



Hope Arrives

Anglican Overseas Aid
Advent Studies 2025



Anglican
Overseas
Aid



AUTHOR BIO

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Introduction

Hope is central to the Christian faith. Throughout the Bible's storyline we see God making promises and God's people needing to put their hope in those promises. At times it looks like God's promises have failed and hope has been dashed. And yet time and again God comes through and fulfills his promises. This pattern of promise and fulfillment is central to the Bible and central to the season of Advent.

As we prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of Jesus, we remember that in him the promises of God are fulfilled, and hopes are realised. Hope arrives! But Advent also looks forward to the return of Jesus and acknowledges that there are still promises that have not yet been fulfilled. We are still a people of waiting and hope, who long to see the world as God designed it to be, renewed and restored.

Waiting and hoping is not passive but active as we play our part working in the world: working for justice, showing mercy, living now for the future that God in Jesus Christ will bring to completion.



WEEK 1



Anticipating Hope

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

The prophet Isaiah was writing during very dark times; things seemed quite hopeless. The Assyrian war machine was plundering territories throughout the region and fear was rife. Amidst this sense of hopelessness people were abandoning God and turning to mediums to consult the dead (Isaiah 8:19), embracing the things of darkness and death rather than light and life.

And yet amidst this hopelessness there is hope; amidst the darkness there is a great light. Isaiah points to a dawning light which will come in the form of a child. A child who will be born to rule with justice and righteousness. A child who will be wise in all his decisions, a wonderful counsellor. A child who will end violence and division, the Prince of Peace. A child who will be God in human flesh, Mighty God, Everlasting Father. A child who will rule eternally. Here is hope; a light to pierce the darkness.

And yet the people had to patiently wait for this hope to be realised. The coming of Christ was still over 700 years away, and at times during the intervening centuries the darkness deepened, and it seemed all light had been snuffed out. Even today we wait in hope for the full outworking of this promise.

What situations of darkness in our world are you most conscious of and troubled by?

What hope for light in the darkness does God promise through Christ?

As followers of Jesus the Prince of Peace, who rules with righteousness and justice, what is God calling us to do to bring light and hope to the world?



*God of Hope,
You have sent your light into our
darkness, and given us a saviour
who reigns with justice and righteousness.
Help us to walk in his light.
Strengthen us to be people of peace.
Teach us to seek justice, love mercy,
and live with hope.
May our lives reflect the light of Christ,
until his kingdom fills the earth with joy.
Amen.*



Hope flourishes in dark places

It's an extraordinary change. Those who are part of it see God at work.

Gerald sees that he is now able to do what is good, rather than what is evil.

He is one of many men living in a Ugandan slum to drop an addiction, to seek work over drinking, to strive to be trustworthy, to be assertive, to communicate better with others.

This Ugandan community is being transformed through a Wise Choices For Life group – supported by AOA. Your prayers and your giving mean this can happen.

It's an extraordinary change.

The community's champion Irene knows God is working when she sees the men build new lives.

Gerald asked Irene for help because he saw that men could be better people in society. He saw

the transformation in the lives of women in the same slum through Wise Choices For Life, and wanted the same for the men.

Many of the men are the same age as Irene's own children – they played together when they were young. Their need pulled her heart.

'I felt so touched, and I used to ask myself, "What can I do to help these people?"' Irene says.

'I look at the love Jesus had for people. And I say, always in the Bible, it tells us Jesus was moved by compassion. And that is what I had at my heart. I was moved by compassion.

'We had a group of young people who were defeated in life. And right now, when you see hope in them, it gives us hope.'

What a glorious story of hope!
Thank you for taking part in it.



Will you join in creating more stories like Gerald's? Give to support Wise Choices For Life's life-changing work building life skills in Ugandan communities.

WEEK 2

Preparing for Hope

Scripture: Luke 1:26-38

God calls on his people to put their hope in his promises. But God also calls on people to participate in his promises and plans. By his grace he uses us in the fulfillment of these hope-filled promises, and often in surprising ways.

Such was the case with Mary, a humble teenager, in the backwater town of Nazareth. God sends the angel Gabriel to announce to Mary that she will conceive and give birth to the Son of the Most High. The 700 years of waiting for the child of hope and promise is nearing an end, but it requires a response of trust and obedience.

Despite her doubts and questions, her fears and uncertainties, Mary makes herself available to God, 'I am the Lord's servant', she says. Mary's acceptance of God's plan brings hope to the world. God is faithful to his word and 'no word from God will ever fail' but he uses Mary's faithfulness, willingness, and obedience to fulfill that word. Her readiness and trust in God is a model for us as well.



