



KEEPING ADVENT

episcopal church of the cross

A devotional for lighting each candle
& praying together while apart in 2020

WELCOME TO ADVENT!

What is Advent?

Advent is the liturgical season of the Church year where we await the coming of Christ at Christmas. We mark it in the four Sundays before Christmas - this year beginning on November 29th. This devotional is intended as a companion guide to our Sunday worship together - whether in person or online - as we observe a Holy Advent together.

Many themes run throughout this time in the Church's life: Hope; Preparation; Expectation; Simplicity; Peace; Returning; Joy; Waiting; Love.

In the midst of all the excitement of this time of year, Advent invites us to pause, and make and give space for Jesus to again enter our lives.

It is a gestational time. John the Baptist, for whom Elizabeth and Zechariah had waited, waits and looks for the Kingdom of God; Mary waits and looks for her baby to be born; the people of God wait and look for the fullness of God's promises to be revealed; we wait and look to how again, Christ enters our lives anew.

So we hope and anticipate and prepare and celebrate. In Advent we make a new start, and on purpose open ourselves to what Christ wants to reveal to us, and teach us, and give at Christmas, one more time.

"We learn in Advent to stay in the present, knowing that only the present well lived can possibly lead us to the fullness of life."

Joan Chittister

As a spiritual practice, Advent is lived out not just in worship, but in our homes and daily lives. So as we enjoy all the beauty and joy of this time of year, here are a few suggestion of ways to live an Advent life this season:

An Advent Wreath and Advent Calendar.

Included in this booklet you'll find reflections for the lighting of the Advent candles.

You'll also find additional prayers and blessings and suggested readings for each day of Advent. In an Advent Calendar, the daily opening of a door reminds us of waiting and expectancy, and tells the story of the coming of the Christ child.

#AdventWord

All are invited to creatively respond to Advent in the global, digital Advent calendar with the #AdventWord project. Every day a word is given as a prompt - how you respond is up to you! A full list of the words can be found on PAGE X. You can look to capture a photo that expresses the word, you can share a memory on social media that connects with the word, you can doodle the word or do some hand lettering, you can use the word as a journal prompt - there are no wrong ways to practice #AdventWord, and you are invited to share your responses on all social media platforms with the hashtag #AdventWord. Be sure to tag us! @ecclaketravis.

Be sure to also follow us on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram as we will be sharing one-minute devotionals every day based off of the #AdventWord prompts.

Look for moments of stillness; maybe just a few minutes at the most convenient time of the day. Whatever works for you. Be quiet; offer a favorite word of prayer; read the scripture passage for the day; pray your prayer beads or sit with your pocket cross; be quiet with the Lord, and let the grace of God wash over you. Remember that Jesus' arrival is God's doing, not ours. Give yourself some stillness and quiet, and receive the gift.

Choose an act of serving and connecting.

- Come out on the Mobile Loaves and Fishes Truck (12/1 and 12/15).
- Help decorate homes for Christmas with Partners in Hope (12/12).
- Contribute to our Partners in Hope "Scattered Community" offering, and sign up to make deliveries.
- Bring offerings of blankets, diapers, and new adult underwear and socks to worship that we'll pass on to Florence's Comfort House.

Consider giving gifts that give back.

Go to the Advent tab at www.ecclt.org for a listing of groups whose products are a grace not only to those who receive them as gifts, but those who create them, as well.

Consider giving any little ones in your household a share check this Christmas.

A share check is a check in which the amount is made out by you. Then, invite your children to decide on a group doing good and godly work they'd like to give it to.

Maybe invite your child to include a note with the check. Is your child interested in animals? Research together groups that help animals. Is your child interested in sports? Research together groups that use sports to build a better world. Is your child interested in art? Research groups that use art for healing. The options are endless, and it's a great opportunity to teach generosity.

Or follow your own practices, remembering and rejoicing that always Christ comes at Christmas.

Always, and again. "Ready or not," as we said in the children's game, Jesus comes; God arrives fully, revealing that God has a human face. The Word becomes flesh, and takes us residence in our neighborhood.

