

The Isaiah Poems

Isaiah 2:1-5 | Advent 2016

Session I: The 'Glorious Impossible' is Possible

PREPARING THE SPACE

You may wish to create an "alter-table" with a purple or blue cloth, a candle, a picture of a mountain or a gardening tool.

WELCOME & LIGHTING A CANDLE

As you light the candle say,
"Come, let us walk in the light God gives."
Let us enjoy the light! Take a few moments of silence.

CHECK IN & NORMS

This is a time for all participants to "check in." There is no cross talk or discussion. Start with yourself and then go around the circle.

Share your name and briefly tell about a special or unique place you walk (or used to walk.)

You will also want to have a brief conversation about **norms**. You might ask questions like: What practices help you participate in small groups? What makes a group a good place for you to share and learn? Think about things like how the group respects different opinions, what can be shared outside the group, beginning and ending on time. It is a good idea to write the agreements on a flip chart and keep them visible in the circle.

THE POEM OF THE PROPHET

You may choose to read from two different translations and/or have two different voices read.

Read Isaiah 2:1-5, slowly

The Prophet Isaiah spoke his words in pictures. As you listen a second time picture his words with the eyes of your imagination. *(Read the poem a second time)*

NOTES ON PLANNING YOUR SESSION

Gather items to help create your space. You may want to set chairs in a circle.

You may want to bring a candle or cloth. You can begin with one candle and add one for each week in Advent.

The colour of Advent is purple or blue.

A picture of a mountain or a gardening tool helps set the scene for the poem.

You will need a Bible. You may wish to explore different translations. See the Advent webpage for suggestions.

Make copies of Participant Sheet #1. You will need it to read the Entry Points.

The session is designed for one hour but you can adapt for a shorter or longer time.

ENTRY POINTS

See the Participant Sheet #1 for the Entry Points. Invite the group to read the Entry Points silently or by taking turns reading aloud.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR PROMPTS FOR JOURNALLING

These questions have no right or wrong answers. It is important to stress this with the group. The questions help start a conversation. Use as many as you like or ask participants what questions they have.

1. The Mountain of the Lord is the place where people gather to the Holy. They are drawn to a place that satisfies their longing or thirst for meaning. Use your imagination. Where is the "Mountain of the Lord" today? What are some thirsts or longings in your community? How might you bring the Advent/Christmas story to a place where people gather?
2. The Mountain promises Mystery. Advent proposes impossibilities. How do we look for signs today? What dreams or visions do you see unfolding in your life or in your community of faith?
3. Where in your life, or in the life of your church, have you seen absurd transformations like swords into ploughshares, or hate into love, impossible into possible, or no into yes?
4. Isaiah suggests we seek God together. How important is worshipping together for you? What story would you tell about a time when you were fed or inspired by being together as a community of faith?
5. I wonder how the Holy is inviting you to use this Advent to prepare for the Mystery of Christmas. What are some of your intentions for practicing Advent this year? What helps you get ready for the Mystery of Christmas?

A PRAYER PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

You may want to share this background with the participants. Then choose a period of time for praying. 1-3 minutes is good for a start.

The Breath Prayer is a tradition rooted in the experience of the Desert Fathers and Mothers of the 3rd Century. They fled the cities for a life of solitude in the desert. They wrote little, but quotes and stories give us a glimpse into their desert spirituality. From this we learn their desert practices.

The Breath Prayer is a short verse, often drawn from scripture. It was repeated over and over. It was prayed as they sat outside their caves and huts weaving baskets from reeds. It was spoken on the breath as they went to sleep at night. Often they awoke with the prayer on their lips.

We can learn Breath prayers to carry in our heart and use as we go about our daily life and find ourselves waiting in lines or needing a soul pause. Our Breath Prayers end up carrying us!

Here is a Breath Prayer from the Isaiah poem.

On the in breath silently pray - **I will walk**

On the out breath silently pray - **in the light God gives.**

You are welcome to change the words to make them meaningful for you.

CLOSING BLESSING

This blessing is printed on Participant Page #1.

You might say something like this: This poem expresses the depths of human longing as people stream together to the Mountain. Take a moment now to think silently about a quality, hope or desire you need most this coming week.

For example: *May I be blessed this day with **beauty**. And may **beauty** reach wherever it is needed.*

May I be blessed this day with _____*invite participants to fill in the blank with their longing*_____.
And may _____ reach wherever it is needed.

You may wish to go around the circle with those participants who wish sharing their blessing. It's ok to simply say "Amen."

Encourage participants to pray the blessing each of the coming days of Advent. Be free to change the word of blessing, as each day requires.

Extinguish Candle. You might want to share words like these:

Leave with Light lingering about you and know that God is always coming into the world.