Advent – the promise of things to come

Themes:
Advent marks the beginning of the Christian year. It is a time of preparation and waiting for the coming of Jesus Christ at Christmas. For children, Advent is a season of great excitement and the anticipation of what is to come.

Ideas for discussion:
The Christmas holidays are coming up. Begin by asking if anybody is going to be travelling away from home over the Christmas holiday period. Whenever we travel away from home we have to leave some things behind, give some things up – ask people what they most miss from home, most dislike ‘giving up’, when they travel away.

As we approach the holiday season we need to remember that some of the children that The Children’s Society exists to serve are children who have run away from home, often leaving everything behind them. For example Robbie, whose story you can read in the 5 minute script on page 23.

Christians believe that Jesus gave up everything for us on the Cross, everything except love, and that’s what the red ribbon on the Christingle reminds us of.

What things could we give up for love of those who have had to flee their homes? You may want to focus this discussion primarily on children who have run away from home, or also include other issues such as the stories of refugees. For more information refer to the scripts on page 22 or visit www.christingle.org/ourwork

Talk/address/sermon ideas:
Start a discussion about giving things up. Ask if any of them can remember the time of the year when lots of Christians give things up – sweets, chocolates, TV etc? Ask if any of them gave anything up last Lent – did they enjoy it?

We often think about giving things up in a very negative way, but actually it’s something we all do a lot of the time – we need some volunteers to help us think about this.

Get the dressing up box out and get the volunteers dressed up in a variety of roles. For each role the children are encouraged to think about what things you have to give up, and why, in each of the different roles. For example:

Football kit – have to give up eating all sorts of rubbishy food in order to be a success in sport.

White coat and stethoscope – have to give up long years to study in order to heal people who are sick.

Movie star – have to give up some privacy and freedom to bring entertainment to lots of people.

School uniform – have to give up the freedom to play all day in order to learn and grow.

I’m sure you can think of lots of better examples of your own. The point is to foster an awareness that actually it is not unusual in life for people to give things up in order to achieve something.

The red ribbon around the Christingle reminds us that Jesus gave everything up, even his life, out of love for us – why did he do that? Invite responses.

Around this time of year it’s easy to get very distracted by the things that we’re hoping we’ll get at Christmas, but we need to remember that the measure of a Christian’s life is not what we get, but what we give, and what we give up, for others.

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Advent marks the beginning of the Christian year.

Scriptures:
Philippians 4:4-7 ‘The Lord is near.’
Hebrews 10:5-10 ‘See, I have come to do your will.’
Luke 1:39-56 ‘He has filled the hungry with good things.’
Luke 3:7-18 ‘What then should we do?’