2026 Advent Daily Devotional
November 29, 2026 to December 25, 2026



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We have created this Advent devotional to help and encourage you to experience the Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love of this season every day, beginning on November 29, you are invited to light a candle and read the reflections included in this booklet.

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Sunday, November 29 Rev. Zack Jackson

1 Corinthians 1:3 (NRSVUE)
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection:
Grace and peace to you, friend, and happy Advent. Today, we are entering into four weeks of anticipation, joy, and love, so I wanted to start with the beginning. With the greeting. With the part that we all skip over to get to the good part. Salutations! Dear Sir or Madam! To Whom it May Concern! Every correspondence starts with an address, but have you ever noticed that every one of Paul's letters starts with the same one? "Grace and peace" is not a standard greeting in the ancient world. It's actually a mashup of greetings. The typical Greek letter started with "greetings" or "health" and the typical Hebrew letter began with "peace". I'll spare you the ancient language lesson, but Paul's customary greeting is a delightful mashup of the two with a little pun thrown in for good measure. This wasn't just clever wordplay. Paul began every letter with a subtle affirmation that everyone belongs. There is no Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free. All are one in Christ. So this Advent season, as we look towards the birth of Christ, I want us to start with that greeting and the radical egalitarianism at the heart of it. Jesus is born for all humanity. For you and me and everyone in between. Let that guide us today, and may we see God's beloved in every face we meet.

Prayer:
God of Love. You love all your children even though we certainly do not. Help us to see your image in the face of those we meet today. Help us to spread your love and light wherever we go. Amen.

Monday, November 30 Rev. Caroline Bashore

Micah 4:1, 4-5 (NIV)
In the last days
the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established
as the highest of the mountains;
it will be exalted above the hills,
and peoples will stream to it.

Everyone will sit under their own vine
and under their own fig tree,
and no one will make them afraid,
for the Lord Almighty has spoken.
All the nations may walk
in the name of their gods,
but we will walk in the name of the Lord
our God for ever and ever.

Reflection:
When Micah describes people streaming toward the mountain of God, I wonder what draws them there. These days, we spend a lot of time worrying about declining church attendance, aging congregations, and empty pews. We become so focused on getting people through the doors that we sometimes forget to ask what might make them want to come.

Perhaps Micah invites us to imagine churches where people find something they need: welcome, belonging, peace, wisdom, and hope. During Advent, some find their way back to church because of a familiar hymn, a cherished memory, or a longing they cannot quite put into words. Maybe they are searching for a glimpse of the world Micah describes.

After all, people aren't streaming toward a building. They're streaming toward a vision of God's world. Are we becoming the kind of places where people can catch a glimpse of that vision?

Prayer:
Loving God, may our lives give others a reason to come closer to you. Amen.

Tuesday, December 1 Rev. Joseph A. Motz

Revelation 18:1-8 (NRSVUE)

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined by his splendor. He called out with a mighty voice,

"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! It has become a dwelling place of demons, a haunt of every foul spirit, a haunt of every foul bird, a haunt of every foul and hateful beast. For all the nations have fallen from the wine of the wrath of her prostitution, and the kings of the earth have engaged in sexual immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxury."

Then I heard another voice from heaven saying,

"Come out of her, my people, so that you do not take part in her sins and so that you do not share in her plagues, for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Render to her as she herself has rendered, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double dose for her in the cup she mixed. As she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, so give her a like measure of torment and grief.
Since in her heart she says, 'I rule as a queen; I am no widow, and I will never see grief,' therefore her plagues will come in a single day— pestilence and mourning and famine— and she will be burned with fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her."

Reflection
Advent brings the hope of God's new creation birthed into the world through Jesus Christ. It is a hope that proclaims a world transformed to the way of God's hope, peace, joy, love, and light. It is a hope our hearts yearn for as we expectantly wait to sing "Joy to the World." What we long for is the new kingdom of God to be ushered in. And yet, we'd be foolish not to dig below the assumptions of our hope to ask to what kingdom we have built our allegiance to. The call of Revelation is to not simply hope in the coming of God's kingdom. The call is to step out in faith of God's kingdom, surrendering the ways of this world, so that we are not caught up in its ending, but rather found among those who live in witness to the lamb upon the throne.

Prayer
Saving God, though I would rather rest in Christmas joy, bring me now to Advent preparation. Reveal the truth of my imperfect allegiance to you and your reign. Reveal to me the reality of my sin and my shame. And in doing so, let my ears hear the boldness of your call to come, to share with you, in the glory of your reign. Here now on earth, as it is in heaven. O come, O come, Immanuel. Amen.

Wednesday, December 2 Rev. Linda Kozlowski

Micah 5:2-5a (NRSVUE)

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore, he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth, and he shall be the one of peace.

