PATHWAYS IN ADVENT

Leader's Guide

INTRODUCTION

This Advent parishes, schools and groups are invited to use this reflective resource in small group settings as part of their journey through this season of preparation.

Each week offers a simple structure for prayer, gospel reflection and a Spirit-led conversation. The sharing arises from both the Sunday gospel and excerpts from one of the pathways for the Irish Church identifed in the working document for the National Synodal Assembly, held in October 2026.

The pathways, in turn, offer a vision for the Church in Ireland:

- **The Church that Proclaims the Gospel**
- **The Church as a Community of Belonging**
- **The Church as a Place of Healing**
- **The Church that Accompanies**

The act of leading and taking part in this series can be seen as one step among many in bringing to realisation the fifth pathway, 'The Church that Empowers for Ministry and Co- responsibility'.

It is our hope that these sessions will both provide spiritual nourishment along the Advent path, as well as providing a prayerful space to begin to explore together how we can bring about this vision of Church in our lives and in our local faith community

An invitation to hear back from groups

While any personal sharing within these sessions is confidential, ideas can be for sharing. If there are particular ideas, suggestions, initiatives around any of the pathways please share them with the diocese.
Bishop Denis, the Commission for Liturgical Formation and the Diocesan Pastoral Council welcome your feedback.

Email: julie.kavanagh@kandle.ie



Kildare and Leighlin
Diocesan Commission for Liturgical Formation

PATHWAYS IN ADVENT

THE FORMAT FOR EACH SESSION

- Each session follows the same steps, clearly outlined in the headings
- It begins with an ***OPENING PRAYER*** said together
- One person ***PROCLAIMS THE GOSPEL*** text, followed by a pause
- The leader invites people to listen to the Gospel being read aloud again, and to notice what is striking them as they listen
- This is followed by a time to ***REFLECT*** in silence and to ***SHARE***,
- Each person is given the opportunity to share without interruption
- A one line prayer ***RESPONSE*** is said after each person
- ***QUOTES*** from the particular pathway are then read aloud with time given for people to consider them in light of a ***REFLECTION QUESTION***
- Again, time is given for people to ***SHARE*** and listen to one another in an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding
- An open question is then offered to the group that invites them to think about and share on how they might ***RESPOND IN ACTION***
- Finally, everything is brought together with an ***INTERCESSION*** and saying the ***CONCLUDING PRAYER TOGETHER***

THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR ORGANISING & LEADING A SESSION

- How will you invite people to this session? Where will it take place? Think HOSPITALITY in terms of invitation, venue and experience
- Consider preparing a sacred space to give people a visual focus for this time of prayer and conversation. It might have a white or purple cloth, a bible and a candle. You may even have an advent wreath that you can use
- The readings and prayers can be done a large group. If your group has more than 6-8 people, you will you need more than one leader/facilitator for those parts of the session that involve small group sharing
- This session should take no more than an hour. It should start on time and end no later than advertised
- People may not be used to sharing. For some it may be more than enough to share just one word. Don't be afraid of silence - it is something that many people are craving!
- This is an opportunity for prayerful sharing and listening to what God is saying to us through one another. It is not a space to convince or change people to our way of thinking!



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Diocesan Commission for Liturgical Formation

PATHWAYS IN ADVENT

First Sunday of Advent



Pathway:
The Church that Proclaims the Gospel

Process

Opening Prayer

Say the opening prayer together

Gracious God, we wait for you in hope.
As we walk the Advent pathway,
may we be alert to the wonders of your deeds
and the signs of your presence in our world.
Open our hearts and minds to hear and share the
message of hope, joy, peace, reconciliation and love
as we await your coming and respond to our
Baptismal call to live the Gospel in our daily lives.
We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

Proclaim the Gospel

Read the Gospel passage aloud slowly. Pause.
Re-read the passage, noticing what is striking you as you hear the words of the Gospel

Reflect and Share

Pause for a time of silence to listen to what God is saying to you in this Gospel text
In turn, each person shares what stays with them
Listen to one another without interruption
Pause before hearing from the next person, in order to receive what has been shared

Response after each person shares

ALL: Your word, O Lord, is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.

