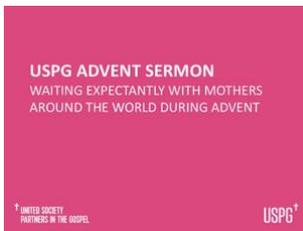


USPG Advent 2018 Sermon

Slide 1 – USPG



Slide 2 – Title slide: USPG Advent Sermon. Waiting expectantly with mothers around the world during Advent.



Slide 3



Introduce yourself, including your role or involvement with USPG.

USPG is an Anglican mission agency supporting churches around the world in their mission to bring fullness of life to the communities they serve. Theologically, practically and financially, we encourage and enable churches in the Anglican Communion to act as the hands and feet of Christ.

Slide 4- Introduction to Advent.



During Advent, as we prepare for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, USPG is exploring the expectant hope of God's greatest gift to us – the precious gift of human life, with the world church. Through the traditional advent themes of Patriarchs and Matriarchs, the Prophets, John the Baptist and the Blessed Virgin Mary, coupled with powerful stories from around the world church, we are able to glimpse something of the mystery, the fragility, the beauty, of the God who in Jesus is born as a precious baby, Emmanuel, God with us.

Slide 5 –Patriarchs and Matriarchs.



Abraham and Sarai were called to live by the light of faith, and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfilment. They were promised an heir, and indeed, were promised that they would be blessed with offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore... and by their offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves. Today, the church around the world is still receiving the gifts and blessings of this promise.

Slide 6 – Story from Tanzania.



The Anglican Church of Tanzania runs a vital USPG-supported PMTCT (Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission) HIV programme which educates communities about

the risk of early marriage and pregnancies during community sensitization and household visits.

Mollen Paul is a victim of early marriage; she was married at tender age of 13 years. She lost her first two babies due to *prematurity* when she was just 14 and 15 years respectively after home deliveries.

Slide 7



Mollen is now 34 and has a total of 8 children. On her last pregnancy she met with the Mobile Clinic Nurses from the PMTCT Programme, and asked to test for HIV following her history of long illnesses and death of her last-born. She agreed and enrolled. When tested she was found to be HIV+, she started using the PMTCT services. Now Mollen has a 9 months baby called Agusta: here she is breastfeeding her. Baby Agusta has recently tested HIV – VE for the second time. She is left with one final test when she will be 12 months old, which could declare her an HIV free baby. Mollen is so happy and said.... *“God will reward those supporting this programme”*.

Slide 8



As we remember Abraham and Sarai, who rejoiced in God’s promise that they would be blessed with numerous offspring, so we pray for those offspring who are born today under the threat of HIV and AIDS. We pray for baby Agusta, her mother Mollen, and so many others who are born under this terrible shadow in Tanzania; praying that those who work to overcome HIV and AIDS may be blessed, and that children may be born with the potential for fullness of life.

Slide 9 – The Prophets.



The Hebrew Prophets foretold that a Saviour who would bring peace would come to his people. They spoke harsh words to a people who had rejected Gods ways; they spoke words of comfort to a people whom God longed to return to Him, they spoke words of hope to the broken and downtrodden. They prepared the way for the One who would be the heir of all things.

Slide 10 – Story from Ghana



Gloria has two children, aged three and one and a half. She has benefitted from the Anglican Church's Integrated Health Programme, in Cape Coast, Ghana, which is supported by USPG. This programme has helped to eradicate cholera in parts of the Cape Coast. Before being part of the programme Gloria didn't know that she needed to wash her children's hands before they eat, or wash fruit and vegetable from the market, or wash her breasts before breast feeding. But now, because of the programme she knows and has severely reduced the risk of cholera in her children.

Slide 11



As we remember how God spoke through the prophets, preparing the way for His Son, so we give thanks for all in whom God continues to speak and work today. We pray for all who work for and receive care from the Anglican Church's Integrated

Health Programme in Ghana. For those who bring life-saving knowledge, so that children and families may live healthy lives and fulfill their promised potential

Slide 12 – John the Baptist



John the Baptist, the forerunner, the last of the prophets, points to our Lord: ‘Behold the Lamb of God’. Born to faithful, aging, Zechariah and Elizabeth, John would bring joy and gladness, and many would rejoice at his birth. Still in the womb he leaped in the presence of our Lord when Elizabeth visited Mary. A prophet of repentance, baptism and salvation, John is the one who calls us to ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God’. (Luke 3: 4 – 6)

Slide 13 – Story from Bangladesh.



