



**PRAYER GUIDE FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS**  
2020-2021



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“ADVENT...IS A SERIES OF EVENTS DESIGNED NOT TO DELAY THE CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS, BUT TO ENHANCE IT. IT’S A KIND OF DELAYED GRATIFICATION THAT CULMINATES IN...A SATISFACTION THAT IS ALL THE RICHER FOR THE WAITING.”

— JOAN CHITTISTER

**THE RULE OF LIFE & THE LITURGICAL CALENDAR.**

At Grace Pasadena, we are committed to forming habits and practices—a Rule of Life—that root us in the love of God in Jesus Christ. As part of our efforts, we follow the liturgical, or church calendar. As we live into the different seasons of the church, the Holy Spirit invites us to live our lives with God and one another with a different rhythm and intention than our usual busy and frantic pace. So, what is the liturgical calendar?

As another calendar year draws to a close, a new church year is just beginning. The church year was developed over centuries as a tool to help the people of God remember and celebrate God’s promises and their fulfilment in Jesus Christ. The church year is divided into the following seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost/Ordinary Time. Each season draws our attention to different aspects of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, as well as his ascension, the day of Pentecost, and his promised return. The church calendar also provides space for us to consider our identity as the body of Christ and our witness to the world in word and deed until Jesus returns. To aid our remembrance and celebration, each season has its own feast days, colors, prayers, and rituals.

By marking the passage of time *redemptively*, the church year reminds us that God holds all time in his hands and has acted and continues to act in history in order to redeem for himself his people. Taken altogether, we see that the church year acts in concert with Scripture, prayer, worship, Sabbath keeping, silence, and other aspects of our Rule of Life to amplify the

invitation to lose ourselves in the Good News of Jesus so that we might truly find ourselves and bless the world with the life of Jesus.

**THE ADVENT SEASON.**

The approximately four-week season of Advent starts the new church year, preparing the people of God for the celebrations of Christmas and Epiphany. It officially begins the Sunday after the feast of Christ the King, which means the length of Advent varies year-to-year. Advent doesn’t always start on December 1!

The word *advent* means “coming.” This is the season when we *remember* Jesus’ first coming and the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises. We also *anticipate* his coming again. Jesus’ resurrection inaugurated a new era in which sin and death are defeated, but until he returns as he promised at the ascension, this world continues to be marred by sin. Along with creation, we yearn for the day when Christ comes again to complete his work of redemption once and for all for all time (Romans 8:22-23). Advent teaches us to look forward with the hope.

It follows that the mood of the season is of longing, expectation and waiting. The color purple is used because of its association with repentance, preparation and sacrifice.

As a season of longing, the cry and prayer of Advent is taken from Revelation 22:20: “Come, Lord Jesus, come!” It is the cry of those who have experienced the tyranny of injustice in a world under the curse of sin. It is the cry of those who still have hope of deliverance because they believe in a God who is faithful to his promise to renew all things by his love. It is the cry that sums up our deepest desires.

Of course, Scripture teaches us that we need redemption from our broken world because we broke it! Advent calls us to wait and prepare for Jesus' return by repenting. We are to turn away from the false hopes and desires that twist our hearts and break our relationships and world. We are to turn toward Jesus, who frees us so that we may serve one another in grace and truth. Just as John the Baptist was born to prepare the way for Jesus' first coming, we are given to each other in the church to encourage each other and challenge the world around us to prepare for his coming again.

So, what do we exactly do during Advent? We wait and prepare by re-committing ourselves to the Christian practices, especially prayer. We learn to pray "Come, Lord Jesus" with new urgency. We offer God our desires, hopes, fears and laments. We enter this time to cultivate patience and new hope.

This makes Advent is a wonderful time to cultivate prayer. This guide offers prayers for individuals, families, roommates, and friends. We hope this guide and the tools offered within it move us into deeper and more intimate prayer. Through prayer, may we be formed into a more patient people, a people who wait on the living King to satisfy rather than a people who seek self-satisfaction with lesser things and their false promises.

## THE CHRISTMAS SEASON.

In the rhythms of the Church year, we learn the value of waiting and preparing for celebration. This rhythm reminds us that God always answers his people and fulfills his promises in his mysterious timing. We are a society that embraces instant satisfaction. Advent forces us to wait, to slow down, and to prepare. And the good news is that our waiting is not in vain: Advent always ends with the second biggest celebration of the Christian year, and that is Christmas! (Let us not forget that Easter, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is *the* feast of feasts.) Without Advent, our Christmas celebrations become too weak.

At Christmas, we remember the birth of Jesus, and celebrate past fulfillment and future fulfillment of God's promises in Jesus Christ. The mood is that of joy. The colors white and gold are used because of its association with the glory, royalty, joy, holiness and light of God. With all of our past, present and future waiting answered in Jesus, we continue the song sung by the chorus of angels present at Jesus' birth: "Glory to God in the highest!" (Luke 2:14).