Reflection:
Friends, we have been living through an incredibly challenging season. There are so many divides which seek to separate friends and families and neighbors. As we move through this season of Lent, this season of waiting and watching and wondering, we seek security. We seek life-giving relationships. We seek unity with our neighbors. We seek to love God and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. We seek peace.

The Prophet Micah reminds us that One is coming who will feed his flock, who will bear the strength of the Lord, who will reveal God's majesty, who will be great to the ends of the earth. And he shall be the One of peace—the peace we long for, the peace our hearts desire.

May we breathe deeply and do all we can to help bring more hope, more compassion, more love, and more peace into the world. May we do all we can to serve our neighbors and to create spaces of beloved community where all voices matter. May we live in ways which reveal compassion and kindness, empathy and hope. May we reflect the peace of Jesus in our words, in our deeds, in our relationships, in the ways we live and love.

Prayer:
Divine Presence, our hearts long for spaces of peace, spaces of unity, spaces of beloved community. As we await the coming of Jesus, may we do all we can to live as your beloved children, as people who shine your glorious light into the shadows of the world. May we do all we can to care for each other, to care for all of creation, to be your love in action. Amen.

Thursday, December 3 Rev. Becky Hoover

Hosea 6:1-3 (CEB)
“Come, let’s return to the Lord;
for it is he who has injured us and will heal us;
he has struck us down, but he will bind us up.
2 After two days he will revive us;
on the third day he will raise us up,
so that we may live before him.
3 Let’s know, let’s press on to know the Lord;
whose appearing is as certain as the dawn;
who will come to us like the showers,
like the spring rains that give drink to the earth.”

Reflection:
On this random Thursday, three weeks before Christmas Eve, we might need an uplifting word proclaiming, “You can do it! It’s almost Friday! You’ve got these Christmas preparations well in hand—you’re rocking Advent!” Instead, we get a word of repentance from the prophet Hosea proclaiming let’s return to God, the One who injures and heals, strikes down and rebuilds. We’re okay with the latter part of both clauses, the healing and rebuilding bit, but we’re not comfortable with messages stating God is responsible for destruction. Yet Advent is a season that looks forward to the tearing down of creation as we know it, the ripping apart of the known to make something yet unknown. What might we need to let go of to be fully present to the next three weeks? What busyness might be necessary to lay aside? What expectations of ourselves or of others can we shed? Tearing down and building up. Death and rebirth. These are the gifts of Advent as well.

Prayer:
We re-turn to you, Holy One, asking you to strike down all that keeps us from having right relationship with you, with each other, and with all creation. In the destruction, kindle hope that your newness will come like the spring rains will return to refresh the earth. Amen.

Friday, December 4 Rev. Becky Sausser

Jeremiah 1:4-10 (NRSVUE)
Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, [5] "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." [6] Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." [7] But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a boy,' for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you. [8] Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD." [9] Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me, "Now I have put my words in your mouth. [10] See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

Reflection:
I have always found it really funny that this beautiful frequently quoted Bible verse about God forming us in the womb is actually from a prophetic book of the Bible about how terrible everything is. Jeremiah is known as the *Weeping Prophet* because his prophetic word was so unpopular. At this time most people were called to be profits in their 30s, which is when a Levitical priest would be trained, but not Jeremiah! He is called in his late teens and early 20s to be a profit that nobody is going to appreciate. I mean, poor Jeremiah had to speak about how the consequences of the people's actions had real consequences and those consequences were coming fast! But look at what God tells Jeremiah during this calling and commissioning, "do not be afraid of them for I am with you to deliver you". That is the part that always grabs my attention in this passage, because sometimes when we are asked to do hard things all we can focus on is our anxiety, but if we tune our senses to listen for the Holy Spirit, we will see that God is with us in all things! That is what the season of Advent is all about, the fact that God is with us in all things so much so that God would even send Jesus Christ to become fully God and fully human to make a way for us to become children of the kingdom of heaven. Here at the beginning of the month as you look at the ever-growing to *do list*, remember that God is with you even in the mundane or the scary or the anxiety producing.

Prayer:
Lord Jesus, help me to see the many incredible ways that you are with me every day. May my ears hear your voice in the other, and my eyes see your face in those I see daily. Thank you, God, amen.

Saturday, December 5 Rev. Leslie Mamas

Ezekiel 36:24-28 (The Message)
For here's what I'm going to do: I'm going to take you out of these countries, gather you from all over, and bring you back to your own land. I'll pour pure water over you and scrub you clean. I'll give you a new heart, put a new spirit in you. I'll remove the stone heart from your body and replace it with a heart that's God-willed, not self-willed. I'll put my Spirit in you and make it possible for you to do what I tell you and live by my commands. You'll once again live in the land I gave your ancestors. You'll be my people! I'll be your God!

