



PREPARE THE WAY

REFLECTIONS FOR ADVENT 2024

pre·pare
/prēˈper/

to make ready
beforehand for some
purpose, use, or
activity





PREPARE

In this season of lengthening nights and shortening days, it seems contradictory to look for light breaking into our world. We feel and fear the burden of the world's problems weighing heavily upon our shoulders. We hear of war and rumors of war and the chaos grows ever more noisy. Why would we look for the coming of light? Why would we in this season of expectation seek out hope, peace, joy, and love? The questions are so many, and the answers are so few.

Yet it is precisely when things are at their thinnest, when the gloom of the world encroaches, and the shadow threatens to overcome that God breaks into our world. Not to shatter the darkness, but to enter the darkness. God's most profound manifestations occur not in the light but in the dark. God seems to have an affinity with transformation in the darkness. In this season of Advent, we are invited to leave behind the familiar, to slow ourselves down, and take notice of where God is poking, prodding, and praying us into deepening our relationship with ourselves, our neighbors, and with God.

The invitation this Advent season is to hold back the mad dash towards the manger and spend some time along the path of expectant waiting. Read the scriptures, engage with the reflections, live the questions, pray the prayers, and join in the journey with God. Jesus is coming!

-Bishop Deon K. Johnson



HOPE

PEACE

JOY

LOVE

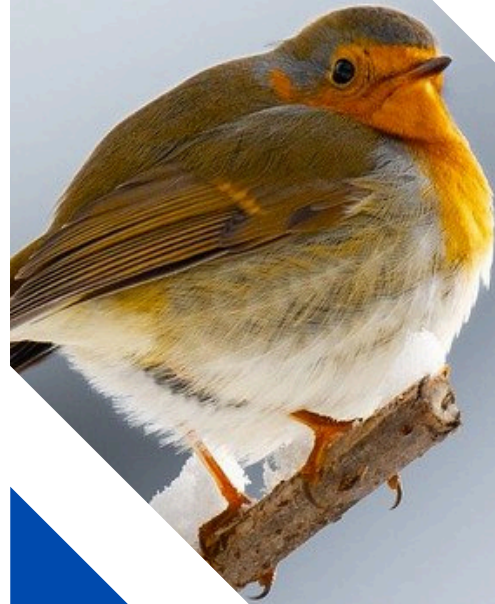
HOPE

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." Romans 15:13

We don't often think of hope as being courageous. Hope is often depicted as being frail, fragile, or feeble. And at times hope can seem fleeting, a mere pipe dream. But hope is the most radical and courageous act we can have in the face of oppression and injustice.

Hope when everything says that you should not hope is a defiant act of courage. God choosing to be among us in the form of the most innocent, fragile, and precious baby is a defiant act of courageous hope. Hope has transformed our world. Hope has toppled rulers destroyed empires and changed the course of human history. Hope has torn down walls, healed divisions, and made friends of enemies.

Now more than ever we need the courage of hope to lead us on.



O Wisdom of our God Most High, guiding creation with power and love, calling humanity to radical hope. Come to teach us the path of knowledge and show us the wellspring of truth; In Jesus whose coming we await. Amen.

How will I live the courage of hope today?



ADVENT WEEK ONE

MONDAY: STORY

SCRIPTURE Matthew 13:34-35

“Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable he told them nothing. This was to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet: ‘I will open my mouth to speak in parables; I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world.’”

REFLECTION

Stories are all around us. They swirl and swell, they ebb and flow. They are the waters in which we live. The stories of the rivers and the creek, the forest and the trees. The stories of our people buried in the Earth and the cry of the forgotten echoing from the soil. Stories surround us, emanate from us, shape us, refine us, define us, undo us, remake us, heal us, wound us. Stories are the most powerful thing we have as people.

The stories that we tell ourselves about where we come from, about who we are, and about where we are going all matter because the story shapes our perspective and our vision. We are in the middle of the story as we are telling it. The stories we tell ourselves matter! We are a part of God’s unfolding story as we walk this journey of Advent. What’s your God story?

PRAYER

O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: who is revealed in sacred story. Come and shine on our story, so that we may be always rooted in your goodness and love; all the days of our lives. Through Jesus, the Word made flesh. Amen.

QUESTION

How will I shape my story today?



ADVENT WEEK ONE

TUESDAY: GIFT

SCRIPTURE James 1:17

“Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”

REFLECTION

A gift given freely from an unrelenting and unyielding love! The gift of our lives is a love story. Not because we create the narrative but because out of love God gifted us. We are God's beloved. The gift of belovedness is perhaps the hardest gift for us to accept because we often find ourselves unacceptable, and unloveable. That is the nature of God's grace and love. God is God and God is love. God's love affair with humanity is unrelenting.

As we journey through the unfolding story of God, breaking into our world, the gift that is given is God's very self. God takes on the very thing, the very substance of who we are to remind us in the depths of our being that we are worthy of this gift of unimaginable, unconditional, and unsolicited love. Perhaps in the season, the lesson we learn is to simply accept the gift of God's love freely given.

PRAYER

O Gift Divine, who orders all things in love and who has given each of us the breath of life. Give us the grace to use our gifts for the building up of others and for the sharing of Love. All this we ask in the name of Jesus the truest gift of all. Amen.

QUESTION

How will you nurture the grace-given gift of love?



ADVENT WEEK ONE

WEDNESDAY: LISTEN

SCRIPTURE Psalm 37:7-9

“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for God. Do not fret yourself over the one who prospers, the one who succeeds in evil schemes. Refrain from anger, leave rage alone; do not fret yourself; it leads only to evil. For evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait upon the Lord shall possess the land.”

REFLECTION

Noise always seems to be on the threshold of what we want. Noise is the thing that clutters the air around us as we plan and prepare for God’s breaking into the world. God does not come to us with noise or fury. God comes to us with a cry, a whimper, a gasp, on a darkened night, interrupted by new life. All else is noise.

God pierces the noise that we create in our world and enters not just our reality but each one of us. What noise is God seeking to break through for you? What noise keeps you from hearing, seeing, or finding God in the still small voice and the midst of the noise?

PRAYER

O Still Small Voice of Calm, who dwells in the loudest silence, quiet our hearts, our minds, and our very being, that we may listen for your voice speaking above the roar of our lives. All for the sake of your Love in Jesus the long-awaited One. Amen.

