

GIVE CLIMATE HOPE THIS CHRISTMAS

**Advent 1 worship and
teaching resources**



**“No one is left behind.”
Mrs Mafi**

Christian World Service 2024

ADVENT 1: CLIMATE HOPE AS SEAS ROAR

OVERVIEW OF ADVENT 1

The suggested lectionary Gospel reading for Advent 1 is Luke 21:25-36. The reading describes times when people will be afraid of the “roaring and tossing of the sea” (Luke 21:25). In times of fear about changing environments, Luke encourages his readers not to flee, fight or freeze. Instead, in Luke 21, he calls them to watch and pray.

The service ideas below provide different ways to think about what it means to watch and pray. A Climate candle lighting involves building an Advent koru out of local leaves, flowers and shells. Singing the “Pasefika” hymn introduces a way of singing together with our neighbours in Oceania. For all ages, there is a chance to think about what it means to watch by building a rain gauge (an activity which will be developed further in Advent 2 and Advent 3). The sermon shares a story of what it means for one church in Oceania to watch and pray.

Two directions are offered for Climate prayers for earth and all creation.

CLIMATE CANDLE LIGHTING – A MODIFIED ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

Making an Advent wreath in the shape of koru speaks of new beginnings.

The Advent wreath could be made from leaves and flowers to make visible connections with the environment. Shells gathered from the sea could speak of water connections in Oceania.¹

Using leaves and flowers will take longer, as items might need to be refreshed over the four weeks of Advent. However, people could be invited to bring flowers and leaves. This would weave ecological practices into your gathered worship, provide a sense of unfolding week by week and allow families and children to participate as they are invited to bring leaves, flowers, or shells to the Advent services.

CLIMATE COLLECT – A PUBLIC PRAYER

(A collect is a public prayer prayed by and for the assembled church. Like the Lord's Prayer, a collect has an address, a focus on some characteristic of God, and a petition. It concludes with a word of praise).

Collect for Advent 1

God of all time, past, present and future

You surround us with signs of love and justice,

¹ For an example, see the front cover of Peter Cole and Leslie Jonath, *Foraged Art. Creative projects using blooms, branches, leaves, stones, and other elements discovered in nature* (BlueStreak Books, 2018). The book explores foraged craft that could be woven into Advent or Christmas, including fern spirals (67-70) and twig stars (75-77).

This Advent, renew our commitment to watch and pray, so that in climate change and anxious times, we may recognise your work of redemption,

Through science and in faith, In the name of hope, we pray,
Amen

CWS ANNOUNCEMENT –

(We provide a brief (60-second/100 word) introduction to the Give Climate Hope this Christmas appeal each week. The announcement could be read as part of the notices or before or after the Climate Collect)

Advent 1 60-second CWS focus – meeting Mrs Mafi

In Advent 1, we meet Mrs Mafi. “No one is left behind,” declares Mrs Mafi. Mrs Mafi is a wife, mother, and grandmother. She lives on the eastern coast of Tonga. High tides and rising sea levels are damaging vegetable gardens.

Mrs Mafi has taken action. She and the women in her community have dug new vegetable gardens on higher ground and rotated their crops so there is always food for older adults. The 2024 CWS Christmas appeal introduces us to Mrs Mafi and to the work that communities in Oceania are doing to ensure no one is left behind. There is more information in the 2024 CWS Christmas appeal fliers.

SONGS – THAT CONNECT WITH THE SERMON IDEAS INCLUDING YOUTUBE LINKS

Singing the *Pasefika* hymn is a way of sharing Advent with our neighbours in Oceania. (We are hoping to source music, which will be placed at <https://tinyurl.com/pasefikahymn>). *Pasefika* hymn as a shared song – the Diocese of Polynesia has kindly blessed the use of the hymn *Pasefika* for the 2024 CWS Christmas Appeal. It comes, in the words of Archdeacon The Venerable Famausili Chris Solomona,

with a vision of the whole of Oceania singing of coconuts, sand, moonlight and children's voices. The invitation is to sing it as "a hymn of ONENESS within the creation of God."²

In addition, I have selected a few songs that could work with the themes of Give climate hope this Christmas. I find the song resource archive provided by Trinity College, Glasgow, a ready resource.³ It has suggestions for songs that work with the Lectionary readings and links to YouTube videos. These are particularly helpful if your congregation is, like mine, lacking in regular musicians.