Reflection:
There is a German fairy tale entitled *Das Kalte Herz* ("Heart of Stone"). Without recounting the entire tale, the main character - Peter - falls on hard times. An evil forest spirit offers aid, but only in exchange for Peter's heart. The forest spirit says that a human heart with all its emotions is only a hinderance, and offers Peter silver coins and a replacement stone heart in exchange. Peter soon realizes that he can no longer enjoy life. The things that make us truly human are experiences like grief and joy, empathy, regret, hope and beauty. In this passage from the prophet Ezekiel, God offers the exact opposite. Ezekiel describes people as already having hearts of stone, meaning that we are focused on our own wants, wills, and interests. We love only ourselves instead of loving God and loving all neighbors. God's will for us is to live by such love, and all the laws and prophets that hang upon it. Yes, loving God and our neighbors may sometimes cause us to feel guilt, grief, and sorrow, particularly when we neglect God or the needs of others. And empathy can be a difficult thing, causing us to deeply feel the pain of others. No wonder some hearts have hardened! But having hearts and spirits capable of such empathy means being attuned to God and God's will. God promises us hearts of goodness, and the very presence of God's spirit within us. There is nothing, no amount of prosperity, wealth, or silver, worth the promise of God-with-us and God-in-us. The burdens of sharing this life may not always be easy, but God promises that we will forever be God's people and God will forever be our God.

Sunday, December 6 Rev. Matthew Hoover

Mark 1:4-8 (NRSVUE)
John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And the whole Judean region and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. 8 I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Reflection:
John's proclamation interrupts and disrupts our lives. There is an immediacy to John's message; its urgent tone calls us to be attentive to what is happening within our own hearts and souls. As we dwell within this Advent season, John reminds us not to grow so distracted by the noise of the world that we fail to notice Jesus once again. Christ's arrival will change us and reorient our lives. At the core of John's message is the call to turn around and lean into the work of the Spirit. To be baptized with water is to be marked as Christian; to be baptized by the Spirit means that God has marked us to do the work of justice and grace in the world. John speaks to us: turn from distraction and open to the work of the Spirit.

Prayer:
God of Spirit and transformation, help us to be attentive this Advent season. May John's message help us to focus on Christ's arrival once again. Strengthen us for the work of change within ourselves and within the world. Help us to work for justice and grace. Amen.

Monday, December 7 Rev. Kimberly Berenotto

Acts 2:37-42 NRSVUE
Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Reflection:
I am always drawn to the phrase "cut to the heart" when I read this selection of scripture. Perhaps I'm drawn to it because in my head I sing it to the tune "shot through the heart" from Bon Jovi's "You Give Love a Bad Name" OR because it's such an intense and sharp way to describe the people's reaction to Peter preaching about Jesus' life and ministry.
The gathered crowds watched the Holy Spirit descend on the disciples at Pentecost and heard Christ's message. Then, they were so overwhelmed when reflecting on how their own lives didn't live up to what Peter was preaching, it felt like a shot through the heart! The people called out, "What should we do?"
Have you ever looked at your own life and how it reflects Christ's love and felt "cut to the heart?" What should we do?

Prayer:
God of Love, may we all so meaningfully reflect on our own lives, that when we don't live up to Christ's ways, we feel it deep in our hearts. Guide us on pathways that lead us toward transformation, so our lives show the promises of our baptism in all we say and do. Amen.

Tuesday, December 8 Rev. Dr. Kimberly Stryjak

Psalm 27:1-4 (NRSVUE)
The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold[a] of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?
2 When evildoers assail me
to devour my flesh—
my adversaries and foes—
they shall stumble and fall.
3 Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.
4 One thing I asked of the Lord;
this I seek:
to live in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord,
and to inquire in his temple.

Reflection:
The advent season often arrives like a frantic snowstorm. Long before the calendar even flips to December, our lives are pulled in a thousand directions. As the holidays approach we are managing budgets, navigating family dynamics, rushing through endless task lists, and carrying the weight of anxieties. Fear whispers that we do not have enough time, enough security, or enough strength to sustain the holiday season that lies ahead. Like the psalmist, we find ourselves surrounded by an army of competing demands and worries that besiege our peace.
Yet, notice that the psalmist doesn't focus on chaos. Instead in a life pulled in a thousand frantic directions by fear and survival, the singular desire is simple—to dwell in God's presence. "One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."
Advent invites us to strip away the noise of the distractions that this season can easily send our way that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." The good news is we do not have to settle our frantic mind or fix our complicated life before we can experience God. When the world pulls us in a thousand different directions today, remember that we have an anchor. We can breathe, pause, and to let our frantic survival yield to God's quiet presence with us.

Prayer:
Emmanuel, when my heart feels the frantic tug of a thousand different demands, you offer me a sanctuary. Be my stronghold today. Steady my anxious mind, silence my fears, and help me to rest deeply in the beauty of your presence. Amen.

