

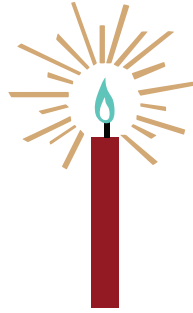
Advent
with

**UNIVERSITY
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**



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The one who came on Christmas morn promises to come again; to make the world right; to make all things new. He came once in weakness to serve; he comes again in glory to rule. That is the witness of Jesus. It is a witness to a better life and it's our witness too.

We live between the comings of Jesus, and when we give ourselves to Jesus, he pulls us into transformation; to begin to live today as we will live in eternity—for his glory, for our joy, and for the welfare of our neighbors.

Advent isn't just a celebration of the past. It is preparation for the future. This Advent we are studying the final two chapters of the Bible and getting ready. Because, as they've said for millennia: "Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again."

Advent is a special time in the church year. It's a time to wait and prepare our hearts to celebrate the great joy of Christmas!

We wait on this side of history with hope and expectancy! This year we are focusing on the hope we have in Christ and his coming into this world, an event we celebrate at Christmas and in the hope that is to come, when he returns to establish his kingdom, where peace will reign and he will be King over all the earth.

During Advent we take time to be thankful for his coming and look with anticipation and hope for when he comes again.

Revelation 21: 5 "...And the one who was seated on the throne said,

“See, I am making all things new.”

This this booklet is for you to use in your Christmas preparations. Our hope is that this booklet helps inspire, guide, and encourage you as you reflect, rest, celebrate, and worship this Advent season.

For each week in Advent, you will find:

- * **Simple Sunday Services** of scripture reading, songs, and prayer as well as services for Christmas.
- * **Daily Reflection Guides** for you to use for your personal devotions during Advent.
- * **Compilation of Celebrations and Traditions** from others to inspire you and encourage you this holiday season.

DAILY REFLECTIONS

We will focus on Revelation 21-22. Michael Gorman, author of *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, writes: "This vision—or, rather, this coming reality—is the climax of the book of Revelation, the New Testament, the entire Bible, the whole story of God, and also the story of humanity."

For your personal daily devotion, set aside 10 minutes each day to spend with God. Find a comfortable, quiet space without distractions. Begin your time of devotion with silent prayer, confession, and an invitation to God to speak.

For further study read *Reading Revelation Responsibly* by Gorman

SIMPLE SUNDAY SERVICE

In order to fully participate in using the weekly guide, you'll need to get ready!

Gather Supplies

- * A Bible and bookmarks
- * An Advent Wreath and four Candles for the Sundays in Advent (traditionally placed around the wreath) and one for Christmas (in the center of the wreath).
- * Matches/ Lighter This Family Advent Booklet
- * Optional—a guitar or piano for the songs

Plan & Prepare

Plan a **time** each week that works for you and your family. Try to pick a **location** that is away from typical everyday distractions (TV, computers, phones etc.).

Questions and Activities

Each service starts with a reflection with some questions then some activities to help make

your time together more fun and engaging. This is a way to ease into the service for the evening. Look ahead and choose the questions or activities that would work best for your family.

Getting ready to Light the Candles of the Advent Wreath

You will need a **leader**, a **reader**, and a **candle lighter** for each service.

The selected **leader** for the evening hosts the service by reading the guiding reflections. The **reader or readers** read the suggested Bible passages.

Mark the Bible passages. Choose a Bible translation that you are most comfortable with and decide who will read the Bible passages and prayers.

Decide who will light the candles. This is especially exciting for children! The first week there is only one candle to light. You may also want to decide who gets to snuff the candles at the end.

Review the recommended Christmas songs (or choose your own). Each song is chosen to represent the scripture story for the week, but you may want to choose one that is more familiar. If you don't know the tune of the song you might try reading the words to the song as a poem instead of singing together.

MAKING AN ADVENT WREATH

Supplies

five candles

Traditionally you can use three purple candles for the first three weeks of Advent symbolizing a season for prayer and preparation; a pink candle for the fourth Sunday (the Angel candle of love), a white candle to put in the middle to light on Christmas (Christ candle). Alternatively, you could use three white candles for the first Sundays and a purple one for the fourth, and a white candle in the middle.

candle holders

Create a circle with the four candles and room for a candle in the middle. Be creative. You can use a variety of materials to make your wreath or buy a wreath and add candles to it, or use individual candle holders, place them in a circle.

greenery

Surround your candles with decorative greenery

Place your wreath where you can gather round it each week. It becomes a symbol of the season.



First Sunday of Advent

The Prophecy Candle. The Candle of Hope

Isaiah 9:6-7

*For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷ Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.*

Rev 21:1-5

¹ Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." ⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Today we light the candle of hope because we know that no matter what is going on in our world, God will always be near to us. He knows what it is like to live in this world because he came and lived among us in Jesus Christ. He came so we might see his promises of new life fulfilled and we might be united to God. And just as he came to us once, he will come again, to bring a final peace and his kingdom on earth, a kingdom where there will be no more pain or loss and joyous communion with God.

We can now live with the joyful knowledge that God is with us through the presence of the resurrected Jesus, whom we know by faith through the Holy Spirit. We can live with the hope that there will be a day when he will return and restore our earth and its people to perfect relationship with him. No matter what is going on around us, we can

live in the confidence that he has not forgotten us and he will be with us now and in the future. Such knowledge and our experience of the Holy Spirit can change our whole attitude and outlook on life. We can be joyful and encouraged when there is sadness around us and when we have to face hard things. We are optimistic when others are tempted to be cynical because we know the present circumstances do not determine the future.

