

**CALM & BRIGHT SERIES – ‘END AND BEGINNING’ – ADVENT 5**

The season of Advent is normally the four Sundays preceding Christmas Day, but having five Sundays in December 2024, provides the opportunity for a fifth Advent Sunday. Time to



reflect on what God and his people have been doing in the past year, together with preparing to join in with what God might be doing in 2025. The four Advent themes are noted on the candles, and in both the reflections upon 2024 and preparations for 2025 that we should be making, apply equally to ourselves as individuals and corporately (church and life group). Together, these are large themes which would take more time than one life group meeting.

I therefore suggest you restrict your reflections to local issues and exclude worldwide/international considerations as it seems much harder for us to see the ‘big picture’ that God sees. Local issues might include where you have seen God at work *(1) in community (2) in family and friends (3) in church (4) in your group; not forgetting (5) within us as individuals. Firstly, share what positive things you have seen. My expectation is that you will find plenty to discuss and thank God for. Some of God’s miracles are small, but nevertheless beautiful! What has been tried but did not produce the hoped for outcome? Is this something to take forward into 2025? How might you facilitate a better outcome?*

Now the negative things. Try not to make this a time of confession (that’s for you to talk with God about), more a general overview where perhaps more prayer, more effort, more time given, would most likely have produced the good fruit you anticipated. *Was it perhaps some outside/unexpected influence? What can we learn from this? What can be taken forward into 2025?*

In the picture above, Jesus is represented by the centre candle, from which the four advent themes flow; so also, we should plan for Jesus to be at the centre of all our preparations for the new year. *What can we do to keep our focus on Jesus as we start to move forward into the year? Share within the group what changes/improvements you intend to make, both personally and within your family circle and friends. Would it be a help if the group revisited these during the year, to discover how things are progressing and to further encourage one another?*

Preparing for 2025, and now thinking about your group, we should start by reminding ourselves of one of God’s many promises, (Matthew 18:20), that God **will be** present when you meet together, and we can be sure His intention will be to use your group meetings to bring the group and individual members closer to himself and his purposes, to see and share his love, joy, peace and hope amongst yourselves, and from there into all encounters. *How can you work with God to achieve this in 2025? Actions, not words alone.*

**Prayer** *Lord, thank you for your many blessings last year. I don’t want to look back next Advent season and see all the ways I haven’t shaken the world, no matter how small the tremors. Lord, help me to tell the truth, with love, to all who will listen. Amen*