Lingering Before the Light

Advent 2025

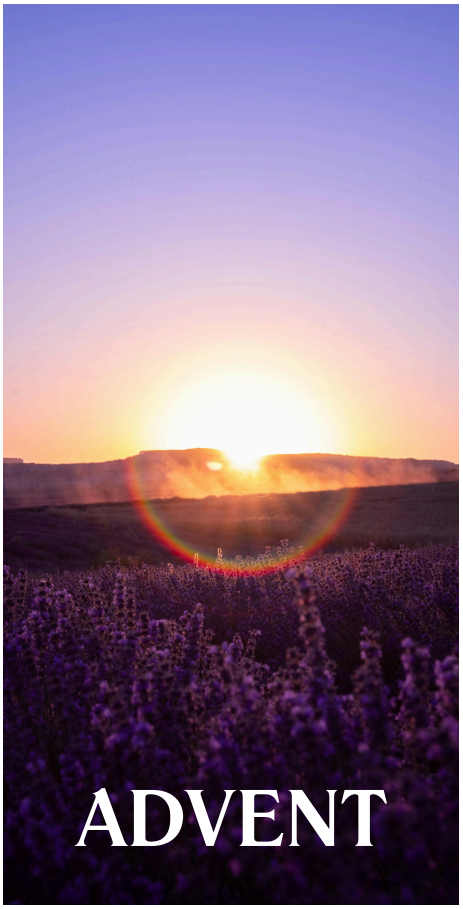
The Episcopal Diocese of Missouri

"Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. " — Isaiah 12:2

Advent invites us not to rush toward Christmas, but to linger in the in-between — in the long shadows before dawn. This is a season of holy waiting, of quiet courage, of learning to dwell in the half-light where hope begins to take shape. Before the brilliance of the manger, we are called to pause and pay attention — to the flicker of faith in our hearts, to the signs of God's presence already stirring in the world.

To linger before the light is to trust that even in the dark, God is near — and that the promise of light is already on its way.

The Right Reverend
DEON K. JOHNSON
Advent 2025



the COURAGE *of* HOPE

In this season of lengthening nights and shortening days, it may seem contradictory to look for light breaking into the world. The weight of local and global crises bears down upon us—war and rumors of war fill our headlines, climate crises become more frequent, and the chaos grows ever noisier. In the midst of such turmoil, why would we look for the coming of light? Why, in this season of expectation, would we dare to seek out hope, peace, joy, and love? Hope seems too fragile a thing for so heavy a time.

And yet—it is precisely when the world feels most fragile, when the gloom encroaches and shadows threaten to overwhelm us, that God breaks into our midst. Advent reminds us that God does not wait for perfect to arrive. God enters the world not in power or splendor, but in vulnerability—in the form of a child, born in a manger, surrounded by obscurity, insecurity, and risk. This is the heart of Advent: the divine defiance of despair through the incarnation of hope.

We don't often think of hope as courageous. It is too often portrayed as frail, feeble, or fleeting. But true hope is radical. It is an act of resistance. To hope when everything around us urges resignation is to stand with God against the gloom. God choosing to dwell among us—in the fragile form of Jesus—is a bold act of redemptive hope. Hope has transformed the world. It has toppled tyrants, dismantled empires, healed wounds, and reconciled enemies. Hope carries no sword, wields no armies, claims no throne —only the flickering flame of faith, lighting a path toward a better and brighter future.

In this season of Advent, we are called to embrace the courage of hope. Not the kind that denies the darkness, but the kind that enters into it. God's most profound works often unfold in obscurity —creation from chaos, resurrection from the tomb, the incarnation in the stillness of night. Advent does not rush to the joy of Christmas but lingers in the holy tension of waiting. It bids us to slow down, to notice where God is poking, provoking, and prodding us toward deeper relationship, with ourselves, with one another, and with the divine.