This celebration is not a one-day affair! Christmas is actually a twelve-day celebration beginning on Christmas Day. Yes, the twelve days of Christmas refers to the entire season of Christmas that ends with the Epiphany on January 6, which commemorates the visitation of the Magi. All of our Advent waiting leads to a long celebration. How could Christmas not be a multi-day, extravagant and joyous feast when the King of Kings, the Prince of Peace, Creator and Redeemer has come and is coming again?

*ADVENT REMINDS US THAT "MISERY, SORROW, POVERTY, LONELINESS, HELPLESSNESS, AND GUILT MEAN SOMETHING QUITE DIFFERENT IN THE EYES OF GOD THAN ACCORDING TO HUMAN JUDGMENT; THAT GOD TURNS TOWARD THE VERY PLACES FROM WHICH HUMANS TURN AWAY; THAT CHRIST WAS BORN IN A STABLE BECAUSE THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR HIM IN THE INN—A PRISONER GRASPS THIS BETTER THAN OTHERS. AND FOR THEM, THIS IS TRULY GOOD NEWS."*

**—DIETRICH BONHOEFFER**

So, what do we do during the Christmas season? We rejoice, celebrate and give gifts. In some traditions, gift giving occurs on each of the twelve days of Christmas. Regardless of your gift giving practice, it is one that emulates and points to God's great sacrificial generosity towards us. No matter how we celebrate, it is a reflection of Christ's selfless condescension (Philippians 2).

While we celebrate, we also look for ways to be united with Jesus in his humiliation so that others in our lives can know the joy of the Incarnation, the good news that God is with us. In other words, we continue to cultivate the Christian practices to be shaped into the people of God.

## THE ADVENT WREATH.

Many celebrations of Advent include the use of an Advent wreath. The Advent wreath as we know it today is a relatively new tradition, but one now embraced by Christians across many denominations. The wreath consists of evergreen boughs encircling five candles. Generally, four purple candles represent each week of Advent and a fifth white/gold one represents Christmas. It's worth noting that in some traditions, the candles also represent the different themes of the season. The following are common themes and their meanings:

- **The first candle** (*purple*)—Hope. For centuries and throughout the Old Testament, God had told His people that He would fulfill the promise by sending the Savior that all humanity needs.
- **The second candle** (*purple*)—LOVE. God's love is shown by this: while we were yet sinners, His Son Jesus died for us. Now we have been redeemed and adopted into His family as His children. Experiencing God's love for us, we are now made free to love others.
- **The third candle** (*purple/pink*)—JOY. It is through Jesus Christ that we participate in eternal, abundant life. One of the fruits of His Spirit dwelling in us is joy. How could it be otherwise since nothing can separate us from the love of God through the Savior? Many use pink this week to mark the midpoint of Advent and symbolize our increasing joy as Christmas draws nearer.
- **The fourth candle** (*purple*)—PEACE. One of Jesus' many titles is the Prince of Peace. He is the means for reconciliation between the Righteous God and His unrighteous people. Thus, he is the means of peace between people, within families, across cultures, generations, classes, and nations. He is the one who restores *shalom*, the way God intended life to be.

- **The fifth and center candle** (*white*)—THE CHRIST CANDLE—Christ is the light of the World and the center of our lives. In Him we find truth, purpose, and life. He not only died to purchase us as a people for His own possession, He rose from the dead as pledged so that we would share in his life.

We recommend the wreath because it offers a visual way to mark our Advent waiting and the fulfillment of our expectations in Jesus Christ. Lighting the candles also offers a moment in our busy days, to pause and to reflect on our longings and to offer them to the one who created us, knows us, and comes to us.

#### THE PRAYER GUIDE & INVITATION TO PRAYER.

We offer this guide to help you keep Advent. A few notes on the different elements of the guide

- This guide is designed for people of all ages. For example, at the start of each week of Advent, families are invited to read through a short devotional that invites children into the theme of the week and to contemplate its connection to the promises of God and their fulfillment in Jesus. These devotionals, however, are good for everyone! Additionally, the suggested scripture lessons, prayers, and reflection questions are relatively simple to keep the time short and sweet.
- Consider keeping a journal for Advent. Write down prayer requests or responses to the passages and music.
- Use the daily liturgy as you are able. If time is tight, for example, simply light a candle and say one of the prayers, or light a candle and read the suggest passage for the day. Keep Advent daily as you and your

household are able and grow into your Advent practices. Consider using the liturgy before or after a meal.

- The guide also includes a short liturgy for the evening or before bedtime. The Apostle Paul encourages us to pray at all times with all kinds of prayers (Ephesians. 6:18). A way to do this is to develop a pattern of prayer throughout the day.
- If you would like to read additional scripture, the daily lectionary is provided on page 17. Readings from the Psalms, Old Testament, Gospels, and Epistles are provided.
- As you keep Advent, consider your individual and communal spiritual practices. For example, how might slowing down a few moments a day during Advent help you build in more silence, fasting, and rest beyond Advent? Previous prayer guides (available on our website) are a good starting point about the spiritual practices. Reach out to Pastor Marc if you want to go deeper or looking for more resources.
- The suggested music reflects the themes of the season, as well as our Advent-desires. You'll notice that the suggested hymns and songs do not include Christmas carols. This is to help us wait for Christmas! A separate appendix with lyrics and links to playlists on Apple Music and Spotify may be found at our website: [www.gracepasadena.org](http://www.gracepasadena.org).
- The guide takes us through the Christmas Season. A prayer guide for Epiphany (1/6/21) and the season that follows will be available starting January 3, 2021.

