

**GATHERING IN HOPE – A PRAYER SERVICE FOR THIS TIME  
RESOURCE PACK**

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*All material in this booklet is available for download on  
[www.kandle.ie](http://www.kandle.ie)*

# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT IS THIS LITURGY?

This liturgy is a prayer service that includes readings, reflections, prayers and song. It is expected that the liturgy will take approximately 30-45 minutes. Any necessary adaptations to the prayer can be made by a locally appointed preparation group in each parish.



## WHY ARE WE PROMOTING THIS OCCASION OF PRAYER?

This prayer service was first offered to parishes in 2009. It came in the context of very difficult times for both Church and society. We recognise that in the year people many people across our diocese are still under tremendous pressure and stress. Many people find themselves under huge financial and emotional strain. Many people struggle with bereavement, addiction, illness and depression.

The **Advent** season stands for us as a **season of hope**. As we prepare to welcome Christ, the light of the world, at Christmas, we can remind ourselves through this prayer that we do have reason to celebrate. We can remember once more that our God became one of us, that our God took on the struggles and pains of humanity and, ultimately, that our God declares that each one of us is precious and holy.

## WHEN WILL THIS LITURGY TAKE PLACE?

We are asking parishes that choose to pray this liturgy to do so during the first week of Advent – ideally on Tuesday, December 4. This is a week when our Advent liturgy resources focus on the Advent gift of hope.

## THE MINISTRIES NEEDED FOR THIS PRAYER

This prayer service draws upon a rich variety of ministers. The following list of possible ministries and ministers is not exhaustive. Whatever the final outcome of ministries and ministers in the local setting, hopefully their participation in the liturgy reflects the richness and diversity of the local worshipping community who gather to pray this liturgy.

### **Preparation Group:**

The diocese has provided a prayer ritual for a Liturgy of Hope but it is the local preparation group that will actually ensure that this ritual becomes an experience of prayer in their particular faith community.

How this liturgy takes flesh will depend on the energy, imagination and preparation of this group. It will be up to them as a group:

- to take this ritual and imagine it in the context of their own place, their own people and their own resources, and to make local adaptations where desired or necessary,
- to draw people in to take on the different roles required for this liturgy,
- to ensure that people have the information they need to carry out their role and are given an opportunity to rehearse where necessary,
- to help ensure that the practical details are covered, for example seeing that prayer aids are photocopied for people that take into account any local changes that have been made by the group.
- to decide how best to advertise this liturgy locally, using the posters that have been supplied as well as the parish bulletin.

### **Prayer leader:**

The prayer leader will, in many circumstances, be one of the priests of the parish or a member of the parish team. In some cases the prayer leader will be a lay member of the local community.

The prayer leader helps to facilitate the prayer by welcoming and introducing the prayer, setting the pace of the prayer, leading some of the prayers and indicating to people when to sit or stand during the prayer. All texts for the prayer leader have been scripted and are contained in the master copy of the prayer.

At the beginning of this liturgy the prayer leader lights three candles – as indicated in the prayer service that follows. Prayer leaders will need to

familiarise themselves with the liturgy and to be aware of and work with whoever is carrying out particular ministries within the liturgy.

During the liturgy, the prayer leader will need to be both visible and audible. We suggest that the text that the prayer leader uses on the night is placed in a suitable folder for use.

### **Hospitality Ministers:**

Every liturgy hopefully begins in a spirit of welcome, friendship and hospitality. This prayer service will benefit hugely before it ever begins from the ministry of a few members of the community welcoming people as they come into the church and giving them whatever they need to help them enter into the prayer – i.e. a candle and a prayer leaflet. Hospitality on the night might also extend beyond the liturgy by, where practical, inviting people to remain for a cup of tea/coffee after the celebration!

### **Music Ministers:**

This liturgy has been designed to put as little demand as possible on local parish music resources. The chosen music should already be familiar to parishes. At a minimum the music of this liturgy could be led by a cantor. Ideally there will also be an accompanist.

