O God,

In this season of Advent, help me remember that you came to reside in our midst,
Immanuel, God with us.
As I prepare to celebrate the birth of your son into our world,
I pray that you come again into my life anew.
In the midst of trees and presents and snow and carols,
Let your presence dwell amongst us and refresh me.
In the midst of the familiar stories and smiles and celebrations,
Remind me that you have come to be the God among us.

As I get busier with obligations and plans and expectations,
Help me let go and experience you in new fresh ways.
Let this season be transforming. Let this season help me to see your presence
in my life in a new way, opening my eyes to the places you are moving.
Take away the barriers and obstacles to seeing you in this Christmas season,
So that every day of Advent you can reveal yourself to me.

Teach me in deeper ways how rich and abundant your love is for me,
And as I experience your love for me, let me share it with others.
And as you transform me in this place and this time, I also pray
that you would use me to invite others into this season of celebration.
For all who walk through the doors of your churches this Advent,
Let their hearts be warmed by your eternal grace.

Amen.

(From The Gathering)

God of hope, who brought love into this world,
be the love that dwells between us.
God of hope, who brought peace into this world,
be the peace that dwells between us.
God of hope, who brought joy into this world,
be the joy that dwells between us.
God of hope, the rock we stand upon,
be the centre, the focus of our lives
always, and particularly this Advent time.

Advent God,
we journey with you,
to Bethlehem’s stable
and a new-born King,
ears attuned
to the song of angels,
eyes alert
for Bethlehem’s star.
Forgive us
if on our journey
if we are distracted
by the tempting offers
of this world.
Keep our hearts aflame
with the hope
of Christmas,
and the promise
of a Saviour. Amen

God of hope
be with us in our Advent journey
to the stable and beyond,
be with us in our meeting
and in our travelling together,
be with us in our worship
and our praying together,
be with us in our Advent journey
to the stable and beyond,
our God of hope.

This Advent-time
we remember Mary and Joseph,
giving thanks for their faithfulness,
courage and obedience,
stepping out into the unknown
in the strength of your Spirit,
playing their part
in the fulfilment of your plan
to bring your prodigal people
home again.
We pray that their example
might be the pattern of our lives,
that when your gentle whisper
breaks through the clamour of this world
and into our small corner,
we might be ready to listen,
and having listened, to act.

Restore us, O Lord, we pray,
bring us back to that place
where we once met,
as shepherds to the stable
after hearing angels sing.
Bring us back to that place
when our love was fresh,
not embarrassed
to express itself in praise
to our heavenly King.
Restore us, O Lord, we pray.

What was it
in that natal star
pre-eminent in the night-time sky
that stirred the hearts
and imaginations
of those magi from the east
was it colour
brightness
conjunction
or more
a still small voice
whispering
in the darkness of the world
'This is the sign
that will proceed the birth
of he who fulfils the prophets' words.'
That still small voice
which whispers still
to our conscience
and soul
still leads
if we will but follow
to the stable door

In this season of expectation
We prepare to welcome Christ Jesus, Messiah
Into the bustle of our lives
and the hard to find moments of solitude
We prepare to welcome Christ Jesus, Messiah
Into our homes and situations
along with friends and families
We prepare to welcome Christ Jesus, Messiah
Into our hearts, and those often hidden parts of our lives
We prepare to welcome Christ Jesus, Messiah
For beneath the surface of your story
is an inescapable fact
You entered this world
as vulnerable as any one of us
in order to nail that vulnerability to the cross.
Our fears, our insecurities and our sins
all that can separate us from God
exchanged by your Grace for Love.
We cannot comprehend the reasoning
only marvel that Salvation comes to us
through a baby born in a stable,
and reaches out to a world in need.

In this season of anticipation
We prepare to welcome Christ Jesus, Messiah

This is Advent, season of promise. In our worship we prepare for the birth of a baby in a dusty stable in Bethlehem, and remind ourselves that this child will become the Saviour of the World who will return again in power and glory to draw all of his children together with songs of everlasting praise. The promise of the baby is also the promise of eternal life to all who believe.

God of hope and promise, be with us throughout this Advent season and d raw us ever closer as we journey together toward the stable and the birth of your Son, our Saviour. Amen

This is Advent, the season of preparation. The shops are full of gifts that we might give or receive. Streets are decorated and choirs begin the rounds of community centres and retirement homes with their seasonal offerings of carols. As we prepare, we remember another, John the Baptist, who came to prepare the Jewish people for the arrival of Jesus. John, who would prepare a way through a call to repentance, so that hearts and souls would be ready to receive the One who was to come.