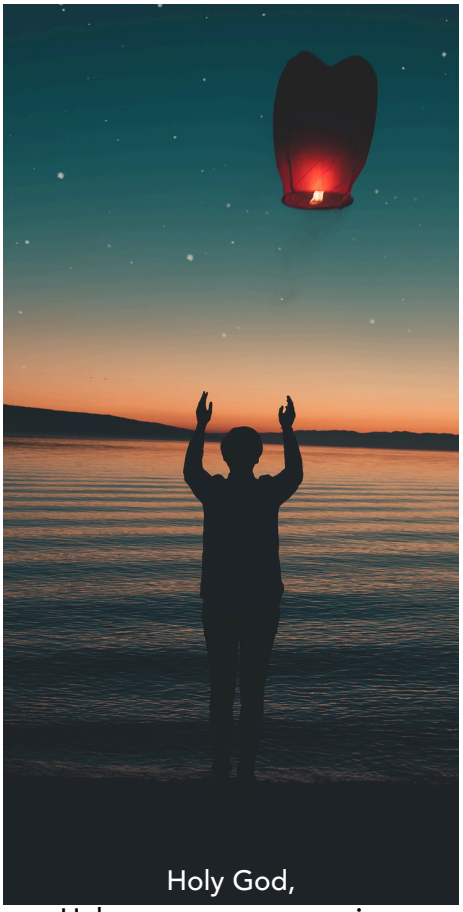
Advent is not just a countdown as we rush headlong towards Christmas; it is an invitation. It calls us to hold back the mad dash toward the manger and walk instead the slower, sacred path of preparation. Light a candle against the dark. Read the prophets. Dwell in the questions. Sing the hymns of longing. Pray with the saints who waited before us.

For Jesus is coming into our world, into our lives, into our darkness. And with him, he brings the fierce, transforming light of courageous hope.

May our anticipation of hope be holy.
May our waiting be pregnant with possibility.
May our expectation be buoyed in our longing.
For surely God dwells with us in this waiting place.

Hope

the First Week *of* Advent



Holy God,
Help me carry compassion,
even when cruelty holds sway.
Help me champion kindness,
even when callousness
carries the day.
Help me cherish hope,
even when cynicism
leads the way.
Help me center love,
even when hate is on display.
Holy God, help me,
just for today. Amen.

Following the aftermath of the 2015 mass shooting in Paris, France, a man named Angel Le visited the site of the shooting with his young son. The son was worried that his family may have to leave because of the "baddies" who had done this horrendous act. The son saw the flowers and the candles that had been laid by countless people to memorialize those who had been lost.

The little boy with tears in his eyes said,
"They've got guns. They can shoot us because they're very, very bad, Daddy." "They've got guns but we have flowers," replied the dad.
"Flowers don't do anything papa," cried the son.
"They fight guns. They're so we don't forget the people who have gone. As long as there are people with flowers, we know that people with guns won't win."

Advent is about hope. It is about flowers and candles against guns and hate. It is about the smallest light surrounded by a storm of gloom. Hope is a paper boat floating on a restless sea. As we go about our daily lives it can be easy to lose sight of hope. There is so much in our world to fear, but there is also abundant hope that goes unnoticed and unseen.

In the small acts of kindness offered to a stranger, in the act of giving and receiving love, in a smile of encouragement freely given, we see the seeds of hope being planted.

Hope is a radical act of defiance in the face of the impossible. Hope is a frail yet fierce force. Hope is a single drop of water seeking to move a mountain, or flowers and candles standing against "baddies" with guns.

God breaks into our world, not with strength or might or power, but with hope. Of all the things in the cosmos that God could have used, of all the magnificent power that God could have employed to get our attention, why would God choose something as fragile as hope? Why not overwhelm humanity with displays of power and awe? History tells us that strength and power are fleeting vanities. History is littered with the ruins of authority defeated by the radical notion of hope because hope pitted against power always endures. The journey of hope may be long and winding, but it endures to the end.

Hope comes to us in a manger and not in a mansion. God comes to us in the frailty and helplessness of a child, because when hope spreads, when hope is shared, hope grows, and hope has the power to radically overwhelm the world.

As we begin this Advent journey, may we be peddlers of a holy hope.

There's a day of hope, may I live to see,
When our hearts are happy, and our souls are free.
Let the new day dawn, oh, Lord, I pray.
We'll never get to heaven, till we reach that day. –The Musical Ragtime.

MONDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

"Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved." -Psalm 80:19

PRAYER

Holy God, Holy and Mighty,
give us hearts to perceive the hope
of your reign breaking into our world once more;
that we who are weary, and waiting and watchful,
may welcome once more the Child of Bethlehem,
Jesus, your son into our hearts and homes. Amen.

ACTION

Be a hope detective. Seek out the places and people who convey hope in your world. Write down those encounters with divine hope and allow them to carry you when things feel hopeless.

TUESDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

"May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness."
–Psalm 72:3

PRAYER

Awaken us now to your coming, O God,
that we may shake off the sleep that neglects love
and wake from the drowsiness that abandons justice.
Bend our wills to the audacity of hopefulness;
that we may with joy and wonder
welcome the Christ Child into our midst. Amen.

