

Advent Conversations with Arnie Advent

Every year the children in **Rev Phil Hoffman's** church look forward to their weekly conversations with **Arnie Advent**, a puppet-style puppet with a rather worldly view of Christmas. The conversations go something like this...

WEEK 1

Phil: Does it feel like a special day in church today? It does? Why does it feel like a special day in church today? Emily? Because it's the first Sunday in Advent... And because it's the First Sunday in Advent we've got lots of special things happening. What are some of those things? Anyone notice anything over there?



Child: A Christmas Tree...
Phil: Yes, a Christmas tree. We're hoping that over the next few weeks you'll be bringing to church with you some things to decorate the tree.
Child: There's bonbons under the tree already.
Phil: That's true. Who do you expect to come at Advent?
Child: You expect Arnie Advent to come
Phil: You expect Arnie Advent. Well, Kai, correct answer. Look, here he is: Arnie Advent...
Arnie: Hello, everyone.
Phil: Some people don't come very often, but we haven't seen you for a whole year.
Arnie: Oh, I only come at Advent.
Phil: What's happened to your nose over the last year.
Arnie: I've had a cold.
Phil: Had a cold have you? I think you've been wiping it too much. Look, his nose has got all dusty. Arnie, what do you do to get ready for Christmas?
Arnie: I light the candles on my birthday cake.
Phil: You do what?
Arnie: I light the candles on my birthday cake.
Phil: What are you talking about?
Arnie: Look, over there! I can't point because I can't lift my arms. Over there!
Phil: Over there? You mean that green thing up there? Arnie, that's not your birthday cake.
Arnie: Oh. Are you sure? It looks like a birthday cake.

Phil: No, it's not! That's our Advent Wreath.
Arnie: Oh. My birthday's at Christmas. I thought you were lighting candles for my birthday. [pause] Aren't you lighting candles for my birthday?
Phil: Well, Arnie, maybe we could do that as well – but we're actually lighting those for Advent. We are going to be lighting the candles over the next four Sundays so that we can get ready for Christmas, which is not just your birthday. He's surprised about that – No, it's bigger than that. It's actually the birth of Christ. Arnie, what are you wanting for Christmas this year?

Arnie: Last year I wanted a bike.
Phil: I remember that. Did you get a bike?
Arnie: Yes.
Phil: Well, that's good.
Arnie: No it's not!
Phil: Oh. Why not?
Arnie: I can't ride it.
Phil: You can't ride it?
Arnie: I haven't got any legs.
Phil: No, you haven't. So what are you hoping for this year?
Arnie: An aeroplane.
Phil: You want an aeroplane?
Arnie: Nods
Phil: OK, we'll get ready for Christmas and we'll get ready for your birthday. I don't know that we'll get ready for your aeroplane, but if you listen now to Judy over there she's going to light the first candle on our Advent wreath – not your birthday cake!

Arnie: Oh. Alright.
Phil: Say "Goodbye," Arnie, and "I'll be back next week."
Arnie: Goodbye. I'll be back next week.



WEEK 2

Phil: I'd like to invite all the children down to say "Good morning" to Arnie...
 Who's getting ready for Christmas? Good. Only one more week of school. Is that right?
 Arnie, see that Christmas Tree over there?
Arnie: Yes.
Phil: What's underneath it?
Arnie: Presents.
Child: They're Christmas presents ...
Phil: Did you hear what Hannah said?
Arnie: Yes. She's wrong.
Phil: What do you mean she's wrong?
Arnie: They're for my birthday.

Phil: Oh, Arnie, we've been through all this. Just because your birthday falls at Christmas doesn't mean those presents are for you. Don't look at me like that, Arnie. I don't want to have to tell you off in front of all these people. Who knows who those presents are for? ... (Child tells who the gifts are for and what might be in them...) Did you hear that, Arnie? Keep listening!

Arnie: I don't want soup for my birthday.
Phil: Arnie, it's not for your birthday, I've told you that already. What do you want for Christmas, Arnie?
Arnie: Tony Hawke Pro-Skater.
Phil: What is that?
Arnie: It's a game.
Phil: Well, you enjoy your skating, Arnie. Now, who can tell us what Advent really means? Hannah? Advent means 'coming'. Georgia? It's Jesus' birthday... Arnie, what are you doing? Come back here...

Arnie: I'm looking for him.
Phil: Who are you looking for?
Arnie: Jesus.
Phil: You won't find him there. Who can help Arnie out? How do we find Jesus at Christmas? ... Jesus is coming in the story of Christmas. If we want to find him we let love grow in our hearts and give to other people. That's how we find Jesus.
Arnie: Well, if that's true and Jesus is coming, then you'd better stop talking.
Phil: Arnie, you're probably right. And Arnie...

Arnie: Yes?
Phil: It's a time for thinking about others. Arnie, are you willing to do that? Well, Arnie, that's what Christmas is for and if we do all that, your birthday will be a happier day.
Arnie: Yeah! Yeah!
Phil: OK. Let's say a prayer. That's a way of finding Jesus, when we pray. Will you pray, Arnie?
Arnie: I can't close my eyes.
Phil: Yes, we can see you can't close your eyes, but you can bow your head... Let's pray...

(After prayer):

Phil: You were a very good boy this morning, Arnie. You started off pretty badly but you've settled down and you can now be ready for Jesus when he comes. Say "See you soon, everyone."



Arnie Advent continued

WEEK 3



Phil: Each Sunday in Advent we've been joined by Arnie. Say "Good morning" to Arnie.

Children: Good morning, Arnie.