- In Advent 1, a gathering song is *Behold, behold I make all things new* by John Bell.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Xgmsynls3k&list=PLdlokAj6uJuoH88dVbUhtSo73oZuhA8a4&index=28>
- *In the Lord, I'll be ever thankful* (Church Hymnary 772/Mission Praise 865) is a Taizé chant of praise and response.
- *My hope is built on nothing less* or the popular reworking as *Cornerstone*.
- *Love divine, all loves excelling* (Church Hymnary 519/Mission Praise 449)

CREATIVE IDEAS THAT ENGAGE A RANGE OF GENERATIONS (CAN BE USED AS A CHILDREN'S TALK)

(This Advent activity involves building a rain gauge as a practical way of keeping watch. Following Advent 1, people could be provided with the instructions (below) to build their own rain gauge and invited to bring their daily rain readings to church during the rest of Advent. Your local rain readings could be compared with current daily readings from countries in Oceania (Advent 2). Next, these readings could be compared with rainfall during a cyclone (Advent 3). These all-age

² Email from Archdeacon The Venerable Famausili Chris Solomona.

³ <https://www.trinitycollegetglasgow.co.uk/songs-for-sunday>.

activities provide a practical way of connecting with hopeful climate solutions being explored with CWS partners.)

Instructions for making your own rain gauge. You will need:

- *a clear bottle*
- *a knife to cut (adult supervision required).*
- *some rocks.*
- *water*
- *ruler*
- *marker pen that works on plastic*

(If time is pressured, you could make the rain gauge at home and have it as a prop).

Making a Rain Gauge

1. *Cut the top section off a clear bottle*
2. *Place several small rocks in the bottom (for weight), then fill the bottle with water to a 0 mark. ...*
3. *Invert the top of the bottle into the rain gauge to act as a funnel. ...*
4. *Wait for the next rain and observe and record rainfall amounts.*

If you want to see a practical example – check out How To Make a Rain Gauge Summer STEM Project

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rh18GMwwV4M>).

Some possible words for a children’s talk:

Who has a rain gauge at home? This week I want to make a rain gauge.

Why are we building a rain gauge? What does a rain gauge have to do with church and Advent?

Advent is about keeping watch. Followers of Jesus are told to keep watch and pray. The Bible says to pay attention to the sun,

moons, and stars (Luke 21:25). So we are to watch creation. A rain gauge helps us watch creation and the weather.

Jesus says that as we watch, we pray (Luke 21:36). We pray that Christians will be faithful in following Jesus. We pray that God's love and justice will become more real, present, and visible in the world around us.

This Advent, we are watching the world of the climate in the Pacific Ocean. As we watch, we will see examples of people taking action, working to make God's love and justice more real, present, and visible.

Let's pray

God, we thank you for rain gauges. We thank you for the way that rain gauges are part of keeping watch and paying attention to rain and weather. Help us to turn our watching into praying. Praying your kingdom come, your love and justice be done, here on earth as it is in heaven (*you could end here or continue to pray the Lord's prayer*).

Next week, during Advent 2, we are going to learn more about watching rain gauges. If you like, if your parents or caregivers say yes, I have instructions on how to build your own rain gauge. If your parents or caregivers say yes, you can build one and bring your rain record next week.

SERMON IDEAS

(The suggested lectionary Gospel reading for Advent 1 is Luke 21:25-36. This sermon focuses on the words of watch and pray, in dialogue with a contemporary story of climate hope with action).

This Sunday marks the beginning of the season of Advent. Advent is from the Latin *Adventus*, which means "coming." Over four Sundays of Advent the Gospel readings call us to think about God's ways of justice and love in our world today.