ACTION

Look again and again. Take some time to really look at the familiar things around you.
Offer a prayer for people and stories that those things conjure.

WEDNESDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." –Psalm 23:4

PRAYER

Raise our heads and hearts
in expectation, that we may yearn for the day
of the coming of Christ, O Holy One of Truth.
Rain down hope in the midst of our despair
and guide into the ways of your justice and peace. Amen.

ACTION

Stop and listen. This week find the time to sit in a quiet place, either at night or during the day, and listen for a symphony of sound around you.

THURSDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

"Peace be within your walls and security within your towers. For the sake of my relatives and friends, I will say, "Peace be within you." –Psalm 122:7-8

PRAYER

Unexpected God,
Your presence in our world
surprises and shocks us.
You come to us in the cries of a child
and the emptiness of a tomb.
Wake us from the slumber of comfort
and move us to the urgency of peace;
through Christ the long-awaited one. Amen.

ACTION

Dwell in Quiet. Spend some intentional time in meditation and quiet as you begin a new day. Capture the moment in poetry, photography, drawing, journaling or something that stirs your imagination.

FRIDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

"The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes." –Psalm 118:22-23

PRAYER

God of the rejected, God of the neglected,
You center those who have been named "less than"
and elevate those called outcasts.
Empower us to draw the circle of love
wide enough that all may come within your tender embrace;
through Jesus the expected. Amen.

ACTION

Everyday awe. Take some time today to see the details. No matter what it may be, take some time to look closely at the intricacy and discover the awe of God in the ordinary.

SATURDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" –Psalm 27:1

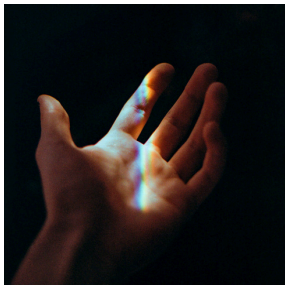
PRAYER

Holy Eternal One,
Assist us in the struggle and the strife
to accept no false peace with injustice,
to affirm no hollow truce with oppression,
and to adopt no shallow accord with tyranny;
that we may see and know that we are tied together in the single garment of destiny.
All for the sake of your Love. Amen.

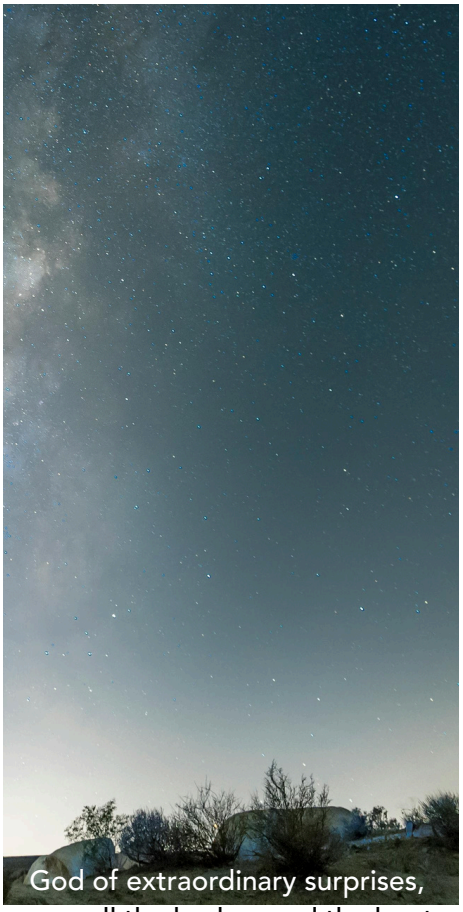
ACTION

Gifts of gratitude. Take the time this week to thank someone who helped you along the way to where you are today.

Peace



the **Second** **Week** *of* **Advent**



ou call the broken and the bent
to be agents of healing and hope,
you claim the ordinary to
accomplish
the impossible in every generation.

Surprise us once more
with your very self,
made incarnate in the
extraordinarily ordinary
Child of Mary, Jesus our Savior.
Amen.

One of my very first memories of my maternal grandmother was her hands. She had worked most of her life in the fields, toiling to help support her family. Her hands had tilled the soil and tended children. They had held tightly to my grandfather in times of trouble and caressed her grandchildren in times of joy. I remember how soft and gentle her hands where despite years of manual labor.

