



# *Your Advent*

## *Celebrating the coming of Jesus Christ*

Advent (a word which in Latin means 'coming to') is the four-week period before Christmas, which Christians use to prepare themselves to celebrate the gift that God give us of his son, Jesus Christ, and the promise of full life now and into eternity that Jesus brings us. It is traditional to focus

prayer and reflection on certain themes that help us to explore God's relationship to us throughout history as found in the Bible. One is to look at the story through the eyes of the Patriarchs, Prophets, John the Baptist and the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus This brief sheet explores these themes.



**LICHFIELD**  
CATHEDRAL



# Week One

## Who were the Patriarchs?

The three principal Patriarchs are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They are found in the Old Testament, (or Hebrew Scriptures). The story of all these three of these great figures help us to understand who Jesus is, God in human form, and born that first Christmas. life, in the life of Jesus.

### Abraham

Abraham's story in the Book of Genesis shows him as a man of complete faith, making him the Father of Judaism and Christianity. Christians see Jesus as fulfilling God's promise to Abraham that "all nations would be blessed through your offspring." Matthew's Gospel traces Jesus's lineage to Abraham, while in John's Gospel, Jesus declares

"before Abraham was, I am," claiming his divine nature.

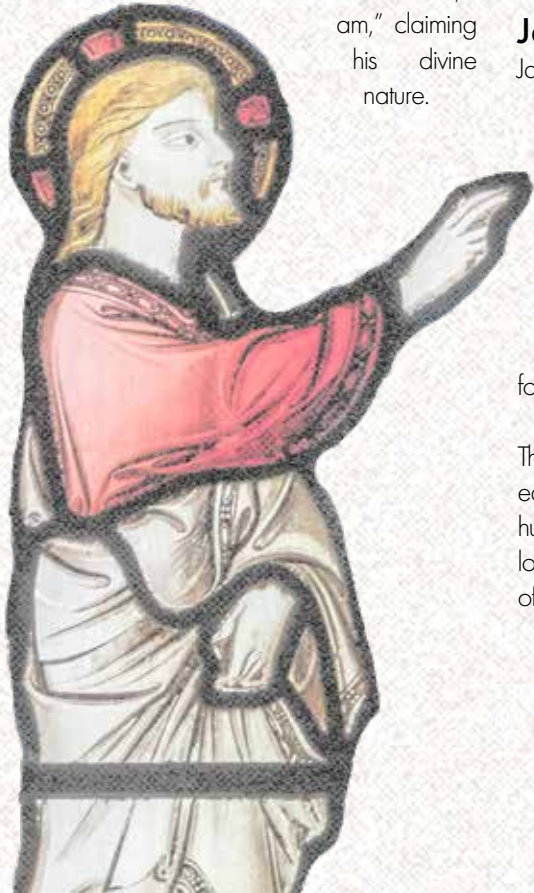
### Isaac

Isaac, Abraham's son, was a miracle child born to his elderly wife, Sarah. His birth foreshadows Jesus's Virgin Birth. When God tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham obeyed until God intervened. This near-sacrifice prefigures God's sacrifice of Jesus for humanity's redemption. Isaac remained faithful to God's covenant, continuing the promise that Jesus would later fulfill.

### Jacob

Jacob, Isaac's son was renamed Israel after wrestling with God. He is vital to Jesus's story. He becomes Father of the Twelve Tribes of Israel and is a key ancestor of Jesus, his dream of a heavenly ladder prefigures Jesus bridging heaven and earth. Jacob's transformation from deceiver to blessed patriarch parallels Christian themes of divine redemption, and his prophecy about Judah foretells Jesus's kingship.

These three figure who take us back to the very earliest times and show us God was at work in human lives as societies formed but their lives also look forward to the fulfilment and full participation of God in human life, in the life of Jesus.



## Reflection

- Hearing these stories of people who felt that they were called, what might be your vocation?
- What do you feel called to do?
- When you look back at your life so far, where have you felt that God has been at work for you?
- You could pledge to read the book of Genesis during Advent?

Here's a prayer to use, if you find it helpful:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors: to you be praise and glory for ever. You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfilment. May we be obedient to your call and be ready and watchful to receive your Christ, a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; for you are our light and our salvation.