The Advent season reminds us that we can live into the hope he gives us so we can bring hope to others. Let's think of ways this week we might be bring the blessing of hope to someone else by being an encouragement to them.

How do God's promises about his future coming bring you hope?

Who are some people you could encourage and bless this Christmas?

Activity

- * If you have a nativity scene, put out the stable and talk about this special place that is being prepared for the baby. Each week you can add some of the figures as the story unfolds.
- * Make a Friendship Bracelet to celebrate Advent. Watch this YouTube video for simple instructions (<https://youtu.be/YujvDp5BJ78>). Consider choosing colors that represent Advent. For example, purple/dark blue for Sovereignty of Christ & Repentance, pink for Joy & Rejoicing, and white for Purity & Light of Christ.
- * Word a day (or week) challenge. For each day (or week) in Advent, meditate on a word and what God might be telling you through that word. For example, you might choose words like: wait, rejoice, sparkle, or neighbor. Find a creative way to be reminded of that word and how God is speaking about it to you. Take a photo to represent it, draw or create something, have a conversation at the dinner table about that word. Do it together as a family, or on your own.

Worship

The Lighting of the Candle

Leader: *It is the season of Advent. We take time to remember God's gift of hope as we wait to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.*

Light the Prophecy Candle

Leader (as candle is being lit): *We light this candle to remember that our hope is in Jesus, the Light of the world who has come and will come again. The first candle of Advent is the Prophecy candle. It is known as the candle of hope. We light it, remembering that Christ's coming had long been foretold through the faithfulness of God's prophets and listen with expectant hope when they tell us that he will come again to our world to banish darkness and bring his ultimate light to the world.*

Readings

Daniel 7:13-14

¹³As I watched in the night visions,
I saw one like a human being
coming with the clouds of heaven.
And he came to the Ancient One
and was presented before him.
¹⁴To him was given dominion
and glory and kingship,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not pass away,
and his kingship is one
that shall never be destroyed.

Isaiah 7:14

¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel.

Luke 1:26-34

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

Song

O Come O Come Emmanuel*

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

*O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

**You might want to look this hymn up
on You tube and listen or sing along
as you light the candle*

Living in Hope

Devotional

Hope is the feeling that comes when we know we are never alone, that God will always be with us and will help us no matter what is happening to us or around us. Hope is like a light that shines in us to help us look ahead with joy, expecting God will make all things new.

We bring hope to others when we share our joy and assurance with them by serving them, encouraging them, walking alongside them. Let's ask God who he wants us to encourage and share hope with.

Prayer

Father, thank you for giving hope to your people by preparing them for Jesus' birth. You spoke through your prophets long ago that you would send your son, and at the right time and place, you fulfilled your promise through the birth of Jesus. Help us live in the hope of his presence as we prepare for Christmas.

Leader Prays: *God of all peoples, your plans are always for our good. You told your plan to Mary and she was willing to do her part. Help us to see your plan for us and help us to do what you ask. Amen.*

Sing or Read:

Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

*Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us,
Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's Strength and Consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear Desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.*

*Born Thy people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever,
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.
By Thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all sufficient merit,
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.*

Leader prays concluding prayer: *Eternal God, through long generations you prepared a way for the coming of your Son, and by your Spirit you still bring light to illuminate our paths. Renew us in faith and hope that we may welcome Christ to rule our thoughts and claim our love, as Lord of lords and King of kings, to whom is due glory forever. Amen.*

Week 1, Day 1

We will begin each week with *Lectio Divina*, Latin for “Divine Reading.” This is an opportunity for us to come prayerfully before the living Word of God, ready to hear God speak to us. Rather than approaching the Scripture academically, this is a moment for us to invite Christ to speak. Follow the pattern listed below as you interact with the passage for each day.

- * **Lectio: Reading.** Slowly and carefully read through today’s passage of Scripture. Read it out loud three times, pausing between each reading.
- * **Meditatio: Meditation.** Ponder the passage. What words, phrases or ideas stood out to you? What questions came to mind? Wrestle with questions. Take a moment to write your thoughts down.
- * **Oratio: Prayer.** Have a conversation with God. Ask the Spirit to give insight into what you have read and what has stood out to you.
- * **Contemplatio: Contemplation.** Take a moment of silent prayer and sit in God’s love. What does God want you take with you today?

¹ “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

“See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
⁴ he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away.”

⁵ And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.”
Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” (Revelation 21:1-5)

Week 1, Day 2

Revelation 21 and 22 paint a vivid picture of God’s new creation. This longing for a new creation can be seen all the way back in the Old Testament during the days of the prophets. Isaiah had already predicted the new heavens and the new earth:

¹⁷ “For I am about to create new heavens
and a new earth;
the former things shall not be remembered
or come to mind.
¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever
in what I am creating;
for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy,

*and its people as a delight.
19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem,
and delight in my people;
no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it,
or the cry of distress." (Isaiah 65:17-19)*

In the season of Advent, we identify with the people of Israel as they awaited a Messiah. Like the ancient Israelites, we continue to long for the fullness of new creation and the second coming of Christ.

What are you longing for in this Advent season? Where do you long to see new creation?

Week 1, Day 3

"And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Revelation 21:2)

N.T. Wright describes Revelation 21-22 as "the marriage between heaven and earth...the ultimate rejection of all types of Gnosticism, or every worldview that separates the physical from the spiritual. It is the final answer to the Lord's Prayer [thy kingdom come]." (*Reading Revelation Responsibly*)

Pray the Lord's Prayer with expectancy in light of the promise of Christ's return:

*Our Father who art in Heaven
Hallowed by thy Name
Thy kingdom come
Thy will be done
On earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.*

Week 1, Day 4

*"See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them." (Revelation 21:3)*

God has consistently made his home with people. We can see this throughout the whole story of the Bible: From God's presence in the Garden with Adam and Eve, to his call to Abraham, to his presence with the Israelites in the wilderness, to Solomon and the Temple, and even into exile with his people. But the most shocking moment in history was God's incarnation—to become human and be born as a baby, Jesus the Christ. This is what we celebrate at Christmas.