My grandmother's hands were powerful. They were loving hands, warm hands, whose weight on my chest had the power to calm and soothe when I was anxious or upset. Those hands were healing as they lay on my forehead when I was sick or in pain. I imagine that God's hands must be like my grandmother's. Those ordinary hands offered comfort and peace, loving service to others, and welcome to friends and stranger. God used those hands to inspire faith out of their ordinariness.

As we continue the journey through Advent and give thanks for the blessing of peace, God seeks to use our hands to accomplish the mighty and the mundane. We are called to point to a God of extraordinary surprises! A God who routinely calls the unqualified, the unknown, the underdog to be God's messengers.

Have you ever noticed that God rarely calls those with power and prestige? Have you noticed that God does not often use those who have authority and earthly power to accomplish great things? Think of almost every great movement in history and it is often the regular, run-of-the-mill, ordinary people that best hear and respond to God's call to service.

God needs you! I believe that the prophetic voice for change in our world is you. I believe that the hands God will use to inspire faith and spread peace are yours. You are called to be the one who points to the kingdom of heaven. You are the nobody that God can use to accomplish God's mission in our world. Yours are the hands, the voice, the feet that God uses to point toward Jesus, the salvation of the world.

Do not for one hot second think that you cannot make a difference. Do not for one moment think that you cannot change the world. Do not ever think that God can't use you to accomplish great things. If this God is able in times when we seek after power, privilege, and prestige to call a nobody, how much more is God able to use us? Sometimes the best thing we can do is get out of God's way and say yes!

My prayer this Advent season is that we will all be the ordinary hands of God in the world. That we may embrace our call to be prophets of a world turned upside down. That you will be prophets of hope and love and forgiveness and joy for a world in need. That you, in the words of the Spiritual may boldly proclaim, "I'm gonna live so God can use me, any time Lord, anywhere!"

MONDAY, THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

"I will listen to what you, Lord God, are saying, for you are speaking peace to your faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to you." –Psalm 85:8

PRAYER

Faithful God,
you prepare a place
where hurt and fear have no sway,
where faith and love lead the way.
Guide us we pray to seek the One
whose perfect love casts out fear,
Jesus Christ the Anointed One. Amen.

ACTION

Share a fear. Ask a friend to listen to one of your fears. Pray together.

TUESDAY, THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

"I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all your marvelous works." –Psalm 9:1

PRAYER

Divine Physician,
your will for all is healing and wholeness.
Clear our lives of hatred and despair.
Plant in our hearts seeds of joy and peace,
that sprouts of hope may spring forth
with the coming of the Child of Bethlehem. Amen.

ACTION

Discover joy. Start a joy box. Collect cards, notes, and pictures that bring you joy or that were gifts from others. When things are tough, spend time going through the box.

WEDNESDAY, THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

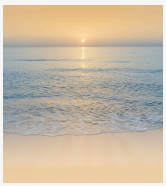
"Let your loving-kindness come to me, O Lord, and your salvation, according to your promise." –Psalm 119:41

PRAYER

Holy God,
So guide our hearts,
So govern our minds,
So gather our thoughts,
So grow our compassion,
So germinate our imaginations;
That we may be wholly yours
and fulfill nought but your will.
All for your Love's sake. Amen.

ACTION

Light a candle. Spend some time in meditation with a candle to remind you of God's presence.



THURSDAY, THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for the Holy One."–Psalm 31:7

PRAYER

God of Life,
in the coming of your Son into the world,
You call us to hope and remind us of the shortness of life.
Move us to remember to redeem the time you have given us,
and send as herald of your reign, through Jesus Emmanuel. Amen.

ACTION

Life list. Make a list of the things you'd like to accomplish in life. Begin to check things off the list.

FRIDAY, THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

"Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe, for you are my crag and my stronghold; for the sake of your Name, lead me and guide me." –Psalm 31:3

PRAYER

O God,
You come to us
the uninvited guest,
the unwanted caller,
the unexpected visitor,
barging into our well-ordered lives,
shattering our false illusions of control
scattering our shallow fallacy of certainty,
scuttling our thin veneer of having it all together.
Help us to delight in welcoming your unbidden love
disrupting the messiness of our lives. Amen.

ACTION

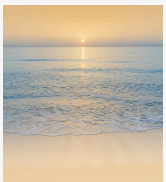
Give Love. Gather clothing, toys, and other items that can be donated as a gift of love to another person or family.

SATURDAY, THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

"Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice in the Lord; shout for joy, all who are true of heart." –Psalm 32:12

PRAYER

Vigilant God,
you watch over your people with the eyes of love
and you hide your children in the shadow of your wings.
Give us the courage to bear witness to your eternal love
as we await your in-breaking presence in the world. Amen.