QUESTION

How will I listen for God’s voice against the noise of today?



ADVENT WEEK ONE

THURSDAY: BREATHE

SCRIPTURE Ezekiel 37:9

"Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath:[a] Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath,[b] and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

REFLECTION

"And God breathed the breath of life." We don't pay a whole lot of attention to our breath, most times. Our bodies go on autopilot when it comes to breathing. And yet our breath, the closest thing to us often gets caught in our throats and times of panic and fear. Our breath quickens, our hearts race. We feel constricted when confronted by fear.

God's coming among us seeks to dispel fear. God's coming is the deep breath of Advent, allowing us to breathe deeply of God's love, to savor hope, to center expectation. All we have to do is breathe. Where in this season do you need to find a deeper breath?

PRAYER

O Breath of Life, with a Word you called the cosmos into being, and you bless each one of us with the breath of life. Helps us to breathe with you a world transformed by hope, that we may live and know that you are God, doing wonders beyond our imagining Amen.

QUESTION

How will I take time to breathe God's presence today?



ADVENT WEEK ONE

FRIDAY: WANDER

SCRIPTURE Jeremiah 29:11

“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”

REFLECTION

Tumbleweed. When I was a kid, I used to love those old-fashioned westerns. I was especially drawn to the scene where the hero and the bad guy stood facing each other in the climactic scene where good would triumph over evil. And inevitably as that scene was framed, you would see a lone tumbleweed roll across the screen. Tumbleweed was a visual reminder that they were somewhere in the middle of a desert, and this roaming bush was simply blowing by doing its thing.

The season of Advent can feel a lot like tumbleweed. Our lives can feel a lot like tumbleweed, rolling along, trying to find a place to put down roots, to go deeper into the heart of God, into our understanding of ourselves. We can feel like we are drifting, rolling along without point or purpose. Then God gets a hold of us and grounds us. Where do you need to be grounded in this season?

PRAYER

O Day Star from on high, who illumines the hearts and minds of your faithful people, and who guides those who wander along right paths, be our sign and guide on the path ahead; that in those times of uncertainty and unknowing, we may ever hold fast to the Light of Christ coming into the world. Amen.

QUESTION

How will I wander along the path of God today?



ADVENT WEEK ONE

SATURDAY: SHINE

SCRIPTURE Matthew 4:14-16

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

REFLECTION

As children, we are encouraged to shine. Our childhood milestones are moments to be celebrated; our first steps, our first words, our first tooth. We are encouraged by those who love us to shine as we know we naturally should. But somewhere along the way our lights dim. We move from being called to shine to being able to blend in.

The light of God is infused into our very being. Yet in subtle and not-so-subtle ways, we are told to hide our light, to dim our wicks. God calls us to shine with the brightness of the gift of life given to us. How dare we not shine! Not to outshine others but to encourage others to let their light shine. How dare we not shine as God intended us to shine! Perhaps we might recapture the encouragement of childhood. This little light of mine...


PRAYER

O Radiant Light of all creation, who in love fashioned the world and fused the light of your very self into the brightness of each one of us; Give us courage to find our light and rediscover our shine, that we may give glory in our brightness and honor through our light. Amen.

QUESTION

How will I shine with the brilliance of God today?

HOPE



"Hope is being able
to see that there is
light despite all of
the darkness."

- Desmond Tutu



HOPE

PEACE

JOY

LOVE

PEACE

On Good Friday, April 18, 1930, BBC Radio, the most listened-to newscast around the world reported, "There is no news!" They then went on to play piano music for the rest of the radio broadcast. It was unusual at best and bizarre at worst.

A day with no news? Can you even imagine such a day in our modern era? Can you imagine the evening news broadcast coming on air and simply saying, "There is nothing going on in the world that needs to be reported. We will now commence forty-seven minutes of feel-good animal videos and serene natural vistas to fill the remaining time. Good night!"

I would love it! People would probably freak out. But isn't that what we long for and look for in this season of Advent? We look for the coming of the Prince of Peace into our world to bring an end to conflicts, wars, division, and devastation. We long for a day when the stuff of human brokenness is healed and reconciled under the banner of peace.

I suspect that with the coming of that blessed day, there will be a day of no news. Let us look for, long for, strive for, and work for a day when, in Jesus, we have no news but Good News to share.



O Prince of Peace, whose coming we await and whose reign of love we long for; Give us the peace that the world cannot give, that in tranquility and grace, we may be called repairers of the breach and makers of peace. For the sake of Christ, our longed-for Savior. Amen.

How will you work towards peace today?



ADVENT WEEK TWO

MONDAY: DREAM

SCRIPTURE Psalm 19:1-4

“The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament[a] proclaims God’s handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice[b] goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world.”

REFLECTION

“The heavens are telling the glory of God.” As children, we play among the clouds. We leap tall mountains and skip along limitless shores through the eyes of our imagination. With deep imagining, we can transport ourselves from the demands and distractions of everyday life into the realm of dreaming. Dreaming lightens our souls, inspires our creativity, and allows us to play playfully. At some point, we leave imagining behind. We relegate daydreaming to the curiosity of childhood and put on the whole armor of rationality.

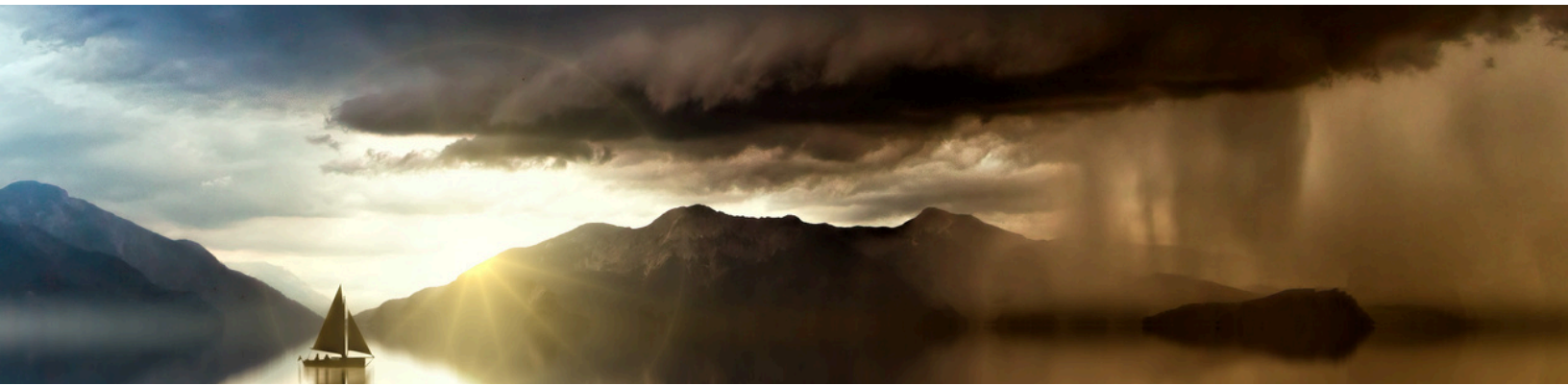
Where does our imagining go when we shed the trappings of childhood? Yet God enters our well-ordered lives with the divine imagining of Jesus being made flesh in our midst. Perhaps the long-awaited incarnation is God’s playful imagination colliding with our stayed rationality inviting us into the dance of Divine dreaming.

