



# O COME, O COME EMMANUEL

A reflective journal based on  
the Advent O Antiphons



DIOCESE OF YORK

# JOY

The Church of England's Advent and Christmas theme for 2025 revolves round a single word: joy!

Our churches will - as always - be seeking to make the most of the opportunity December brings to share the joy of Advent and Christmas with their communities.

The great joy of Christmas, of course, is the good news the angel declared to the shepherds - the news of Jesus' birth as Emmanuel (God With Us). We echo this as we sing "Rejoice! Rejoice!" in the great hymn, 'O Come, O Come Emmanuel'.

To help communities to prepare for the joy of Christmas, this Advent journal explores the symbolism behind the hymn 'O Come, O Come Emmanuel', in the Great O Antiphons. Over the 24 days of Advent, each page offers the opportunity to reflect on who Jesus is for us, using names found in scripture to create our own antiphons, in the joyful anticipation that Advent brings.



# What are the O Antiphons?

The Advent Antiphons, also known as the 'O Antiphons,' are a set of short, poetic prayers traditionally used in the final days of Advent, from 17th to 23rd December. Each Antiphon begins with the exclamation 'O' followed by a biblical title for Christ, drawn mostly from the Old Testament prophets and wisdom literature.

Each Antiphon names a different aspect of the Messiah, and ends with a plea for him to come and bring salvation. They are rich in Scriptural imagery, drawing especially from Isaiah, and express the deep longing of the Church for the coming of Christ.

Traditionally, these Antiphons are said or sung before and after the Magnificat at Evening Prayer, creating a daily rhythm of anticipation and hope. When read in reverse order (Emmanuel, Rex, Oriens, etc.), the first letters of the Latin titles form the words 'Ero Cras', meaning 'Tomorrow, I will come.'

The Advent Antiphons also form the basis of the well-loved hymn O Come, O Come, Emmanuel. Each verse of the hymn reflects one of the ancient titles for Christ used in the Antiphons, such as O Wisdom and O Emmanuel. As we sing it during Advent, we join with centuries of Christian worshippers in expressing longing and hope for Christ's coming.

The Advent Antiphons remain a beautiful way to mark the final week before Christmas. Whether sung, prayed, or reflected upon, they invite us to wait with joyful holy expectation, to contemplate who Christ is for us and the whole people of God, and to welcome Jesus afresh as Christmas Day dawns.



# How do I write an Antiphon?

Advent Antiphons are short, poetic prayers traditionally said or sung during Advent. Rooted in ancient Christian worship, they express longing for the coming of Christ. Each begins with a title for Jesus (e.g., O Wisdom, O Emmanuel) and follows a simple, reverent structure. Here's a guide to help you write your own.

## Reflect on the day's title for Christ

Each Antiphon begins with 'O' followed by a name of Jesus we find in Scripture, such as O Light of the World, O Prince of Peace, or O Key of David. Read and reflect on the passage of Scripture, and what this title reveals about Jesus' identity and mission.

## Expand on the title's meaning

Follow the opening line with a few words that expand on the title — why it matters and how it speaks into our world today. Use the day's passage of Scripture or imagery from the Advent season to draw out its significance.

## Make a prayerful petition

End your antiphon with a heartfelt request that fits the season of waiting and hope. Ask Christ to come, to bring light, peace, justice, or healing. Keep the language simple, poetic, and expectant.

Writing our own Antiphons can be a rich spiritual exercise, helping us focus on prayer, deepening our reflection, and connecting us with the Church's ancient voice of longing for Christ. Once you've finished, you might want to read it aloud to ensure it flows smoothly and prayerfully.



# O Antiphons

## 17 December – O Sapientia

**O Wisdom**, coming forth from the mouth of the Most High,  
reaching from one end to the other mightily,  
and sweetly ordering all things:  
Come and teach us the way of prudence.

*cf Ecclesiasticus 24.3; Wisdom 8.1*

## 18 December – O Adonai

**O Adonai**, and leader of the House of Israel,  
who appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush  
and gave him the law on Sinai:  
Come and redeem us with an outstretched arm.

