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.