PRAYER

O God of infinite dreaming, you called forth the rich diversity of all created things, you call humanity to join you as co-creators of a world filled with wonder and dreaming. Expand our vision beyond our sight so that we may see you at work among us, expanding our knowledge and wisdom as we await the coming of the Christ Child. Amen.

QUESTION

How will you seek and be sought by imagination today?



ADVENT WEEK TWO

TUESDAY: STILL

SCRIPTURE Psalm 46:10-11

"Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations; I am exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

REFLECTION

Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Be aware of your breath. Be aware of your body. Be aware of your surroundings. Ground your feet beneath you. Listening to the gentle beating of your heart. Feel the rhythm of your breathing. Sense the air about you on your skin. Breathe. Allow yourself to be still. Breathe. In the stillness wait for God. Listen for the voice of the Holy One speaking in the stillness. God comes to us,

God enters our world, and God breaks through the noise of our creating, with the stillness of being. In those moments of stillness, we experience the spaciousness of clarity. The world will often tell us what we must be doing to be productive, yet God invites us into the stillness of simply being. God enters our world in the stillness of the night and pierces our well-ordered lives with the cries of a child. Be still and know.

PRAYER

O God enshrouded in stillness, we seek you in the earthquake, wind, and fire, yet you are not there. We look for you in our busyness, yet you are not there. Help us to dwell in the stillness of your presence, that the coming of Christ we may be still and know that you are God.

QUESTION

How will we embrace stillness in our doing today?



ADVENT WEEK TWO

WEDNESDAY: DEEP

SCRIPTURE Luke 5:4-5

“When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” Simon answered, “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.”

REFLECTION

I learned to swim in the ocean. We started in the shallows of the shore and the constant motion of the waves. Hands in the sand and feet out towards the horizon kicking to get our sea legs. We moved a little deeper with the mastery of each motion. Further from the comfort and safety of the shore. Arms and legs moving in rhythm, pushing against the dance of the waves and the flow of the current. Out into the deep we went as a final test.

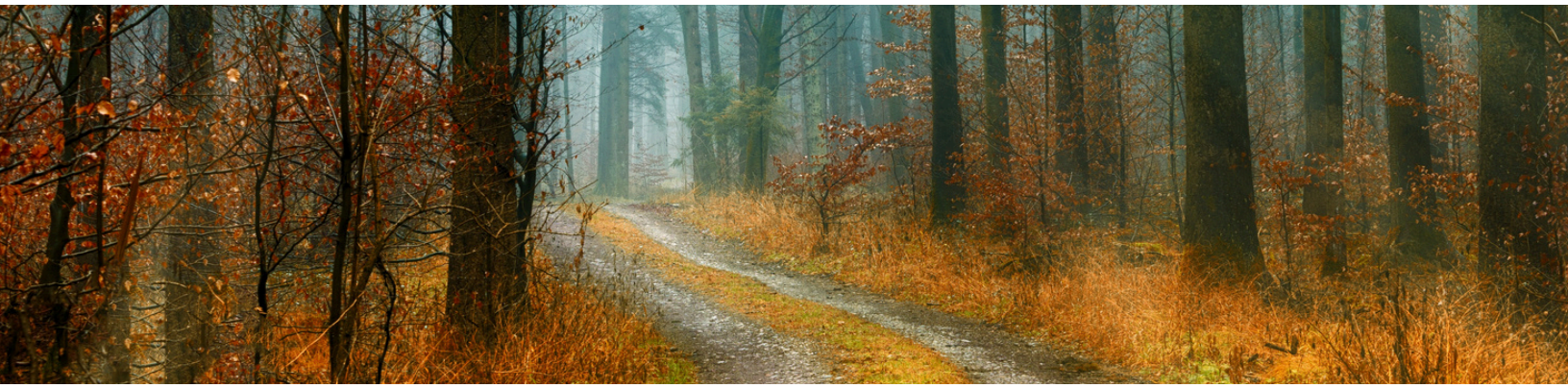
The deep ocean, where the anchor of the sand and the embrace of the shore seem a distant memory. Out in the deep all the things we learned were put to the test. We needed to go deep. Without venturing into the deep, we cling tightly to the shore. The depth of God is discovered in the deep. Deep calls to deep calls to deep. This season of expectation is rich with its depth. Come into the deep.

PRAYER

O God who calls us into the depth of your love, when we are fearful grant us courage, when we are despairing, grant us hope, when we are lost grant us grounding, and when we are wandering grant us your homing. Direct us in seeking the deep truth that is Jesus our Savior. Amen.

QUESTION

How will you enter the deep today?



ADVENT WEEK TWO

THURSDAY: JOURNEY

SCRIPTURE Jeremiah 29:11-13

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. 12 Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. 13 When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart."

REFLECTION

There is an exhilaration in starting something new. Looking out onto the unknown path unfolding brings excitement and trepidation. The first step at the beginning of something new energizes and excites more often than not, but the journey ahead is shaped by the journey behind it. We lay tracks for our coming journey in the choices we make today and the seeds we sow in our lives. In seeking to come among us, God invites us into a journey of discovery that helps us enter into an old story made new.

The story of God's love affair with humanity, with you, has been unfolding for millennia, and with each turn, bump, and smooth path we move a step closer to the heart of completeness. Pay attention to the journeys that have shaped you; they are a gift of love from the God of all journeys.

