

# PRAYER GUIDE

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS  
11/28/21 TO 1/5/22



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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 is defeated, but until he returns as he promised at the ascension, this world continues experience the effects of 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 TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

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**

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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, a pink candle is used for the third Sunday of Advent to mark the midpoint of Advent. Also, some traditions assign a theme

to each candle. 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

- The guide provides different readings. The first set focuses on the weekly themes of Advent. For children and families, readings from the Advent Chain activity are also provided. Those following the Daily Office Lectionary can find those readings for morning and evening on page 17.
- The daily liturgy is meant to be flexible. If time is tight, for example, simply light a candle and say one of the prayers, or light a candle and read the suggested passage for the day. Keep Advent daily as you (and your household) are able and grow into your Advent practices.

- The guide also includes a short evening liturgy. 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.
- 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? How could you develop patterns of prayers with those outside your household?
- The guide takes us through the Christmas Season. The next prayer guide will be available on January 9, 2022.

### 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 leaders 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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## ADVENT 1 - PRAYER AT ANY TIME

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### 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. (*Jn 8:12 & Mat 12:21*)

### THE OPENING PSALM

<sup>5</sup> For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. <sup>6</sup> He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. <sup>7</sup> On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. <sup>8</sup> Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. (Psalm 62:5-8)

- *Take a few moments to be silent and to rest in God. What hope is stirred in you?*

### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Lord, we have not kept watch for you and we have not acknowledged the ever-constant love you give to us. 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. Forgive us for our lack of watchfulness and renew us this day. *Amen.*

### ADVENT 1 READINGS

*(The first set of readings help us dwell on the Advent theme of the week, hope. The second set follows the Advent Chain for kids and families. For those following the Daily Lectionary readings, refer to page 17.)*

Sunday	11/28	Mark 13:35-37		
Monday	11/29	Isaiah 2:1-5	or	Luke 1:26-28
Tuesday	11/30	Isaiah 11:1-5	or	Luke 1:30
Wednesday	12/1	Isaiah 11:6-10	or	Luke 1:31
Thursday	12/2	Psalms 25:1-5	or	Luke 1:32-33
Friday	12/3	Isaiah 40:1-5	or	Luke 1:38
Saturday	12/4	Is. 40:28-31	or	Luke 2:3

### FOR REFLECTION:

- What images and words of hope do you hear in the passage?
- How might you invite others into this hope?

### CLOSING SONG AND PRAYERS

*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 the ones ahead as we wait for you. Amen."*



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## EVENING PRAYER

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### OPENING PRAYER

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. *Amen.*

- *Spend a few moments in silence, repeating the opening prayer or a part of it.*

### EVENING PSALM

*Read one or part of a prescribed Psalm from the Daily Lectionary on page 17.*

### EVENING READINGS

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

Look back on your day and look ahead to tomorrow.

- How do these words help you see God's presence with you today and how do they help you anticipate God's presence tomorrow?

### 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.*

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## ADVENT 2 - PRAYER AT ANY TIME

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### 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)*

### THE OPENING PSALM

<sup>1</sup> O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath. <sup>2</sup> Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing; heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled. <sup>3</sup> My soul also is greatly troubled. But you, O Lord—how long? <sup>4</sup> Turn, O Lord, deliver my life; save me for the sake of your steadfast love. *(Psalm 6:1-4)*

- *What sorrows do you carry today? Imagine God turning his face to you and looking at you with eyes full of steadfast love.*

### 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.*

### ADVENT 2 READINGS

*(The first set of readings help us dwell on the Advent theme of the week, love. The second set follows the Advent Chain for kids and families. For those following the Daily Lectionary readings, refer to page 17.)*

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

### FOR REFLECTION:

- How do the images and words of the passage deepen your experience of God's love?
- How might you extend God's love to yourself, your neighbor, and city today?

### CLOSING SONG AND PRAYERS

*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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## EVENING PRAYER

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### OPENING PRAYER

Oh God, make speed to save us. Oh Lord, make haste to help us.

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 your light. *Amen.*

- *Spend a few moments in silence, repeating the opening prayer or a part of it.*

### EVENING PSALM

*Read one or part of a prescribed Psalm from the Daily Lectionary on page 17.*

### EVENING READINGS

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

Look back on your day and look ahead to tomorrow.

- As you read these words, take a few moments to consider any reactions or responses you feel in your body. What feelings and prayers emerge?

### PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS

*Pray for yourself, neighbors and world. Give thanks for the day and conclude with the Lord's Prayer or the following:*

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

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## ADVENT 3 - MORNING PRAYER

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### 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)*

### THE OPENING PSALM

<sup>1</sup> How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! <sup>2</sup> My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. <sup>3</sup> Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. <sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath. steadfast love. *(Psalm 84:1-4)*

- *What do you long for today? How might these desires point you to the joy of the living God?*

### 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.*

### ADVENT 3 READINGS

*(The first set of readings help us dwell on the Advent theme of the week, joy. The second set follows the Advent Chain for kids and families. For those following the Daily Lectionary readings, refer to page 17.)*

Sunday	12/12	Ps. 33:1-5; Lk. 6:21		
Monday	12/13	Luke 2:8-15	or	Luke 2:12
Tuesday	12/14	Luke 2:16-20	or	Luke 2:13-14
Wednesday	12/15	Philippians 4:4-9	or	Luke 2:15-16
Thursday	12/16	Psalm 95:1-7a	or	Ps. 95:6-7
Friday	12/17	Psalm 150	or	Luke 2:17-19
Saturday	12/18	Psalm 26:6-9	or	Matthew 2:1

### FOR REFLECTION:

- What images and words of joy do you hear in the passage?
- Where in your heart, mind, or body do you desire deeper joy?

### CLOSING SONG AND PRAYERS

*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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## EVENING PRAYER

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### OPENING PRAYER

Oh God, make speed to save us. Oh Lord, make haste to help us.

To you our hearts are open, mighty God. Speak your words of life. Speak your words of rest.

Open our ears to your word. Open our eyes to you light. *Amen.*

- *Spend a few moments in silence, repeating the opening prayer or a part of it.*

### EVENING PSALM

*Read one or part of a prescribed Psalm from the Daily Lectionary on page 17.*

### EVENING READINGS

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

Look back on your day and look ahead to tomorrow.

- How might the Holy Spirit be using these words to create more space in you for God's love?
- How do these words invite you to trust Jesus, the coming King, with your desires and worries?

### PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS

*Pray for yourself, neighbors and world. Give thanks for the day and conclude with the Lord's Prayer or the following:*

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

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## ADVENT 4 - MORNING PRAYER

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### 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)*

### THE OPENING PSALM

<sup>1</sup> Lord, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. <sup>2</sup> You forgave the iniquity of your people; you covered all their sin. <sup>3</sup> You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger. <sup>4</sup> Restore us again, O God of our salvation... <sup>10</sup> Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other. <sup>11</sup> Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky. <sup>12</sup> Yes, the Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. *(from Psalm 85)*

- *God's peace means restoration and wholeness. What longings for peace do you bring today?*

### 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 and land. We are lost, in need of your help. Come, Lord Jesus. Forgive and restore us. Renew our peace. *Amen.*

### ADVENT 4 READINGS

*(The first set of readings help us dwell on the Advent theme of the week, peace. The second set follows the Advent Chain for kids and families. For those following the Daily Lectionary readings, refer to page 17.)*

Sunday	12/19	Isaiah 9:2-7		
Monday	12/20	Jn. 14:27; 16:32-33	or	Matthew 2:2
Tuesday	12/21	Ephesians 2:13-17	or	Matthew 2:11a
Wednesday	12/22	Philippians 1:2-6	or	Matthew 2:11b
Thursday	12/23	2 Corinthians 3:11	or	John 3:16
Christmas Eve	12/24	Matthew 1-2	or	2 Cor. 9:15

### FOR REFLECTION:

- What images and words of peace do you hear in the passage?
- When and where have you recently glimpsed God's peace or restoration?

### CLOSING SONG AND PRAYERS

*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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## EVENING PRAYER

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### OPENING PRAYER

Oh God, make speed to save us. Oh Lord, make haste to help us.

My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promise.

Open our ears to your word. Open our eyes to your light. *Amen.*

- *Spend a few moments in silence, repeating the opening prayer or a part of it.*

### EVENING PSALM

*Read one or part of a prescribed Psalm from the Daily Lectionary on page 17.*

### EVENING READINGS

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

Look back on your day and look ahead to tomorrow.

- What invitations to rest and restoration do you hear?

### PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS

*Pray for yourself, neighbors and world. Give thanks for the day and conclude with the Lord's Prayer or the following:*

**For 12/19-12/23:** Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**For Christmas Eve:** O God, you make us glad by the yearly festival of the birth of your only Son Jesus Christ: Grant that we, who joyfully receive him as our Redeemer, may with sure confidence behold him when he comes to be our Judge; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

*or this*

O God, you have caused this holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light: Grant that we, who have known the mystery of that Light on earth, may also enjoy him perfectly in heaven; where with you and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. *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. Use the following meditations morning or evening. 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 the Bible, also known as the Pentateuch or 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.*

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## ALTERNATIVE DAILY READINGS FOR ADVENT

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### WEEK OF 1 ADVENT, STARTING 11/28

**Sun:** AM Ps.146, 147; PM Psa.111, 112, 113  
Amos 1:1-5,13-2:8; 1 Thess. 5:1-11; Luke 21:5-19

**Mon:** AM Psalm 1, 2, 3; PM Psalm 4, 7  
Amos 2:6-16; 2 Pet. 1:1-11; Matt. 21:1-11

**Tue:** AM Psalm 5, 6; PM Psalm 10, 11  
Amos 3:1-11; 2 Pet. 1:12-21; Matt. 21:12-22

**Wed:** AM Psalm 119:1-24; PM Psalm 12, 13, 14  
Amos 3:12-4:5; 2 Pet. 3:1-10; Matt. 21:23-32

**Thur:** AM Psalm 18:1-20; PM Psalm 18:21-50  
Amos 4:6-13; 2 Pet. 3:11-18; Matt. 21:33-46

**Fri:** AM Psalm 16, 17; PM Psalm 22  
Amos 5:1-17; Jude 1-16; Matt. 22:1-14

**Sat:** AM Psalm 20, 21:1-7; PM Psalm 110, 116, 117  
Amos 5:18-27; Jude 17-25; Matt. 22:15-22

### WEEK OF 2 ADVENT, STARTING 12/5

**Sun:** AM Psalm 148, 149, 150; PM Psalm 114, 115  
Amos 6:1-14; 2 Thess. 1:5-12; Luke 1:57-68

**Mon:** AM Psalm 25; PM Psalm 9, 15  
Amos 7:1-9; Rev. 1:1-8; Matt. 22:23-33

**Tues:** AM Psalm 26, 28; PM Psalm 36, 39  
Amos 7:10-17; Rev. 1:9-16; Matt. 22:34-46

**Wed:** AM Psalm 38; PM Psalm 119:25-48  
Amos 8:1-14; Rev. 1:17-2:7; Matt. 23:1-12

**Thurs:** AM Psalm 37:1-18; PM Psalm 37:19-42  
Amos 9:1-10; Rev. 2:8-17; Matt. 23:13-26

**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  
Haggai 2:1-9; Rev. 3:1-6; Matt. 24:1-14

### WEEK OF 4 ADVENT, STARTING 12/12

**Sun:** AM Psalm 63:1-8(9-11), 98; PM Psalm 103  
Amos 9:11-15; 2 Thess. 2:1-3,13-17; John 5:30-47

**Mon:** AM Psalm 41, 52; PM Psalm 44  
Zech. 1:7-17; Rev. 3:7-13; Matt. 24:15-31

**Tue:** AM Psalm 45; PM Psalm 47, 48  
Zech. 2:1-13; Rev. 3:14-22; Matt. 24:32-44

**Wed:** AM Psalm 119:49-72; PM Psalm 49, 53  
Zech. 3:1-10; Rev. 4:1-8; Matt. 24:45-51v

**Thur:** AM Psalm 50; PM Psalm [59, 60] or 33  
Zech. 4:1-14; Rev. 4:9-5:5; Matt. 25:1-13

**Fri:** AM Psalm 40, 54; PM Psalm 51  
Zech. 7:8-8:8; Rev. 5:6-14; Matt. 25:14-30

**Sat:** AM Psalm 55; PM Psalm 138, 139:1-17(18-23)  
Zech. 8:9-17; Rev. 6:1-17; Matt. 25:31-46

### WEEK OF 4 ADVENT, STARTING 12/19

**Sun:** AM Psalm 24, 29; PM Psalm 8, 84  
Gen 3:8-15; Rev. 12:1-10; John 3:16-211

**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:** AM Psalm 80; PM Psalm 146, 147  
2 Samuel 7:18-29; Gal. 3:1-14; Luke 1:57-66

#### **Christmas Eve:**

AM Psalm 45, PM Psalm 46  
Gal. 3:23-4:7; Matt. 1:18-25

#### **Christmas Day**

AM Psalm 2, 85; PM Psalm 110:1-5(6-7), 132  
Micah 4:1-5,5:2-4; 1 John 4:7-16; John 3:31-36