As we wait in Advent, we remember the first coming of Jesus and anticipate his second coming in hope. We live in a period of history where the kingdom of God is here but is not yet here. We wait in the “now and not yet.” But we look forward to a certain future of God’s “permanent incarnation.”

Michael Gorman reflects, “In this eschatological reality, the boundary between heaven and earth—God’s reality/abode and ours—is permanently removed. Eschatological life is marked by God’s perpetual presence—a state of permanent incarnation, so to speak. This is, in fact, the most significant characteristic of the New Jerusalem: divine presence in all its fullness and glory.” (*Reading Revelation Responsibly*, p. 165).

Even as we live in the “now and not yet,” we can have God’s presence with us through God’s Holy Spirit. If you have never said “yes” to God’s invitation to come live in your heart, take some time to pray and invite Christ to make his home in you. If you pray this prayer today, reach out to a Christian friend or pastor and let them know about your decision. Go to upc.org/Jesus and let someone know of your decision and connect with a spiritual advisor.

Week 1, Day 5

⁴ *“He will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away.”*

⁵ *“And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.”
(Revelation 21:4-5)*

The holiday season can be an especially difficult season when we are experiencing grief or loss. The joyful season we see around us can contrast with the pain we feel in our hearts. After a year of pandemic and isolation, racial violence, and contentious politics, many of us are grieving. Bring your pain honestly before God.

*** Where are you longing to see Jesus make all things new in your life?**

*** Are there places of loss, death, pain and grief in your life?**

Come to Jesus in your places of pain. Ask him for the comfort of the Holy Spirit and assurance of our eternal hope.

If you are already a follower of Jesus, take time today to pay attention to God’s presence with you throughout the day. Ask God for eyes to see the ways he is with you all throughout this day.

*The Symons clan has a long-standing tradition of attending UPC Christmas Eve services. A big part is helping with the children's part of the evening, specifically the Christmas Pageant. Rehearsals with other kids, families, and UPC staff built community and a long-standing tradition of connection and celebrating with our church family. **Debbie Symons***



Mele Kalikimaka



*Mele Kalikimaka playing everywhere. Aloha shirts and muumuus. Dried squid from the neighbor. Chow Mein at Ellen Ho's house between services Christmas Eve. Portuguese sausage and papaya with breakfast, 80 degrees, palm trees, trade-winds, and going to the beach Christmas Day. Though I've spent most of the last 30+ Christmases on the "Mainland", having grown up in The Islands these things will always be Christmas norms for me that are close to my heart. Fortunately, I can still get Portuguese sausage and play Hawaiian Christmas music even in Seattle. You can take the boy out of Hawaii, but you can't take Hawaii out of the boy!
Paul Yoder*

Second Sunday of Advent

The Bethlehem Candle, The Candle of Peace

The Bethlehem Candle is known as the candle of peace because even as the circumstances of Jesus' birth were unsure and chaotic, God's peace surrounded the holy family as they traveled to Bethlehem. It also reminds us that there will be a day when he returns and will bring light and healing to our world, true and final peace.

Isaiah 60:1-3

¹ *"Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.*

² *See, darkness covers the earth
and thick darkness is over the peoples,
but the Lord rises upon you
and his glory appears over you.*

³ *Nations will come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*

Micah 5:2

*But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.*

Luke 2: 2-7

¹ *In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.³ All went to their own towns to be registered.⁴ Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*

Revelation 22:1-2, 5

¹ *Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb² through the middle of the street of the city... the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him...⁵ And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.*

Long ago, God sent word through his prophets that he would send one from himself who would come and bring light and hope into the world. For hundreds of years the people of Israel waited, knowing that the one whom God would send would reflect God's glory and draw nations to himself. They knew he would be born in Bethlehem and would bring life to all who believed in him. That day finally arrived with the birth of Jesus, miraculously born of Mary, the promised one sent by God for the redemption of all people. Like the people of Israel, we who now know Jesus and follow him await his coming again when he will banish the darkness of our world and bring his glorious, permanent light to the world. He will reign in glory and justice forever.

We who live in the hope of his coming know that God will do what he has promised. While we wait, we are able to withstand the difficult times because we know that the world around us does not define all there is. God is preparing us for the day when we will be able to have continuous joy and fulfillment. We are able to serve others in joy because we know God is watching over us, saving us, and keeping safe until the day of his return.

During this Advent season we can praise God for the coming of Jesus, the fulfillment of God's promise to send a Savior, and for the promise of his coming again when he will complete his redemption of the world. Let your celebration on this second Sunday of advent reflect the joyful confidence we have in God's promises.

What is one way as a family that you could celebrate the light that Jesus has brought and will bring into this world?

Take a few minutes every day to thank God and ask him to remind you that he is near. Keep a list throughout the day of things you know about God and his presence. Review them and thank God for being with you always!

How can you encourage or show someone love this week?

What are some creative ways you could be a light in your neighbors while practicing safe social distancing?

Challenge yourself this week: bring a meal, surprise someone with a Christmas treat, do an act of service for someone in your neighborhood, or light a candle each night at dinner and pray for a neighbor.

Activities

- * Draw names within your family and do something special (secretly) to serve them during the week. At the end of the week guess who had each name.
- * Add hay to your nativity scene: on yellow strips of paper write down ways you have encouraged others this week and place them in the manger.

