



On your marks

The season of Advent helps us as Christians not only to prepare for the celebration of the birth of Christ but also to get ready for his return. Between those two events lies the mystery of the cross and the resurrection, which of course have been there since the beginning of time. The cross reveals the depths of God's love for his creation and is God's unique signature over all that he has made. If we do not recognise this, it is possible to sentimentalise the Christmas story and to sanitise the impact of the second coming.

With this in mind the following outline offers a way to link the cross into the cycle of Advent by means of a particular cross story.

St Andrew's Day (30 November) falls around the start of the Advent period and has become linked with prayer for the mission of the church. The following outline can be used with children or in a service where children are present to explore this particular cross.

Get set

This material is based on information and ideas that are available in the book [A-cross the World](#) (BRF, 2011) by Martyn Payne and Betty Pedley. You will need some craft materials to make a version of the cross and also other items to represent the life of the disciple. See the suggested list in the outline below.

Go!

1 Ask the group or congregation if they can tell you about some pairs of brothers that they know: their names and some information (polite!) about them. What other famous brothers do they know from the world of entertainment or sport? Are brothers always alike? Do they have different gifts, appearances and interests?

2 The brothers Andrew and Simon Peter from the New Testament were a partnership. They were both fishermen but were, as far as we can tell, different in character. Jesus chose them both to be part of his discipleship team and on a number of occasions Andrew exercised his particular gift of being able to spot opportunities to introduce others to Jesus. He introduced his brother, then the young lad whose picnic Jesus used to feed the 5000 and later some Greeks to Jesus. Introducing people to Jesus is another way of describing what is happening in evangelism and mission.

3 I wonder what words Andrew used when he introduced others to Jesus? We know what he said to his brother (see John 1: 41) but clearly he would have used different sorts of words with different groups of people.

In small groups ask the children or congregation to think of someone else whom they all know and whom they could introduce to everyone else. It may be a teacher or a family friend or a classmate.

What will they focus on? Character? Appearance? Interests? Personality? Here are some sample introductions from these groups.

Now ask the same groups to think of five things they could say about Jesus if they were to be introducing him to others. Invite any group that is willing to share what it has decided upon. Take note to how these introductions might vary. Is it the stories, the miracles or the character of Jesus that get most mention?

I wonder what sort of things Andrew would have said about Jesus and how he might have said it differently to the different groups of people he talked with?

4 Although Andrew is not mentioned in New Testament outside the Gospels, tradition records that he, like the other disciples, travelled far and wide introducing people to Jesus. Some say he went to Greece and even further north towards modern-day Russia. He is said to have died on a distinctive X-shape cross called a Saltire Cross. This is now known as a St. Andrew's Cross.

5 I wonder what sort of objects would best represent the life of St. Andrew? Ask the children to suggest ideas for symbols for his life story. Collect or make some of these and ask the children to arrange and decorate them to create a 3-D lifeline of St. Andrew.

Here are some suggested items or visuals:

Figures of two brothers; a fishing boat; a net and fish; a symbol for a road to represent the travels he made with Jesus; the packed lunch that he spotted at the great picnic; other items that are reminders of Jesus' stories and miracles; some Greek letters to represent the Greeks he met; the cross and open tomb; a Pentecost flame or dove; a sailing boat for travel overseas; the Saltire Cross.

Can the children now tell Andrew's story in their own words using the objects to introduce people to him.

6 The St Andrew's cross itself could be the focus for a craft activity and be made from various materials. I wonder what two shapes could be used for the cross pieces, which will also have a particular connection with St Andrew?

Perhaps two oars from a fishing boat? Perhaps two arrows pointing in different directions to represent his travels? Or perhaps two people meeting (being introduced) and holding hands in such a way that they create this cross shape?

The blue background to this cross represents of course the Sea of Galilee or the other seas over which St. Andrew travelled. This too could be decorated to make clear that it is real water. Encourage the children to use a range of craft materials to make their own version of this cross for the beginning of Advent.

7 Advent is the time when we think about how the coming of Jesus was well signposted long ago by the prophets in the Old Testament. The St. Andrew's Cross could be used to display their particular introductions to Jesus by writing or drawing on each arm of the cross some of the descriptions of Jesus they gave. e.g.

- Isaiah introduces Jesus as: the Prince of Peace and the Wonderful Counsellor (chapter 9)
- Micah introduces Jesus as a new King (chapter 5)
- Jeremiah introduces Jesus as the Righteous Branch (a new perfect shoot coming from a tree) (chapter 27)
- Ezekiel introduces Jesus as the Shepherd who looks for his lost sheep (chapter 34)
- Isaiah in the second half of that book introduces Jesus as the Suffering Servant (chapter 53)

These prophecies point not only to Jesus coming at Christmas but also to his dying and rising again at Easter. In this way the cross of St. Andrew helps us to be introduced to a Jesus who was not only born for us but also who died for us.

8 I wonder where God wants to send each one of us to introduce people to Jesus? The St. Andrew's cross could be used as a focus for prayers in two ways:

The four arms of the cross could represent four places or groups of people in our lives where God wants us to be like Andrew introducing people to Jesus by our words and actions. Give children or the congregation time to think about this and then ask them to write words or names on each of the four arms of the cross, giving some space then for prayers about these particular situations.

For more general prayer for the world, the four arms of the cross could be pointing to four parts of the world with which the Church or the group has a special link in mission. Turn the cross around and write on the other side the names of four countries or perhaps draw the flags of those countries, for which you are going to pray.

9 Here is a prayer for St. Andrew's Day, which could be written, one line on each of the four arms of the cross. It is based on a prayer for mission that comes originally from Wales:

God the Sender, send us
God the Sent, come with us
God the Strengtheners, empower us
God the Spirit, fill us