PRAYER

O God of faithful journeys, you companion your people along every path, every byway, every road. Be our companion and guide us as we seek to follow in the Way of Jesus the Christ, that relying wholly on your goodness and grace, we may accomplish your purpose, now and at our journey's end. Amen.

QUESTION

How will your journey be reshaped today?



ADVENT WEEK TWO

FRIDAY: DISRUPTION

SCRIPTURE Luke 21:34

“Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life and that day does not catch you unexpectedly.”

REFLECTION

Have you ever noticed that whenever you sit down to do something important, something that you just have to get done, there is always an interruption? The cat wants attention. The dog needs walking. The kid wants to play. A neighbor needs to talk. The computer needs to be updated. Life has a way of disrupting the well-ordered, the well-meaning, and the well-planned. Somewhere between frustration and acceptance, we respond to the disruptions of our planned doing. Emmanuel, God with us, is God’s supreme disruption of our world.

When we think we have it all together, when think we have figured it out, when we know exactly how things will go, God enters the world and shatters our illusion of control. The disruption of God turns us upside down and the right side up because the distraction is often the place of leaning into the unknown. Perhaps we might wait patiently for the many distractions of God’s presence in our world.

PRAYER

O God of holy disruption, you break into our world like a thief in the night, and you upend our well-made plans continually. Help us to see in the many interruptions and distractions of our lives the holy constant that is your presence as we look for Christ to be born among us once more. Amen.

QUESTION

How will you greet the disruptions of today?



ADVENT WEEK TWO

SATURDAY: INTENTION

SCRIPTURE James 5:12

“Above all, brothers and sisters, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “Yes” be yes and your “No” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.”

REFLECTION

I have taken up walking as a physical and spiritual practice. Most mornings I have to convince myself that this is a good idea. Leaving the warmth of my bed on those cold winter mornings is good for me. Or so I tell myself. I have to be intentional and, most days, motivated to foster this habit. But once I'm up and out, I remember why this is good for me. This motivated intentionality forces me to take notice.

To take notice of the path before me, to take notice of the people around me, to take notice of God's presence encroaching at times around me. In a real sense, advent is about the intentionality of seeking to notice God breaking into our world. God walks with us for a time, and we must be able to tune our feet to notice God, in the walking.

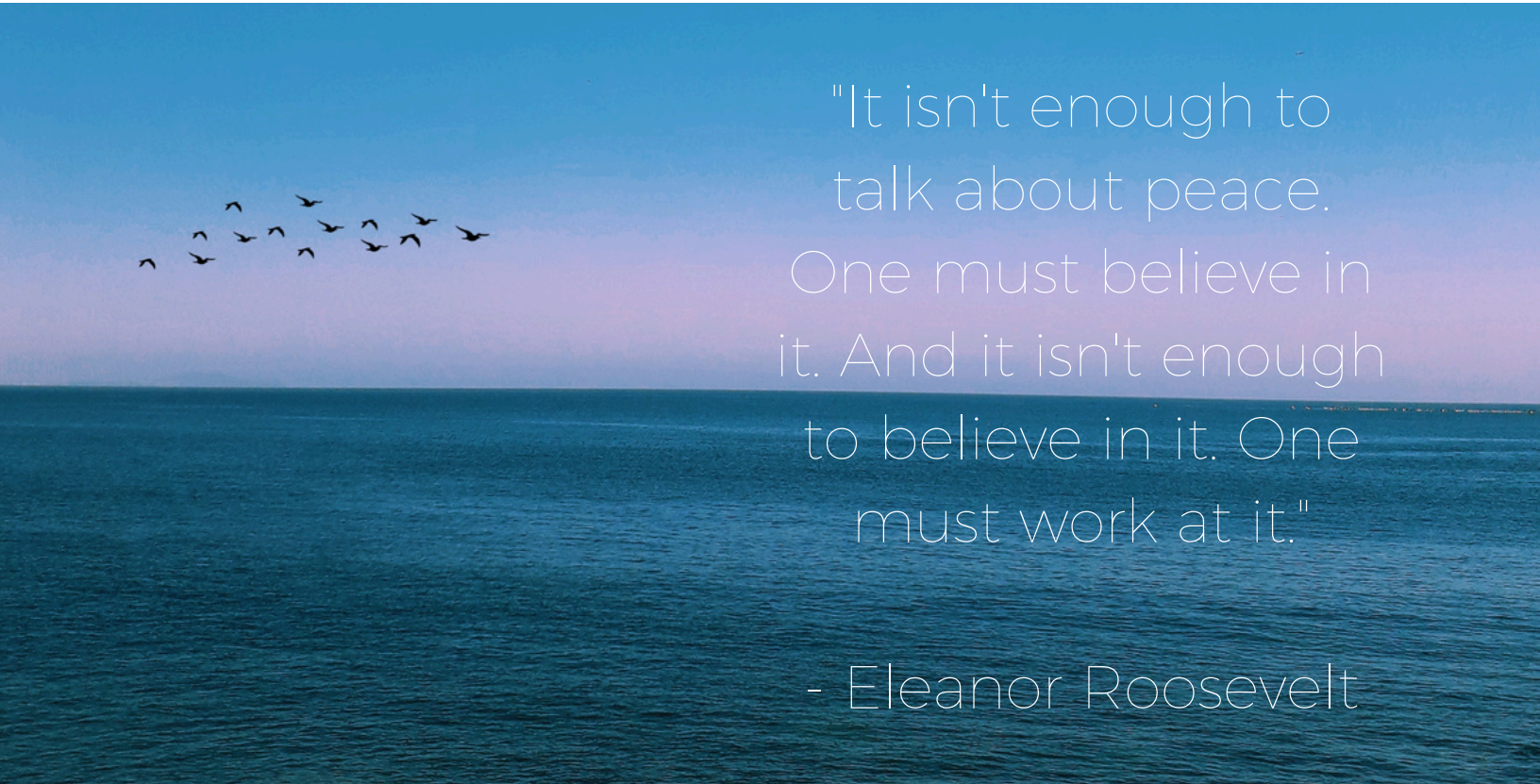
PRAYER

O God, who out of chaos created order and who out of nothing called the cosmos. Renew us in your intentional love so that we might be transformed more and more into the likeness of Christ Jesus. Then use us we pray to fulfil the task of loving our neighbor as ourselves. Amen.