Parishes that have the local resources may well choose to draw in other singers and instrumentalists to enrich the celebration. Together, music ministers and the local preparation group should also feel the freedom to change the music choices to better suit their own circumstances and resources.



### **Readers:**

A variety of readers is used during this liturgy. It is hoped that this use of a number of readers reflects the fact that this is a liturgy being prayed by the local community.

The following are points within the liturgy when readers can be used:

*The second psalm, the New Testament reading, prayers of intercession, the litany of hope, (alternative to monologue).*

### **People to carry and light candles:**

During the opening hymn, one person is needed to carry in the Paschal Candle. Having placed the Paschal Candle in its place, this person lights a taper from the Paschal Candle and uses the taper to light three candles that have been placed ahead of time beside the stand for the Paschal Candle and to light one candle on the advent wreath.



During the liturgy people's candles will be lit – similar to the lighting of candles during the Easter Vigil. It would be very helpful to have a number of people to bring light from the Paschal Candle to people's candles throughout the church.

### **Opening Monologues:**

Three monologues have been scripted for this liturgy. (***An alternative to the monologue is also given below***). These short monologues require a young adult, a middle aged woman and an older man. An important preparation ahead of time is to ensure that these monologues can be heard on the night. This requires practice & rehearsal on the part of the people delivering them and adequate amplification of their voices where necessary.

After each monologue the prayer leader hands the person one of the three candles that has been lit from the Paschal Candle. When all three monologues have been delivered those leading the monologues place their candles in front of the icon of the Holy Family (see below). All of the above needs some rehearsal.

### **Art & Environment Ministers / Set-up:**

An important task to be done in readiness for this prayer is to ensure that the "things" needed for this celebration are in place and that the Church space itself is prepared in a way that is welcoming and inviting. This ministry is explored further in the next section.

## PREPARING THE CHURCH – SOME SUGGESTIONS

As people walk into the church on this Advent night hopefully they will come into a space that is welcoming and has been prepared for them to enter fully into this particular prayer. The *lighting* and *heating* of the church adds to the sense of welcome and can help create the desired atmosphere that supports the prayer.

When preparing this prayer it is important to look at the “*things*” of the liturgy and the *layout* of the church. In this particular prayer we draw upon the *symbols* of the **Paschal candle**, the **advent wreath** and the **icon of the Holy Family**.



Where will these key symbols be placed in the church so that they support the ritual being prayed? For example, when placing the Icon of the Holy Family the group will have to take into account that in the opening stages of the liturgy three candles will be placed before this icon. (Note: Each parish received this icon a number of years ago as part of the Christmas Reach Out campaign)

What will be the quality of the Advent wreath and the candles we use? Are the candles of large enough size to be visible in a large church? What candles will be given to people as they enter the church? Experience has shown that the most suitable are tapers with the protective disc – these are both easier to pass on light and less likely to drip wax.



This group might also consider the following practical details of set up:

- The placement of candles and prayer aids at the back of the church for distribution – in baskets or other suitable container.
- The placement of any necessary microphones.
- A seat within the sanctuary area for the prayer leader, if other than a priest.

# SELECTED MUSIC AND ALTERNATIVE SUGGESTIONS

## ***Opening Hymn:***

- ❖ Christ be our Light - Bernadette Farrell- Gather Hymnal
- ❖ All are Welcome - Marty Haugen - Gather Hymnal
- ❖ The Light of Christ - Donal Fishel - Alleuia Amen

## ***Quiet Time :***

- ❖ Lord Increase our Faith – David Haas – Gather Hymnal
- ❖ You are Mine - David Haas - Gather Hymnal
- ❖ Come to me - Liam Lawton - Healing Song Collection
- ❖ Be not Afraid - Bob Dufford - Gather Hymnal
- ❖ Stand by Me - Tom Kendsia - Clothed in Love Collection