Despite political wrangling and horrific terrorist activities, Bollobphur Hospital in Bangladesh remains an oasis of peace. Families of different faith backgrounds – Muslim, Hindi and Christian – live and work together in peace and harmony.

Slide 14



Indeed, tiny babies of different faith backgrounds share together the warmth and comfort of the incubators. The largest incubator often has three babies growing up

together. Sr. Gillian, the Director always says that these tiny babies do better if they have a companion – and, indeed, they keep each other warm when a sudden power cut shuts off the electricity supply to the incubator.

Slide 15.



During this year, a total of 573 babies were born at Bollobphur. Of these babies, 38 were tiny and premature. The majority are very tiny on arrival, weighing only 800g, 900g or 1kg. Several mothers brought tiny twin babies to be cared for. Sadly, such very tiny babies do not all survive, but the majority do and we are very happy to be able to provide this service. Student nurses care for them, feeding them every two hours, day and night – and what a joy it is when the mother is able to take her baby home, weighing over 2kg.

Slide 16



As we remember God's servant John who prepared the way for Jesus' coming; so we remember all who prepare the way for children to be born today: especially Sr. Gillian, the nurses and Midwifery School at Bollobphur Hospital in Bangladesh. In a world where difference of faith and background is increasingly a barrier and promoter of fear, we give thanks for the beautiful example of innocent babies of many faiths beginning life together in a common incubator: and pray this vision of harmony might be extended throughout their lives; that the world might become a fair and just home for all.

Slide 17 – Blessed Virgin Mary.



The Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of our Lord, without whose ‘yes’ to the angel, the story of our salvation would not be complete, offers herself in loving service to her Lord. Mary, the God-bearer, enables God in Jesus Christ, to become flesh and dwell amongst us. Her selfless example inspires her to journey with Jesus through his life, ministry, death and resurrection: ‘This child is destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too’. (Luke 2: 34 – 35)

Slide 18 – Story from Palestine



St Luke’s Hospital in Nablus, Palestine, has been serving its local community with love and care since its inception in 1900. The hospital operates in a non-commercial manner to provide medical care for all who are in need, regardless of race, religion or financial status, reaching a local population of almost 200,000, with around 9,000 patients treated each year. The hospital’s aim is to demonstrate God’s love in action by alleviating suffering, supporting the poor and comforting the bereaved.

Slide 19



Nadia, 25, from Ballata village, had a traffic accident during her eighth month of pregnancy, which led to an early delivery of her baby Ammar by Cesarean. But

Ammar, being so premature, was struggling to breathe, so Nadia brought her baby to St Luke's for urgent treatment.

Mother and baby stayed for two weeks until Ammar had sufficiently improved and could be discharged. Nadia is a Palestinian whose family struggles financially because her husband earns very little as a daily-paid worker. So Nadia's medical fees were reduced to a minimum – and she expressed her deepest thanks to the hospital for her care, for paying the costs, and for making her family smile by hanging balloons in her ward.

Slide 20



As Mary and Joseph made the difficult Advent journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, where our Lord was born; we pray for all who are born today in the land made holy by our Lord. We pray for those who are born into an occupied land, where restrictions of movement and violence prevail. We give thanks for the ministry of church run hospitals that serve the whole community regardless of race, religion or financial status; may they be a beacon of light and hope in a divided Holy Land.

Slide 21



Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, King of peace:
To you be praise and glory for ever.
The new light of your incarnate Word
Gives gladness and sorrow,
And a presence in our isolation.
Fill our lives with your light,
Until they overflow with gladness and praise.
Blessed be God for ever.

O come, O come Emmanuel.

Slide 22 – USPG contact details

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Slide 23 – USPG Mission Statement

USPG is an Anglican mission agency supporting churches around the world in their mission to bring fullness of life to the communities they serve.

Theologically, practically and financially, we encourage and enable churches within the Anglican Communion to act as the hands and feet of Christ.

Together, we are working to improve health, tackle poverty, put children in school, challenge discrimination, nurture leaders, give a voice to women, and much more.

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