*cf Exodus 3.2; 24.12*

## 19 December – O Radix Jesse

**O Root of Jesse**, standing as a sign among the peoples;  
before you kings will shut their mouths,  
to you the nations will make their prayer:  
Come and deliver us, and delay no longer.

*cf Isaiah 11.10; 45.14; 52.15; Romans 15.12*

## 20 December – O Clavis David

**O Key of David** and sceptre of the House of Israel;  
you open and no one can shut;  
you shut and no one can open:  
Come and lead the prisoners from the prison house,  
those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

*cf Isaiah 22.22; 42.7*



### 21 December – O Oriens

**O Morning Star,**

splendour of light eternal and sun of righteousness:

Come and enlighten those who dwell in darkness

and the shadow of death.

*cf Malachi 4.2*

### 22 December – O Rex Gentium

**O King of the nations,** and their desire,

the cornerstone making both one:

Come and save the human race,

which you fashioned from clay.

*cf Isaiah 28.16; Ephesians 2.14*

### 23 December – O Emmanuel

**O Emmanuel,** our King and our lawgiver,

the hope of the nations and their Saviour:

Come and save us, O Lord our God.

*cf Isaiah 7.14*





# Week One

30th November

**O Root of David**

*Isaiah 11.1-9*

1st December

**O Light of the World**

*John 8.12-20*

2nd December

**O Morning Star**

*Revelation 22.16-21*

3rd December

**O Alpha, Lord of the Beginning**

*Revelation 1.4-8*

4th December

**O Omega, Lord of the End**

*Revelation 22.8-12*

5th December

**O Lamb of God**

*John 1.29-34*

6th December

**O Lord of Glory**

*1 Corinthians 2.6-13*







# Week Two

7th December

**O Servant Messiah**

*Isaiah 42.1-9*

8th December

**O Refiner's Fire**

*Malachi 3.1-7*

9th December

**O Saviour and Holy One**

*Isaiah 43.1-7*

10th December

**O Precious Cornerstone**

*Isaiah 28.14-17*

11th December

**O Good Shepherd**

*John 10.11-18*

12th December

**O Living Vine**

*John 15.1-11*

13th December

**O Bread of Life**

*John 6.35-51*





# Week Three

14th December

O Lord of the Way

*John 14.1-7*

15th December

O Lord of the Truth

*John 14.8-14*

16th December

O Lord of Life

*John 11.17-27*

17th December

**O Great High Priest**

*Hebrews 4.14-5.10*

18th December

**O Gate for the Sheep**

*John 10.1-10*

19th December

**O Mighty God**

*Zephaniah 3.14-20*

20th December

**O Spring of Living Water**

*John 4.7-15*





# Week Four

21st December

O King of Kings

*Revelation 19.9-16*

22nd December

O Wonderful Counsellor

*Isaiah 9.1-7*

23rd December

O Prince of Peace

*Luke 1.67-79*

# Christmas Eve

24th December

O Emmanuel

*John 1.1-18*



# O Come, O Come Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
and ransom captive Israel  
that mourns in lonely exile here,  
until the Son of God appear:

*Rejoice! rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, thou Rod of Jesse, free  
thine own from Satan's tyranny;  
from depths of hell thy people save,  
and give them victory o'er the grave:

*Rejoice! rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer  
our spirits by thine advent here;  
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
and death's dark shadows put to flight:

*Rejoice! rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, thou Key of David, come,  
and open wide our heavenly home;  
make safe the way that leads on high,  
and close the path to misery:

*Rejoice! rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, O come, thou Lord of Might,  
who to thy tribes, on Sinai's height,  
in ancient times didst give the law  
in cloud and majesty and awe:

*Rejoice! rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

# The Magnificat

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;  
he has looked with favour on his lowly servant.  
From this day all generations will call me blessed;  
the Almighty has done great things for me  
and holy is his name.

He has mercy on those who fear him,  
from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm  
and has scattered the proud in their conceit,  
Casting down the mighty from their thrones  
and lifting up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away empty.

He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,  
to remember his promise of mercy,  
The promise made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and his children for ever.

*Luke 1.46-55*