## ***Response to Intercessions:***

- ❖ Kyrie, kyrie, eleison

## ***Closing Hymn:***

- ❖ Lord of All Hopefulness - In Caelo Hymnal
- ❖ Will you Let Me be your Servant - Richard Gillard - Gather Hymnal
- ❖ A Place at the Table - Lori True - Gather Hymnal
- ❖ How Great Thou Art - Stuart Hine - Gather Hymnal



## OPENING MONOLOGUES

*After each monologue the prayer leader takes a candle from beside the Paschal Candle & hands it to the person who has just spoken, while the refrain of "Christ be our light" is sung. At the end of all three monologues the speakers together walk over to the Icon of the Holy Family, place their candles in the place before the icon that has been prepared. They then return to their seats.*

### 1. (Teenager/Young Person):

I was always told that if I worked hard, and got my exams all would be well – but it's not well, not well at all. I keep sending out CVs, I want to work - I don't want to have to leave my family and go away for work – but I can't get a job anywhere – there are so many people out there all job hunting, they're much more experienced than me. God\* it's very difficult to keep going and believe that all will be well, that I will be ok – I, and many like me, need your help your guidance – we desperately need to experience your Hope during these difficult times.

### 2. (Mother):

Dear God\*, I can't believe the test results are positive. The children are still at school – they need two parents. Even the thoughts of all that's ahead – more tests, treatment, it's all unknown territory, it's so frightening. Lord I'm begging for your help, help me to cope, show me the way forward. Please give me the courage to Hope.

### 3. (Father):

When my son took his own life, my world fell apart. I'll never know why. He was the light of our lives – sport, music, friends. It's been nine years, I think of him every day, I miss him all the time – and the days I don't think of him is because I numb the pain through the bottle – then I'm no help to anyone. God Almighty\* help me, help my family – show us how we can have Hope in these dark days and help us to move on with our lives.

*\*these phrases are intended to be spoken as colloquial expressions rather than as direct addresses to God – a subtle reminder of how often we unconsciously pray to God in times of need...*

***Alternative to Monologue:***

*This is delivered by a person other than the prayer leader. It is given below in a model form. Parishes should feel very free to adapt to their own circumstance.*

“On this Advent night – our great season of Hope,  
we turn to our God in prayer and we place before God, in hope and  
expectation, the cares and worries of this time.

In these days,  
together as a community we face the reality of  
job losses and the threat of losing our jobs,  
of young people leaving college and education and still struggling to find a job,  
of having to emigrate,  
the worry of possibly losing a family home,

together as a community we face the reality of  
coping with long term illness and new found ill health, with health tests and  
treatments, with the worry that comes with illness for the sick and for their  
family

together as a community we face the reality of  
the pain of suicide for families and community alike,  
of addictions to alcohol, drugs and gambling  
and the harm these addictions do to all concerned.

Together as a community we face the reality of our time  
And as a community let us say and hear and believe this night  
that we shall be well  
that all will be well...

*(The person receives a candle from the prayer leader and places it before the  
icon of the holy family...one candle rather than three in this option)*

# LITURGY OF HOPE

## GATHERING

### Welcome –

(The prayer leader or another)

In the name of \_\_\_\_\_ parish I welcome each of you to this time of prayer. Your presence here tonight is a sign of the strength and the support that we can give each other in times of difficulty.

We gather on this Advent night, in the darkest time of the year, mindful of the many challenges and concerns facing people in our parish, across our diocese and across our country.

On this night we carry these concerns with us and lay them down before God in prayer – they are the struggles of our children, our parents, our neighbours, our friends, our strangers, ourselves.

Yet, in the midst of Winter - when even nature itself seems to be declaring decay - we gather as people of hope. We gather as people who know that in the very darkest hour our God is with us. And our God is a God of light, a God whose light is stronger than any darkness...