Phil: They said "Good morning" to you, Arnie.

Arnie: Thank you.

Phil: Arnie, have you been getting ready for Christmas?

Arnie: Yep.

Phil: What have you been doing to get ready for Christmas?

Arnie: I made a list.

Phil: Oh, you made a list did you? That's a good thing to do. What's on the list?

Arnie: Don't know.

Phil: What d'ya mean you don't know?

Arnie: I can't find the list.

Phil: Well, have a look in here.

Arnie: Nup, not in there.

Phil: Well, where do you think you left it? There's not much point making a list if you can't remember where ...

Arnie: I know where I left it!

Phil: You do? Where?

Arnie: It's in your pocket

Phil: What do you mean?

Arnie: I put it in your pocket.

Phil: Arnie, Arnie! (*feels in his pocket*) Yes, here's your list. OK, what's on your list?

Arnie: First: Choose my present.
Second: Choose my present.
Third thing: Choose my present.

Phil: You can't choose a present more than once, Arnie.

Arnie: Different present...

Phil: What else is on your list, Arnie?

Arnie: Buy a present for Mum.

Phil: Good thinking, Arnie. What else?

Arnie: Choose my presents...

Phil: How many presents do you think you are you going to get, Arnie? What else do you need to do?

Arnie: That's it.

Phil: You've got four, no, *five* things on your list and four of them are 'Choose your present'?

Arnie: Yep.

Phil: All right. What else do you need to do to get ready for Christmas?

Arnie: Nothing I can think of.

Phil: Well, you know, Arnie, lots of people are writing lists of who they need to buy presents for, who they're going to write cards to, and what they need to buy for Christmas. What else do you think we need to remember at this

time of year that we don't put on our list?

Arnie: Can't think of anything.

Phil: You can't think of anything? So you think that as long as you get to choose your present, Christmas is all covered?

Arnie: Well, isn't it?

Phil: No, Arnie. That's the problem with lists: you can't write some of the most important things down.

Arnie: Like what?

Phil: Be patient with people; be kind to people...

Arnie: Oh. Can you get me a pen?

Phil: Well, I haven't come ready with a pen, Arnie. What about if you just remember when you look at your list next time that there are some other things that are important for Christmas that are not on your list.

Arnie: That's a good idea, Mr Phil.

Phil: Well, thank you for saying so. Now, do you want to say goodbye to the choir?

Arnie: Goodbye, choir.

Phil: Do you want to sing in the choir?

Arnie: Yeah, that'd be good. What can we sing?

Phil: They said, Tenor or Base.

Arnie: No, I don't play a musical instrument.

Phil: OK, say goodbye. Wave to the choir. Wave to everyone out there and Arnie, we'll see you again next Sunday for Advent. And remember your list, and remember the things that are not on your list.

Arnie: I'll try to do that. Bye!

WEEK 4

Phil: Arnie, Arnie are you there? Arnie, wake up! Oh, Arnie, you haven't done your hair! Oh, you're still half asleep. Arnie, say "Hello, everyone."

Arnie: (*deep voice*): Hello, everyone.

Phil: Arnie, c'mon get with it! Now, Arnie, this is the last Sunday before Christmas. No more Sundays. This is called the 4th Sunday of Advent. Some of the people here we might not see again for Christmas.

Arnie: Oh.

Phil: So, Arnie, what do you think we should be saying to everyone from Sunday School? Because some might be going away this week to have Christmas with relatives elsewhere.

Arnie: Hope you get lots of presents...

Phil: Oh, Arnie, do you think that's all we hope for? ... I think Hannah's got an idea over there. ... What else could we say?... Happy Christmas and Happy New Year?

Arnie: Yeah.

Phil: Y'know, some people say, 'Seasons Greetings.'

Arnie: Seasons Greetings?

Phil: Yep. That's what some people say.

Arnie: What's that mean? Have a nice summer?

Phil: Well, no, not exactly. Because the time of Christmas is called a Season, so we're really saying Greetings for the Season of Christmas. Would you say that?

Arnie: Nup.

Phil: You wouldn't?

Arnie: What are *you* going to say?

Phil: Me? What am I going to say? Well, Arnie, I've been thinking about that. There are a lot of different things you could say. I think I was going to say Happy Christmas to all the people out there, and to all the kids of the Sunday School: "I hope you have a Happy and Holy Christmas."

Arnie: A "Holy" Christmas?

Phil: Yes, A Happy and Holy Christmas. What are you looking at me like that for?

Arnie: You want them to have holes in their Christmas?

Phil: No, Arnie, I don't want them to have holes in their Christmas. I want them to have a 'Holy' Christmas. A happy Christmas means a happy time with their families and a Holy Christmas...

Arnie: What's that?

Phil: Well, Arnie, a holy Christmas means that God is part of your Christmas. Something that's holy means that God is in it. So I hope that everybody has a Happy Christmas with their families, and that it is a Holy time for them, which means that I hope God is part of it. So, do you think you can say that?

Arnie: Have a Holy Happy Christmas.

Phil: Well, A Happy and a Holy Christmas, Arnie.

Arnie: Have a Happy and a holy Christmas.

Phil: Thank you, Arnie, and that's our wish for all the kids and all the parents and all the visitors this morning. We wish you a Happy and a Holy Christmas.



Thanks to **Rev Phil Hoffman**, [Minister of the Word at Rosefield UC and previously at Brougham Place UC, Adelaide] for permission to use this script. Phil has quite a reputation for comedy and interactive drama, including contributions to the Nite Life program at NCYC 2005.