QUESTION

How will you intentionally notice God today?

PEACE

A flock of birds is flying in a loose formation across a clear blue sky. Below them is a vast, calm blue ocean that stretches to the horizon. The overall scene is peaceful and serene.

"It isn't enough to
talk about peace.
One must believe in
it. And it isn't enough
to believe in it. One
must work at it."

- Eleanor Roosevelt

The image features a dark background filled with the warm, glowing light of numerous lit candles. The flames are out of focus, creating a bokeh effect of soft, golden-yellow circles. In the foreground, the vertical lines of several candles are visible, some with their wicks and the beginning of their wax. A large, white, rectangular text box is centered on the page, containing four words stacked vertically. The word 'JOY' is the most prominent, rendered in a bold, solid pink font. The other words, 'HOPE', 'PEACE', and 'LOVE', are in a thin, blue-outlined font.

HOPE

PEACE

JOY

LOVE

JOY

My friend Beth is always happy! No matter what is going on in her life she usually has a smile on her face and a song on her lips. She has had times of loss and pain in her life of course, as we all do. But even through the heartbreak and hurt she is the picture of joy. She often says, "I am blessed by the best and highly favored." That is not a Pollyanna-ish sense of joy, but a deep abiding joy that is untouched but the rigors of the world.

I imagine that that was the same joy that permeated Mary as you waited for the coming of Jesus. Like Beth, Mary knew the soul-crushing pain of heartbreak and heartache. Mary the Godbearer was not exempt from the horrors of Roman occupation and brutality. She lived in the same oppressive system as anyone else in her day, yet she possessed an indomitable joy in God's promised future. She was certainly blessed by the best and highly favored. Her joy in the anticipation of God's act of liberation and justice in the form of the child growing inside her is the same indomitable joy we find amid adversity and struggle.

God invites us into Mary's joy even as we struggle with the brokenness of our world. "My soul proclaims the greatness of God and heart rejoices in God my savior." We are blessed by the best, and highly favored.



O Eternal Dawn, whose joy shone radiantly through Mary the Godbearer and who nourishes us in the joy of unfenced love; ensnare us, like Mary, towards the fulfilling of your purpose and your promise of salvation found in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

How will you be an agent of joy today?



ADVENT WEEK THREE

MONDAY: BEING

SCRIPTURE Colossians 3:16

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.”

REFLECTION

“Art Thou in the darkness? Mind it not, for if thou dost it will feed thee more, but stand still and act not, and wait in patience, till Light arises out of darkness and leads thee.” The Quaker preacher James Naylor invites us into a stillness that is often unknown in our busy world. With the demands of doing and producing, we can feel at times like we need to program ourselves, our families, and our churches into usefulness. I know that at times when my life is chaotic and my calendar is full the last thing I think of is being still.

We live in a culture that values doing. We want to think, pray, walk, or run toward a new solution or a new answer. Sometimes we are called to simply stay in that place of unknowing. Standing in a place of uncertainty and waiting for the light to illuminate our darkness is difficult. Jesus’ coming into the world invites us to let space come in, to stay present, and to be open to the guidance of the light as it comes.

PRAYER

O God, our lives are often pulled in many directions and we are called to serve many masters in our busyness. Give us the grace and the courage to find our worth not in the doing, but in the being. Help us to wait with patience the coming the One who enters our humanity and raises us to divinity. Amen.

QUESTION

How will you lean into being today?



ADVENT WEEK THREE

TUESDAY: WAIT

SCRIPTURE Isaiah 40:31

“But those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

REFLECTION

Have you ever called a utility company or the doctor’s office only to be greeted with the saccharine voice of impending waiting? “Your call is important to us and will be answered in the order it was received. Please enjoy the music while we try to avoid talking to you or getting you to a real person who can answer your question.” That is often my interpretation of the infinite loop of being on hold. Waiting. I don’t like to wait and I dread having to sit on hold.

A friend of mine shared with me that she prays or sings when she is put on hold. I do not. I would rather get a person on the phone, solve my problem, and get on with my day. But waiting is just a part of life, even if I don’t necessarily like it. Jesus comes to a long-waiting world. I may not like to wait but waiting is as sacred as the fulfillment of God’s promised grace. I may not like to dwell in the waiting place, but God lives there. So perhaps I might try saying a prayer or two the next time I have to wait on hold. Perhaps I might not. But I know that God enters the waiting spaces of our lives and dwells there.

PRAYER

O God of time and space, who dwelling is beyond our comprehending, who holds the wellspring of eternity, grant us the grace to wait patiently for you to be revealed among in the Child of Christ which transcends all time with your infinite love. Amen.

QUESTION

How will you find time to wait today?



ADVENT WEEK THREE

WEDNESDAY: IMAGINE

SCRIPTURE Joel 2:28

"Then afterwards I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions."

REFLECTION

This season calls for imagination. It is the season of angels bearing Good News of great joy, wandering stars, and visitors from far-off lands. It is the season for cherishing these treasures in our hearts, longing for the world to be made new as the familiar falls away, and seeking to go home by another way.

The journey to the manger is a pilgrimage of imagining God's presence among us. This season calls us to recapture the whimsy of imagination because only a vivid imagination is able to recognize the improbable and dream of the seemingly impossible.

But often our imagination fails us. We would rather seek certainty than stargazing. We want our angels safely nestled atop trees or in heaven far away where they make no great demands of us and we can ignore their divine message. God calls us in this season of expectation to join the Divine imagining, because to imagine with God is to act for a world transformed one small step at a time.

PRAYER

O Divine Imaginator, who cast the stars and craft the cattails, who stretched the heavens and sang the seas. So inspire our imaginations that we may see beyond the horizons of what is, to behold in beauty what could be. For the sake of Christ. Amen.

QUESTION

How will you join the Divine imagination today?



ADVENT WEEK THREE

THURSDAY: STORIES

SCRIPTURE Luke 13:18-19

“Jesus said therefore, “What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it? 18 It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches.”

REFLECTION

Collective stories tell us who we are as a nation and a community. They are the narratives of a society of our history of remembering us our history will judge us. Stories are the windows through which we view the past. They are the doorways to how we will live in the future. How then do we shape the stories that surround us? How are we shaped by stories? No matter what we cannot escape stories.