Together, as one community united in prayer this night, let us stand and welcome in song the God of light among us... **(Please stand)**

### Opening hymn & procession of light:

**Christ be our Light**

*During the opening hymn one person carries the Paschal Candle – slowly - through the assembly & places it in its stand. Once in place they take a taper and light it from the Paschal Candle. They then use the taper to light the three candles that are in place beside the Paschal Candle stand and to light one candle on the Advent wreath. They then return to their place.*

### Monologues – (see preparation notes for texts)

*Once the opening hymn is sung and the three candles and the advent wreath are lighting the prayer leader introduces the monologues (or alternative to the monologue) in these or similar words:*

**Leader:** We now take a few moments to acknowledge the reality facing many people in our community. These words, though scripted for tonight, might begin to put before us what many of us are experiencing in these days ... please be seated **(Please be seated)**

*3 people representing situations of today come to the front of the sanctuary area...microphones as required – after each monologue the following response is sung –*

“Christ be our light, shine in our hearts, shine in our darkness, Christ be our light, shine in our Church gathered today.” (Bernadette Farrell)

At the end of each monologue the prayer leader gives one of the candles beside the Paschal Candle to the speaker as the refrain is being sung...

***At the end of all three monologues the three speakers together bring their candles and place them before the icon of the Holy family. The speakers then return to their place...***

## **THE WORD OF GOD**

**Prayer leader:** We sing together God’s word to us this night...

### **Psalm 22: Sung Version**

The Lord’s my shepherd, I’ll not want.  
He makes me down to lie.  
In pastures green he leadeth me,  
the quiet waters by...

My soul he doth restore again,  
And me to walk doth make.  
Within the paths of righteousness,  
E’en for his own name sake.

Yea, though I walk through death’s dark vale,  
Yet will I fear no ill;  
For thou art with me, and thy rod,  
And staff me comfort still.

Goodness and mercy all my life  
Shall surely follow me:  
And in God’s house for ever more  
My dwelling place shall be.

***Pause***

**Psalm 26: Recited R. *The Lord is my light and my help***

The Lord is my light and my help;  
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life;  
before whom shall I shrink?

There is one thing I ask of the Lord,  
for this I long,  
to live in the house of the Lord,  
all the days of my life,  
to savour the sweetness of the Lord,  
to behold his temple.

I am sure I shall see the Lord's goodness  
in the land of the living.  
Hope in him, hold firm and take heart.  
Hope in the Lord!

***Pause***

**A Reading from the Letter of St Paul to the Romans**

Nothing can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried. Nothing can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Jesus Christ.

**The Word of the Lord.**

**QUIET TIME:**

**Leader:** Nothing can come between us and the love of Christ. Let us take a moment of quiet now and in this time may each of us bring our own cares and concerns before the Lord. Entrust these cares to the Lord and welcome his love once more into your life.

*(Instrumental or sung music might accompany this time, for example "Lord Increase our Faith" or "You are mine" – David Haas or other music suggested above)*

**Additional Optional Reflection:** All will be well...

*(This reflection could be read after the quiet time and immediately before the prayers of intercession – or at another suitable time within the liturgy)*

Our good Lord answered  
all the questions and doubts which I could raise,  
saying most comfortingly:  
I make all things well,  
and I can make all things well,  
and I shall make all things well,  
and I will make all things well;  
and you will see for yourself  
that every kind of thing will be well. (Julian of Norwich)

#### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

**N.B.** *(parishes might draw on a few of the prayers below and add their own)*

**Prayer Leader:** In the sure and certain hope that our God listens to the petitions of his people, let us stand and bring our prayers to God....

#### **Reader:**

For those who lead our country

That the love of Christ's love will fill their hearts with compassion and right judgement.

God of Hope - R. Hear our prayer *(or sung Kyrie, Kyrie, eleison)*

For those called to lead us in faith

That the love of Christ will fill their hearts with a prophetic voice to raise up God's people.

God of Hope - R. Hear our prayer *(or sung Kyrie, Kyrie, eleison)*

For those who have lost their jobs and for those who face the threat of losing their jobs

That the love of Christ will fill their hearts with courage...