(Psalm 118:105)

Gospel Text

Mark 13:33-37

Jesus said to his disciples:
'Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!'



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Read and Reflect on the Pathway

The following quotes are taken from the Irish Synodal Assembly working document, October 2026, 'Is not this what God asks of you?'

Micah 6:8

"We envisage a Church that is missionary in its outlook. One where it's members are confident in proclaiming the Gospel and committed, by virtue of their baptism, to extend an invitation to others to engage in a living relationship with Jesus Christ"

The Working Group on Formation and Catechesis



[Following the example of Jesus] The Church in Ireland cannot fail to look outwardly with compassion on the 'crowd' which struggles to find meaning and hope in a world that promised salvation through politics, economics, secularism, technology, and individualism but has failed to deliver, with enormous cost in human terms. It is in this world that we are called to walk alongside our brothers and sisters with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, calling them to a saving encounter with Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)

From the Working Document
Pathway 1: The Church that proclaims the Gospel

Reflect and Share

Your word, O Lord, is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.
Prayerfully consider these quotes.
Notice what draws you, where you see something of the Gospel, where the Spirit might be inviting us/you to change, deepen or begin again in the light of this pathway.
Listen to one another without interruption, pausing briefly before moving on to the next person.

Respond in Action

Taking to heart the words of the Gospel, how will you be awake to opportunities to proclaim the Good News to others, through words and deed?

Prayer of Intercession

May we dare to hope of a Church capable of transforming all by authentic witness, service and joyful proclamation of the Gospel.
R. Is not this what God asks of us?

Concluding Prayer

Say the closing prayer together

Loving God,
we give praise and thanks
that you have sent your Son to be
our light in the darkness of this world.
As we await your coming, help us to be
a Church that proclaims the gospel,
a Church of welcome and belonging,
a Church where the wounded find a place of healing,
a Church that accompanies one another
and a Church that empowers each of us
to be ministers of your gospel.
May your Word be a lamp for our feet
and a light for our path.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.
Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus.

Learn more about the Synodal Pathways at www.synod.ie or

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PATHWAYS IN ADVENT

Second Sunday of Advent



Pathway:
The Church as a Community of Belonging

Process

Opening Prayer

Say the opening prayer together

Gracious God, we wait for you in hope.
As we walk the Advent pathway,
may we be alert to the wonders of your deeds
and the signs of your presence in our world.
Open our hearts and minds to hear and share the
message of hope, joy, peace, reconciliation and love
as we await your coming and respond to our
Baptismal call to live the Gospel in our daily lives.
We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

Proclaim the Gospel

Read the Gospel passage aloud slowly. Pause.
Re-read the passage, noticing what is striking you as you hear the words of the Gospel

Reflect and Share

Pause for a time of silence to listen to what God is saying to you in this Gospel text
In turn, each person shares what stays with them
Listen to one another without interruption
Pause before hearing from the next person, in order to receive what has been shared

Response after each person shares

ALL: Your word, O Lord, is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.

(Psalm 118:105)

Gospel Text

Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah: *'Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way. A voice cries in the wilderness: Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight'* and so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. John wore a garment of camel-skin, and he lived on locusts and wild honey. In the course of his preaching he said, 'Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'



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Diocesan Commission for Liturgical Formation

Read and Reflect on the Pathway

The following quotes are taken from the Irish Synodal Assembly working document, October 2026, 'Is not this what God asks of you?' Micah 6:8

"The Church seeks to be a community for all to whom she has given birth in the waters of Baptism. At our Baptism, we were each welcomed 'with great joy' into the Christian community, and we were marked with the sign of the cross as a sign that we 'belong to Christ'"

From the Working Document
Pathway 2: The Church as a Community of Belonging

"The foundational truth of our faith is that we belong, first and foremost, to God. Because we belong to God, we are inherently bound to the rest of creation – we belong to the Earth we call home and we belong to each other as members of one human family."