We who are keepers of the story must be willing to tell the whole truth. It is not enough to tell a part of the history a part of the vision of the future we must be willing to tell the whole story because the whole story will set us free. The whole story will give us a clearer vision of where God is calling and cajoling and convincing us to be without the whole story we are not complete.

PRAYER

O God of Sacred Stories, you hold the past, present, and future. You enter the sacred circle of human time to redeem and remake our stories with the truth of your love. Bless us with a sense of your unfolding promise made real in the person of Jesus Emmanuel. Amen.

QUESTION

How are you living out the incomplete story of God in you today?



ADVENT WEEK THREE

FRIDAY: MUSIC

SCRIPTURE Psalm 95:1-2

"Come, let us sing to the Lord; let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before the presence of the Lord with thanksgiving and raise a loud shout to God with psalms."

REFLECTION

In the beginning, God sang! Before the worlds began, before the heavens were formed, before the stars took flight, God sang. God sang a single perfect note in multipart harmony. God sang a story of love that wove through the universe and called all things into being. The voice of the Holy One filled the void of eternity and the melody of creation spread across the cosmos in an all-encompassing love song.

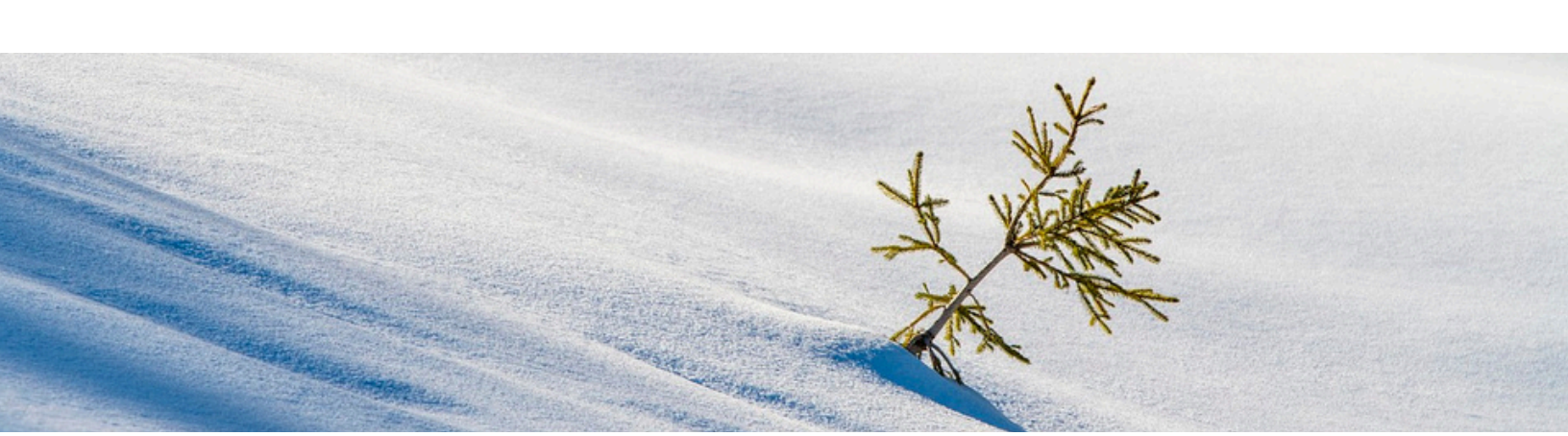
All created things sing with the rhythm of our Creator, who summons us into harmony with God and each other. Each life is a note in the great opus of the Eternal One. And the song goes on. Each aria, each ballad, and each hymn join with the angels' voices to amplify the music of God. The course of all creation has been a symphonic love song from God. As we look to the coming of the Song of God in the Christ Child, how can we keep from singing?

PRAYER

O God of endless song, from whom flows the melody of creation and the beauty of the cosmos; tune our hearts to the infinite love that permeates and penetrates all life. That our lives may be a love song filled with the radiant symphony of hope found in Jesus Emmanuel. Amen.

QUESTION

How will your life sing with the beauty of God's love today?



ADVENT WEEK THREE

WEDNESDAY: IMAGINE

SCRIPTURE Jeremiah 29:11

“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”

REFLECTION

This season calls for imagination. This is the season of angels bearing Good News of great joy; of wandering stargazers and visitors from far-off lands. This is the season for cherishing these things in our hearts and looking towards the coming of hope.

The Advent journey to the manger is a pilgrimage of imagining and reimagining God's presence among us. But often our imagination fails us. We would rather seek certainty rather than stargaze. If we are honest we want our angels safely nestled on trees or in heaven where they make no great demands of us and where we can ignore their divine message.

But to enter this season of Advent is to embark on an adventure into the imaginative work of joining God in creatively rethinking who we are and how we are as people of faith. Perhaps the call of this season is to look beyond the concrete and to dive deeply into the waters of wild imagining.

PRAYER

O God of infinite imagining, spur our hearts and our minds beyond the now so that we may catch sight of your Divine vision unfolding in the world about us. That with Jesus our Salvation we may dream new dreams, and foster new visions; now and always. Amen.

QUESTION

How will you imagine with God a different future?

JOY

“Joy is the holy fire
that keeps our
purpose warm and
our intelligence
aglow.”

-Helen Keller

A long-exposure photograph of a starry night sky, showing numerous curved light trails from stars. The trails are most prominent in the upper half of the image, where they form a dense, swirling pattern of blue and white lines. The lower half of the image shows a lighter, more uniform sky with fewer trails, and the dark silhouette of a tree is visible at the bottom center.

HOPE

PEACE

JOY

LOVE

LOVE

Love, at its essence, is the heart of faith, yet it is the hardest and most demanding call in following Christ and seeking God. To love is to look beyond ourselves, embrace the divine light in others, and live in harmony with God's will for all creation. This season of longing expectation reminds us that love is not just a feeling but an active choice—an offering of kindness, patience, and selflessness in a world yearning for hope. It means that we cannot see love as a mere sentiment but as the ultimate source and culmination of all creation.

As we live more fully into a love that looks beyond ourselves and focus more intently on the ultimate gift of God's love—Jesus, Emmanuel—let us carry this truth in our hearts: we are deeply loved, we are called to love in return, and we receive abiding love. How then do we live more fully into love? How do we share this love that we know deeply but understand incompletely? We look for love bursting forth in small and great ways around and through us. To see love we must be love.