#### FINAL ENCOURAGEMENTS

We believe this guide, along with the wreath, will help you as individuals, roommates, groups, and families to enter into the redemptive story of God's love in Jesus Christ in new and deeper ways. Our goal is not to load you down with more tasks in an already busy life, but rather to provide you with tools to help you experience God's goodness more fully this season and beyond.

With that said, please remember that keeping Advent and the Rule of Life is not about perfection. The truth is, we will never keep either perfectly. The good news is that our

God is perfectly faithful and is the one leading us into deeper communion with him. So, let's keep Advent and our Rule of Life imperfectly but with hope, peace, joy, and love.

It is a great joy to be in community with you and to wait on Jesus together. We are so thankful that God has brought us together and we are honored to be able to worship and serve our Lord together with you. May Christ grant us all a blessed Advent and Christmas!

***With great love for you all,***

The Pastors and Staff of Grace Pasadena

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*"CHRISTMAS HAS DEVoured ADVENT, GOBBLED IT UP WITH THE TURKEY GIBLETS AND THE GOBLETS OF SEASONAL ALE.... [THE] DISAPPEARANCE OF ADVENT SEEMS ESPECIALLY DISTURBING FOR IT'S INJURED EVEN THE SECULAR CHRISTMAS SEASON: OPENING A HOLE, FROM THANKSGIVING ON, THAT CAN BE FILLED ONLY WITH FIERCER, MADDER, AND WILDER ATTEMPTS TO ANTICIPATE CHRISTMAS. MORE CHRISTMAS TREES. MORE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS. MORE TINSEL, MORE TASSELS, MORE GLITTER....FOR MUCH OF AMERICA, CHRISTMAS ITSELF ARRIVES NEARLY AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT: NOT THE FULFILLMENT, BUT ONLY THE END, OF THE LONG YULE SEASON THAT HAS BURNED WITHOUT STOP SINCE THE STORES BEGAN THEIR CHRISTMAS SALES."*

**—JOSEPH BOTTUM**

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\* Portions of this guide have been adapted from "The Jesus Storybook Bible" by Sally Lloyd-Jones, as well as materials written by Stephanie Freemyer and our friends at Christ Church Berkley (CA) and Resurrection Brooklyn (NY).

**FOR THE START OF ADVENT 1 - HOPE - 11/29**

**DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR NAME MEANS?** If you don't, type "meaning of (your name)" into Google (ask a parent or guardian if you need help) and look up the name of each person in your house. You can even look up the meaning of pet names for fun! Now look up the name "Isaiah." What does this name mean?

**Parent/Guardian/Adult or Older Child:** There was once a man Isaiah, and his name meant "Salvation of the Lord," or "God will save us!" God had a special job for Isaiah. You see, Isaiah's job was to listen to God and then tell people what he heard. Now, God let Isaiah know a secret. God was going to mend his broken world. He showed Isaiah his Secret Rescue Plan: Operation "No More Tears!" This is the message God gave Isaiah (it was like a letter God wrote to his children). *Continue reading or invite an older child to read the letter:*

My dearest child: I made you to know you and to be known by you. But you're all wandering away from me like lost sheep, and now you can't find your way back. You've been stumbling around, like people in a dark room. I'm chasing after you to bring you back to me because I love you. I am coming to you as a Shepherd to carry you home to me. I'll shine my Light to chase away all the shadows.

I will come as a little baby. A Royal Son. The Prince of Peace. You will call me *Emmanuel*, which means "God has come to live with us." By coming to you as a baby, I will fulfill my promise to Adam and Eve. I will fulfill my promise to Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Ruth, and David. I will be from their family tree, but I will be for the whole world. Yes, I am coming as the Good Shepherd and Light of the World; I will bring you back to me!

But many people won't recognize me. I will be a King, but I won't live in a palace. I will be poor. And I will be a Servant. I will fight for you and all my people. I will rescue you from your sin and its power to break you. I will make the blind see and I will make the lame leap like deer! I will make everything the way it was always meant to be. I will make everything beautiful again. I won't do this with an army. I will do this by giving up my life. I will be like a Lamb. By dying and coming alive again, I will defeat sin and death. On that day the mountains and the trees will dance and sing for joy! The earth will shout out loud! And all tears will be wiped dry. Look for me! Wait for me! Hope for me!

Love, God.

**For reflection at the start of the week:**

- Look back at the story. Reread sections of it if necessary. How does God's rescue plan make you feel and think? How does the story give you hope?
- This week, you will read passages that remind us of the hope God gives to us and prepare us for the celebration of Christmas. A few come from the book of Isaiah. Have a family Advent journal ready to write down your responses.