Worship

Light the Prophecy and Bethlehem candles.

Reader: Matthew 2:1-12

¹ After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶ "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel."

⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Sing or Read

Away in a Manger

*Away in a manger no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky, looked down where he lay;
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.*

*The cattle are lowing the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love you Lord Jesus, look down from the sky,
And stay by my side until morning is nigh.*

*Be near me Lord Jesus I ask you to stay,
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children
in your tender care,
And fit us for heaven, to live with you there.*

Leader: God promised that he would bring a savior and that he would be born in Bethlehem. At the right time, he fulfilled his promise through Mary in the town of Bethlehem. Jesus was born!

Leader Prays: Our God, you are the Giver of all good gifts. Open our eyes to see all the ways you give us what we need and help us give thanks to you. Amen.

Sing or Read

O Little Town of Bethlehem

*O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie,
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep,
the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth,
The everlasting Light,
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in Thee tonight.*

*For Christ is born of Mary,
And gathered all above;
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars together,
Proclaim the holy birth.
And praises sing to God the King,
And Peace to all on earth.*

How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin
Where meek souls will receive him still,
The dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us, we pray.
Cast out our sin and enter in,
Be born to us today.
We hear the Christmas angels,
The great glad tidings tell
O come to us, abide with us
Our Lord Emmanuel.

Leader prays concluding prayer: Loving God, you taught us that the night is over and the day is at hand. Keep us awake and alert, watching for your kingdom, and make us strong in faith, so that when Christ comes in glory, we may joyfully give him praise.

DAILY REFLECTIONS

Week 2, Day 1

We will begin each week with *Lectio Divina*, Latin for “Divine Reading.” This is an opportunity for us to come prayerfully before the living Word of God, ready to hear God speak to us. Rather than approaching the Scripture academically, this is a moment for us to invite Christ to speak.

- * **Lectio: Reading.** Slowly and carefully read through today's passage of Scripture. Read it out loud three times, pausing between each reading.
- * **Meditatio: Mediation.** Ponder the passage. What words, phrases or ideas stood out to you? What questions came to mind? Wrestle with questions. Take a moment to write your thoughts down.
- * **Oratio: Prayer.** Have a conversation with God. Ask the Spirit to give insight into what you have read and what has stood out to you.
- * **Contemplatio: Contemplation.** Take a moment of silent prayer and sit in God's love. What does God want you take with you today?

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³ Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; ⁴ they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. ⁶ And he said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true, for the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place. ⁷ See, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” (Revelation 22:1-7)

Week 2, Day 2

⁴ “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵ when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; ⁶ but

a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground⁷ then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.⁸ And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed.⁹ Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” (Genesis 2:4-9)

In the original garden of Eden was a tree of life. God intended humanity to have access to the tree of life. When Adam and Eve sinned by eating from the fruit of the tree of knowledge, which was the one limitation God had given them, they were cast out of the garden. Post-garden, humanity has felt the sting of death. Death was not God’s original intention for us. We look forward to return of Jesus Christ and the future tree of life in the New Jerusalem. Reflect on your life and our world today:

Where do you see sin leading to death?

Where has sin damaged our world and led to spiritual and physical death?

Pray over God’s original intention for us individually and corporately to have life.

Week 2, Day 3

“And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” (Revelation 22:2)

Revelation 22:2 is a beautiful picture that points towards a future where we will not only find individual salvation but an eschatological reality of ultimate reconciliation between peoples: “the healing of nations.” Sin caused a broken relationship between God and individuals, individuals and nature, and communally between people. The promise in Christ’s second coming is not just personal salvation from death, but reconciliation between all peoples. Throughout the entire Bible, we read a story of God’s salvation for all people, all nations. Today, we prepare for the future reality that all nations will gather before the throne of God under the rule of Jesus Christ.

Pray over the nations:

Where are there broken relationships?

Pray for the nations that are the “enemies” of your people.

Repent and ask for forgiveness for the wrongs your nation has done to other nations.

Pray for the blessing of nations other than your own.

Week 2, Day 4

“But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; ⁴they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.” (Revelation 22:3-5)

Michael Gorman stresses: "The eschatological reality is not a fantasy but a certain hope, guaranteed by the faithful and true God and by the death, resurrection, and exaltation of the slaughtered Lamb, the faithful and true witness." (*Reading Revelation Responsibly*, p. 166). As a result of this reality, we should be inspired to worship. Gorman defines worship as "giving honor and praise to God and to the Lamb for the present and future salvation offered to us and all the world." Spend time in worship of God.

Write out all of the names of God, all of the phrases that honor him.

Look back on your life and remember what he has done in your life.

Listen to or sing a favorite worship song.

Week 2, Day 5

"See, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." (Revelation 22:7)

Revelation closes with the promise that Christ is coming again soon. God's definition of "soon" is on a different timeline than ours as humans. The church throughout the ages has had the challenge of waiting with anticipation for the second coming of Jesus Christ. We are to wait eagerly, faithfully, to be ready at any time—while not growing impatient or discouraged. Ask God for endurance as we wait for Christ's return.

Where are the places in your life where you need God's help and grace to wait with patience?

Where are the areas of temptation in your life to be unfaithful to God?

Ask for courage to remain faithful as we await Jesus in his second coming.