The Working Group on Belonging

"The foundational building block of the parish community is the family and the parish itself is a family of families."

From the Working Document
Pathway 2: The Church as a Community of Belonging

Reflect and Share

Your word, O Lord, is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.
Prayerfully consider these quotes. Notice what draws you, where you see something of the Gospel, where the Spirit might be inviting us/you to change, deepen or begin again in the light of this pathway. Listen to one another without interruption, pausing briefly before moving on to the next person.

Respond in Action

How can I, and others in my parish, be a voice that invites those living in the wilderness of unbelonging to experience a welcoming Church?

Prayer of Intercession

May we learn to welcome one another on our pilgrim journey together so that all can find a home in Christ.
R. Is not this what God asks of us?

Concluding Prayer

Say the closing prayer together

Loving God,
we give praise and thanks
that you have sent your Son to be
our light in the darkness of this world.
As we await your coming, help us to be
a Church that proclaims the gospel,
a Church of welcome and belonging,
a Church where the wounded find a place of healing,
a Church that accompanies one another
and a Church that empowers each of us
to be ministers of your gospel.
May your Word be a lamp for our feet
and a light for our path.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.
Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus.

Learn more about the Synodal Pathways at www.synod.ie or

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PATHWAYS IN ADVENT

Third Sunday of Advent



Pathway:
The Church as a Place of Healing

Process

Opening Prayer

Say the opening prayer together

Gracious God, we wait for you in hope.
As we walk the Advent pathway,
may we be alert to the wonders of your deeds
and the signs of your presence in our world.
Open our hearts and minds to hear and share the
message of hope, joy, peace, reconciliation and love
as we await your coming and respond to our
Baptismal call to live the Gospel in our daily lives.
We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

Proclaim the Gospel

Read the Gospel passage aloud slowly. Pause.
Re-read the passage, noticing what is striking you as you hear the words of the Gospel

Reflect and Share

Pause for a time of silence to listen to what God is saying to you in this Gospel text
In turn, each person shares what stays with them
Listen to one another without interruption
Pause before hearing from the next person, in order to receive what has been shared

Response after each person shares

ALL: Your word, O Lord, is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.

(Psalm 118:105)

Gospel Text

John 1:6-8, 19-28

A man came, sent by God.
His name was John. He came as a witness,
as a witness to speak for the light, so that
everyone might believe through him.
He was not the light, only a witness to
speak for the light.
This is how John appeared as a witness.
When the Jews sent priests and Levites
from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?'
he not only declared, but he declared quite
openly, 'I am not the Christ.' 'Well then,'
they asked, 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not' he
said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered,
'No.' So they said to him, 'Who are you? We
must take back an answer to those who
sent us. What have you to say about
yourself?' So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah
prophesied: a voice that cries in the
wilderness: make a straight way for the
Lord.'
Now these men had been sent by the
Pharisees, and they put this further
question to him, 'Why are you baptizing if
you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and
not the prophet?' John replied, 'I baptize
with water; but there stands among you –
unknown to you – the one who is coming
after me; and I am not fit to undo his
sandal-strap.' This happened at Bethany, on
the far side of the Jordan, where John was
baptizing.



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Read and Reflect on the Pathway

The following quotes are taken from the Irish Synodal Assembly working document, October 2026, 'Is not this what God asks of you?' Micah 6:8

"The Church that seeks to be a place of healing must be at the service of Christ who heals, offers new life, and liberates from the bonds that continue to imprison and burden those who have been hurt."

"Now we dare to hope of a Church capable of transforming the spiritual landscape of our culture through authentic witness, service, and joyful proclamation of the Gospel."

For the Church that seeks to be a place of healing, our common Baptism reminds us that, in Christ, we are entrusted to each other. When we recognise one another as brothers and sisters, and walk with and listen to one another, including those whose courageous truth-telling confronts us with the harm caused within the Church, we foster authentic relationships and shared responsibility in the Body of Christ.It then becomes a sacred duty to seek forgiveness, to work for healing, and to rebuild trust. To walk this path as brothers and sisters in not merely a spiritual exercise – it is an act of justice.