To help us think about justice and love in our world today, let me start with a story.⁴ It takes a while to tell. However, the story provides contemporary ways to think about what it means to watch and pray, which are two key words in the Gospel reading of Luke 21.

Our contemporary story arises in the Solomon Islands, on the small island of Walande. There are a couple of online articles and videos about this if you want to google Walande Solomon Islands.⁵

In 1966, the island of Walande had 200 inhabitants who had built houses flat on the ground. Over decades, more people built homes, and by 2002, there were 1200 inhabitants on the island of Walande.

But the sea was changing. People on Walande described feeling “scared” of what they called the “restless seas.” They felt “out of control,” unsure of the future for them and their children.

Because they were scared, people built their houses not flat on the ground but on tall stilts. Then, the church was flooded and people began to relocate to live higher up on nearby islands. By 2016, there were only four inhabitants living on the island of Walande.

Scientists (like Dr Ivan Haigh from the National Oceanography Centre, University of Southampton) described an extreme weather event, magnified by rising sea levels and warmer seas with increased intensity of storms.

⁴ This story is drawn from several online websites and two academic journal articles. For websites, see Pat Ashworth, “Apostles’ Monitor Life at Sea Level,” October 22, 2021, <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/22-october/features/features/apostles-monitor-life-at-sea-level>. See also Chloe Axford, “Priests Become Scientists on Disappearing Islands Affected by Climate Change,” Diocese of Exeter, October 7, 2019, <https://exeter.anglican.org/priests-to-become-scientists-on-disappearing-islands/>. For academic journal articles, see Adam Bobbette, “Priests in the Observatory: Rethinking Climate Science and Religion in a Warming World,” *Scottish Geographical Journal* 139, no. 1–2 (2023): 99–102, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702541.2022.2157866>. See also Adam Bobbette, “Priests on the Shore: Climate Change and the Anglican Church of Melanesia,” *GeoHumanities* 5, no. 2 (2019): 554–69.

⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2_GzkUne7g

If you're the church in the Solomon Islands, how do you respond to "restless seas"? How do you respond to over 1200 people leaving the place where you had built a church, leaving a community of 4?

In 2019, the Anglican Church decided to respond to "restless seas" by installing weather monitoring equipment near the island of Walande.

You see, there are very few climate monitoring and weather station sites in the Solomon Islands. This means little is known about climate change in this part of Oceania.

The Solomon Islands is a country consisting of 21 major islands and over 900 smaller islands. But every island has a church. So the idea was born. To use the church as a weather monitoring station.



In 2019 near Walande (and in 3 other sites), the Anglican Church installed weather monitoring equipment. Local people committed to be trained as citizen scientists to record the weather. While the task is

⁶ Photo caption "Green Apostles at Walande village, in Malaita Province, install the new rain gauge for the ACoM Environmental Observatory, October 2019." Photo part of article titled 'Apostles' monitor life at sea level." *Church Times* October 21, 2021, <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/22-october/features/features/apostles-monitor-life-at-sea-level>. Photo reproduced from *Church Times* and used with permission. To subscribe to *Church Times*, go to www.churchtimes.co.uk/subscribe.

shared, it is led by a person commissioned by the church as a "green apostle," often a clergy person, who takes responsibility as part of their daily prayer for updating the booklet in which the weather measurements are recorded.

These measurements can then be used for scientific analysis by the government and international organisations. Scientists (like Marie Schlenker also from the University of Southampton) note that climate change is measured on timescales of 30 years or longer. So, watching the weather is part of understanding long-term trends.

A contemporary story: in which I find some really interesting connections with the Advent reading from Luke's Gospel – with **restless seas, keeping watch** and **prayer with hope**.

Restless seas

Luke 21:25 begins with signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea.

In today's world, increasing numbers of people express anguish and perplexity in the face of climate-related threats and disasters. The reading describes people "freezing" with terror (verse 26).