Close by praying: "Amen, Come Lord Jesus." (Revelation 12:20)

Dinner Rolls

These dinner rolls are my traditional Christmas rolls. They are expected to be at every Christmas dinner. My 104 year old Grandma, who died this year, never failed to say they were the best thing at Christmas dinner every year. Becky Busby



Ingredients:

- * 4 ½ to 5 cups flour
- * 2 packages yeast
- * 1 cup milk
- * ½ cup sugar
- * ½ cup shortening
- * 2 teaspoons salt
- * 3 eggs

Instructions: In a large bowl combine 2 cups of the flour and yeast. In saucepan heat milk, sugar, shortening and salt until just warm 115-120° (stirring constantly to melt shortening). Add dry mixture in the bowl; add eggs. Beat at low speed with mixer for 30 seconds, scraping sides. Beat 3 minutes at high speed. By hand stir in enough remaining flour to make a moderately stiff dough. Turn out on a lightly floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic 5-8 minutes.

Shape into ball. Place in a lightly greased bowl; turn once to grease surface. Cover and let rise in warm place until double in size approximately 1 – 1.5 hours. Punch dough down; turn out on lightly floured surface. Cover; let rest 10 minutes. Shape dough into rolls. Roll into 3 equal circles about 8" in diameter. Brush with butter. Cut into 8 pie pieces. Roll towards point and seal end. Place sealed side down on pan and cover. Let rise until double in size about 30-45 minutes. Bake 350° for 10-12 minutes. Enjoy!

The Yorioka Family Christmas Eve Curry

My family started making this incredibly simple recipe on Christmas Eve because we could make it in the slow cooker, go to the Christmas Eve service, and then come home to a delicious meal! (The first year we made it, we were worried that the dog might try to jump on the counter with the slow cooker. So we thought, "where is the safest place in the house to put the slow cooker?" Naturally, we decided to put it in the bathroom. The curry was safe, but the bathroom smelled like curry through Christmas!) While everything is a little different for Christmas 2020, we will still be making our traditional Japanese curry. It wouldn't be Christmas Eve now without it! **Polly Yorioka**

Ingredients:

- * Potatoes
- * Onions
- * Carrots
- * Chicken (any cut of meat)
- * Apples
- * Cooking oil
- * Water
- * S&B Golden Curry cubes
- * (or other Japanese curry brand)

**Portions and ratios to taste, depending on the number of people you want to serve. You really can't go wrong!*



Instructions:

Slice potatoes, onions, carrots, and apples into approximately 1 inch cubes. Slice meat into cubes—or add whole chicken thighs (just be careful to remove the bones later). Pour a little bit of cooking oil into a large pot (with lid)- or use a slow cooker if you have more time (6+ hours). Heat the oil and then add the chicken on medium heat. Brown the chicken. Then add potatoes, onions, carrots and apples—and cover with water. Add a few cubes of curry to taste. Start with less, add more as needed so it doesn't get too salty. On medium, cover and bring to a boil; then, reduce to a low simmer for as long as you can. The longer you simmer, the more flavor it will have and the softer the chicken will be. The apples will melt into the curry giving it a sweet taste. Stir occasionally so that nothing burns. Serve with a fresh pot of white, Japanese short grain rice. Enjoy!

Advent Calendar

1 "The angel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth, to a virgin."
Luke 1:26-27

Luke 1:30
"The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary for you have found favor with God."
2

3 "And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus."
Luke 1:31

Luke 2:3
"All went to their towns to be registered."
7

Luke 2:4-5
"Joseph also went from Nazareth to Judea...he went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child."
8

"And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger."
Luke 2:7
9

13 **Luke 2:10** "But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people..."

14
"to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."
Luke 2:11

Luke 2:12 "This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."
15

Matthew 2:1
"In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ..."
19

"Where is this child who has been born the king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage."
Matthew 2:2
20

Matthew 2:11a "On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and worshipped him..."
21

Short scriptures for daily reading. Consider adding one activity to each day based on the questions in the daily reflections (bake some cookies for a neighbor, or drop some canned food at the food bank)

Luke 1:32
 "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High. . ."

4

"Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

Luke 1:38

5

Luke 2:1
 "In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered."

6

Luke 2:7 "...and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn."

10

"In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night."

Luke 2:8

11

Luke 2:9
 "Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terrified."

12

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

Luke 2:14

16

"so they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger."

Luke 2:16

17

18
Psalm 95:6 "O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!"

"Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

Matthew 2:11b

22

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

23

"Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"

2 Corinthians 9:15

24

Third Sunday in Advent

The Shepherd's Candle, the candle of joy

Ezekiel 37:26-28

²⁶ I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary among them forevermore. ²⁷ My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ²⁸ Then the nations shall know that I the Lord sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is among them forevermore.

Luke 2:8-20

⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Revelation 21:10-11; 18-19;21-24

¹⁰ And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. . . ¹⁸ The wall is built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass. ¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every jewel. . . ²¹ And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass. ²² I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.

The promise from the beginning of scripture to the end is that God would rescue all who call upon him and bring them back into his original intention for creation: dwelling with him in wholeness and joy. Throughout human history he has called humanity to give up their self-centered obsession with themselves and turn back to him. He promised he would give them a way to be rescued by sending a Savior.

On this Sunday we rejoice with the shepherds at the birth of Jesus, the Savior who was and is Christ the Lord. They were given a firsthand look at the miracle of Christ's birth,

announced to them by the angels in heaven. They were called from their work to worship, to stand in awe at God's determination to save his people through His Son.

The miracle of Jesus' entrance into our world, his life, death, and resurrection, give us wondrous access to the Lord God now in this life. But that is not all. God promises that there will be a day when all the earth will be redeemed, with no more tears and no more brokenness. He has promised that he will come to earth and recreate a world filled with the light of his love and glory. While we wait for the fulfillment of that promise, we have hope! Christ will come again!