# Week Two

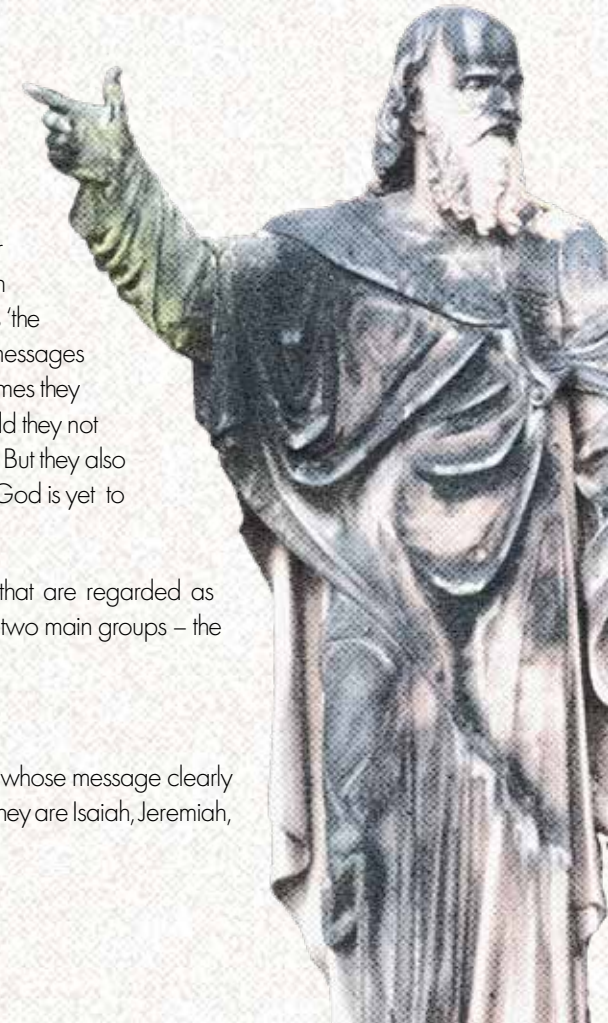
## Who were the Prophets?

Within the Jewish and Christian tradition, Prophets are regarded as individuals whom God has chosen to deliver his message. The word 'prophet' comes from an original Greek word (prophetas), which means 'the one who speaks before'. The prophets deliver messages that declare God's will or his intentions. Sometimes they look ahead in warning, to tell people that, should they not change their ways, bad things may befall them. But they also look ahead, declaring the good promises that God is yet to grant his people.

The books of the Bible in the Old Testament that are regarded as 'prophecy' have traditionally been divided into two main groups – the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets.

### The Major Prophets

include the more substantial and longer books, whose message clearly has an impact beyond Israel's specific context. They are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.





## The Minor Prophets

include twelve books (twelve being a biblically significant number – twelve tribes of Israel; twelve apostles): Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

## Reflection

- During services in Advent, listen to Isaiah, and see how Isaiah points to the coming of Jesus.
- Why not read the Book of Jonah this week? It is a short book, with a great story! You might want to think about some of the themes it brings up – willingness to follow God, sacrifice, obedience, and how we deal with bad news.
- Who might be the prophets of our current age, and what might they be saying?
- Who is God showing you his good promises through?
- Is God calling you to share insights for the future? If so, have you shared them? And who with

# Week Three

## Who is St John the Baptist?

John the Baptist is a prophetic figure in the New Testament and is known as the 'forerunner' of Jesus. He was born to Zechariah and Elizabeth when they were well into their old age, and his story mirrors Jesus' in some ways. He appears in the four gospels and is also mentioned by the Jewish historian Josephus, who was contemporary with him.

## John and the Old Testament

When John the Baptist appeared, people believed he was a reincarnation of Elijah or one of the prophets, and they repeatedly asked him "who are you?"

## Wild

John is often depicted as a wild figure, as the gospels tell us he wore a hair shirt and ate wild locusts. His message was one of preparation for

## Isaiah and Jeremiah

During the year, you will hear the prophets often read in services. You'll particularly hear Jeremiah read during Lent, because Jeremiah warns the people of Israel that straying from the good way will result in disaster. Likewise, during Advent you will often hear Isaiah, because Isaiah's prophecy describes one who will come as a Messiah and looks ahead to Jesus.