In the face of danger and restless seas, it is easy for humans to flee, fight, or freeze.

To freeze and pretend it's not happening

To flee and leave the problem to someone else.

To fight and so escalate and extend the conflict.

Watch

In Luke 21, we find another response. In the face of the danger of "restless seas," Luke calls us to watch and pray. In verse 28 – "stand and lift your heads ... redemption is drawing near."

Then the example of the fig tree (21:29-33), look at nature, watch the fig tree and all trees.

Then in verse 36 "Be always on the watch ... that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

In 3 different ways, when people are anxious at "restless seas," those following Jesus are called to watch and pray.

Pray with hope

This passage in Luke 21 has attracted plenty of attention throughout the ages. The words in verse 32 - "this generation" - have caused preachers plenty of excitement.

Every few months the news seems to have another religious leader popping up saying that some sign - some earthquake, some war - has significance for "this generation" and that this is the end of time. Most of these people seem to have linear views of time - past, present and future - all happening in a straight line. So they are all busy trying to pin "this generation" on straight lines between past, present and future.

Another approach is to view time as "horizoned." Imagine being on a boat in the middle of the ocean. Where is the horizon? Is the horizon past - behind us? Or is the horizon future - ahead of us?

Well, both. Horizon time is actually all around us, 360 degrees.

In this reading, as it says in verse 28, we are looking for redemption that is drawing near.

And if time is "horizoned," then the redemption drawing near is 360 degrees. Behind, ahead and all around us.

In the past, 360 degrees behind us, drawing near in the redeeming acts of God in Scripture and the redeeming way of Christ in the Gospels. In the future, 360 degrees ahead of us, drawing near in God's

work for redemption in all of life, God's will for love and justice being done on earth as in heaven.

All around us, 360 degrees either side, as we watch and pray for God's redeeming drawing near in the lives of people we met and in the communities we serve.

So in response to "restless seas," God's people are urged not to flee, fight or freeze. But to watch. And to pray for God's redeeming drawing near, "horizoned" time. 360 degrees. Past, present and all around us.

What might it mean to watch and pray for us, for our generation?

Three suggestions as we think about living in 2024.

First, learning from our neighbours in Oceania. I am inspired by the example of the church in the Solomon Islands, turning church buildings into weather stations, watching and praying. There is much to learn from how our neighbours in Oceania live their faith in the face of "restless seas."

Second, bringing faith and science together. I like the wisdom of another scientist (Dr Adam Bobbette, now at Glasgow University), who was involved in setting up the weather stations in the Solomons. Dr Adam Bobbette commented, "The Church was involved in observing [**watching**] the processes of nature in the past. [The church] has historically been a scientific institution, and this is a new dimension." Faith and science, watching and praying in the face of "restless seas"

Third, to look for redemption. Not in a straight line trying to find past, present and future, but in a "horizoned" way. Ahead and behind and all around. Where in 2024 is God's redemption drawing near? Where are we seeing love and justice? We can look practically for love and justice this week as we make space for people to be included in our communities. We can look practically for love and justice by reading about the CWS climate hope in action appeal this Christmas.

In a time of restless seas, Watch and pray, for redemption is drawing near.

And for those who find poetry helpful, some words by Mary Oliver, titled Instructions for living a life,⁷

Pay attention.

Be astonished.

Tell about it.

CLIMATE PRAYERS FOR THE EARTH AND ALL THINGS

(Prayer during Advent could be focused on the earth and all things. Two directions are possible. One direction is to use Mary Oliver's poem, "Instructions for living a life."⁸ A second direction is to pray using a climate prayer from the Anglican Church of Melanesia.)

Pray using the poem by Mary Oliver

Direction one is to use the poem by Mary Oliver, titled "Instructions for living a life," and the three phrases - Pay attention; Be astonished; Tell about it - to frame a prayer.

