



On your marks

The Old Testament book of Isaiah has a special place in the heart of many Christians, as the prophecies in this book, more than any other, seem to point to the coming of Jesus. It has often been called the 'Old Testament Gospel'. The words of Isaiah are the Old Testament scriptures most often quoted by the writers of the New Testament. The book contains many precious promises for Christians and sections of its poetry have been turned into well-known songs and hymns.

Isaiah was a prophet in the eighth century BC, working in the south of Israel. Through his writings he brings a message of warning to the people of God, because they are not living in the way they should, but he then has a message of comfort for his readers as they go through difficult times. The third part of Isaiah looks forward to the distant future when there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

These different voices of the prophet correspond to three different sections of the book, but it is the message of hope that Christians turn to during the season of Advent, as they get ready for the mystery of Christmas.

The following outline explores some of the important imagery and stories contained in Isaiah, to help us get ready for both the first and the second comings of Jesus.

Get set

If you are using the following ideas for a Messy Church session, you will need to collect the items needed for all the suggested crafts and activities and decide what kind of meal you will share together.

Alternatively, select three or four craft sessions, from the ten listed, that you could make part of a programme for your children's groups during Advent.

For a useful Key Stage 2 retelling of parts of the book of Isaiah, see *The Barnabas Children's Bible*, stories 194-201, on pages 171-177. The same retelling can be found in [The Barnabas Page a Day Bible](#), pages 205-212.

Go!

Here are ten crafts and activities that you can use to explore the book of Isaiah. The Bible verses are taken from The New International Readers' Version (NIRV).

1. Picturing heaven

Express your idea of heaven somewhere on a long piece of lining paper. You can use words or pictures or word art. Use some additional craft materials if you wish to make your image 3D.



'I will create new heavens and a new earth. The things that have happened before will not be remembered. They will not even enter your minds' (Isaiah 65:17).

2. A garment of praise

As a group activity, transform a drab coat (representing the way things used to be) by covering it with colourful fabric squares to create a garment of praise.

'He has dressed us with salvation as if it were our clothes. He has put robes of godliness on us' (Isaiah 61:10).

3. Animals at peace

In Isaiah's vision of heaven, the wolf and the lamb lie down peacefully beside each other. Using the some animal templates from a craft shop, create and colour a picture of two animals beside each other, which would usually be enemies.

Wolves will live with lambs. Leopards will lie down with goats. Calves and lions will eat together (Isaiah 11:6).

4. Good news feet

Trace around your feet and write inside the resulting footprint words or phrases that sum up the good news about Jesus. Arrange the footprints to spell out the letters of GOOD NEWS.

What a beautiful sight it is to see messengers coming with good news! (Isaiah 52:7)

5. The suffering servant

Decorate a cross outline in sombre colours, to remind everyone what Jesus did, out of love for the whole world, on Good Friday.

People looked down on him. They didn't accept him. He knew all about pain and suffering (Isaiah 53:3).

6. A flock of sheep

Roll a small ball of air-drying clay or play dough. Cut off the ends of lots of cotton buds and stick them into the clay, all over, to look like sheep's wool. Draw a sheep's face on a circle of card with two holes at the top. Secure the face to the clay with cotton buds stuck through the holes, as ears.

All of us are like sheep. We have wandered away from God (Isaiah 53:6).

7. Light in the darkness

On a dark surface, in a dark corner, light one tealight candle and pray for those who need to know



the light of Jesus in their dark and dangerous times.

The people who are now living in darkness will see a great light. They are now living in a very dark land. But a light will shine on them (Isaiah 9:2).

8. Heaven's song

Gather around a piano and use as many instruments and other sound effects as possible to recreate a group version of the song of heaven that Isaiah heard in the temple.

'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord who rules over all. The whole earth is full of his glory' (Isaiah 6:3).

9. Beautiful names

The book of Isaiah contains many beautiful descriptions of God. Using two sets of Scrabble letters, create a crossword starting with the word ISIAAH. Create as many words as possible that describe what God is like.

And he will be called Wonderful Adviser and Mighty God. He will also be called Father Who Lives Forever and Prince Who Brings Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

10. An amazing book

The Bible has 66 books in total, so the 66 chapters of Isaiah make it like the Bible in miniature. Using 66 small wooden Jenga blocks, challenge each other to create as stable and as tall a tower of 'books' as you can within 30 seconds.

'Lord, you will give perfect peace to those who commit themselves to be faithful to you. That's because they trust in you' (Isaiah 26:3).

Some ideas for a celebration together.

For the Bible story, share a visual retelling of the book of Isaiah, focusing particularly on chapters 7 to 9 (the promise of a special child). You could use this [story outline](#).

Some song suggestions are:

- He is high and lifted up (Junior Praise)
- You will go out with joy (Junior Praise)
- Written in the palm of his hand

For prayers, make a link back to the tealight candle in activity 7 above.

If you are using this idea for Messy Church, don't forget to include a meal. Here are some suggested questions for 'table talk'.



- Which part of Isaiah's story do you like the best?
- What do you think heaven will be like?
- How has God ever comforted and helped you?
- Do you think God still calls people to be prophets today?

Finally, don't forget to give out invitations to the Christmas services and events at your church.