Wednesday, December 9 Rev. Nichole Jackson

Luke 1:11-17 (NRSVUE)
11 Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified, and fear overwhelmed him. 13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. 14 You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. 16 He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Reflection:
Have you ever sang the Christmas song, "The Friendly Beasts?" You know that one about the birth of Jesus as witnessed through the lenses of the animals who were there and took part? There's the donkey who carried Jesus' mother to Bethlehem to give birth to Jesus. And there's the cow, who gave the baby a bed and pillow in the manger and hay for rest once he arrived and things quieted down. Then there's the sheep who gave her fur for his blanket, and the dove who sang her cooing melodies to him so he could sleep. It's one of my very favorites - it's playful and wonder-filled and it helps us to connect to the story with our senses.

I <u>really</u> love it, though, because everyone has a gift to offer, a job to do, a part to play. And the Advent/Christmas season is full of this good news. We have Mary and Joseph, Jesus' parents, the innkeeper, the angels, the wise travelers. And John the Baptist – Jesus' crazy cousin in the wilderness always makes an appearance – born just 6 months earlier than Jesus - who prepared the way for Jesus' ministry 30 years later - he always gets a shout out! Even John's elderly parents – Zechariah and Elizabeth that we read about today – their wild story gets told as well. Because while the story revolves around the main character, it's also very much a divinely community affair. Jesus was the child of a people, of a place. He was born in the home of "friendly beasts" who cleared the way for the God to walk among us. Isn't that amazing?

We are a part of that story too! We have unique gifts to bring to the kingdom of God breaking through into the world. We have unique jobs to do and parts to play because in God's story, everyone belongs. Take some time today to reflect on what those gifts, that job, that role might be – in what ways is God inviting you to take in God's grander story?

Prayer:
God, we thank you that this kingdom of God thing is a group project, and that you invite us to participate. You are the author/creator of it. May you help us to have the courage to offer what we have and grant us the joy that comes from being useful. Amen.

Thursday, December 10, 2026 Rev. Tammie Wisniewski

Psalm 126:1-3 (MSG)
1-3 It seemed like a dream, too good to be true,
when God returned Zion's exiles.
We laughed, we sang,
we couldn't believe our good fortune.
We were the talk of the nations—
"God was wonderful to them!"
God was wonderful to us;
we are one happy people.

Reflection:
Advent invites us to imagine a world transformed by hope. The psalmist remembers a time when sorrow gave way to laughter and the impossible became real. "The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced."

But Advent is more than remembering what God has done. It is daring to believe what God can still do.

We look around and see a world burdened by injustice, loneliness, fear, and division. Yet God's dream of liberation, compassion, and peace continues to call us forward. We are invited to become partners in that dream, working for a world where every person is valued, every voice is heard, and every community has reason to rejoice.

This Advent may we nurture hope, practice kindness, and help make joy possible for others. The remarkable things God is doing, may they begin with us.

Prayer:
Loving God, awaken our hope and lead us toward a world where joy and justice flourish. Help us to be One Happy People again! Amen.

Friday, December 11, 2026 Rev. Selina Hamilton

Psalm 126:5-6 (NRSVUE)
5 May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.
6 Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

Reflection:
My last full-time job before I went to seminary was as a customer service representative at a mail order pharmacy. I spent my days answering the phone and talking to people about their prescription refills. It was easy enough work, but the job was hard in the way that all customer service jobs are hard. At least once a week, I would have to take a break to have a good cry after some customer had yelled at me about something well outside my control. That job sowed plenty of tears.
That job also gave me something very important, a skill that I use often in ministry. For every order, I was required to repeat the name of the medication being ordered, out loud and with confidence. I learned to try to say ever letter I saw, and I practiced doing that without halting or stumbling.
Now, when it's time to read scripture in worship, I know how to take a run at some of those names of towns and people: try to pronounce every letter and sound confident. A season of my life that sowed with plenty of tears, has reaped a harvest of confidence in public speaking.
Think about the difficult seasons of your life that have brought you unexpected gifts. Keep your eyes open to see where tears have watered gardens that bloomed with joy. I'm sure you can find them!
And, be kind to your customer service representatives. They're just people, doing their best. Don't be the reason they need a break to have a good cry.

Prayer:
Holy God, we trust that you are with us in our weeping and in our shouts of joy. Help us to learn what we need to learn in the struggles, and help us to trust that there is always hope and joy ahead. Amen.

Saturday, December 12 Rev. Mark Stryjak

Matthew 21:28-32 (NIV)
"What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.'
"'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.
"Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go.
"Which of the two did what his father wanted?"
"The first," they answered.
Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

Reflection:
Jesus' statement to them seems clearly obvious and is what comes to my mind when reading this scripture.