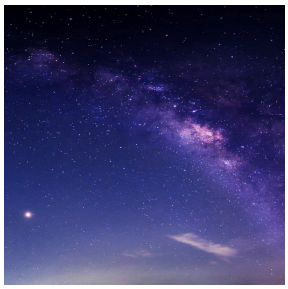


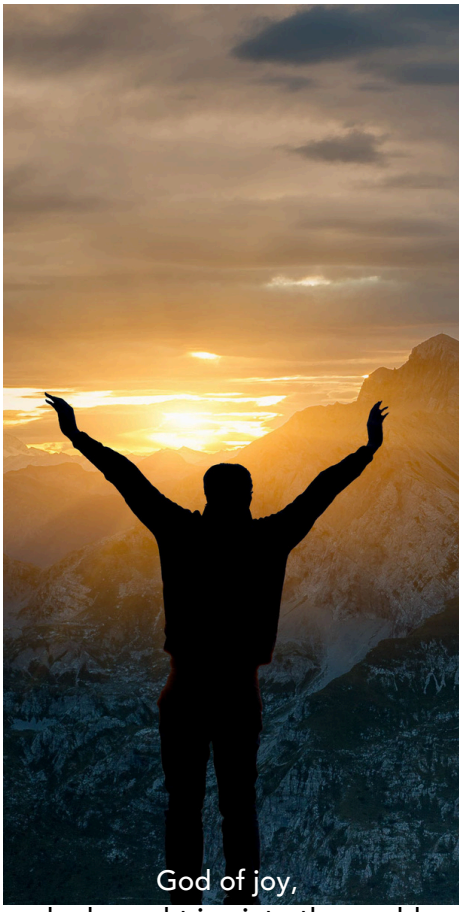
ACTION

Share the story. Share with a friend the story of where God has been present in your life this week. Listen to their story.

Joy

the Third Week *of* Advent





God of joy,
who brought joy into the world,
dwell in the hopeless spaces
between us.

God of love,
who came as love in our world,
dwell in the loveless places
between us.

God of peace,
whose will for all is peace within
and without,
dwell in the peace-starved spaces
about us.

God of joy, love, and peace,
come among us once more. Amen.

In 1719, during a time of upheaval, division, and fear, poet and theologian Isaac Watts penned the words of the now famous hymn Joy to the World. The hymn was originally not written for Christmas but rather as a reminder that at Jesus' second coming the world would be united as one. His hymn was a reminder to the people around him that even in the face of division, uncertainty, and fear, God was still in charge.

Right now our nation, our neighborhoods, and the church are filled with fear. Fear of the unknown. Fear of the future. But Jesus' advent reminds us that we are not called to succumb to fear, we are called to live the Good News. We are called to do something with our piece of Christ.

Following Jesus means that we go out into the world. Following Jesus means that we take our light of faith into the places of greatest need. It means that there is no place, no person, no cause, no community so downtrodden, forgotten, depraved, or rejected by this world that we cannot seek and serve Christ in them. Following Jesus means that we must be willing to discover Christ already at work and present in the places of greatest need.

We are called to be peddlers of hope, ambassadors of love, and carriers of joy. In our work of following Jesus, we are called to not say so much about Jesus as to show Jesus.

The work that we had to do yesterday: to minister to the hurting, hungry, marginalized, broken, terrified, and disenfranchised, along with the healed, hopeful, joyful, and loved; and to share the loving, liberating, life-giving way of Jesus, is still the work we have to do today and tomorrow. The work of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, healing the sick, and burying the dead has been and still must be our calling and our cause.

We gather together each Sunday to give thanks for God's love for the world – the whole world – Republicans, Democrats, rich, poor, women, men, young, old, gay, straight, bi, trans, queer, persons of all races, cultures, and ethnicities. God loves us all. And we are united not by gender or race, orientation or economic status, political affiliation or cultural expression, but rather by faith – faith that God created all things and people, sustains all things and people, and will redeem all things and people, because of God's overwhelming love.

Jesus coming into our world to redeem and release us all from the many prisons of our own creating is a cause for joy; joy that simply shines in the knowledge of being deeply and truly loved. We have work to do and little time to do it.

"Joy to the world, the Lord has come, let earth receive her king. Let every heart prepare him room and heaven and nature sing." –Sir Isaac Watts

MONDAY, THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

“But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.” –Psalm 52:8

PRAYER

God of the journey,
you are present at our beginnings and our endings,
enfold us with your sheltering arms that we may dispel
the fear that infects the world with the love of your presence
in Christ the awaited one. Amen.

