source to keep his animals alive and maintain his livelihood. Each day that passes is another day of digging, and another day of desperation.

Mekonnen knows his way of life as a pastoralist herdsman will not last much longer as the climate crisis worsens these conditions. Many of his livestock have already died, and hunger has forced him to sell off some of his remaining animals to feed his family.

Before you light the third Advent candle take a moment to pray with Mekonnen and all who are struggling with the climate crisis in Ethiopia this Advent.

Candle-lighting

Third Sunday of Advent: John the Baptist

We light this candle for all God's messengers,
preparing the way for change,
signs pointing to a new age to come.
God, as we wait for your promise,
Give light, give hope.

Advent 4 – Advent love

'There is nothing we can do but love. What we would like to do is change the world . . . We can throw our pebble in the pond and be confident that its ever-widening circle will reach out around the world. We repeat, there is nothing that we can do but love, and dear God – please enlarge our hearts to love each other, to love our neighbour, to love our enemy as well as our friend.' Dorothy Day

Activity

Make a list or create a poster of all the things that love does.

During Advent we await the Love that came into the world that first Christmas. The hope of the world wrapped up in swaddling bands and lying as a tiny infant in a manger.

Love does unexpected things.

How have you experienced love this year?

Communities across the UK and Ireland have reached out to support each other. Even the simple act of washing our hands with soap and water became an act of love to help protect ourselves and those around us from coronavirus.

Compare your list or poster of what love does with this beautiful poem by Ruth Burgess, a member of Christian Aid's worship and theology collective:

Love

Love grows
Love cares
Love sings
Love cries
Love acts
Love waits
Love wonders
Love does

Love takes risks
Love asks questions
Love tells stories
Love stands up for justice
Love makes you vulnerable
Love listens
Love does

Love builds hope
Love builds respect
Love builds bridges
Love builds courage
Love builds community
Love keeps on giving
Love does

Love beckons
Love challenges
Love weeps
Love dances
Love changes lives
Love dares
Love lasts
Love does

Candle-lighting prayers used with permission.
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Story



This is Kumana. Thanks to training from Christian Aid's partner, she now has a thriving aloe vera soap-making business that empowers her to build that hope into reality. Aloe vera thrives in the changing climate where other crops fail.

The aloe soap provides much needed extra income, and is also helping fight off the further spread of the coronavirus pandemic in Kumana's village. Praise God.

Candle-lighting

Fourth Sunday of Advent: Mary

We light this candle for all God-bearers,
saying 'yes' to God's challenge,
accepting the pain and joy of an unknown future.
God, as we wait for your promise,
Give light, give hope.

In this season where we celebrate giving, will you make
a gift that builds hope for women like Kumana?

Love builds hope.



Find out more about our Christmas appeal at
caid.ie/ChristmasAppeal

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