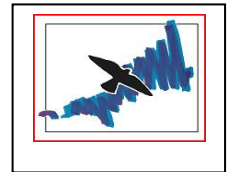


Week beginning: 7th December – 2nd Week of Advent
 THEME: ADVENT




LUKE 67-79 Then Zachariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; he came and set his people free. He set the power of salvation in the center of our lives, and in the very house of David his servant, Just as he promised long ago through the preaching of his holy prophets: Deliverance from our enemies and every hateful hand; Mercy to our fathers, as he remembers to do what he said he'd do, What he swore to our father Abraham— a clean rescue from the enemy camp, So we can worship him without a care in the world, made holy before him as long as we live.
 And you, my child, "Prophet of the Highest," will go ahead of the Master to prepare his ways, Present the offer of salvation to his people, the forgiveness of their sins. Through the heartfelt mercies of our God, God's sunrise will break in upon us, Shining on those in the darkness, those sitting in the shadow of death, Then showing us the way, one foot at a time, down the path of peace.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME: Advent marks the start of the new Christian calendar and we have now entered Year C of the lectionary. Advent means 'coming' and we are now in the season when we start preparing for the 'coming' of Christ at Christmas but also remembering that Jesus said he would come again. It isn't simply a counting of days or a time of waiting - it is a time of preparation! This passage describes that time when Mary has visited her cousin Elizabeth and announced that she is expecting a baby and Elizabeth has just had her own baby, John – (John the Baptist). Elizabeth and Zachariah had given up all hope of ever having a child so when John is born Zachariah is so pleased he makes a prophesy which is about the coming of the Messiah as promised by the prophets of long ago. He then turns his attention to his own new born son and foresees John as preparing the way for Jesus and helping people to see the signs before them. This passage is often known as the Song of Zachariah

GATHERING / WELCOME (This can be said and signed)

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus
Response: Come to us in love

WORSHIP SONG - Suggested songs:
 (No Pianist for Assembly? No Problem 1)

Way in 1 – Preparing for Christmas	Idea 1 - INTRODUCING THE BIBLE STORY
<p>Collect groups of coloured beads or unifix cubes e.g. 6 red, 6 blue and 6 green and hide them around the hall. Select three teams of 2 or 3 children and ask one group to find the red beads, one the blue and one the green. Which ever team finds all their beads returns first is declared the winner. Emphasize to the children that during the competition they were only looking for a specific coloured bead and ignored the other coloured beads. At this time of Advent we remind ourselves that in preparing for Christmas we also remember that Jesus said he would return and search out everyone who had led good, honest, kind, generous and loving lives. We need to be ready to meet him when he comes and searches us out.</p> 	<p>Ask a pupil to carry an empty crib and place it at the front of the hall. Add straw and animals but no human figures. Remind the children that we are preparing to remember Jesus' birth and sometimes in the business of preparing for Christmas as a holiday we forget all about Jesus. This is Jesus' birthday, a party for him and we must not forget to invite him. Advent means 'coming' – the coming of Jesus. REFLECTION – Imagine it is your birthday and a huge party has been planned with presents, a feast, a time of celebration and rejoicing. Imagine what it would be like to know about this party to celebrate your birthday but to not be invited RESPONSE – During this time of Advent, the time of preparation for the coming of Christ, help us to make time every day to remember what it is we are preparing for – to make and take special time to think about all that Jesus did for us. Try and find 10 special minutes every day to think about Jesus. PRAYER – Loving Jesus, help us during this season of Advent to prepare our hearts to welcome you. This is a season when everyone is excited and busy making preparations, help us to find special times to think about you and the love that you came to share with us. AMEN</p>

<p>Way in 2 – looking for signs.</p>	<p>Idea 2 - INTRODUCING THE BIBLE STORY</p>
<p>Show the children a range of road signs and ask them if they recognise them and know what they stand for.</p> <div data-bbox="105 241 252 398" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="300 241 526 407" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="577 250 782 421" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>If we look about us we can see lots of preparations for the coming of Christmas – lots of signs. Can we name any? Christmas decorations in the streets; people shopping for presents; what other preparations are being made?</p> <div data-bbox="143 600 450 882" data-label="Image"> </div>	<p>In our Bible reading this week we hear how delighted Zachariah is having just seen the birth of his new son, John. John was Jesus' cousin. The Old Testament contains stories from the Prophets who told of the coming of the Messiah and yet when he arrived few people recognized him. When John was an adult he tried to prepare people and tell them that Jesus was their Messiah and amongst them. Very few people saw those signs even though they were listening to what John the Baptist was saying. It is easy to look about us during the season of Advent and see lots of reminders and signs that Christmas is coming but we forget sometimes what it is we are really celebrating! In our first Bible reading Zachariah was really celebrating – he was celebrating the birth of his son, John and what Jesus would bring to the world even though Jesus had not yet been born.</p> <p>REFLECTION – Think of a time when you have celebrated something with your family, a birthday, a wedding, an anniversary, a reunion. What did you do to celebrate the?</p> <p>RESPONSE – As we look about us, at school and at home remember that all the signs of Christmas around us tell the story of your birth and that is something to celebrate!</p> <p>PRAYER- Lord Jesus, as we enjoy the preparations for Christmas help us to remember that John came to prepare the way for Jesus and to show people the signs. Help us to remember to see the signs of Your love in the world around us and to share Your love with those less fortunate than us. AMEN</p>

Luke 3: 1-6 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar – when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene – during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: “A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God’s salvation.’”

<p>Way in 3 – How to straighten the roads.</p>	<p>Idea 3 - INTRODUCING THE BIBLE STORY TO THE CHILDREN.....</p>
<p>Plan two routes across the room – one which requires a volunteer to weave between every row and between their classmates and another, direct route straight to the back of the room. Ask for one volunteer to follow the first long route as quickly but safely as they can (no running). Using a stop watch, see how long it takes! Ask the volunteer if it was an easy route or if they could think of an easier way of getting to the back of the room.</p> <p>Ask for another volunteer to travel to the same point but use a straight route – you may want to part a route through the children to enable a straight pathway. Time how long that route takes!</p> <p>What are the conclusions about routes that quicker and easier?</p> <div data-bbox="191 1890 389 2096" data-label="Image"> </div>	<p>This second reading is about John the Baptist and how he lived in the desert, baptized people in the river Jordan and prepared the way for Jesus. John had a very special job which was to tell people to recognize the signs that Jesus the Messiah, had come to earth. John was to prepare people and make things easier for Jesus – to ‘straighten the paths for him’. Even though John was a wonderful prophet many people still didn’t understand and missed all of the signs.</p> <p>REFLECTION – Sometimes we make things difficult for other people and sometimes we can find ways to make things easier. John came to help Jesus and prepare the way for him. Jesus came to tell everyone of God’s love and he showed that when he died for us.</p> <p>RESPONSE – Think of a way of helping someone else this week and making a task easier for them. You could help someone at school or at home. As you are helping someone else remember how John helped Jesus.</p> <p>PRAYER – Loving Jesus, we remember how John was set to prepare the way for you - to tell of your coming. At this time of Advent help us to remember that this is a time when we remember your coming over 2000 years ago but we remember your promise that you said you would come again. AMEN</p>