Read aloud Mark 1:3-4. God sent John the Baptist (Jesus' cousin) to spread the news that God's gift of Jesus was on the way. God wanted people's hearts to be ready to receive and celebrate Jesus. He wanted this good news to be spread everywhere.

Can you name some ways we send and get news?

If the birth of Jesus happened today, how would we hear about it?

What does Jesus' birth mean to you personally?

Why do you think God wanted people's hearts to be ready to celebrate Jesus?

Knowing that Jesus will return and create the kind of world described in Revelation is meant to give us hope for the future. How does this promise of Christ's return help you celebrate this Christmas?

Activities

- * Make a God's Blessing Box: wrap a shoebox, tie a bow around it, and make a slit in the top. Write your blessings on pieces of paper that you can place in the box throughout Advent. Keep the box near your nativity scene to remind you of the ways God is showing you love and hope.
- * As a household, set up a giving jar. Put all your loose change in it each day. Decide where you will contribute whatever money you collect. You may want to give to the Deacon Fund or to the Salvation Army.
- * Add the shepherds and animal grazing nearby to the nativity scene.
- * Add more hay (ways you have encouraged others this week).

Worship

Light the Prophecy, Bethlehem, and Shepherd's Candle

Leader (as the candle is being lit):

We light these candles to remember that our hope is in Jesus, the Light of the world.

Sing or Read:

O Come all Ye Faithful (Hymn 173)

*O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold Him,
Born the King of Angels!
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.*

*Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be the glory giv'n;
Word of the Father,
Now in the flesh appearing,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.*

*Sing, choirs of angels;
Sing in exultation,
O sing, all ye blissful ones of heav'n above.
Glory to God, In the highest glory!
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.*

Read: Isaiah 40:1-5

¹Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.
²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the Lord's hand
double for all her sins.
³A voice cries out:
"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,

make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
⁴Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.
⁵Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

Sing or Read

The First Noel

*The First Noel, the Angels did say
Was to certain poor shepherds
in fields as they lay
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep
On a cold winter's night that was so deep
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel
Born is the King of Israel!*

*They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the East beyond them far
And to the earth it gave great light
And so it continued both day and night,
Noel, Noel, Noel Noel,
Born is the King of Israel!*

Leader prays concluding prayer: Faithful God, your promises stand unshaken through all generations. Renew us in hope, that we may be awake and alert watching for the glorious return of Jesus Christ, our Judge and Savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Week 3, Day 1

We will begin each week with *Lectio Divina*, Latin for “Divine Reading.” This is an opportunity for us to come prayerfully before the living Word of God, ready to hear God speak to us. Rather than approaching the Scripture academically, this is a moment for us to invite Christ to speak.

- * **Lectio: Reading.** Slowly and carefully read through today’s passage of Scripture. Read it out loud three times, pausing between each reading.
- * **Meditatio: Mediation.** Ponder the passage. What words, phrases or ideas stood out to you? What questions came to mind? Wrestle with questions. Take a moment to write your thoughts down.
- * **Oratio: Prayer.** Have a conversation with God. Ask the Spirit to give insight into what you have read and what has stood out to you.
- * **Contemplatio: Contemplation.** Take a moment of silent prayer and sit in God’s love. What does God want you take with you today?

22 I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. 25 Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” (Revelation 21:22-27)

Week 3, Day 2

I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.” (Revelation 21:22)

In the Old Testament, the Jerusalem temple was the focal point of Israelite worship: it was the dwelling place of God. The temple was to be a symbol to the nations of the presence and power of God—accessible to all through the people of Israel.

In the New Testament, something remarkable happens: the presence of God is no longer in the physical temple but dwelling in the hearts of all believers. Paul writes to the early church in Corinth, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16)

In Revelation, we see an image of the future where God’s presence is fully established on earth. There is no need for a temple in the city because Jesus Christ has returned.

Reflect on the mystery of God’s presence in your life and the gift of God’s Holy Spirit.

Allow yourself to imagine a future where Jesus Christ has established his kingdom.

How would God’s physical presence and rule change our individual lives, our communities, and our nations?

Week 3, Day 3

"Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there." (Revelation 21:25)

In ancient cities, gates were closed at night. The Jerusalem temple closed its gates at night. But in the world to come, the gates of the new Jerusalem will never be closed. There will be no night, no danger, no enemies. Only the nations coming to bring tribute. With no closed gates, there is no outsider, no stranger, no one left out. Everyone is invited into the kingdom of God.

This image from Revelation 21 was foretold by the prophet Isaiah:

*¹⁹"The sun shall no longer be
your light by day,
nor for brightness shall the moon
give light to you by night;
but the Lord will be your everlasting light,
and your God will be your glory.
²⁰Your sun shall no more go down,
or your moon withdraw itself;
for the Lord will be your everlasting light,
and your days of mourning shall be ended." (Isaiah 60:19-20)*

Reflect on where there is darkness and mourning in your life.

Pray that the light of God would enter into the dark places & bring hope.

Ask God to reveal places where we have closed gates:

Who are the enemies that we fear?

Who have we made an outsider?

Pray for God's wisdom to know how to reach out with grace to those on the outside.

Week 3, Day 4

"The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it." (Revelation 21:24)

Revelation continually reminds us that God's kingdom is multi-national, multi-cultural and multi-lingual.

⁹"After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰They cried out in a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" (Revelation 7:9-10)

Reflect on how we can prepare now for the future reality that all nations, tribes, peoples and languages will be gathered before the throne of the Lamb.

What are next steps that God is calling you to take to break down racial and ethnic barriers in your own life?

Pray that God would bring to mind a person or cross-cultural context where you could more fully live into the future reality of reconciliation.

Close by listening to a worship song in a language other than your own.