How much clearer do we need to have Jesus' words laid out to us? Eventually, we either leap into our faith and embrace a changed life through God's will, or we don't. The information is clear. The words from Jesus are true. The life he offers is yours to accept or deny.

The question, how much more needs to be put in front of you to understand?

I don't believe we need any more information. What we need is to find absolute trust in God in a broken world where trust seems to be rather elusive in this world. How can we trust completely when so much is broken around us? Maybe in relationships, maybe in families, maybe in whatever it is that we do these days. My understanding is to recognize the absolute difference between God's promises told through Jesus life and the illusion of this world that this is all we get.

How will you respond?

Recently, many of life's daily concerns have trickled there way through the theme of temporary and eternal. What is it that you need? I have found discipline living to be a place where I come to, often.

Do I choose the temporary fixes of this world that are often are played out through perceived safety, increased security or prosperity, or do I stretch towards my faith? Believing that faith is all about learning and growing without reaching a finish line, seems to open the words and give voice to the Holy Scripture's, this day and forevermore!

Peace and advent blessings!

Sunday, December 13 Rev. Zack Jackson

1Thessalonians 5:16-24 (NRSVUE)
Rejoice always.

Reflection:
When I was in seminary, I had a roommate who used to wake up at 6am, get out of bed and shout, “YEEEEEEEEHAW!” He then would open a hymnal to a random page and sing as loudly as he could at least one hymn. Sometimes two or three if he felt like he really needed it. He told me that joy didn’t come easy to him, and he was often awash in sorrows, so every morning, he set out to “fight for his joy”; to storm the castle of melancholy and rescue joy from the tallest tower. Ironically, his joy became my rage, but that’s besides the point. He may have been a little extreme in his application, but there was an insight in his frenzy that is worth remembering. “Rejoice” does not mean “be happy”. “Rejoice” is not a feeling, and it is not dependent on your emotional state. It’s a command. It’s an action. It’s a choice. It’s a deliberate act of rebellion in a world that wants you to be small, miserable, and controllable. To rejoice is to declare that your circumstances do not have the final word, and that there are things in life worth celebrating. So rejoice in the stillness of falling snow, the fullness of a pipe organ, or the laughter of a child who has not yet learned to be self-conscious. Rejoice always, and know that God is with you.

Prayer:
God of joy. Give us the strength to choose goodness today. Help us to notice what we take for granted, and to be amazed by the gifts that you offer us each day. When we are tempted to despair, help us to rejoice, and give us grace when despair overtakes us. Amen.

Monday, December 14 Rev. Caroline Bashore

Ephesians 6:10-18, MSG
And that about wraps it up. God is strong, and he wants you strong. So take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the Devil throws your way. This is no weekend war that we'll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the Devil and all his angels.

Be prepared. You're up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over but the shouting you'll still be on your feet. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You'll need them throughout your life. God's Word is an indispensable weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out.

Reflection:
We have all probably heard of the "Sunday Scaries" as we begin dreading going back to work, but what about the "Christmas Crazies"? For some, it begins December 1st, others after Thanksgiving, and still others once the -ber months hit… but we aren't here to open that can of worms! Between endless to-do lists, finding the PERFECT presents, living up to picture-perfect holiday expectations, and navigating the emotional roller coaster of joy, grief, excitement, and missing those who aren't here, Christmas can sometimes feel like a life-or-death battle. Perhaps that's why Paul's words about keeping one another's spirits up are worth remembering. He reminds us to pray for one another, keep our eyes open, and make sure nobody falls behind or drops out. This Advent, let's remember that we aren't meant to fight every battle alone. Let's look out for one another, because nobody should have to fight the Christmas Crazies alone.

Prayer:
God, remind us that we have everything we need to face the battles ahead. A little patience, a whole lot of love, and a willingness to look out for one another might be our most indispensable weapons. Help us remember that we're in this together. Amen.

Tuesday, December 15 Rev. Joseph A. Motz

2 Kings 2:9-12 (NRSVUE)
When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." He responded, "You have asked a hard thing, yet if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not." As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

Reflection
As a child reading this scripture, I always thought Elisha was being pretty cheeky in asking for a double share of Elijah's spirit. What I didn't understand is Elisha was asking for the portion due to one's first-born son. Though not a completely outrageous request, in this light, it is still a bold request. Its boldness comes from the fact that Elisha has no claim to this honor, and yet he still asks for the honor of receiving the inheritance due to a first-born son. To Elisha's boldness, Elijah says, then keep your eyes on me to the end. In other words, do not seek for another way, do not seek for another master, do not fail to continue to seek after me.

In this season of Advent, the invitation is to set our eyes upon the will and the way of God. Not seeking after another way, not seeking after another master, not failing to seek after the one God sends to claim us all like first-born sons. And in doing so, the invitation is to inherit a double share of Christ's spirit in to our lives.