God bless you, friends. We bid you a most holy season of Advent.

Your clergy, Paul & lizzie

DAILY SCRIPTURES & #ADVENTWORD

WORD DAY SCRIPTURE

Advent 1: Expectation

Tender	Sun Nov 29	Mark 12:28-37
Deliver	Mon Nov 30	Psalms 23
Strengthen	Tues Dec 1	Psalms 46
Earth	Wed Dec 2	Genesis 1:1-13
Rebuild	Thurs Dec 3	Isaiah 2:1-5
Fellowship	Fri Dec 4	John 17:6-11
Glory	Sat Dec 5	Ephesians 3:14-21

Advent 2: Peace

Speak	Sun Dec 6	Isaiah 40:1-11
Comfort	Mon Dec 7	2 Corinthians 1:3-5
Patient	Tues Dec 8	Isaiah 40:28-31
Mercy	Wed Dec 9	Isaiah 55:6-11
Baptize	Thurs Dec 10	Romans 6:2-4
Word	Fri Dec 11	Deuteronomy 30:11-14
Honey	Sat Dec 12	Psalms 119:97-112

DAILY SCRIPTURES & #ADVENTWORD

	WORD	DAY	SCRIPTURE
Advent 3: Joy	Go	Sun Dec 13	I Thessalonians 5:16-24
	Rest	Mon Dec 14	Matthew 11:28-30
	Worship	Tues Dec 15	John 4:22-24
	Pray	Wed Dec 16	Psalms 121
	Learn	Thurs Dec 17	Isaiah 35:1-10
	Bless	Fri Dec 18	Philippians 4:4-7
	Turn	Sat Dec 19	Mark 1:1-8
Advent 4: Love	Rejoice	Sun Dec 20	Luke 1:26-38
	Mystery	Mon Dec 21	Luke 1:39-56
	Wisdom	Tues Dec 22	Matthew 1:18-24
	Holy	Wed Dec 23	Isaiah 9:2-7
	Proclaim	Thurs Dec 24	Luke 2:1-20
	<i>Christmas!</i>	<i>Fri Dec 25</i>	<i>John 1:1-18</i>

“Advent is patience. It’s how God has made us a people of promise in a world of impatience.”

Stanley Hauerwas

ADDITIONAL PRAYERS

May God bless you with discomfort,
At easy answers, half-truths, and
superficial relationships,
So that you may live deep within your
heart.

May God bless you with anger,
At injustice, oppression, and exploitation
of people,
So that you may work for justice, freedom,
and peace.

May God bless you with tears,
To shed for those who suffer from pain,
rejection, starvation, and war,
So that you may reach out your hand to
comfort them and help turn their pain to
joy.

And may God bless you with enough
foolishness,
To believe that you can make a difference
in this world,
So that you can do what others claim
cannot be done.

A Franciscan Blessing

Let nothing disturb you,
Let nothing frighten you,
All things are passing away:
God never changes.
Patience obtains all things
Whoever has God lacks nothing;
God alone suffices. **Amen.**

St. Teresa of Ávila

O God, you will keep in perfect peace
those whose minds are
fixed on you; for in returning and rest
we shall be saved; in
quietness and trust shall be our
strength. **Amen.**

The Episcopal Book of Common Prayer, p. 138

God our Savior, all generations call
you blessed.
Holy is your name!
You have done great things for us.
Holy is your name!
You have shown us your strength.
Holy is your name!
You have humbled the proud.
Holy is your name!
You have raised up the weak.
Holy is your name!
You have fed the hungry.
Holy is your name!
You have kept your promises to your
people.
Holy is your name!
We thank you for your mercy.
Holy is your name!
We praise you for your wisdom.
Holy is your name!
We rejoice in your love and
faithfulness.
Holy is your name!
Amen.

Rev. Beth Ann Gaede

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT: EXPECTATION

NOVEMBER 29, 2020

Households are invited to read these devotionals out loud, pausing to talk about each question as a family together.

On this Sunday, we only light the first PURPLE candle in our Advent Wreaths.