Father God, prepare our hearts not only for the celebration to come, but also for sharing that Good News with friends, family and work colleagues should opportunity arise. Grant us courage and a real willingness to talk about the love that came down to earth and walked among us. Amen

God of majesty and power
Who spoke and this world was
Who breathed and this world lived
Who counts the hairs upon our head
Who sees our thoughts and reads our hearts
Who loves us more than we deserve
How can we not bring today
Our sacrifice of praise?
For in the child at Bethlehem
Lies the promise of intimacy
With a Saviour who would die even for me
And the promise of an eternity
In which to praise you more each day
God of promise we praise your name, Amen

To you O Lord we bring our lives
Troubled, broken or at ease
A sacrificial offering
For you to use
Take away our selfishness
And teach us to love as you loved
Take away our sense of pride
And show us the meaning of humility
Take away our blindness
And show us the world through your eyes
Take away our greed
And teach us how to give as you gave
Show us your ways
Teach us your paths
That we might walk with you more closely
Our hand in your hand
Our feet in your footsteps
From the baby in a stable
To eternity, Amen

For your word which endures
We give you thanks
For your promises to which we hold
We give you thanks
For such intimacy with you
We give you thanks
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies
We give you thanks
For those gathered here today
We give you thanks
For family, friend and stranger
We give you thanks
For those who minister your grace
We give you thanks
For the hope that lives each Advent
of a love that has no end
We give you thanks, Amen

As streets fill with shoppers
Bright lights and tempting offers
Christmas songs and children’s laughter
You lead us along a different path
To a desert river and a Prophetic voice
A call to repentance
A call to service
A call to immerse ourselves
In living water that will never run dry
A call to prepare a way in our own lives
For the Saviour of the world to enter in
To know the touch of tender mercy
And rest in your forgiving love

For your faithful prophets
And your Living Word
We give you thanks. Amen

You challenge us this Advent time
This season of preparation
To put aside our pride
And understand our need
For repentance
Forgiveness
And mercy
Less of self
More of you
Preparation for our journey
To the stable and beyond
Purify our hearts
Sanctify our lives
That we might serve you
Faithfully this day and all days. Amen

Thank you Father, for your patience
With a rebellious people
Loving you one moment
Forgetting you the next
Thank you for your endless love
Which does not give up
But wants the best for us
Despite our faults
Thank you for your promise
To all who believe
And put their trust in you
Everlasting life
And in this Advent season
May the Baptist’s call
Resound in hearts and minds
Drawing many to the living water
Where they might find forgiveness
And knowledge of your Salvation. Amen

This is Advent, the season of expectation. In homes throughout the land Christmas cards have arrived and stand displayed on mantelpiece and windowsill. Festive trees are adorned with tinsel and baubles, and children wonder what gifts will lie beneath them this year. Two thousand years ago a people waited expectantly as they listened to a prophet called John talk of one who was to come, the Promised One of God, and they began to prepare themselves for that moment.

 Father God, your servant John the Baptist came with a challenging message; calling for repentance and lives to be transformed. Those who heard were filled with expectation, waiting for Messiah, and yet ultimately failing to notice his arrival in that humble stable.
This Advent season, may we be filled with expectation, as we celebrate the greatest gift of all; your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen

Rejoice in the Lord always
Shout out his name
For God is with us
Our God is with us
The God of our salvation
In whom alone we trust.
Rejoice in the Lord always
Shout out his name
For God is our Father
He draws us home
By streams of living water
Where we shall thirst no more.
Rejoice in the Lord always
Shout out his name
He knows our thoughts
Understands our hearts
And enables us to become
The people we were meant to be. Amen

Forgive us, Lord
We are a wandering people
Who kneel before you now
A people who bring prayers
And requests to your feet
When we have need of you
And nowhere else to turn
Then go our own way
When times are good
And life is easy
Forgive us and draw us close
Teach us your way
That we might follow
Help us to walk in your company
And know your presence
From the moment we awake
Until we lay our heads to rest. Amen

You are the Father who welcomes home
The prodigal who has wandered far
You are the Father who prepares a meal
When others would simply ignore
You are the Father whose love extends
Beyond our thoughts or minds
You are the Father who knows our hearts
And yet loves us as we are
You are the Father whose word we trust
In whose presence we have no fear
You are the Father whose tender touch
Makes a wounded spirit whole
You are the Father whose only Son
Was born that he might die
You are the Father whose gracious love
We celebrate this day. Amen

The preparations are in place, the excitement mounts, and for those who are journeying to families arrangements are finalised, clothes sorted, gifts wrapped and labelled. Two thousand years ago and more, a pregnant girl called Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth who was also expecting. As soon as they greeted each other, the baby in Elizabeth's womb kicked out, and she interpreted this as a sign from God that Mary was greatly blessed, because she believed that all God had promised would be fulfilled in her life.