Whether through a gentle word, a generous act, or quiet prayer, may we embody the spirit of Advent by living out the love that transforms lives and draws us closer to the divine. As this season of Advent draws to an end, let love be the light that guides us, and let love be the anchor that steadies us as we prepare to welcome Christ anew.



O God, who lovingly created and more lovingly restored the cosmos, and whose very self is infinite love; reground us in yourself, that seeking to love and serve you in all persons we may grow in compassion and grace; for the sake of Emmanuel your ultimate gift of Love. Amen.

How will you embody love today?



ADVENT WEEK FOUR

MONDAY: FORGIVE

SCRIPTURE Ephesians 4:32

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

REFLECTION

In my family growing up, Christmas was a huge deal. For weeks before Christmas there were chores to be done; the furniture needed to be dusted, drinks had to be bought, the silverware had to be polished, food had to be cooked, all in preparation for family and friends to stop by on Christmas. Rarely did we do presents growing up because Christmas was about being ready to welcome friends and strangers who stopped by in the guise of Christ. In the Caribbean, Christmas is about community gathering, so preparing is an act of hospitality.

I imagine Mary and Joseph, like millennia of parents, tried to be prepared for Jesus's coming. I imagined that they found a cot, knitted clothes, and made toys in preparation for the baby. I wonder how the census threw all their well-thought-out plans out the window? Or did Jesus simply come earlier than they planned? Regardless of the best-laid plans God has a way of showing up. In this season dedicated to preparation, be prepared to be surprised by God.

PRAYER

O God of astonishing surprise, you prepare a place for us and prepare us for a place in your embracing love. Grant to us who await the birth cries of Jesus Emmanuel to be watchful and waiting, that we may welcome you into the manger of our hearts; for the sake of your Love. Amen.

QUESTION

How are you preparing to welcome Christ into your midst today?



ADVENT WEEK FOUR

TUESDAY: PREPARE

SCRIPTURE Jeremiah 29:11

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

REFLECTION

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Familiar words that we say and pray whenever the community gathers, but how often do we pay close attention to what they mean? Forgiveness dwells at the heart of Christianity as a radical act of love. But we often give into the fallacy that forgiveness is about the other person. Forgiveness starts with me, not with the other person. Forgiveness by its very nature is a self-focused act. To forgive is to let go. We find it hard to let go of the slights, hurts, insults, and harm caused by others while often neglecting our failings and faults. But to forgive is to let go of the hope that we can change the past.

In Jesus, we see God's willingness to find us and forgive us. God has been in the forgiveness business since Eve and Adam disobeyed the first commandment, and God continues in the same vein now. Advent invites us to let go of what has been so that we may be open to what will be in the forgiveness offered by God in the Child of Bethlehem.

PRAYER

O Holy One, in love you call and in love you free us from the fetters of our sins and chains of our transgressions; help us in our struggles and our striving to release into your hands our failed hopes and our dashed dreams; that we might forgive as we are forgiven. For the sake of Christ, we pray. Amen.

QUESTION

How will you seek to be forgiven or to forgive today?



MERRYCHRISTMAS

INCARNATE

"And the word became flesh." No angels, no shepherds, no sheep, none of the familiar Christmas trappings that are the stuff of pageants and plays the world over. The innkeepers are keeping their inns and the magi are blissfully stargazing. No journeys to a distant land, no fleeing from the jealous king, and no dreams of what is to come.

Five simple words from the Gospel of John transmit the most profound mystery of the incarnation -God becoming flesh to dwell among us. In these uncomplicated words, the entirety of the infinite Creator enters into the finite world, taking on human form, vulnerability, and suffering. No mere act in history, a momentary reveling in humanity, but a demonstration and declaration of God's deep desire for intimacy with creation. God's love affair with humanity takes flesh in the very humanity of Jesus.

On this day, Christmas Day, we are reminded that God is not distant or detached from the everyday struggles and stumblings of our lives but is intimately integrated into the life of the world. The incarnation of God with us in the person of Jesus is a reminder and a challenge to look for the divine in the ordinary. It is the assurance that there is night so dark that the light of hope is not there, no struggle so challenging that God has not redeemed, and no despair so thick that God is not able to dispel.

God comes among us, reminding us that greatness is found not in power but in love and self-giving. This Christmas, let it be our hope, our prayer, and our desire that the Word may be made flesh in us.