**DWELLING IN HOPE**

**OPENING SONG**

*Sing or Listen to "Isaiah 11".*

**PRAYER OF THANKS**

Father, thank you for sending Your Son. Thank you for Your plan to rescue us and to save us. Your love for us gives us hope this season. Help us prepare for Jesus' birth this Advent. In Jesus' name. *Amen.*

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Lord, we have not kept watch for you. We are too busy with our fears. We are too busy with our work and comfort. We have not waited to find your will for us. We have not noticed the needs of our neighbor. We have not acknowledged the love you have given to us. Forgive us for our lack of watchfulness and renew us this day. *Amen.*

**LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLE 1**

**Q.** Why do we light the Advent candle?

**A.** To remember this truth: Jesus is the Light of the World and we who follow Him do not walk in darkness but have the Light of Life. In him the nations will put their hope. *(based on John 8:12 & Matthew 12:21)*

**ADVENT 1 READINGS**

*(Alternative readings from the Daily Lectionary are on page 17)*

Sunday	11/29	Mark 13:35-37
Monday	11/30	Isaiah 2:1-5
Tuesday	12/1	Isaiah 11:1-5
Wednesday	12/2	Isaiah 11:6-10
Thursday	12/3	Psalms 25:1-5
Friday	12/4	Isaiah 40:1-5
Saturday	12/5	Isaiah 40:28-31

**FOR REFLECTION:**

- What images and words of hope do you hear in the passage?
- How is God asking you to find hope in his love and promises today?

**CLOSING SONG AND PRAYERS**

*Sing or listen to "Precious Lord, Take My Hand". Write down prayers of hope for yourself, the world and its needs, the Church and her life. End with the Lord's Prayer and/or following prayer:*

"Come, Lord Jesus, come. Renew our hope for this day and ones ahead as we wait for you. *Amen.*"

**Reader 1 (A Parent/Guardian/Adult or Older Child):** Everything was ready. The moment God has been waiting for was here at last! God was coming to help his people, just as he promised in the beginning. But how would he come? What would he be like? What would he do? Mountains would have bowed down. Seas would have roared. Trees would have clapped their hands. But the earth held its breath. As silent as snow falling, he came in. And when no one was looking, in the darkness, he came.

There was a young girl who was engaged to a man named Joseph. (Joseph was the great-great-great-great-great grandson of King David.) One morning, this girl was minding her own business when, suddenly, a great warrior of light appeared right there, in her bedroom. He was Gabriel and he was an angel, a special messenger from heaven. When she saw the shining warrior standing there, Mary was frightened.

**Reader 2 (Invite an older child to read):** “You don’t need to be scared,” Gabriel said. “God is very happy with you!”

**Reader 1:** Mary looked around to see if perhaps he was talking to someone else.

**Reader 2:** “Mary,” Gabriel said, “you’re going to have a baby. A little boy. You will call him Jesus. He is God’s own Son. He’s the One! He’s the Rescuer!” The God who flung planets into space and kept them whirling around, the God who made the universe with just a word, the One who could do anything at all is making himself small and coming as a baby.

**Reader 1:** Wait. God was sending a baby to rescue the world? “But it’s too wonderful!” Mary said and felt her heart beating hard. “How can it be true?”

**Reader 2:** “Is there anything too wonderful for God?” Gabriel asked.

**Reader 1:** So Mary trusted God more than what her eyes could see. And she believed. “I am God’s servant,” she said. “Whatever God says, I will do.”

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**For reflection at the start of the week:**

- When you hear the word *love* what comes to mind?
- Look back at the story and recall last week’s letter from God. God keeps his promises! How does promise-keeping show love?
- This week, you will read passages that are about God’s love and prepare us for the celebration of Christmas. A few of these passages relate to the story about Mary. Have a family Advent journal ready to write down your responses to God’s love!

**OPENING SONG**

*Sing “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing”.*

**PRAYER OF THANKS**

God of Love, we thank you for making us and saving us because of your faithful love. Who are we that you love us so much? Grant that we may love one another and together be ever watchful for your coming. May we be ready to greet you, receive your love, and share it with the world. *Amen!*

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

We are to love you with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves. We fail to love you and our neighbors in thought, word, and deed. Forgive and restore us. Guide and deliver us. Renew our love with your great love for us. *Amen.*

**LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLES 1+2**

**Q.** Why do we light the Advent candles?

**A.** We welcome God’s light into our lives and we welcome the full revelation of God’s unfailing love for us and for all of creation. For Jesus is the Word of God, the lamp to our feet and the light to our path. *(based on Psalm 119:105)*

**ADVENT 2 READINGS**

*(Alternative readings from the Daily Lectionary are on page 17.)*

Sunday	12/6	Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:26-33
Monday	12/7	Luke 1:46-55
Tuesday	12/8	John 3:16-21
Wednesday	12/9	1 John 3:1-3; 3:16
Thursday	12/10	Psalm 36:5-9
Friday	12/11	2 Corinthians 1:20; Isaiah 25:1
Saturday	12/12	Psalm 136:1-9

**FOR REFLECTION:**

- What images and words of love do you hear in the passage?
- How might you respond to God’s love?