We light the first candle today to remember that Jesus is the HOPE of the world and we live in EXPECTATION of Jesus' return.

Advent is a season that does two big things: first, we anticipate Christmas, when Jesus was born - when God literally became human flesh and lived with us to show just how much God loves us. Can you imagine creating all the galaxies and vast expanse of interstellar space, knowing everything that ever happened and everything that could ever happen, and deciding to be a human like us? A human who has needs and feelings? And God did just that!

Advent is also the season where we look for Christ to come again. Jesus coming again will bring God's kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven" as the Lord's Prayer says. So in Advent we focus a lot on the ways that our world falls short of the kingdom of God. In the kingdom of God, everyone is named, loved, and cared for. But we know in this world that isn't always true, so we can ask: Where is there sadness and sin in our world and how can we look for God's hope in these places? How can we live into the expectation that Jesus is near?

Before Jesus came, people had a lot of hopes for what the promised Messiah would do. People were looking for God in all kinds of places, and many people knew that when the Messiah came, there would be peace and justice on earth. They lived expectantly; hopefully. They lived awake.

Our reading this week is words of Jesus from Mark's Gospel, in which Jesus calls us to be awake, and invites us to hope.

As you read it, wonder: How can I live *expecting* Jesus to show up this week?
Where do I see hope?

EXPECTATION

Mark 13:28-37

Jesus said, 'From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

'But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.'

Reflection Questions:

What do you think Jesus means when he says "keep awake?"

How does Jesus invite us to hope?

Suggested activity:

Count how many pairs of shoes there are in your house. For each pair of shoes put a dime or a quarter or a dollar into your collection to give to an organization that cares for vulnerable people - we'll also be out with Mobile Loaves & Fishes this week, so they're a great place to start. Pray for those who don't have shoes. Pray for the hope of the world.



A PRAYER FOR THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE IN THE FIRST WEEK IN ADVENT:

Loving Lord, your light shines in the darkness. We light this single candle, a reminder to keep awake and await you with hope. Fill us up. Shine in us. Light our way. Fill us with expectation. Prepare our hearts to receive you anew. Give us eyes to see you in the faces of family and friends, strangers and neighbors. And then, we pray, give us every grace to seek and follow your will, to the glory of your Name and the welfare of your people. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT: *PEACE*

DECEMBER 6, 2020

Families are invited to read these devotionals out loud, pausing to talk about each question as a family together.

On this Sunday, we light TWO purple candles.

We light the first candle today to remember to live in EXPECTATION that Jesus is the hope of the world, and we light the second candle to remember God brings PEACE to the world. Jesus spoke a lot about peace; sometimes, this peace looked like Jesus crying with people who were sad. Sometimes this peace looked like Jesus healing people who were sick. And sometimes, this peace was hard: Jesus would say that he came not to bring peace, but a sword! And yet, Jesus said over and over again it was God's peace he brought and peace he left with.

What do you think peace means? Why do you think sometimes peace can feel like conflict?

Remember last week we talked about how Advent is also the season where we LOOK for Christ to come again. So in Advent we pay attention to how our world falls short of the kingdom of God. This week, we can ask:

Where is there no peace in our world and how can we bring peace to these places? How can I be a person of peace in my school, my job, and my family?

Before Jesus came, the Prophet Isaiah spoke with expectation of what God is doing.

So as you read this passage from Isaiah, wonder:

How is Isaiah's word a word of peace?

The Reading: Isaiah 40:1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak 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.

PEACE

The Reading, continued:

A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every 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. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'

A voice says, 'Cry out!' And I said, 'What shall I cry?' All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand for ever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, 'Here is your God!' See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.

He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

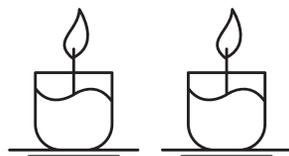
Reflection Questions:

What does peace look like in this passage?

How can I be an agent of peace?