Prayers
God of creation, though I am prone to set my eyes upon other things, help set my eyes upon you. Let me see the wonder of your glory and the truth of your love. Let me see you, O God. And in my seeing, convict my soul to know there is no other way, no other master, no other god upon which I desire to set my eyes. O come, O come Immanuel. Amen.

Wednesday, December 16, 2026 Rev. Linda Kozlowski

Scripture: Malachi 3:16-18 (NRSVUE)
Then those who revered the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord took note and listened, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who revered the Lord and thought on his name. They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, my special possession on the day when I act, and I will spare them as parents spare their children who serve them. Then once more you shall see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.

Reflection:
Oh, beloved friends, God knows us fully and completely. God listens to our joys and to our concerns. God chose us—each of us. God loves us eternally and God loves all of our neighbors. We belong to God. What a joyful truth! We belong to the One who created us, who chose to take on flesh and live among us, who promises to guide our footsteps all the days of our lives. Our response is to be thankful and grateful. Our response is to serve God by serving our neighbors and to live in ways which are righteous and just. Our response is to live and to love more like Jesus.

How are you serving God and your neighbors in this season of your life? How are you shining God's glorious light to help illuminate a path forward for those whose lives feel broken? How are you sharing the Advent gifts of Hope, of Peace, of Love, of Joy? How are you working toward justice for the oppressed, hope for those who despair, grace for those seeking new chances, love for those who feel lost and alone? What steps can you take to make a difference and to bring more peace into this broken, hurting world?

Prayer:
Sacred Presence, search our hearts and our minds. Receive our questions and our wonders. Guide our journeys as we seek to follow Jesus' teachings and mission and ministry. Strengthen us so we might go where you need us, so we might feed our neighbors, so we might help bring your realm of peace and unity to fruition. Amen.

Thursday, December 17, 2026 Rev. Becky Hoover

Hebrews 1:1-3a (CEB)
In the past, God spoke through the prophets to our ancestors in many times and many ways. ² In these final days, though, he spoke to us through a Son. God made his Son the heir of everything and created the world through him. ³ The Son is the light of God's glory and the imprint of God's being.

Reflection:
Tonight marks the beginning of the O Antiphons. The O Antiphons are an ancient prayer practice traditionally marking the seven days leading up to Christmas. The word antiphon means something responsive, usually a piece of music. The "O" part of the name comes from seven names, or images, for Jesus drawn from the prophecies of the Hebrew scriptures, such as O Emmanuel, O Ruler of Nations, O Shoot of Jesse, and so forth. We know the O Antiphons and have heard them many times in their most familiar form, the seven verses of the carol "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." A fun bit of trivia about the O Antiphons is that when all seven Latin names of the antiphons are put together in the traditional order backwards, they spell in Latin, "Ero cras," which means "Tomorrow I will be there." Jesus is almost here. Tonight we remember he is God's Wisdom in human form. May the wisdom he gave us, through his teachings and his example, lead us and light our path.

Prayer:
"O come, O Wisdom from on high, and order all things, far and nigh; to us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go." Amen.

Friday, December 18 Rev. Becky Sausser

Hebrews 1:5-14 (NRSVUE)
5 For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"? 6 And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." 7 Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds and his servants flames of fire." 8 But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions." 10 And, "In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands; 11 they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like clothing; 12 like a cloak you will roll them up, and like clothing they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end." 13 And to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? 14 Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Reflection:
Yes, it is the season of Advent! So let me talk a little bit about Easter… more specifically I want to talk about Easter eggs. Hiding Easter eggs has become something most notable in the Pixar franchises, but these are intentional hidden messages that a person may notice, hidden for only the keenest observer. I think this passage from the letter to the Hebrews is an Easter egg hunt! In these nine short verses, we find references to psalms, the gospels, other epistles, and so much more! Even as a self-proclaimed Bible nerd, I found it challenging to find all of the Easter eggs, I finished my count at 16 hidden references. What does it all mean and what is the point? Every reference to other scriptures in this passage establishes Jesus Christ as the son of God and ruling over all other beings. Verse five even begins with the same type of greeting you would use at a king enthronement ceremony! When we read about angels in the Bible things always feel a little bit confusing because it isn't apparent what the hierarchy is between the angels and the arch angels and all the other creatures, but the way that I explained it to my congregation is that all of the angelic beings are sort of like the office staff of heaven. They are sent to deliver messages, to protect people, and a number of other tasks depending on what department they are from. This passage helps us to understand that Jesus is not just here as a staff person, he is here to inherit the whole company and open the doors wide so that humanity can take their place in heaven too. And all of this started with a little baby born in a manger thousands of years ago. Wow!

Prayer:
Precious Lord Jesus, you are so far above us, and yet you are our friend that sticks closer than any brother. You are the ruler of the universe, and yet you are our friend and savior. Thank you for your constant presence in our lives. Amen.