**CLOSING SONG AND PRAYERS**

*Sing “Only Ever Always”. Also take a few moments to write down prayers of love for yourself, the world and its needs; the Church and her life. End with the Lord’s Prayer and/or following prayer:*

*“Come, Lord Jesus, come. Renew all things with the light of your love. Make our way straight and lead us to you. Amen.”*



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## FOR THE START OF ADVENT 3 - JOY - 12/13

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**Reader 1 (A Parent/Guardian/Adult or Older Child):** After a long season of waiting, a bright new star appeared. Of all the stars in the dark vaulted heavens, this one shone clearer. It blazed in the night and made the other stars look pale beside it. The star announced the coming of God into the world as a baby, just as he promised. The Star was like a spotlight shining on him, lighting up the darkness. The star was a beacon, guiding everyone who longed to see God. And to announce the good news, a giant choir of angels appeared.

Guess who saw the choir first? A king? A queen? The rich? No! All those angels sang for a raggedy old bunch of shepherds watching their sheep outside Bethlehem. In those days, remember, people used to laugh at shepherds. You see, people thought shepherds were nobodies, just scruffy old riff-raff. They were considered outsiders and they heard the good news first! But they were afraid. Wouldn't you be if hundreds of angels appeared out of nowhere?

**Reader 2 (Invite an older child to read):** But an angel said: "Fear not! I bring happy news for everyone everywhere! Today in King David's town, in Bethlehem, the Messiah has been born!"

**Reader 1:** Then all the angels burst into a song, singing: "*Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.*" Then as quickly as they appeared, the angels left. And the shepherds ran to meet the Savior of the World, the one who would make all things right, the one who would gather every nation, tribe, language and people to bring peace!

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### **For reflection at the start of the week:**

- When you hear the word *joy* what comes to mind?
- Look back at the story. What kind of joy do you think the shepherds experienced?
- This week, you will read passages that are about the joy God gives and prepare us for the celebration of Christmas. A few of these passages relate to the story about the shepherds. Have your family Advent journal ready to write down your experiences of joy!

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## DWELLING IN JOY

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### **OPENING SONG**

*Sing or Listen to "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus".*

### **PRAYER OF THANKS**

Almighty God, we give thanks for your generosity. You give us love; you give us all that we need in life; you fill our hearts with joy because it brings you joy to do so. May we rest in this joy as we wait for Christmas and for you to make all things new in Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Lord, we have neglected Advent; we have neglected patience and waiting. We have been too busy with buying and wanting. We have been too busy with selfishness. Because of this, we have forgotten you and we are joyless. We are lost, in need of your help. Come, Lord Jesus. Forgive and restore us. Guide and deliver us. Renew our joy. *Amen.*

### **LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLES 1-3**

**Q.** Why do we light the Advent candles?

**A.** To remember this truth: Jesus is the Word through whom all things were made. In him is life and his life is the light of all people. If we receive his light, our joy is made complete. *(based on John 1:1-3 & John 15:11)*

### **ADVENT 3 READINGS**

*(Alternative readings from the Daily Lectionary are on page 17.)*

Sunday	12/6	Psalm 33:1-5; Luke 6:21
Monday	12/7	Luke 2:8-15
Tuesday	12/8	Luke 2:16-20
Wednesday	12/9	Philippians 4:4-9
Thursday	12/10	Psalm 95:1-7a
Friday	12/11	Psalm 150
Saturday	12/12	Psalm 26:6-9

### **FOR REFLECTION:**

- What images and words of joy do you hear in the passage?
- How might you respond to God's love?

### **CLOSING SONG AND PRAYERS**

*Sing or listen to "Messiah". Write down prayers of joy for yourself, the world and its needs; the Church and her life. End with the Lord's Prayer and/or following prayer:*

*"Come, Lord Jesus, come. Fill us with your joy. Fill our mouths with laughter. Amen"*

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## FOR THE START OF ADVENT 4 - PEACE - 12/20

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When you hear the word peace, what comes to mind? *Take a few moments to share your responses. If you have time, write a few responses or draw a picture of peace.*

We've had quite a year! 2020 has brought us many surprises, and many of them have reminded us that our lives, relationships, and the many things we love are very fragile. 2020 has been the year of a lot of brokenness. Have you been sad, heartbroken, worried, or afraid this year? *Take a few moments to reflect and discuss some of the desolations or "frownies" of the year.*

Christmas is Good News and medicine for our troubled hearts. Christmas tells us that God sees our heartache. Christmas tells us that God comes to us to break the power of sin, the source for all our heartache. Christmas tells us that God comes to us to overcome the sin in us and world in order to heal, restore, and make us the world whole.

We often think about peace as a something we feel inside of us. It is, and more! True peace comes when God puts the broken pieces of our lives and world back together to make everything whole. This is what Christmas is all about: God coming to us in Jesus Christ to make us whole, to give us peace.

We need a lot of peace! Thankfully, God is the source of true peace and he delights to give us his peace. When we believe in Jesus, the Prince of Peace, we can experience peace and help God extend peace to the world.