ACTION

Invest in a dream. Encourage a friend or loved one to risk following a dream that has been differed. Find out how you could support that dream.

TUESDAY, THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

“I will make your name to be remembered from one generation to another; therefore, nations will praise you for ever and ever." –Psalm 45:18

PRAYER

God of the dawn, God of the day,
God of the dusk, God of the dark,
your presence is balm along every journey.
Go with us, we pray, to the manger and beyond,
so that with hearts fixed securely on you, we may welcome Emmanuel. Amen.

ACTION

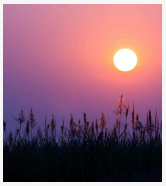
Kind time. Set an alarm on your phone to go off at three different times during the day. In those moments, do something kind for someone else.

WEDNESDAY, THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

“Remember your word to your servant, because you have given me hope. This is my comfort in my trouble, that your promise gives me life.” –Psalm 119:49-50

PRAYER

Eternal One, you hold the present and the past,
help us to remember in the busy seasons of our lives,
to be still and know that you are God.
Help us to remember that in Jesus we are born anew
in love and sent in faith for the life of the world. Amen.



ACTION

Paper hearts. Put 50 paper hearts in a box. On each cutout, write something special about a loved one or a friend. Give them the box and tell them to pull out a heart anytime they need a pick-me-up.

THURSDAY, THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

"Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving and make good your vows to the Most High. Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall honor me." –Psalm 50:14-15

PRAYER

Holy God,
Teach me to sing like Mary,
because singing is a radical act of defiance.
Teach me to sigh like Rachel,
because some thoughts are beyond words.
Teach me to smile like Sarah,
because no one has the power to claim my joy.
Teach me to shout like, Anna,
because love should never be contained.
Teach me O God, teach me. Amen.

ACTION

Play the music. Find a piece of music that lifts your spirit and makes you smile. Play the music, turn up the volume, and imagine the lyrics as God's love washing over you.

FRIDAY, THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

"Save me, O God, by your Name; in your might, defend my cause. Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth." –Psalm 54:1-2

PRAYER

Perfect Love,
you cast out the fear that infects our hearts
and in Christ's coming to vanquish the powers of division.
Help us who walk by fear to walk by faith,
that we may welcome friend and stranger in the love of your Son. Amen.

ACTION

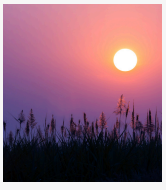
Feed others. Purchase extra canned goods. Donate them to a pantry.

SATURDAY, THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

"Hear my prayer, O God; do not hide yourself from my petition. Listen to me and answer me; I have no peace, because of my cares." –Psalm 55:1-2

PRAYER

Hold close, dear God,
those who are wearied, worried, and worn.
Renew the restless, reassure the reluctant,
revive the ravaged, restore the restive;
all for the sake of your Love. Amen.

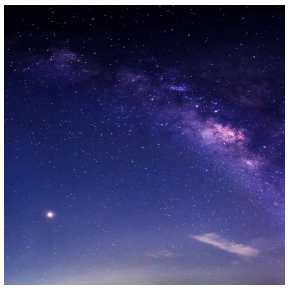


ACTION

Refocus. Find something in your home that seems ordinary. Spend some time carefully looking at that object for the extraordinary hiding in plain sight.

Love

the ***Fourth*** **Week** *of* **Advent**



God of unbound love,
you blessed your servants
Mary and Elizabeth
with the gift of new life.
Make our hearts leap for joy,
and fill our mouths
with shouts of praise;
that we may be heralds
of glad tidings
and messengers of love,
to welcome Christ
whose coming draws near.
Amen.

The year was 1989. Communism was the rule of law in the small German town of Leipzig. The people had clashed for months with the government forces about their harsh treatment of the people. Many had been injured, hurt, or lost their lives in protest. Finally, a pregnant mother organized the women in her town to protest the government. She wanted a better future for her child, so she gathered the women to march through the streets of the town to St. Nicolai Church.

As this handful of women made their way to the church, the police arrived. Tear gas, gas cannons, guns at the ready. The square in front of the church was surrounded by rifle-carrying government agents. In silent protest, the women just marched, right up to the police in the square. It was a tense moment as the women and the police stood there inches apart, eye to eye.