Saturday, December 19 Rev. Leslie Mamas

John 7:40-52 (NRSVUE)
When they heard these words, some in the crowd said, “This is really the prophet.” Others said, “This is the Messiah.” But some asked, “Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he? Has not the scripture said that the Messiah is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?” So there was a division in the crowd because of him. Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him. Then the temple police went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why did you not arrest him?” The police answered, “Never has anyone spoken like this!” Then the Pharisees replied, “Surely you have not been deceived, too, have you? Has any one of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd, which does not know the law, they are accursed.” Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before and who was one of them, asked, “Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?” They replied, “Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee.”

Reflection:
Who was Jesus? Everyone had their own perspective and their own answer. The chief priests and Pharisees did not want Jesus to be the messiah, because it would threaten their own positions of comfort and authority. Some did not want Jesus to be the messiah because his reframing scripture and interpreting the Law threatened their pre-held beliefs and theologies. The judicial council (the Sanhedrin) worried that talk of the messiah and Jesus’ rising popularity could spark unrest or a rebellion against Rome. Still others rejected Jesus simply because he, and what he stood for, did not align with what they already believed. Today, many Christians still find themselves asking "Who was Jesus?" Our scriptures tell us of a man who was God, and thus could have wielded ultimate divine power to smite enemies or rule the earth. He could have chosen to be born in a grand palace of marble and gold, surrounded by the most influential people. He could have judged the unrighteous and sinful with severity and indifference. There are those today who would reimagine such a Christ in order to align with their own ambitions and beliefs. But during this season of Advent, we are reminded of who Jesus truly was. He chose to be born to the oppressed, surrounded by the filth and odors of barn animals. He chose to reject the devil's temptations to consume more, protect himself, or rule the earth. He surrounded himself with sex-workers and financial frauds, touched the contagious and untouchable, loved across borders and difference, and forgave freely over and over again. What does it mean for us to declare this man - this Jesus - our messiah?

Sunday, December 20 Rev. Matthew Hoover

Luke 1:35-37 (NRSVUE)
35 *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.* ***36*** *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.* ***37*** *For nothing will be impossible with God."*

Reflection:
In the novel Alice in Wonderland, the heroine Alice has trouble believing the Queen's claim, "Alice laughed. 'There's no use trying,' she said. 'One can't believe impossible things.'

The response comes quickly back…I daresay you haven't had much practice,' said the Queen. 'When I was your age, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast…"

As human beings and Christians we, like Alice, might not be in the practice of believing impossible things. Yet believing in the impossible is part of our faith. Believing in the impossible is at the core of the Advent and Christmas season. The angel speaks to Mary, "For nothing will be impossible with God." (Luke 1:37). A sentiment that is echoed later in the 18th Chapter of Luke's Gospel, when Jesus says to his disciples, "What is impossible for mortals is possible for God." (Luke 18:27). As we celebrate this final Sunday of Advent, I want to encourage each of us as Christians to lean into believing the impossible because the impossible is about to happen.

Prayer:
Holy God, help us to believe in impossible things. Give us the faith to trust in you. Open our hearts in expectation of your arrival into our lives and into the world once again. Amen.

Monday, December 21, 2026 Rev. Kimberly Berenotto

Luke 1:46-55 (NRSVUE)
And Mary said,
“My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.
Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name;
indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.
He has come to the aid of his child Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

Devotion:
Today’s scripture reading answers the theological question turned into popular holiday song, “Mary, Did You Know?” And the answer is “ABSOLUTELY!” These verses from the Gospel of Luke are famously known as the Magnificat. After finding out she is pregnant and will give birth to God’s son, Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth and sings these words of praise. So, not only did Mary know that she would bear the Christ-child, but she knew that God taking on flesh to walk the earth would turn the world upside! The proud would be scattered, the powerful removed from their thrones, the humble would be exalted, the lowly would be lifted up and filled with good things. Mary knew that Jesus would be the turning point in God’s kingdom. So, instead of asking, “Mary did you know?” perhaps we should just listen to women first.

Prayer:
Glorious God, we thank you for choosing Mary, a humble young peasant-girl from Nazareth, to bring your son Jesus Christ into the world. May the elevation of Mary and her song of praise remind us to tune our ears to those the world would cast aside. Help us to hear the deep knowledge and experiences of our siblings in society who are considered less-than. Amen.

Tuesday, December 22 Rev. Dr. Kim Stryjak

Luke 1:46b-55 (CEB)
46 Mary said,
"With all my heart I glorify the Lord!
47 In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.
48 He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant.
Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored
49 because the mighty one has done great things for me.
Holy is his name.
50 He shows mercy to everyone,
from one generation to the next,
who honors him as God.
51 He has shown strength with his arm.
He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.
52 He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones
and lifted up the lowly.
53 He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty-handed.
54 He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,
remembering his mercy,
55 just as he promised to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants forever."