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### ***For reflection at the start of the week:***

- Look back on the last few months. When have you felt God's peace?
- This week, you'll sing two songs that express our desire for Christmas. These songs give us words to express how much we long for God's peace in Jesus Christ.
- This week, you will also read passages that are about God's peace and prepare us for the celebration of Christmas. To help you prepare, you will read the story of Jesus' birth on Christmas Eve. We're almost there!

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## DWELLING IN PEACE

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### **OPENING SONG**

*Sing or Listen to "The Earth Shall Know".*

### **PRAYER OF THANKS**

Triune God, you are the source of all harmony. As we wait for Christmas, draw your people together in renewed peace and unity, that our praise and worship might echo through our lives. In this season of expectation, draw us together in renewed mission, that we may be peacemakers as you have commanded. Keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the true Prince of Peace. *Amen.*

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

O God, we have each in our own way forgotten your love for us. We have, too often, walked away from your love only to hurt ourselves and rob peace from our neighbors. We are lost, in need of your help. Come, Lord Jesus. Forgive and restore us. Guide and deliver us. Renew our peace. *Amen.*

### **LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLES 1-4**

**Q.** Why do we light the Advent candles?

**A.** To remember this truth: Jesus is the Lord our God who lights our candle and lightens our darkness. For Jesus himself is our peace, the one who has broken down the dividing wall of hostility. (based on Psalm 18:28 & Ephesians 2:14)

### **ADVENT 4 READINGS**

*(Alternative readings from the Daily Lectionary are on page 17.)*

Sunday	12/20	Isaiah 9:2-7
Monday	12/21	John 14:27; 16:32-33
Tuesday	12/22	Ephesians 2:13-17
Wednesday	12/23	Philippians 1:2-6
Christmas Eve	12/24	Matthew 1-2 or Pages 176-191 in <i>The Jesus Storybook Bible</i>

### **FOR REFLECTION:**

- What images and words of peace do you hear in the passage?
- How might you respond to God's peace?

### **CLOSING SONG AND PRAYERS**

*Sing or Listen to "O Come, O Come Emmanuel". Write down prayers of joy for yourself, the world and its needs, the Church and her life. End with the Lord's Prayer and/or the following:*

*"Come, Lord Jesus, come. Cover us with your peace as we work, play, and rest. In all things, we rest knowing you are coming soon. Amen."*



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## THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

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*Christmas is finally here! Let's celebrate with a 12 day party! Take time at the start of Christmas to re-visit the introductory words about the season. Enter in and rejoice!*

### OPENING SONG

*Sing one, or more, of your favorite Christmas carols!*

### PRAYER OF THANKS

Shout for joy the whole earth, and everything within. Rejoice! For Light has come into the world! The mountains sing, the seas resound to the praise of your name. Salvation once promised is here on earth! The angels' song rings in the air, a child has been born. Hallelujah! The Savior of the world is here and he is coming again to complete his work of redemption! *Amen!*

### LIGHTING OF ALL ADVENT CANDLES + THE CHRIST CANDLE

**Q.** Why do we light the Christ candle?

**A.** With joy we remember Christ's coming and with joy we look forward to his coming again when night will be no more and lamp and sun will no longer be needed because he will be our light forever and ever. *(based on Revelation 22:5)*

### READINGS AND MEDITATIONS FOR THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

*(Alternative readings from the Daily Lectionary are on page 17.)*

What do you hear when you listen to the song "The 12 Days of Christmas"? It's more than a list of nonsensical, silly, and impractical gifts: it's a tool to teach us (children and adults!) the basics of historic Christianity. The "true love" of the song is God; the "me" are all of us who receive the gift of Jesus Christ by faith. On each day of Christmas, consider God's gifts to us and rejoice.

- **On the 1st day of Christmas (12/25), our True Love gives us a partridge.** The gift represents Jesus Christ, the Son of God given to us. He is the mother hen who gathers us under his wing and gives his life for us. Give thanks to God for sending his Son and ask for a deeper experience of his love. Read Isaiah 9:2-7; 13:34.
- **On the 2nd Day of Christmas (12/26), our True Love gives us two turtle doves.** The gift represents the Old and New Testaments. All of Scripture sustains and renews us by telling the story of God's faithful love and self-revelation in Jesus Christ. Give thanks for the great story of God's love and ask for a deeper hunger for God's Word. Read 2 Timothy 3:12-17.
- **On the 3rd Day of Christmas 3 (12/27), our True Love gives us three French Hens.** The gift of represents the three virtues of faith, hope and love. Thank God for all those who model these virtues and ask the Holy Spirit to help you grow in them. Read 1 Corinthians 13:13.
- **On the 4th Day of Christmas (12/28), our True Love gives us four turtle doves.** The gift symbolizes the four gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The claim of John 20:31 could be said of all the gospels. Thanks be to God! Praise God for these accounts and pray our congregations would be bold in our proclamation of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Read John 20:31.