God of Hope - R. Hear our prayer *(or sung Kyrie, Kyrie, eleison)*.

For families and people living on their own who are struggling to make ends meet

That the love of Christ will fill their hearts with strength

God of Hope - R. Hear our prayer (*or sung Kyrie, Kyrie, eleison*)

For people in our midst who feel vulnerable and alone

That the love of Christ will fill their hearts with a sense of friendship and connection with those around them

God of Hope - R. Hear our prayer (*or sung Kyrie, Kyrie, eleison*)

For those in our communities making choices in their lives about alcohol and drugs

That the love of Christ will fill their hearts with the desire to turn away from destructive choices and towards ways of life

God of Hope - R. Hear our prayer (*or sung Kyrie, Kyrie, eleison*)

For the sick and the dying and those who care for them

That the love of Christ will fill their hearts with his healing presence

God of Hope - R. Hear our prayer (*or sung Kyrie, Kyrie, eleison*)

#### **ACCEPTING AND SHARING OF THE LIGHT**

**Leader:** We have entrusted our cares to the Lord.

On this Advent night we stand as people of hope.

I invite you to take your candles now and to help spread the light of Christ within this church as people go among you bringing the light from our Paschal Candle.

*(the light is taken from the paschal candle by a number of people and brought out to the church to be passed on – music – sung solo/congregational, instrumental... when all have received the light the prayer leader continues... )*

And on this night we choose to let this hope shine in our midst for all to see as we say together....

*Lord,  
the light I choose to let into my life today  
is based on my hope in you.  
It is a small flame,  
but I believe that it can dispel a bit more darkness tonight.  
I join this flame to the flames of each individual here,  
for it is through us  
that Christ's light will shine*

*in the midst of the struggles and cares of the world.*

**LITANY OF HOPE**

*(when the prayer is finished and all the candles are lit a reader comes forward to lead the following litany...)*

With the eyes and hearts of faith we look upon our world and we proclaim to our God:

*R. Christ who was, who is, and who is to come, you are our light and our hope.*

We acknowledge Your beauty and goodness in every created thing.

*R. Christ who was, who is, and who is to come, you are our light and our hope.*

We move out of the shadows to follow you and walk in the light of true life.

*R. Christ who was, who is, and who is to come, you are our light and our hope.*

We celebrate Your compassion as revealed by so many who care for the poor and marginalised.

*R. Christ who was, who is, and who is to come, you are our light and our hope.*

We stand together in solidarity with and care for one another, united in faith and hope.

*R. Christ who was, who is, and who is to come, you are our light and our hope.*

We prepare to welcome Your coming once more into the very heart of our lives.

*R. Christ who was, who is, and who is to come, you are our light and our hope.*

We look forward to our Christmas feast as people who believe that You, our God, dwells among us in love.

*R. Christ who was, who is, and who is to come, you are our light and our hope.*

**LORD'S PRAYER**

**Leader:** Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Saviour gave us: Our Father

**(AN INVITATION TO A CUP OF TEA IF BEING PROVIDED COULD BE DONE AT THIS POINT)**

**CLOSING PRAYER**

**LEADER:** Let us pray...

Ever loving and faithful God,  
Your will is justice for the poor, peace for the afflicted,  
Strength for the fearful and weak.

May the light that we have shared this night  
Go with us as a source of blessing and hope in the days ahead.  
May it remind us  
Of the common bond of love and faith  
that we share as sisters and brothers in Christ.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**Leader:** Let us bless the Lord.  
*R. Thanks be to God*

**Raising of Candles at Closing Hymn:** Lord of All Hopefulness  
Introduction by prayer leader:

We leave this Church tonight sure of God's love. Together we walk into our future with hope, believing that God can, shall and will make all things well.

And so in solidarity with one another and in confidence let us raise our candles as we sing together our closing hymn...

*(at the end of the hymn the prayer leader leaves their place to join with the rest of the congregation as they depart)*