

**Advent 2025**

**CHURCH  
URBAN  
FUND** ⊕



**SEASONAL IDEAS FOR REFLECTION AND WORSHIP**

**This year we're inviting your church to make a donation to our work, through a collection at an Advent Sunday service or Christmas carol service, at a shared lunch or coffee morning, or by holding a sponsored walk.**

We've provided ways to help you introduce CUF's work to your congregation, pray for the projects we support, and engage even the youngest members of your church.



At Christmas, we fill our homes and churches with light. A star shows the way to Bethlehem. Jesus, the light of the world, is born for everyone. We know from **Isaiah 9:2** that Christ's light is for all: Those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shined. Yet thousands within our own communities suffer in the darkness of poverty and isolation.

Church Urban Fund helps churches and groups light up all that is best in their neighbourhoods – kind-hearted volunteers, cheery spaces, welcoming friendships and food-filled tables in community cafes. At a time when news headlines focus on strife and division, local people are uniting to challenge poverty and exclusion.

We help them mobilise through initiatives such as Places of Welcome. We provide spaces where people can meet and find friendship, equip churches to support refugees, and train mentors to work alongside vulnerably housed people. We bring people together to build strong communities.

Advent carols and scriptures are full of light. **John 1, 9-10** says, "the true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world". For everyone, not just the good and the holy. Christmas is a time to remember we are all bathed in the love of God, and when we help those facing hardship, we celebrate His eternal love.



## Prayers

**Isaiah 9:2 Those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shined.**

Use the following suggestions to shape a time of prayer and intercession.

- Thank God for the individuals, groups and organisations in your local area who are bringing hope and showing love by supporting those in need.
  - Pray for healing between opposing factions in our communities, and ask God for the courage to help us build bridges, not barricades.
  - Thank God for what makes your community a special place to live, and for the good feelings, memories, and connections you can share.
- Pray for those who are struggling to afford the essentials like food, heating and a home.
  - Give thanks for everyday blessings– our friends and family, little moments of joy, the beauty of the natural world.
  - Pray for those who are lonely and isolated, especially as we approach Christmas.
  - Thank God for volunteers and carers and mentors - for their talents and strengths, and for the amazing difference they make.
- Pray for opportunities to give and receive generous hospitality this Christmas
  - Give thanks for Jesus, the light of the world, and for the church where we gather to welcome Him.



## CUF's work

At CUF our vision is a future where everyone in England can access a community of support when they need it most.

Our mission is to tackle complex challenges like poverty and exclusion across England by mobilising people, churches, and whole communities to make a positive difference.

We aim to transform the lives of those in poverty and strengthen communities by reducing loneliness, increasing self-confidence and building stronger communities.

Show our short video or use the simple script to encourage your church to support the work of CUF through giving and prayer.

This 5 minute video describes CUF's mission and features some of the churches and groups we work with.

Hear how we help churches and community groups provide a wider welcome by offering free spaces for people to meet, increasing participation, building community and supporting refugees.



## An Advent prayer

Watchful at all times,  
let us pray for strength to stand with confidence  
before our Maker and Redeemer.

That God may bring in his kingdom with justice and mercy,  
let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

That God may establish among the nations  
his sceptre of righteousness,  
let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

That we may seek Christ in the Scriptures  
and recognize him in the breaking of the bread,  
let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

That God may bind up the broken-hearted,  
restore the sick  
and raise up all who have fallen,  
let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

That the light of God's coming may dawn  
on all who live in darkness and the shadow of death,  
let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

That, with all the saints in light,  
we may shine forth as lights for the world,  
let us pray to the Lord:

**Lord, have mercy.**

We commend ourselves and all for whom we pray  
to the mercy and protection of our heavenly Father:

*Silence is kept.*

Almighty God,  
as your blessed Son Jesus Christ  
first came to seek and to save the lost;  
so may he come again to find in us  
the completion of his redeeming work;  
for he is now alive  
and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
God for ever and ever.

Amen.

## A Prayer by Desmond Tutu

Goodness is stronger than evil.

Love is stronger than hate.

**Light is stronger than  
darkness.**

Life is stronger than death.

Victory is ours through Him  
who loves us.

Amen.





## All age activity: Paper chains

This short activity focuses on the power of strong communities as you create some festive decorations to decorate your church space and welcome your community this Christmas.



### Equipment:

- Strips of paper approx. 15cm x 2.5cm.  
You can use any paper – recycled wrapping paper, magazine pages or even newspaper – the more colourful the better!
- Glue sticks or tape.
- Marker pens (optional).

### Instructions:

Take a strip and make a loop securing in place with glue or tape. Thread another strip through the first loop and make another loop.

Get everyone involved in making a really long paper chain. You could set a time limit or target length. People might want to work in small groups and then link their shorter chains together into one long chain. You could give people the option of writing their names, and those they love or want to connect with, on the paper strips.

### Reflection:

Hold up a single loop of paper....

A single loop isn't very festive – no one would hang up one loop of paper to decorate their house at Christmas.

It's only when we start to join the loops together that we create a chain that looks beautiful.

The more loops we add and the more variety of colours and patterns we use, the longer, stronger and more Christmassy the chain becomes.

This is the same with our churches and communities. The more people we include, the stronger our communities become, no one is left on their own and everyone is supported.

This Christmas let's follow Jesus example of loving our neighbours and look for ways to make our chains of friendship and community longer and stronger.

If you have more time you could ask people to reflect a bit more on the symbolism and practical uses of chains:

- Discuss how chains can symbolise unity, connection, strength, and friendship.
- Explore how chains are used in everyday life, such as for securing objects or connecting things.