Autumn & Winter Overview

# Leaders Notes

Themes from September to December

Please note Bible stories and themes may occasionally differ from this overview.

# September – Climate Change

This month we will be exploring climate change – what it is and how we can respond to it.

In Session Four we will be looking at practical actions we can take to care for creation and address climate change. The Great Big Green Week, organised by The Climate Coalition (of which The Salvation Army is a member organisation) is taking place from 18-26 September 2021.

Thousands of events will celebrate how communities are taking action to tackle climate change and protect green spaces, and encourage others to get involved too.

National organisations, institutions, businesses and media outlets will join in, getting more people involved up and down the country, and putting pressure on the UK Government to up its game on tackling climate change.

You may want to get involved in a local event or organise your own. If so, you may want to introduce this idea to the group in an early session so you can plan something in plenty of time.

Visit [**greatbiggreenweek.com**](https://greatbiggreenweek.com/) for more information.

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| **Date** | **Title** | **Bible Reference** | **Content** |
| **5 September** **Session 1** | Stewardship - what it is and why it matters  | Genesis 1:31 and 2:15 | Thinking about why, as followers of Jesus, we should care for creation.  |

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| **12 September****Session 2** | The Salvation Army - impact of climate change and projects | Matthew 25:35-40 | Thinking about the impact that climate change has on some of the world’s most vulnerable people, and how The Salvation Army is working with them to overcome the challenges they are facing. |
| **19 September****Session 3** | Hope for the future | Colossians 1:15-20 | Thinking about the idea that though climate change is a big challenge, we can have hope in Jesus. We can be part of God’s plan of reconciliation for the whole of creation. |
| **26 September****Session 4** | Showing Love to the World | James 2:14-17 | Thinking about how we, as followers of Jesus, can take action against climate change in a way that shows love to other people and the rest of creation. |

# October – Global Justice

Over the next few weeks we will be thinking about global justice. We will learn about how The Salvation Army, all over the world, is walking and working alongside people to overcome poverty and injustice. In the UK, The Salvation Army’s International Development team supports projects which fall into six different areas (anti-trafficking, clean water, emergency response, food security, gender justice and income generation) and over the weeks we will look at each area in more detail.

# Clean water and gender justice

These are linked because the burden of finding and collecting water often falls on the shoulders of women and girls. This can mean they miss out on the opportunity of education and are unable to spend their time on other activities.

11 October is the International Day of the Girl Child. This is a chance to celebrate girls’ achievements and raise awareness about the challenges they face in accessing equal rights and opportunities. Visit the [UN website](https://www.un.org/en/observances/girl-child-day) to find out more about this year’s observance day and how you can take part.

# International food security and income generation

In Session Three we explore the importance of sharing and learn more about The Salvation Army’s projects. You can find out more about these projects and how your group could get involved at https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/international-development/campaigns/feeding-hope

# Anti-Trafficking and Emergency Response

Human trafficking is the movement of people by means such as force, fraud, coercion or deception, with the aim of exploiting them. It is a form of modern slavery.

The Salvation Army is well placed to respond to human trafficking, a globally networked crime. It is estimated that 40.3 million people are trapped in modern slavery today – including labour exploitation, domestic servitude, forced marriage and sexual exploitation.

The Salvation Army in the UK and Ireland Territory supports projects which seek to mobilise communities to be resilient to trafficking and support survivors. Projects include skills training for vulnerable young people in Ukraine, children’s recovery centres in Malawi and Tanzania, and awareness-raising in Russia.

We also know that emergency situations and humanitarian crises increase people’s vulnerability to human trafficking for various reasons. For example, people’s livelihoods are threatened so they may accept high-risk job offers as a survival strategy, and children who have been orphaned/separated from their caregivers may be traumatised by their experiences and more trusting of adults and apparent authority figures. The Salvation Army is working to ensure that anti-trafficking activities are integrated into emergency response.

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| **Date** | **Title** | **Bible Reference** | **Content** |
| **3 October****Session 1** | A call to global justice  | Isaiah 58:6-8; Micah 6:8 | An introduction to global justice. Exploring the concept of unfairness and unjust attitudes and behaviour. |
| **10 October****Session 2** | Clean water and gender justice | John 4:4-42 The woman at the well | Jesus offers us living water, a life and soul transformed. Discover how Salvation Army water projects are transforming lives (especially for women and girls).  |

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| **17 October****Session 3** | Food security and income generation | Acts 2:42-47 The believers share | The early Church knew the importance of sharing. Learn more about The Salvation Army’s international food security and income generation projects. |
| **24 October****Session 4** | Anti-trafficking and emergency response | 1 John 3:1 We are God’s children | Find out about some of The Salvation Army’s anti-trafficking projects. Explore some ways our choices help combat trafficking and modern slavery. Create a prayer journal.  |
| **31 October****No session provided** |  |  |  |

# November – Living right with God (The story of Joseph)

Joseph experienced a number of difficult and testing circumstances while following God, yet he remained committed to him.