From the Working Document
Pathway 3: The Church as a place of healing

Reflect and Share

Your word, O Lord, is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.
Prayerfully consider these quotes.
Notice what draws you, where you see something of the Gospel, where the Spirit might be inviting us/you to change, deepen or begin again in the light of this pathway.
Listen to one another without interruption, pausing briefly before moving on to the next person.

Respond in Action

Entrusted to each other in baptism, how can I and others in my parish work to make straight the path and grow as a listening, truthful, healing and servant community?

Prayer of Intercession

May we recognise one another as brothers and sisters, listen to one another and encourage one another to speak the truth in love, so all may find healing.
R. Is not this what God asks of us?

Concluding Prayer

Say the closing prayer together

Loving God,
we give praise and thanks
that you have sent your Son to be
our light in the darkness of this world.
As we await your coming, help us to be
a Church that proclaims the gospel,
a Church of welcome and belonging,
a Church where the wounded find a place of healing,
a Church that accompanies one another
and a Church that empowers each of us
to be ministers of your gospel.
May your Word be a lamp for our feet
and a light for our path.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.
Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus.

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PATHWAYS IN ADVENT

Fourth Sunday of Advent



Pathway:
The Church that Accompanies

Process

Opening Prayer

Say the opening prayer together

Gracious God, we wait for you in hope.
As we walk the Advent pathway,
may we be alert to the wonders of your deeds
and the signs of your presence in our world.
Open our hearts and minds to hear and share the
message of hope, joy, peace, reconciliation and love
as we await your coming and respond to our
Baptismal call to live the Gospel in our daily lives.
We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

Proclaim the Gospel

Read the Gospel passage aloud slowly. Pause.
Re-read the passage, noticing what is striking you as you hear the words of the Gospel

Reflect and Share

Pause for a time of silence to listen to what God is saying to you in this Gospel text
In turn, each person shares what stays with them
Listen to one another without interruption
Pause before hearing from the next person, in order to receive what has been shared

Response after each person shares

ALL: Your word, O Lord, is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.

(Psalm 118:105)

Gospel Text

Matthew 1:18-24

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and said, *'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.'*

Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet: *'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'.*

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home.



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Read and Reflect on the Pathway

The following quotes are taken from the Irish Synodal Assembly working document, October 2026, 'Is not this what God asks of you?' Micah 6:8

"[In many ways, the Church already accompanies people] What is perhaps now emerging as different is a longing for a Church that can accompany people in their search for God.

The desire for accompaniment extends to people in every state of life, including single men and women, widows and widowers, separated and divorced persons, those returning to the faith, and those discovering it for the first time. The model for such accompaniment is the Risen Christ on the road to Emmaus

From the Working Document
Pathway 4: The Church that accompanies

"The Church must walk alongside people at every stage of life, providing opportunities for encounter, learning, reflection, belonging and mission."

The Working Group on Formation and Catechesis

Reflect and Share

Your word, O Lord, is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.
Prayerfully consider these quotes.
Notice what draws you, where you see something of the Gospel, where the Spirit might be inviting us/you to change, deepen or begin again in the light of this pathway.
Listen to one another without interruption, pausing briefly before moving on to the next person.

Respond in Action

Do not be afraid. As you consider accompaniment and how it might be lived and experienced even deeper, what is God inviting you and others to bring to birth in your parish?

Prayer of Intercession

May we be a Church that accompanies people along the path of life and faith, walking with those who are searching for God.
R. Is not this what God asks of us?

Concluding Prayer

Say the closing prayer together

Loving God,
we give praise and thanks
that you have sent your Son to be our light in the darkness of this world.
As we await your coming, help us to be a Church that proclaims the gospel,
a Church of welcome and belonging,
a Church where the wounded find a place of healing,
a Church that accompanies one another and a Church that empowers each of us to be ministers of your gospel.
May your Word be a lamp for our feet and a light for our path.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.
Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus.

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