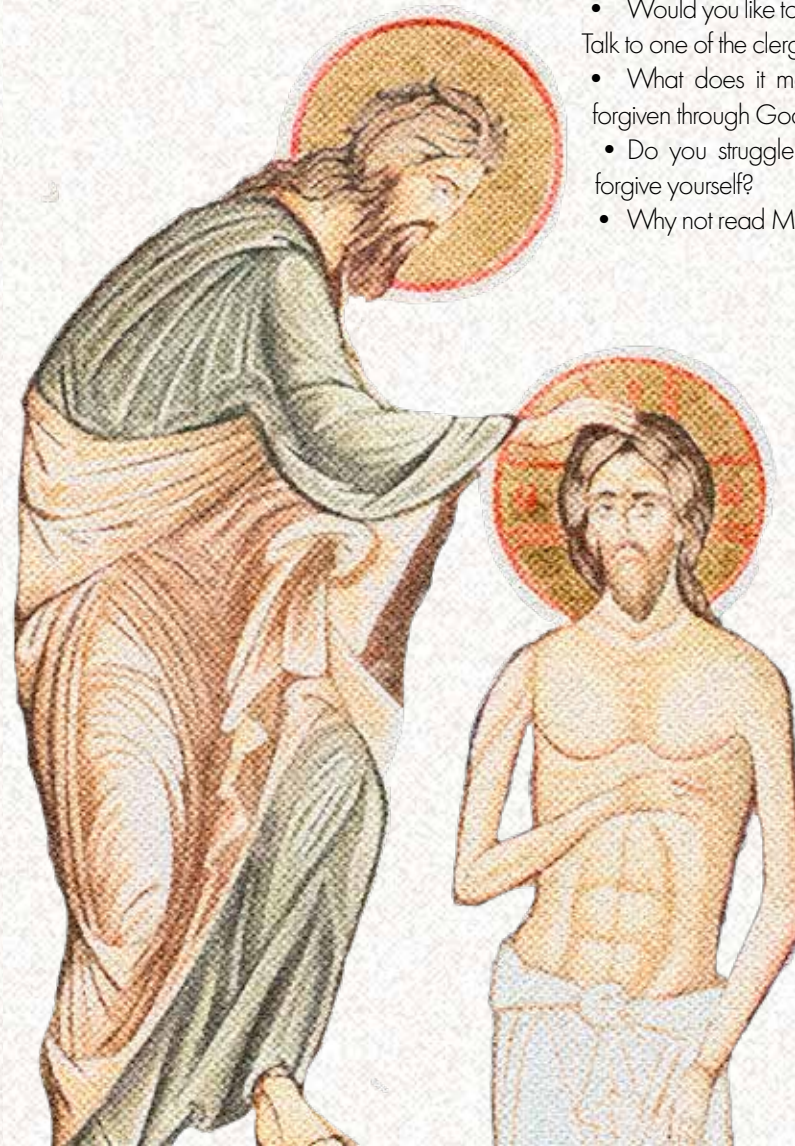
## Baptism

Perhaps it's stating the obvious, but John was the first in the Christian tradition to baptize. He baptized Jesus, even though he believed he was not worthy to do so. But in completing that baptism, John showed that through Jesus, we are all offered baptism. Baptism represents the forgiveness of sins - when we do wrong or commit sin, we will always

be forgiven if we come back to God in sorrow. Baptism is the start of a Christian's journey, the beginning of a deeper relationship with Jesus. The baptismal font is located near the entrance of the church, as it represents our entry into the kingdom of heaven. It is also the symbol of our participation in the family of God, a reminder that we are forgiven and loved.

## Reflection

- Would you like to be baptized or confirmed? Talk to one of the clergy.
- What does it mean to know that you are forgiven through God's love?
  - Do you struggle to forgive someone or to forgive yourself?
  - Why not read Matthew 3:13-17?