Week 3, Day 5

"But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Revelation 21:27)

At the heart of the Gospel is grace. In Revelation, amidst vivid apocalyptic images, it can be easy to lose sight of the message of God's grace.

God's purity demands us to come to him with clean hearts. This is why it was so important in the Old Testament for the people of God to carefully prepare themselves through ritual cleansing and animal sacrifice when coming into the presence of God in the temple. The Israelites had to continually cleanse themselves, over and over again.

In Jesus Christ, we can receive cleansing and forgiveness from sin. Once and for all. This is a message of radical grace, offered to us through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. The good news is that we do not have to be perfect and sinless to enter the kingdom of God. We need to accept the gracious gift of God to send his own son, Jesus Christ, to die in our place—accepting the punishment for our sins.

This is the foundation for a life in Christ: accepting the gift of God's grace. If you are ready to do that today for the first time, pray to God and tell him that you're ready to accept this gift. If you pray this prayer today, reach out to a Christian friend or pastor and let them know about your decision. Go to www.upc.org/Jesus and let someone know of your decision and connect with a spiritual advisor.

For all of us, today is an invitation to invite God to purify our hearts. If we have received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we are assured of our salvation. But sin can still creep into our lives and create a barrier from his hearing from God.

Ask God to reveal any sin in your life. Is there anything unclean?

Have we acted in ways not pleasing to God?

Confess your sins to God and receive this assurance of pardon:

"If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

Tradition Tradition



*The Hinmans love to ski on Christmas day while everyone else is opening presents and NOT standing in lift lines. Tradition, tradition! **George Hinman***

SIMPLE SUNDAY SERVICE

Fourth Sunday in Advent

The Angel's Candle, the candle of love

Isaiah 7:14

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, a virgin shall conceive and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel (God with us).

John 14:25-29

²⁵ 'I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. ²⁸ You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.

Rev 21:22-27

22 I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. 25 Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

From Dallas Willard: Peace is not the absence of conflict — it's "shalom" or fullness of life. Peace is a rest of will that comes from divine assurance about how things will turn out.

Jesus came to bring us to God, to make a way to have peace. Even when there is not peace in the world, we can have peace because of Christ living in us through faith. His sacrificial love, his presence in us can make it possible for us to live at peace, to live in "shalom" in this world no matter what is happening around us. We yearn for the day when the peace we experience in him will be a reality all around us. There will be a day when He will return and bring a glorious end to our suffering, and we who believe in him will live in the beautiful city, filled with light and hope, and yes, peace.

How do you think the birth of Jesus changes the lives of ordinary people? How is it changing you?

In what ways would you like Jesus to bring you peace this Christmas season?

Activities

- * Add Mary, Joseph, and the donkey, and more hay to the nativity scene.
- * Write a letter, poem, or song to Jesus and/or to each person in your family. Wrap it in a gift box with special (maybe white or gold) wrapping paper to be opened on Christmas Day.
- * Pray and thank God for his gift and for each other.

Worship

Light the Prophecy, Bethlehem, Shepherd's, and Angel's Candle

Leader (as the candles are being lit):

We light these candles to remember that our hope is in Jesus, the Light of the world.

Read

Isaiah 9:1-7

But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

² *The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.*

³ *You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.*

⁴ *For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.*

⁵ *For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.*

⁶ *For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

⁷ *His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

Matthew 1:18-24

¹⁸ *Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:*

²³ *"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.*

Sing or Read: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled."
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With th' angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King!*

*Christ, by highest heaven adored:
Christ, the everlasting Lord;
Late in time behold him come,
Offspring of the favored one.
Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see;
Hail, th' incarnate Deity:
Pleased, as man, with us to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel!
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King!*

*Hail! the heaven-born Prince of peace!
Hail! the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that we no more may die:
Born to raise the ones of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King!"*

Leader: An angel visited Mary and she decided to put her hope in God's promise. An angel visited Elizabeth and she was grateful for God's great gift to her. An angel visited Zechariah and told him that his prayers had been answered and he waited until his son John was born. At long last, it was time for Mary to see God's promise to her come true.

Sing or Read:
Angels we Have Heard on High (Hymn 146)

*Angels we have heard on high
'Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!*

*Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heav'nly song?
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!*

*Come to Bethlehem and see Him
Whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee,
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!*

*See Him in a manger laid,
Whom the choirs of angels praise;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,
While our hearts in love we raise.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!*

Leader prays closing prayer: Dear Lord Jesus- we love you because you loved us first and came to earth to be with us. We thank you that you are still with us today. Amen.

DAILY REFLECTIONS

Week 4, Day 1

We will begin each week with Lectio Divina, Latin for "Divine Reading." This is an opportunity for us to come prayerfully before the living Word of God, ready to hear God speak to us. Rather than approaching the Scripture academically, this is a moment for us to invite Christ to speak.

- * **Lectio: Reading.** Slowly and carefully read through today's passage of Scripture. Read it out loud three times, pausing between each reading.
- * **Meditatio: Mediation.** Ponder the passage. What words, phrases or ideas stood out to you? What questions came to mind? Wrestle with questions. Take a moment to write your thoughts down.
- * **Oratio: Prayer.** Have a conversation with God. Ask the Spirit to give insight into what you have read and what has stood out to you.
- * **Contemplatio: Contemplation.** Take a moment of silent prayer and sit in God's love. What does God want you take with you today?

¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

⁹Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. ¹²It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites; ¹³on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. ¹⁴And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵The angel who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. ¹⁶The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width; and he measured the city with his rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. ¹⁷He also measured its wall, one hundred forty-four cubits by human measurement, which the angel was using. ¹⁸The wall is built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass. ¹⁹The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. ²¹And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass.