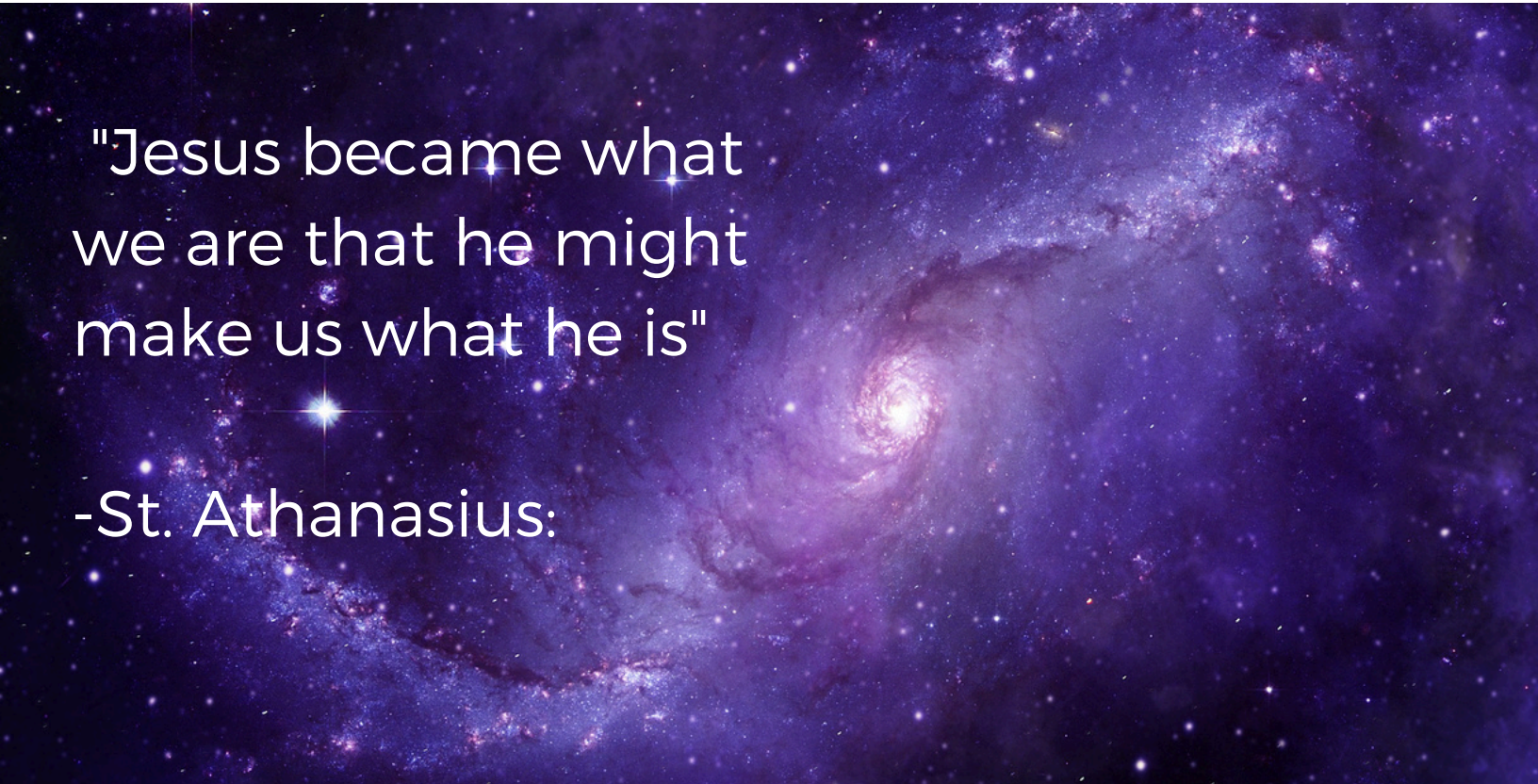
O God, who wonderfully created us in your own image and yet more wonderfully restored us through your Son Jesus Christ: grant that, as he came to share in our humanity, so we may share the life of his divinity; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

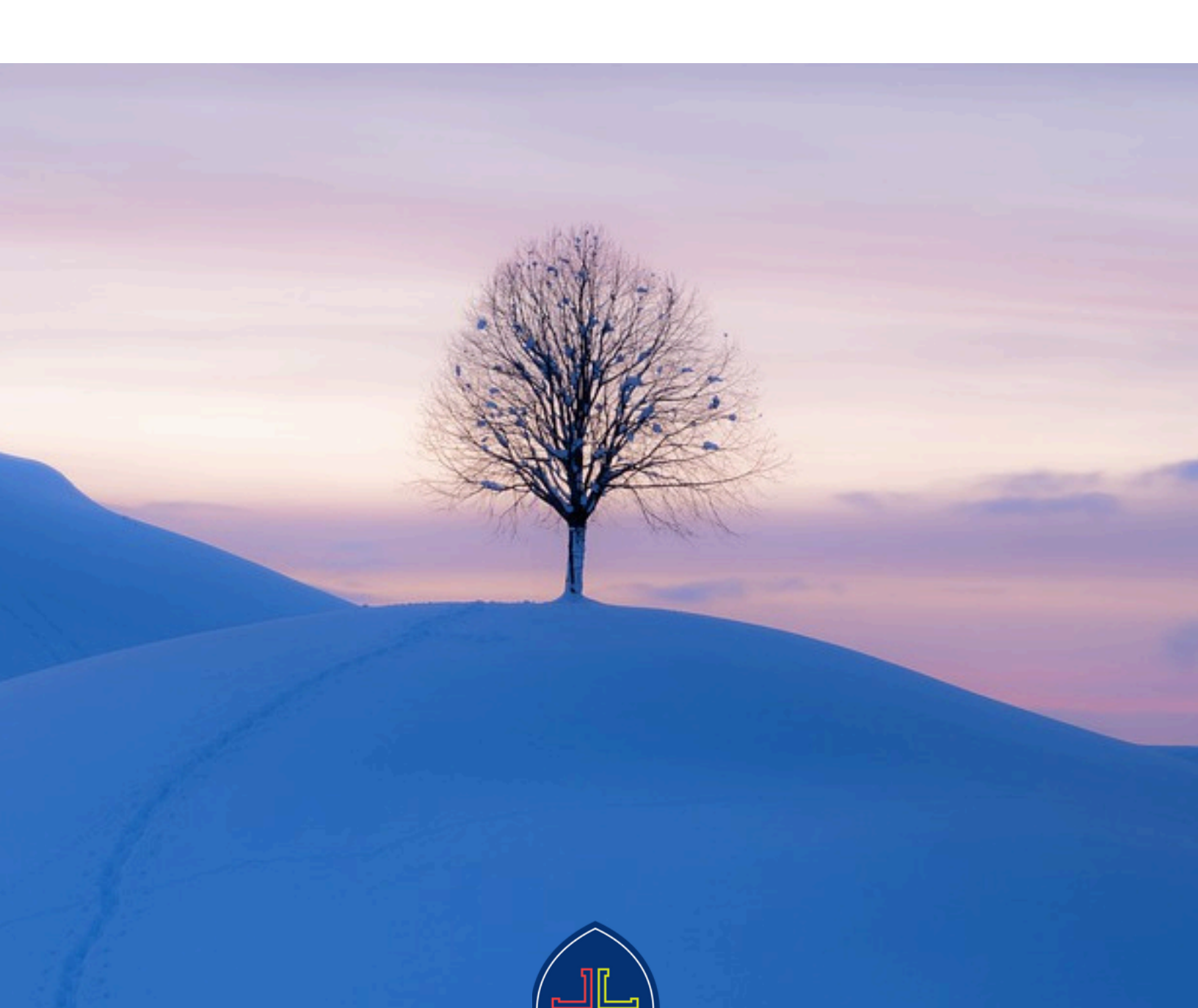
How will God be incarnate in you today?

LOVE

"Jesus became what we are that he might make us what he is"

-St. Athanasius:





THANK YOU FOR JOINING IN
THE ADVENT JOURNEY!
MAY GOD BLESS YOU AT CHRISTMAS
AND THE WHOLE YEAR THROUGH!