- **On the 5th Day of Christmas (12/29), our True Love gives five golden rings.** The gift stands for the first five books of Genesis, also known as the Pentateuch or the Law. We who mediate on the law will be led in the way righteousness and be called blessed. Thank God for his law and pray to become like a tree rooted by streams of living water. Read Psalm 1.
- **On the 6th day of Christmas (12/30), our True Love gives six geese a-laying.** This gift stands for 6 days of creation and serve as reminder that God is the creator and sustainer of all things, and that he is utterly committed to his creation. Thank God for our beautiful world, and pray for the wisdom to be good stewards of this world. Read Genesis 1.
- **On the 7th Day of Christmas (12/31), our True Love gives seven swans a-swimming.** This gift symbolizes the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Ask the Holy Spirit to draw out and hone your gifts for the flourishing of God's church and world. Read 1 Corinthians 12:8-11.
- **On the 8th Day of Christmas (1/1), our True Love gives eight maids a-milking.** This gift symbolizes the 8 Beatitudes that frame for us the blessed life of God's people. Thank God for the people in your life who embody "the blessed life" and ask the Holy Spirit to form and mold you more and more in the likeness of Christ. Read Matthew 5:3-10.
- **On the 9th Day of Christmas (1/2), our True Love gives ladies dancing.** This gift represents the nine-fold fruit of the Holy Spirit. Ask the Holy Spirit to bear more and more fruit in you for the flourishing of your relationships, home, workplace, and neighborhood. Read Galatians 5:22.
- **On the 10th Day of Christmas (1/3), our True Love gives ten lord's a-leaping.** This gift stands for the 10 Commandments that frame for us the moral life of love for God's people. As you read the Commandments, ask God for the strength to respond with joyful obedience and faith to rely on the righteousness of Christ alone. Read Exodus 20:1-17.
- **On the 11th Day of Christmas (1/4), our True Love gives eleven pipers piping.** This gift symbolizes the eleven faithful Apostles, on whom Jesus built his church. Thank God for the Church universal and your local congregation and pray that our congregations would grow in love, unity and boldness. Read Luke 6:14-16; Ephesians 2:20.
- **On the 12th Day of Christmas (1/5), our True Love gives twelve drummers drumming.** This gift represents the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostles' Creed. Today, prayerfully recite the Apostles' Creed, giving thanks for this historic profession and asking God: (1) to help you embody the truths of the Creed more and more, and (2) that all who profess it may be one as Jesus prayed. Give thanks for the 12 Days of Christmas and ask God to prepare your hearts for the celebration of the Epiphany tomorrow, 1/6. Look for a celebration guide at our website.

### CLOSING SONG AND PRAYERS

*Sing another favorite Christmas carol and end with the following:*

God, we are as confounded as Joseph and Mary, as busy as the innkeepers, as lonely as the shepherds, as frightened as Herod, as wayfaring as the Magi. Bring us to the place where your love and salvation is known in a child born in a crude barn. Bring us to Bethlehem, to the place where Jesus was homeless, but where we are truly at home. *Amen.*

A SHORT EVENING/BEDTIME LITURGY FOR ADVENT

OPENING PRAYERS

Oh God, make speed to save us. Oh Lord, make haste to help us.  
Reveal among us the light of your presence that we may behold your power and glory.  
Blessed are you, Sovereign God, creator of light and darkness, to you be glory and praise forever.  
As evening falls, you renew your promise to reveal among us the light of your presence. Open  
our ears to your word. Open our eyes to you light. Amen.

EVENING SCRIPTURE READING

Revisit the assigned reading for today from the guide, or one of the scripture passages on page  
17. Savor these words.

PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS

Pray for yourself, neighbors and world. Give thanks for the day and conclude with the Lord’s  
Prayer or the following:  
Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ is the one who is to come, and the one whom we await with  
longing hearts. Make us ready to celebrate his first coming and make us ready to receive him  
when he comes again. Grant us a quiet night and grant us a perfect end. Amen.

Conclude with: “Come, Lord Jesus, come! Amen!”

From 12/17 to 12/23, add an antiphon. (The seven antiphons are often recited or sung on the  
seven days before Christmas Eve, a tradition stemming from the 7th or 8th centuries. Many of  
us are familiar with them through the hymn “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.” Each begins with  
“O” and is followed by a messianic title and ends with an invocation for the Messiah to come.  
The texts are derived from Old Testament passages that anticipate the coming of the Messiah. The  
Latin words for the messianic titles are, from first to last, Sapientia, Adonai, Radix, Clavis, Oriens,  
Rex, and Emmanuel. Surprisingly, the first letters of each word form a backwards acrostic: ERO  
CRAS. In Latin, this means “I shall be there tomorrow.” How appropriate for Advent!)

- 12/17: O Wisdom, coming forth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from one end to the  
other mightily, and sweetly ordering all things. Come and give us prudence.
- 12/18: O Adonai, leader of the House of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning  
bush and gave him the law on Sinai: Come and redeem us with an outstretched arm.
- 12/19: O Root of Jesse, standing as a sign among the peoples; before you kings will shut their  
mouths, to you the nations will make their prayer: Come and deliver us, and delay no longer.
- 12/20: O Key of David and scepter of the House of Israel; you open and no one can shut; you  
shut and no one can open: Come and lead the prisoners from the prison house, those who dwell  
in darkness and the shadow of death.
- 12/21: O Morning Star, splendor of light eternal and sun of righteousness: Come and enlighten  
those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.
- 12/22: O King of the nations, and their desire, the cornerstone making both one: Come and save  
the human race, which you fashioned from clay.
- 12/23: O Emmanuel, our king and our lawgiver, the hope of the nations and their Savior:  
Come and save us, O Lord our God.