Below I provide an example. The three phrases from the Mary Oliver poem are bolded. I then offer some words, imagining I am praying in my own local congregation. However, given your unique context and our rapidly changing world, I also provide some prompting questions (in italics) that could help you connect the phrases with your local congregation and contemporary community needs when you come to pray in December.

God of all things,

⁷ Excerpted from the poem "Sometimes," from *Red Bird*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2009, page 37.

⁸ Excerpted from the poem "Sometimes," from *Red Bird*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2009, page 37.

We pray using the words of Mary Oliver.

Pay attention – We hear the call in the Gospel of Luke to watch and pray. And so we pay attention to nations in anguish,

We watch with those impacted by war in Ukraine, Sudan and the Middle East

We pray for those offering mercy

And those working to provide protection

And those seeking peace

We pay attention to nations in perplexity at the roaring of seas,

We watch with our neighbours in Oceania, concerned about rising sea levels and the impact on communities like Walandé

We pray for courage for those seeking hopeful climate solutions

We pray for creativity for organisations like Tonga Community Development Trust, CWS and many others

We pray for persistence for those seeking global policy changes, including Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change and the Pacific Conference of Churches

What might God call us to pay attention to? Is there something from the Gospel reading, the life of the congregation, the current news, or the CWS Give climate hope this Christmas brochure?

Be astonished – As we think about redemption drawing near, we are astonished to hear of church buildings becoming weather stations and congregations become “Green Apostles”

We are thankful for gifts of adaptability and resilience

We pray for those researching science and those seeking to weave science and faith

Where is God's redemption surprising us? What can we be thankful for as we look for redemption drawing near?

Tell about it – As we think about God's Kingdom coming ...

We watch with those in our local congregation and community who suffer, those in hospital, those who grieve, those who struggle with mental health and addictions,

We pray for ministries in our congregation and community who share in words and deeds God's Kingdom coming, including

And we pray together, using the words that Jesus taught us to pray
(The Lord's Prayer)

What does sharing in words and deeds mean in God's Kingdom coming? What local ministries could we name before God?

Pray using a climate prayer from the Anglican Church of Melanesia

Direction two using words in a prayer from The Anglican Church of Melanesia. The prayer was used during COP26 and resonates with themes of giving climate hope this Christmas.

You could either say the prayer (words below). Or you could have it prayed to you by using the video link, in which the prayer is read by Freda Fataka, the Environment Observatory Manager in the Solomon Islands. The video is

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1015867532316765>

*If you use the video, there is one time bound reference to COP 26 in Glasgow. I have noted this with an * in the script below. You could mention this to your congregation as you were introducing the video and suggest that when people hear the reference to COP 26 and Glasgow, they pray for decisions resulting from COP 29, which will have just finished on November 22, 2024, in Baku, Azerbaijan.)*

Dear Lord

Thank you for the creation of the universe.

The earth, air, sky and waters are your creation and all living things that live on it

We see nature as a symbol of life and continual existence.

As climate change confronts us, give us the right spirit and courage to change the way that we live, to reduce our energy use, to share the resources you provide and to bear the cost of change.

Forgive and send us your spirit of wisdom and understanding to help us build confidence and good vision for the future to which you are calling us

Your children are suffering from climate crisis and all kinds of challenges and situations due to human greed, selfishness, ignorance and bad attitudes towards your creation that continue to increase with every passing days.

Lord, we also remember the COP 29* conference in Azerbaijan* and those who have been affected by climate crisis throughout the world and in the Solomon Islands.

May your Holy Spirit that conveys understanding, flood the hearts of people of goodwill in every nation to share the resources you have provided and to be good stewards of your creation.

Bring peace, love and good mind and heart out of their discussions, to recognise the plight of the poor and the vulnerable in every land

Enlighten their hearts and minds to care for creation in the world in which will live. Strengthen us with your grace and power to protect all life with justice peace and love and help us to be able to grow deeper in respect towards your creation as a sign of your wonderful love and enable us to see the impacts of our choices on the poor and vulnerable so that we may be able to prepare the way towards a better future

In your mighty name, O Lord, we pray, Amen.