Suggested activity:

Count how many bottles of water there are in your house. Put a dime or a quarter or a dollar in your collection for each bottle. Pray for those who have to walk a long way to get water.



A PRAYER FOR THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES IN THE SECOND WEEK IN ADVENT:

Lord Jesus, you are Prince of Peace. We light these candles hopefully and expectantly, looking for the peace that passes all understanding that you promise. And we pray for the grace to be peacemakers in the lives we live today.

Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT: JOY

DECEMBER 13, 2020

Families are invited to read these devotionals out loud, pausing to talk about each question as a family together.

On this Sunday, we light TWO purple candles and the PINK candle.

This Sunday is called "Gaudete Sunday." "Gaudete" is Latin for "Rejoice." This Sunday, we rejoice!

We look expectantly for Jesus. We remember that Jesus brings peace to the world. And today, we are reminded of the joy God brings into the world! God brings Joy to the World! God created us for God's own delight—we are literally made because of God's joy.

Jesus is coming. God again consecrates humanity by becoming human. Joy enters the world. Christmas is close. Maybe we've made present wish lists; or done some shopping; or maybe we are feeling a little overwhelmed with all the things to do in this season. Maybe, even, there is some sadness that this Christmas season feels so different from Christmases past. So Gaudete comes at exactly the right time! To be joyful in all the gifts God has already given us, and is giving us!

Our reading this week is from I Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul's sweetest letter. The Apostle loved the Thessalonians greatly, and here he reminds them...and us...to rejoice! To rejoice always!

What does rejoicing feel like?

JOY

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

Reflection Questions:

What are you grateful for?

What gives you joy already?

What does it look like to rejoice today?

Suggested activity:

Count how many books are in your house. Put a dime or a quarter or a dollar in your collection for each book. Pray for those who don't have time or access to learn to read.



A PRAYER FOR THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES IN THE THIRD WEEK IN ADVENT:

Loving Lord, at all times, and in all places, we rejoice at your arrival!

We light these candles to remind us that you are the Light of the World, come to bring life and love to all. Fill us with your joy, and may we know the depth of your Good News in our life this day, and always.

Come, Lord Jesus. Amen

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT: LOVE

DECEMBER 20, 2020

Families are invited to read these devotionals out loud, pausing to talk about each question as a family together.

On this Sunday, we light ALL FOUR candles!

We light the first candle today to remember to hope expectantly. We light the second candle to remember that God brings peace to the world. We light the third candle—the pink Gaudete candle—to remind us of the joy God brings to the world.

And today, we light the final candle to remember most of all God's love.

God loves us so much that God "took on human flesh" to be with us. This means God was willing to be with us, completely. God was willing to experience all the things we do—sadness; hurt; joy; love; sickness—to show that more than anything, God wants us to love God back and also love one another. *Why do you think God loves us so much?*

Our reading this week is from Luke. It's the story of Gabriel's visit to Mary. Mary was surprised by the angel's visit, and surprised by what she was invited into. And she responded in love...love of God, love of God's people, and love of the child she would bear.

As you read this week's passage, wonder: what might this passage teach me about love?

LOVE

Luke 1:26-38

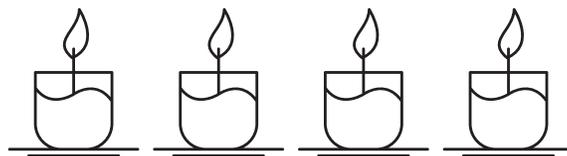
In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He 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. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The 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. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

Reflection Questions:

When has God surprised you?

Suggested activity:

Write a note to someone whom you love who you are not biologically related to, and thank them for the ways they love and cherish you.



A PRAYER FOR THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES IN THE FOURTH WEEK IN ADVENT:

Loving God, we thank you for loving us and for coming among us. May these candles remind us how your love fills our hearts, and households, and neighborhoods, and the world. Thank you for every blessing. We love you. Amen.

“Advent creates people...new people.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

2020
ADVENT
DEVOTIONAL

PRODUCED BY
EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE CROSS
LAKE TRAVIS AREA OF TEXAS

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