How is God calling you to hope in his promises?

How is God calling on you to participate in the fulfillment of his promises and plans?

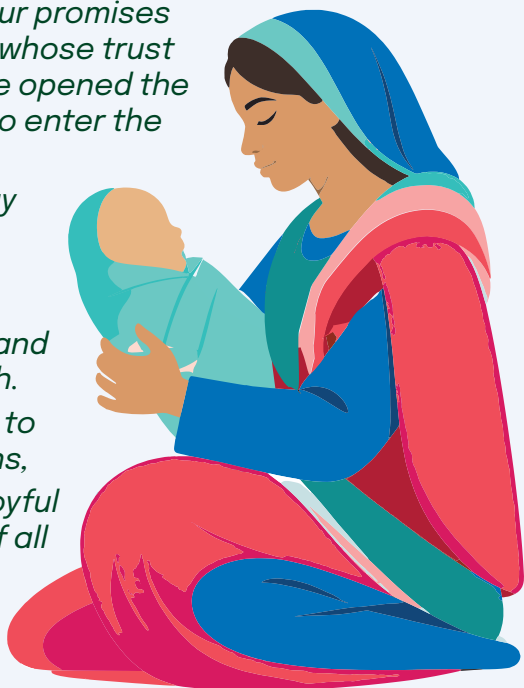
Are you willing to say to God today 'I am the Lord's servant', and what will that mean for you in practice as you seek to live as a faithful and obedient servant of God?

*God of Hope,
You fulfilled your promises
through Mary, whose trust
and obedience opened the
way for hope to enter the
world.*

*Teach us to say
'yes' to you as
she did – with
open hearts,
willing hands, and
steadfast faith.*

*Strengthen us to
trust your plans,
and to live in joyful
expectation of all
you will do.*

Amen.





Partners in hope

Lucia can see change all around her. Hope is spreading deep in people's lives – embedding itself into the small Mozambiquan community's structures.

A community volunteer, Lucia sees everyone is learning that women and men are equal. Previously women had no power in the community.

Lucia is one of a small group of people nurturing this growing hope. As they meet, bright colours match their beautiful smiles. Outside the sun streams down. Inside their mudbrick meeting room, it's pleasantly shaded.

But in this beautiful environment, is very real need. The need for gender equality is deep, as is the need for healthcare.

Many children in the region are malnourished. Malaria, cholera, scabies are real health risks. Women can be reluctant to go to hospital to give birth, because they cannot afford to pay for treatment.

Slowly things are changing. Slowly, but surely, hope is dawning.

Malaria cases have plummeted. People are going to hospital for healthcare, where before they stayed home. There has not been a case of cholera in this community for four years.

Here, hope's face wears the same beautiful smile as Lucia and other members of the village's Health Committee. The group is sharing hope throughout its community. Your gifts and your prayers help them do this.

Lucia and her peers take people to hospital, they teach people effective ways to use mosquito nets, they provide shelter for children with disabilities.



And as they do this, the group shares the message of gender equality with those they work with.

The group brings hope with training from the Anglican Church in Mozambique.

God is bringing hope through their faithfulness, willingness and obedience.



Your support in prayer, and your gifts, are part of God's work. Will you continue to equip Lucia and those around her to bring hope in their community? Give now.



The Anglican Diocese of Nampula is supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

WEEK 3

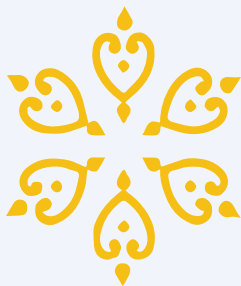
Proclaiming Hope

Scripture: Luke 2:8-20

When hope arrives in Jesus it sneaks in quietly in the night. Jesus is born amongst the animals in the little town of Bethlehem where 'the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight'. And when God sends his angels to announce the birth of Jesus they do not go to the rich and powerful but to lowly shepherds in nearby fields. Hope has come but it comes quietly. It is good news brought first to the poor and lowly.

But what hope it is: the angels announce the birth of a child who is Saviour, Messiah, and Lord. Jesus is the world's great hope because he has come to save, to fulfill God's promises as Messiah, and to be the universal ruler of the world. And yet the sign for the shepherds of this powerful hope is a baby wrapped in cloths and in a manger. Powerful hope in a tiny, vulnerable package.

The shepherds respond to this good news of great joy by running to see this baby. They embrace the hope personally and then they proclaim this hope to others. It is too good to keep to themselves.



Why does God choose to work through the vulnerable, poor, and lowly rather than the powerful to bring his hope to the world?