Reflection:
Advent is often expressed with silent peaceful nights in the glow of candlelight. Yet Mary's song—known as the Magnificat—is anything but quiet. It bursts forth from a young, ordinary woman who has just been handed news that will upend her life, her reputation, and the entire world.
And upon hearing this news, Mary does not sing about her own strength, her worthiness, or her readiness. She does not wait for the dust to settle, and she does not demand answers or certainty before she fixes her heart on the Almighty. Instead, Mary sings about God's blessings in her life and about God's vision of a world made right. Mary's song is a holy hallelujah, a rejoicing in God amid the struggle and radical disruption of her life.
Mary models a profound shift in focus when she chooses to "magnify" the Lord. When we feel deeply uncertain or overwhelmed, Mary invites us to turn our gaze upward to God. To shift our spiritual lens away from the immediate storm and onto the character of God. By locking our eyes on God's holiness and mercy this season, the chaos is stripped of its power and instead we can find peace.

Prayer
God, the world around me feels loud, fractured, and chaotic, grant me the courage of Mary to shift my focus. Let my heart magnify your goodness, your stability, and your sovereignty above everything else. Amen.

Wednesday, December 23 Rev. Nichole Jackson

Luke 1:46-55 (NRSVUE)
46 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
48 for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant. Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed, 49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name; 50 indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. 51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; 53 he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. 54 He has come to the aid of his child Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, 55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Reflection:
In these final days of Advent, hours away from the labor pains beginning, as Mary and Joseph are in the final stretch of their travels and their pace is beginning to slow, let us sit with Jesus' mother and her dreams for this baby boy. Months before when Mary sang this lullaby for the first time, everything was new. She was spending time in the home of her relative also with child, Elizabeth, another woman experiencing an unlikely and unexpected pregnancy, only instead of being an unmarried teenager with child, she was with child while living well into her twilight years. Mary was still trying to make sense of this drastic shift and what it all meant for her life. But one thing she knew was that this was much bigger than her personal narrative and the trajectory of her life. This child coming into the world was God breaking in. He was going to be the one her people had been waiting for generations to come and save them. He was going do the things the prophets long ago had foretold. He would bring hope, peace, joy, and love for everyone, not just her. AND also for her. She was filled to the brim!

The big day is arriving soon – the one we have been waiting and preparing for. Allow yourself to capture the wonder once more – Jesus, the Incarnation, the hope of all peoples, God who walked among us, who showed us kindness, and inclusion, and compassion, and mercy, and grace, and an unending list of beautiful gifts – he is soon being born. Let us join Mary once more in praising God for this long-anticipated good news finally arriving.

Prayer:
We praise you God, for showing mercy for those who fear you from generation to generation, you who has shown strength with your arm; you have scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. You have brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; you have filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. Praise be to God! We can't wait to welcome your Son into the world. Amen.

Thursday, December 24, 2026 Rev. Tammie Wisniewski

Titus 3:4-7 (NRSVUE)
4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. 6 This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Reflection:
Have you ever felt the great relief of finally being able to exhale? Perhaps a burden has lifted, forgiveness has been offered, or someone has loved you when you feared you were unworthy of love.

The Book of Titus reminds us that God's kindness and love are not rewards for getting everything right. We are not saved by our perfection, our accomplishments, or our ability to meet every expectation. We are met by grace….a love that renews us and offers us a fresh beginning.

What a gift to carry into Christmas! In a world that constantly tells us to do more, achieve more, and prove our worth, the coming of Christ reminds us that we are already embraced by God's love.

This season, may we release the burden of perfection and breathe deeply into the freedom of grace. And may we extend that same relief to others through our compassion, welcome, and love.

Prayer:
Gracious God, as we approach the most wonderful night, help us to rest in your love and share its freedom with the world. Amen.

Friday, December 25, 2026 Rev. Selina Hamilton

John 1:1-4 (NRSVUE)
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

Reflection:
Merry Christmas!! Throughout the season of Advent, as they days get shorter and the nights get darker, we have been lighting candles, reminding ourselves of the warm glow of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. Last night and today, we add the candle celebrating the birth of Christ, and our wreathes shine brightest of all.
As you celebrate this day, know that this light is with us always. It has been with us since the very beginning, when God spoke the worlds into being. It will remain with us after the last of our Christmas lights are boxed up to wait in storage for our celebrations next year.
This light is for us, and for all people. Thanks be to God!

Prayer:
Holy God, we thank you for your Word that is a light for our lives. We thank you for the warmth and love that we feel so clearly as we celebrate the birth of our Savior. Make us light-bearers, shining your Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love everywhere we go. Amen.