ALTERNATIVE DAILY READINGS FOR ADVENT

WEEK OF 1 ADVENT, STARTING 11/29

- Sun: AM Ps.146, 147; PM Psa.111, 112, 113  
Isa. 1:1-9; 2 Pet. 3:1-10; Matt. 25:1-13
- Mon: AM Psalm 1, 2, 3; PM Psalm 4, 7  
Isa. 1:10-20; 1 Thess. 1:1-10; Luke 20:1-8
- Tue: AM Psalm 5, 6; PM Psalm 10, 11  
Isa. 1:21-31; 1 Thess. 2:1-12; Luke 20:9-18
- Wed: AM Psalm 119:1-24; PM Psalm 12, 13, 14  
Isa. 2:1-11; 1 Thess. 2:13-20; Luke 20:19-26
- Thur: AM Psalm 18:1-20; PM Psalm 18:21-50  
Isa. 2:12-22; 1 Thess. 3:1-13; Luke 20:27-40
- Fri: AM Psalm 16, 17; PM Psalm 22  
Isa. 3:8-15; 1 Thess. 4:1-12; Luke 20:41-21:4
- Sat: AM Psalm 20, 21:1-7; PM Psalm 110, 116, 117  
Isa. 4:2-6; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Luke 21:5-19

WEEK OF 2 ADVENT, STARTING 12/6

- Sun: AM Psalm 148, 149, 150; PM Psalm 114, 115  
Isa. 5:1-7; 2 Pet. 3:11-18; Luke 7:28-35
- Mon: AM Psalm 25; PM Psalm 9, 15  
Isa. 5:8-12,18-23; 1 Thess. 5:1-11; Luke 21:20-28
- Tues: AM Psalm 26, 28; PM Psalm 36, 39  
Isa. 5:13-17, 24-25; 1 Thess. 5:12-28; Luke 21:29-38
- Wed: AM Psalm 38; PM Psalm 119:25-48  
Isa. 6:1-13; 2 Thess. 1:1-12; John 7:53-8:11
- Thurs: AM Psalm 37:1-18; PM Psalm 37:19-42  
Isa. 7:1-9; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; Luke 22:1-13
- Fri: AM Psalm 31; PM Psalm 35  
Isa. 7:10-25; 2 Thess. 2:13-3:5; Luke 22:14-30
- Sat: AM Psalm 30, 32; PM Psalm 42, 43  
Isa. 8:1-15; 2 Thess. 3:6-18; Luke 22:31-38

WEEK OF 4 ADVENT, STARTING 12/13

- Sun: AM Psalm 63:1-8(9-11), 98; PM Psalm 103  
Isa. 13:6-13; Heb. 12:18-29; John 3:22-30
- Mon: AM Psalm 41, 52; PM Psalm 44  
Isa. 8:16-9:1; 2 Pet. 1:1-11; Luke 22:39-53
- Tue: AM Psalm 45; PM Psalm 47, 48  
Isa. 9:1-7; 2 Pet. 1:12-21; Luke 22:54-69
- Wed: AM Psalm 119:49-72; PM Psalm 49, 53  
Isa. 9:8-17; 2 Pet. 2:1-10a; Mark 1:1-8
- Thur: AM Psalm 50; PM Psalm [59, 60] or 33  
Isa. 9:18-10:4; 2 Pet. 2:10b-16; Matt. 3:1-12
- Fri: AM Psalm 40, 54; PM Psalm 51  
Isa. 10:5-19; 2 Pet. 2:17-22; Matt. 11:2-15
- Sat: AM Psalm 55; PM Psalm 138, 139:1-17(18-23)  
Isa. 10:20-27; Jude 17-25; Luke 3:1-9

WEEK OF 4 ADVENT, STARTING 12/20

- Sun: AM Psalm 24, 29; PM Psalm 8, 84  
Gen. 3:18-15; Rev. 12:1-10; John 3:16-21
- Mon: AM Psalm 61, 62; PM Psalm 112, 115  
Zeph. 3:14-20; Titus 1:1-16; Luke 1:1-25
- Tues: AM Psalm 66, 67; PM Psalm 116, 117  
1 Samuel 2:1b-10; Titus 2:1-10; Luke 1:26-38
- Wed: AM Psalm 72; PM Psalm 111, 113  
2 Samuel 7:1-17; Titus 2:11-3:8a; Luke 1:39-56
- Thurs - Christmas Eve:  
AM Psalm 45, PM 46  
Isa. 35:1-10; Rev. 22:12-17,21; Luke 1:67-80
- Fri - Christmas Day  
AM Psalm 2, 85; PM Psalm 110:1-5(6-7), 132  
Zech. 2:10-13; 1 John 4:7-16; John 3:31-36

*December 2020 - January 2021*

*Grace Pasadena*

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