The hope that comes with Jesus is personal, 'a Saviour has been born to you'. What personal response do you need to make today to Jesus?

The hope that comes with Jesus is good news of great joy for all people. How does it shape your words and actions so that you live and proclaim this hope?

*God of Hope,
You sent your message
of good news to ordinary
shepherds, and filled the
night with the song
of peace.*

*Open our hearts to
respond to your gift of
hope in Christ.*

*Send us out with joy and
boldness, to live and proclaim this
same hope.*

Amen.





Hope draws near

Mansoor* is one of many children who attend a small school in Kolkata, beside railway tracks. Here he takes part in the early years education program the school offers: reading, writing, English and creative arts.

Hundreds of children like Mansoor attend the Cathedral Relief Service's early years schools programs, located in poor, densely-populated districts of Kolkata.

Beaming, eager children crowd into their classroom, which can just be a mat with tarpaulin walls and ceiling, or a concrete community centre. However humble, the space is lovingly adorned with colourful learning charts and children's drawings.

The children and their families eke out a living working in rag picking, as house help, and other insecure work. The area is busy, crowded, polluted, and poor.

Hope seems far from the lives of people who live here.

But through the Cathedral Relief Service's work, slum communities like this are moving towards more sustainable, self-sufficient, and secure futures.

The relief service's work across health, education and gender brings hope to the lives of women and children, flowing on to whole communities.

One teacher, Purbasha described how the small early years school has helped parents realise the importance of education – transforming their children's lives long-term.

She sees her students equipped to enter a government school, helping them access mainstream education.

It is a change that can transform a future. It brings opportunity to those whose circumstances would otherwise limit them.

The relief service is bringing this hope to people like Mansoor, and many others.

*Name changed to protect identity



Will you join them? Pray
Cathedral Relief Service
workers will be able to
continue this transformative
work. Give to support CRS here



‘The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it’

When Mandisa sings praise to God in the Te Deum, she is inspired to act for climate justice. In this, she is taking part in a journey of hope, hope for a healed creation.

Each week, Mandisa calls out with her congregation, ‘We praise you O God: we acclaim you as Lord. All creation worships you: the Father Everlasting.’

Each week, it reminds Mandisa of her calling: a steward entrusted with a great treasure.

Each week, it reminds Mandisa to work for climate justice, while giving thanks to God.

In her South African home, Mandisa sees climate change hitting badly. It is particularly devastating during the rainy season. It motivates Mandisa to speak up against injustice caused by environmental degradation, which disadvantages the most vulnerable. She sees African countries suffer from the effects of climate change, while their own carbon emissions remain low.

Mandisa is fighting for justice – and to inspire others to do the same. She works through some conventional channels, and some that are less conventional.

Mandisa organises litter clean-ups, she was behind a motion that barred the Anglican Church of Southern Africa from using single-use plastics. These are creating change.

But Mandisa also creates momentum through her social media influence.

It all takes place within Africa's Green Anglicans movement, a partner of Anglican Overseas Aid. Your support enables Mandisa to call for justice in her own context – and many others to do the same.

The words of Psalm 24 drive her, 'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it'.



Mandisa is living out the Christian calling to steward God's precious creation.

Will you join her? Give to support Green Anglicans here.

WEEK 4

Hope Fulfilled

Scripture: Revelation 7:9-17

Advent is a time when we rejoice in a hope that has come but also a time that we hope for greater rejoicing in the future. Hope has arrived with the first coming of Jesus Christ as a baby. But we are still waiting in hope for the second coming of Jesus, waiting with longing for the justice, peace, and renewal still to come for creation.

Revelation 7 paints a vivid picture of what this fulfilled hope will look like. We see people of diverse ethnicities, nations and languages gathered in unity before God. Hunger and thirst are no more and there is abundance for all. Suffering, pain, and violence have come to an end with the personal and intimate intervention of God who wipes the very tears from our eyes.

This powerful and hope-filled future empowers our present actions. We can look ahead to the rapidly approaching horizon of Christ's return and have hope. We can live for that future now, knowing that God loves his good creation and will renew it, that God loves his people and will bring restoration, healing, justice, and peace.



What excites you most about the hope-filled future of Revelation 7?

How does this empower you to maintain your hope, even when things seem hopeless?

How will you live for the future today, that God's kingdom may come on earth as it is in heaven, as it will be when heaven comes to earth?



God of Hope,

You have shown us the end of the story: a future where people of every nation stand before you, where hunger and thirst are no more, and where all tears are wiped away.

May this vision shape how we live today with compassion, justice, and unshakable faith.

Until that day comes, keep us rooted in hope, bold in love, and serving the Lamb whose victory is assured.

Amen.



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