²²I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. ²⁵Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ²⁶People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Revelation 21:1-2, 9-27)

Week 4, Day 2

"And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God." (Revelation 21:10)

Richard Bauckham writes, "In the beginning God had planted a garden for humanity to live in (Genesis 2:8). In the end he will give them a city. In the New Jerusalem the blessings of paradise will be restored, but the New Jerusalem is more than paradise regained. As a city it fulfills humanity's desire to build out of nature a human place of human culture and community." (*Reading Revelation Responsibly*, p. 164)

The narrative arc of the story of the Bible moves from Garden to City. Or as Michael Gorman puts it, the paradise that we look forward to is a "garden-city." Gorman explains, "This tells us that is not civilization/culture/the city itself that is evil, but the distortion of city/culture/civilization caused by evil people and powers (*Reading Revelation Responsibly*, p. 164).

What would it look like to see civilization/culture/the city restored?

Think about your own families, neighborhoods, communities, and nation.

Ask God how he wants to invite you to join his restoration?

How are we being invited into the cultural renewal that God desires for our communities?

Week 4, Day 3

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21:1)

"As communities of uncivil worship and witness, Christians seek to practice the ways of peace, justice, reconciliation, evangelism, and earth care that are implied in the vision of the new heaven and new earth given to us in Revelation 21-22. In visionary, truthful worship we have been caught up into God's own plan for the re-creation of the world, and we long to share that vision by witnessing to it in concrete practice...

This is done, not with the false, crusading great that such activity will eventually bring the nations to faith in Christ, defeat all corporate sin, end all Empire, and make all things new. Rather, because Christians have the true hope that God will in fact do all those things, and because they have experienced the early signs of that future, complete transformation in their own lives and communities, they attempt, with the Spirit's power, to live as an alternative community shaped both by the reality of the new creation and the promise of the fullness of that new creation God's future." (*Michael Gorman, Reading Revelation Responsibly*, p. 169-170)

As we ready for hearts for the celebration of Christmas, the first coming of Jesus Christ, thank God for what he has been speaking to you through Revelation this Advent. Ask God to open your eyes to the ways he is calling you to join him in his mission to make all things new.

Christmas Eve

¹In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ²until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

⁶Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

⁷He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:1-8)

As we celebrate Christmas Eve and the birth of Jesus Christ at his first coming two-thousand years ago, we are invited to join Jesus in his mission of restoration to all peoples. The baby Jesus, born in a manger, was God's gift of grace and salvation to all the world.

With this gift comes a promise and invitation. We are promised the power of the Holy Spirit. And we are invited to join Jesus in his mission of salvation. Meditate on this promise and invitation. This Christmas Eve say "yes" to joining Jesus—and invite Jesus to fill you with the Holy Spirit. Ask God where he may be calling you in the new year ahead. Which neighborhood is inviting you to join him? What concrete next steps do you want to commit to taking in the new year? Write down anything you feel that God may be nudging you to do—and revisit them in the new year.

CELEBRATIONS & TRADITIONS

Stollen with Marzipan

Stollen with marzipan (we use the one from King Arthur Flour) is always on the menu for Christmas morning. We spread Christmas cheer by baking extras and delivering to neighbors. After breakfast we look for snow! Cross-country skiing with extended family is a tradition. Valerie Giesbrecht

Search: *Gluten Free Stollen with Marzipan on the King Arthur Flour Website*



Christmas Day

Christ Candle

Activity

- * Place the baby Jesus in your manger at home.

Worship

Light the Prophecy, Bethlehem, Shepherd's, Angel's, and Christ candles

Leader (as the candles are being lit): We light these candles to remember that our hope is in Jesus, the Light of the world.

Read: Luke 2:1-7

¹ In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴ Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Sing or Read:

What Child is This?

*What child is this Who laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping.
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping.
This, this is Christ the King
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing.
Haste, haste to bring him praise;
The babe, the son of Mary.*

*Why lies he in such a mean estate,
Where ox and ass are feeding.
The end of fear for all who hear,
The silent word is speaking.
This, this is Christ the King
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing.
Haste, haste to bring him praise;
The babe, the son of Mary.*

*So bring him incense Gold and myrrh,
Come peasant, king to love him.
The King of kings salvation brings,
Let loving hearts enthrone him.
This, this is Christ the King
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing.
Haste, haste to bring him praise;
The babe, the son of Mary.*

Leader: *This is the day we have been waiting for. It is a day to celebrate and enjoy the gifts that God has given us.*

Sing or Read:
Silent Night (Hymn 164)

*Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright.
Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child,
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.*

*Silent night, holy night!
Son of God, Love's pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth,
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth.*

*Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight,
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia.
Christ the Savior is born,
Christ the Savior is born!*

Leader prays closing prayer: *Glory to you, almighty God, for you sent your only-begotten Son, that we might have new life. Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for you became flesh and dwelt among us that we might become your people. Glory to you, Holy Spirit, for you direct and rule our lives. Glory to you, almighty God, and to your Son, Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.*

If you want someone to walk with you in this journey of joining Jesus, reach out to a Christian friend or pastor. If you have made a first time decision to become a Christian during this Advent, please go to upc.org/Jesus and let someone know of your decision and connect with a spiritual advisor in the new year.

Merry Christmas! We hope this season of Advent gave you time to experience renewed hope, joy unencumbered, and peace in your lives in light of God's promise to us to make all things new! Our hope is for you to carry these realities with you into this new year.

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*All scripture references contained in this booklet are NRSV
For questions or more information please contact the communications department.*

**CHRIST
HAS
DIED.
CHRIST
IS
RISEN.**

**CHRIST
WILL**

*come
again*



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