With God’s help, Joseph was able to overcome his own feelings of hurt, sadness, temptation and suffering and show forgiveness and love in action. He didn’t just say good words, but his choices and actions were guided by God. They reflected the difference God makes in people’s lives and therefore demonstrated the impact we can have on others.

In our world, there are situations where people make choices in what they think are the best interests for themselves and don’t consider the impact of their choices on others. God’s great love in sending Jesus to die for our sins was to fix our relationship with him, and shows us the value God places on caring for others and in seeking and offering forgiveness.

Through the story of Joseph this month we will explore why we experience suffering and hurt and how we can move through it with God, how our choices should reflect righteous Godly living, and how we show God’s love and forgiveness when we love and forgive others.

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| **Date** | **Title** | **Bible Reference** | **Content** |
| **7 November****Session 1** | Trusting God in tricky times | Genesis 37 & 39:1-6Joseph the dreamer | It is often easier to say something than actually do it, such as trusting God in tricky times. But the Bible is full of stories of God’s people who have done just that. Through sharing their stories and our own they can help us understand the nature of God. They can reassure us as we know there are people who have shared similar experiences so we can support each other and keep our attention fixed on God. Joseph’s life was turned upside down. Sometimes in our own lives things may change in a difficult way, but these experiences can help us grow stronger and come closer to God.  |
| **10 November****Session 2** | Overcoming temptation  | Genesis 39:6b-23Joseph is put into prison | Are there times when you know something is just not the right thing to do? Joseph had exactly that experience, but he chose to honour God and not do what he knew would cause trouble. How can we make ‘right’ choices? We need to understand what God wants for our lives.  |
| **17 November****Session 3** | The power of forgiveness  | Genesis 45:1-28Joseph reveals who he is | Joseph’s story happened more than 1,000 years before the birth of Jesus, so how are they linked? What can we learn from how Joseph forgave his brothers and from Joseph’s example of sticking with God? Why is it important that we forgive? |

# Christmas - Advent

Ask children about what excites them about December, and many will probably reply, ‘I can eat chocolate from my Advent calendar’ or ‘Christmas is coming.’ December is also a period of time in the Christian calendar known as Advent and is an important part of the annual celebration of Christmas and the birth of Jesus.

Advent means ‘coming’ and is a time of preparing and waiting for the birth of Jesus. It is a time of expectation and hope. Without doubt, through this year there have been times of sadness, needing to be patient and hold on to the hope Jesus brings.

Before Jesus’ birth, God’s people waited a long time for his coming, not knowing when or how it would happen. But now we can look forward to Christmas each year knowing what is coming – the celebration of Jesus’ birth – a light born in darkness, the Saviour to heal our broken relationship with God, the hope for the world.

In many churches an Advent wreath is placed with five candles, one for each of the four Sundays leading up to Christmas Day and one for Christmas Day itself, and some people have their own wreath or candle they light at home, or indeed have an Advent calendar to count down the days to Christmas.

There are different themes explored through the period of Advent in different churches, but over these four weeks we will explore how we can prepare for Jesus’ coming, journeying through the Christmas story looking at hope, faith, peace and joy.

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| **Date** | **Title** | **Bible Reference** | **Content** |
| **28 November****Session 1** | Hope | Isaiah 9:2-7 | God made promises to his people but they had to wait for them to come true. The prophets particularly waited with hope. What are the things you wait for today? What are you hopeful for? What does it feel like to wait for things that seem far away? At the start of this time of Advent, focus on the promises God has made, on not giving up, and in our understanding that our hopes come true in Jesus. |

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| **5 December****Session 2** | Faith  | Luke 1:26-38 | God’s people waited for his promise to come true and finally it did. Throughout this time God’s people must have experienced a range of emotions from excitement to anxiety, as often happens when we experience change. Discuss what change you have experienced in your lifetime. How did you feel waiting for change? Are there times you have been able to get ready for change? What did you do? Just as Mary and Joseph had faith in God’s plan, we can follow their example in preparing for Jesus’ coming and having our own faith in what will come. |
| **12 December****Session 3** | Peace  | Luke 2:8-20 | It can be difficult to find peace in our world. People have many worries, relationships have times of disagreement and stress, and people can be unkind, fight and cause conflict. God promises peace through Jesus – peace with God, in ourselves, with others and on Earth. In the Bible we read stories of angels delivering messages to God’s people. They visited and revealed parts of God’s plan. When they visited the shepherds they were able to announce Jesus’ arrival: ‘Give glory to God in Heaven, and on Earth let there be peace to the people who please God.’Discuss what areas of your life are peaceful. What areas have worry and conflict? Why? How can Jesus bring peace in your life? How can you bring peace to others?  |
| **19 December****Session 4** | Joy  | Luke 2:15-20;Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11 | What do you think the difference is between happiness and joy? I wonder how filled with joy the shepherds and magi were at the birth of Jesus. The Bible describes how the shepherds were just living their ‘normal’ lives when angels appeared. The magi were guided by a star but were unsure what they would find. We don’t always expect extraordinary things to happen in our ordinary days, but God is working in our lives. How does God bring moments of joy to your life and remind you he is there? |

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| **31 December****No session provided** |  |  |  |