Father God, when we consider your servant Mary, what we see is a humility and obedience that is so often lacking in our own lives. As we hear your Word again, and consider the one through whose body you entered this world, remind us of the meaning of humility and grant us a confidence of faith that knows your promises to us are always fulfilled.

My soul magnifies the Lord!
All is ready
Stable prepared
Shepherds working
Magi journeying
Gifts are chosen
My soul magnifies the Lord!
A city awaits
Crowded and bustling
Stars are shining
People expecting
A drama unfolding
My soul magnifies the Lord!
The Lord is coming
To save his people
Mary's obedience
Jesus' willingness
Your gracious gift to us
My soul magnifies the Lord!

Gracious God, you have done so much for us
And we so little in return
You ask for humility
And we are often a proud people
You ask for willingness
And we are often a stubborn people
You ask for repentance
And we are often a deaf people
You ask for service
And we are often a busy people
Gracious God, you want the best for us
Teach us obedience
Grant us forgiveness
That we, like Mary
Might be your willing servants. Amen.

Creator and Redeemer
You did not plant the seed of this earth
Into the universe as if by chance
It was your hand that placed it here
Your plan to grow it here
You did not populate this earth
With a people made in your image
Purely by chance
It was your hand that placed us here
Your breath that keeps us here
You did not come as a tiny child
To walk this earth as if by chance
It was your Love that brought you here
Your Grace that saved us here
Our Creator and Redeemer

There is a new song in the air! God's promise to his people was that he would eventually draw them back into his arms from wherever they had strayed. Prodigals returning to their heavenly Father with humility and repentance would find Salvation. And now this is God's Day as the Messiah, the Annointed One of God, the one whom people longed for, is born in human form. God becomes flesh to live among them. The angels are singing this new song, the shepherds are singing this new song, and we are invited to join in their chorus of praise!

Saving God, who came to earth for us, we praise you for your everlasting love, your endless patience, and for the greatest gift you could possibly give to us, the possibility of Salvation through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

From the very beginning was
Your Word
Which spoke this world into being
Your Word
Which thunders from the skies
Your Word
Which flows like mountain streams
Your Word
Which whispers in morning breeze
Your Word
Revealed through kings and prophets
Your Word
Revealed through Angels' praise
Your Word
Revealed in humble service
Your Word
Revealed through a tiny child
Your Word
Alive from the beginning of all things
And to eternity.

You gave your all to the world
In the bleakness of that stable
Love was born that day
Pure love
Undiluted
Poured out for all
Who call on Your name
Such Grace
Undeserved
Deserves a response
In the life that we lead
Forgive our ingratitude
After all you have done
Draw us to your Word
Give us a new song to sing
That will resonate throughout this world
And begin with us today. Amen

Shout for joy
The whole earth
And everything within
Rejoice!
For Light has come into the world

The mountains sing
The seas resound
To the praise of your name
Salvation
Once promised is here on earth

The angels' song
Rings in the air
A child has been born
Hallelujah!
The Saviour of the world is here

We are not grains of sand upon the shore
buffeted by sea and storm,
we are individuals loved by God
more intimately than we could ever know.
Though from a distance
we seem insignificant and frail
the creating breath that formed us
now lives in and sustains us.
Thank you, Saving God
made known to us in Jesus Christ
not only by his words
but through his sacrificial life.
May our lives reflect
not only his love
but your glory
and the whole earth sing your praises. Amen

God of the journey, your invitation is to all
to walk with you without fear of stumbling
Your arm enough to steady the feeblest soul
Your grace to rescue us should we fall
Grant us faith enough to take you at your word
To know that when our hearts are heavy
and the destination seems so distant
that you are there with us along the road
Forgive us those times when we doubt your Word
when we awake and feel alone
Draw us ever closer into your family
that we might know your presence
and sing your praises
all the days of our lives. Amen

Creator God, you who love us more than we can know
Who chose us from the very beginning to be family
We praise your holy name
Jesus Christ, Son of God, Word become flesh
Who dwelt among us and was sacrificed for us
We praise your holy name
Holy Spirit, present and power in our lives
From the moment that we first believed
We praise your holy name.