# Week Four

## Who is the Blessed Virgin Mary?

The Blessed Virgin Mary, or simply Mary, is the mother of Jesus Christ, and her story is central to the Christmas narrative. Her role is unique as she is a “God-bearer,” carrying Jesus, who is both human and divine. This role is foreshadowed by the prophet Isaiah.

## In the Prophets

In Isaiah 7:14, the prophet promises King Ahaz (the 8th-century King of Judah) a sign of God’s blessing:

“The Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel.”



In the New Testament, this prophecy is repeated, and Jesus is called Immanuel (or Emmanuel), which means “God with us.” Jesus embodies both God and humanity in one person.

## Mary’s Story

Mary was a young woman, promised in marriage to Joseph (betrothed). However, she receives a visit from the Angel Gabriel, who tells her that she will give birth as a virgin to a son, who will be called “Emmanuel.” Although terrified, Mary agrees. Joseph, understandably shocked and confused, considers leaving her but, after a reassuring dream, chooses to marry her.

## Reflection

- Visit the Lady Chapel: Spend some time there, noticing the statues and windows of female saints.
- Read or listen to Mary’s Song (Luke 1:46-55): This song is often part of Choral Evensong.
- Reflect on Mary’s courage, obedience, and joy: Consider how we might draw inspiration from her virtues in facing uncertain times.

## Mary’s Place of Honor

Mary is often revered as the pinnacle of the saints. While her obedience is extraordinary, her strength and courage are also noteworthy. She is told that while she bears God himself, her son Jesus will suffer, and that “a sword will pierce [her] own soul.” Nevertheless, she accepts this calling and even rejoices in her role in the story of salvation.

In medieval England, Mary was particularly honored and called “Our Lady.” Many churches and cathedrals had “Lady Chapels” dedicated to her, and England was so devoted to Mary that it was often known as “Our Lady’s Dowry.”

**Almighty God,  
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness  
and to put on the armour of light,  
now in the time of this mortal life,  
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;  
that on the last day,  
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty  
to judge the living and the dead,  
we may rise to the life immortal;  
through him who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.**



# Advent & Christmas 2024

## Advent Carol Service

**30 November and 1 December at 18:00**

A beautiful thought-provoking service with readings and carols that help us begin the Advent journey. Starting in darkness, the Cathedral is gradually lit by thousands of candles as the first of the Advent Candles is taken in procession through the church.

## Christmas Light Service

**8 December at 15:30**

Come and join us as the light fades outside the Cathedral for carols, readings and prayers as we light the Christmas tree. This short service begins inside and moves outside; it is suitable for all-ages.

## Carols Around the Tree

**21 December at 14:00 and 15:00**

Enjoy a short time of joy and celebration with some popular readings and Christmas Carols. Featuring a live brass band outdoors in the Cathedral Close.

## Festival of Lessons & Carols


**23 and 24 December at 18:00**

Celebrate the promise of the Christmas story through readings interspersed with carols, hymns and other choral music sung by the Cathedral Choir.

## Christmas Eve *24 Dec*

**Crib Service 15:00** 

Our popular children's nativity service. Come dressed as a character from the story of the Nativity!

**Festival of Lessons & Carols 18:00** 

Celebrate the promise of the Christmas story.


**Midnight Mass 22:00** 

We gather for the First Eucharist of Christmas to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

## Christmas Day *25 Dec*

The Cathedral is open for services only.

**Holy Communion 8:00**

**Choral Eucharist 10:30** 

**Carols around the Crib 15:30**

## Boxing Day *26 Dec*

Open for sight-seeing 10:00 - 15:30

**Morning Prayer 9:00**

**Eucharist 12:30**

**Carols around the Crib 16:00**

## Epiphany *5 Jan*

**Solemn Eucharist 10:30**


**Epiphany Carol Service 18:00** 

Celebrate the story of the coming of the Wise Men through readings interspersed with carols and hymns.

## Candlemas *2 Feb*

**Solemn Eucharist 10:30**

**Solemn Choral Evensong 15:30**

**Candlemas Carol Service 18:30** 

Celebrate the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple through readings interspersed with carols and hymns.

## Key

*Reflective Events* - 

*Family-Friendly Events* - 