And then the unthinkable happened. Face to face with the commander of the communist forces, the pregnant organizer of the march raised her voice and began to sing. It was quiet at first, then louder and louder, until the whole square was filled with the sounds of hundreds of voices in song.

On November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall fell. The commander of the forces, when asked why they didn't crush the marchers as they had in the past protests, replied, "We didn't have a plan for singing."

Today, we hear the magnificent song of Mary as she sings the praises of her God. But what does Mary have to sing about? Singing isn't exactly life-changing or world-ending, yet as she meets with her cousin, Elizabeth, she sings of the wonders that God has done.

She sings of hope for the future,
She sings of a world changed
She sings of a time when justice and equity
will be real and present in the world.
She sings a song of protest and defiance
in the midst of chaos and darkness.
She sings of a world put right, but a God who calls the low and not the proud.
And we are called to join in the singing!

No wonder Jesus spent most of his ministry hanging out with the unknowns and the untouchables. I suspect that he really was Mary's child to turn out the way that he did. He had Mary as a mother.

Mary's song is a song of the future she wishes for her child.

Singing is an act of resistance. Sometimes it is an act of joy and sometimes of camaraderie, but it is also an act of resistance.

The enslaved knew this. When they sang spirituals, they were both praising God and protesting the masters who locked them out of worship but couldn't keep them out of the promise of deliverance. And the civil rights leaders knew this, too, singing songs like "We Shall Overcome," when so many in the society didn't give them a chance to advance their cause of justice, let alone triumph.

Mary's song is our triumph song. How can we keep from singing?

MONDAY, THE FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

“You have turned my wailing into dancing; you have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.” –Psalm 30:12

PRAYER

God bless you with restlessness and resilience,
that, like a deep-rooted tree in a storm, you may
bend and not break, sway and not splinter, twist and not tear.
God bless you with restlessness and resilience to stand fast and hold firm
in the time of trial and testing, all your days. Amen.

ACTION

Look for restoration. Be vigilant in seeing where God is transforming what has been into what will be. Perhaps look at an old building being used for a new purpose.

TUESDAY, THE FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

“The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom." –Isaiah 35:1

PRAYER

Holy God,
With the busyness of the day;
untangle my thoughts, unweave my fears,
unclothe my pride, unwind my doubt,
unleash my joy, unfurl my hope,
unmoor my heart, unlock my love;
That I may seek your presence, rest in your province,
and dwell in your peace. Amen.

ACTION

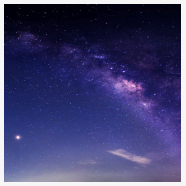
Find rests. In the noises of this season around us, pause to listen too and look for the pauses, the rests present in the busyness of the day.

WEDNESDAY, THE FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. –Joel 2:28

PRAYER

God of the prophets, bless the prophets’ heirs.
God of deep abiding truth,
confront, convict, and coax us into your paths of love.
God of our long hoped-for future,
entice us to heed the words of your prophets
that we may proclaim the coming of your Christ. Amen.



ACTION

Get to know a prophet. Read one of the Hebrew Scripture books on one of the prophets or research a modern prophet like the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy Day, Pauli Murray, or Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

THURSDAY, THE FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

"And Mary said: 'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior.'" –Luke 1:46-47

Prayer

Holy God,
Teach me to sing like Mary,
because singing is a radical act of defiance.
Teach me to sigh like Rachel,
because some thoughts are beyond words.
Teach me to smile like Sarah,
because no one has the power to claim my joy.
Teach me to shout like, Anna,
because love should never be contained.
Teach me O God, teach me. Amen.

Action

Joy List. Start a list of 10 things that bring you joy. Do one of them today. Repeat.

FRIDAY, THE FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" –Luke 2:14

PRAYER

Holy One,
Today I will choose hope over despair,
because to hope is to believe in a different future.
Today I will choose curiosity over condemnation,
because to be curious is to be open to possibilities.
Today I will choose love over fear,
because to love is to dance in the world with joy.
Holy One, teach me to choose well today. Amen.

ACTION

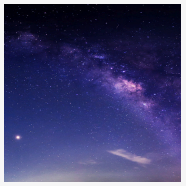
Keep watch. In the busyness of this day/night, keep watch for sighs of hope being made new.

SATURDAY, THE FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

"And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." –Luke 2:7

PRAYER

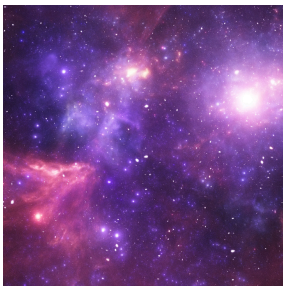
Holy God,
Be our tower of joy, through the vale of weeping.
Be our mountain of hope, across the valley of despair.
Be our pillar of courage in time of trial.
Be our anchor of truth, upon the seas of falsehood.
Be our light of love, among the shadows of hate.
Be with us, O God, along the way. Amen.



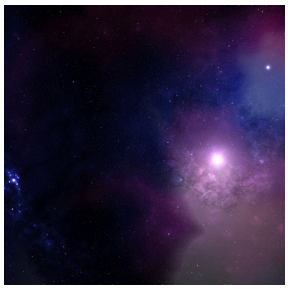
ACTION

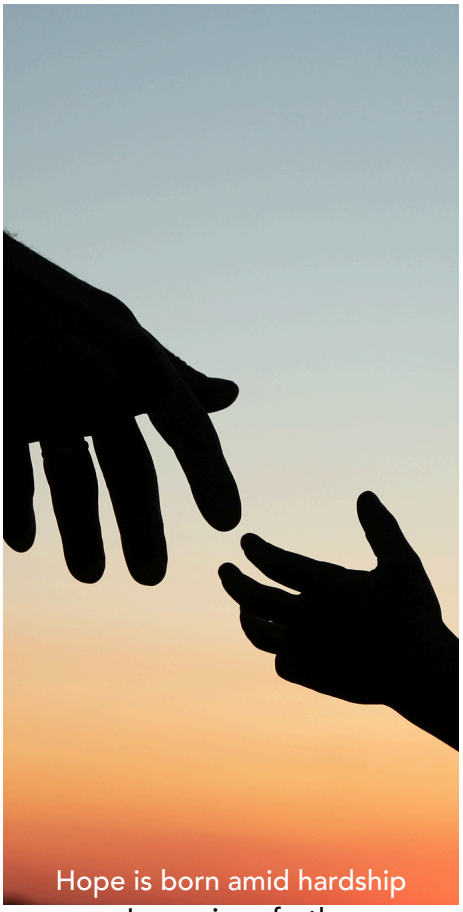
Refocus. Find something in your home that seems ordinary. Spend some time carefully looking at that object for the extraordinary hiding in plain sight.

Light



the Incarnation *of* Christ





Hope is born amid hardship

Joy springs forth
in the heart of despair,
Light dawns
even in the deepest gloom
Peace wages on
surrounded by war.
God enters our world,
and nothing changes,
except everything.
May hope, joy, light, and peace
be our this Christmas
and may Christ be born
once more into our world
and in our hearts.
Amen.

THE RADICAL MYSTERY OF THE WORD MADE FLESH

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us…" (John 1:14)

Why would God choose to become one of us? Why not simply dazzle humanity with acts of overwhelming power or signs of unmissable wonder? Surrendering the infinite power of creation to dwell within creation—even for a time—is, by all accounts, not logical. But therein lies the radical mystery of divine love.

Where we would seek to dominate, God offers self-emptying. Where we would demand control, God chooses community. Where we would cling to power, God offers prophetic vulnerability. The incarnation is not a grand display of force but a stunningly radical act of divine humility. The Creator of the universe slips into the story not with a shout but with the cry of a newborn. God entry into the creation is proclaimed by the angels not to the powerful but to certain poor shepherds.

The beauty and scandal of the incarnation is this: when the Word becomes flesh, God has skin in the game. God is not removed from creation, observing from a distance, but intimately bound to every fiber of it. The Word made flesh is a declaration that there is no place, no person, no part of creation into which God will not go. God enters our world, our suffering, our loss, our shame, our joy—and remains. This is the shocking intimacy of Emmanuel: God with us, in all things.

The One who fashioned the atom and the aardvark, who sculpted mountains and whispered galaxies into motion, who said, "Let there be," and called forth the cosmos—this God of infinite majesty and unfathomable love—entered into the fragile frame of human flesh. God did not come draped in divine splendor but wrapped in swaddling clothes, laid in a borrowed manger; a refugee. The incarnation is not just an event in history; it is a divine revolution that redefines what it means to be human, to be made in the likeness and image of God.

God takes on our humanity so that we might share in Christ's divinity. This is the heart of Christmas—not the pageantry, not the poetry, but the promise: I will never leave you nor forsake you. (Hebrews 13:5)

That is why we gather—in stately cathedrals and dingy catacombs, in chapels, sanctuaries, and living rooms. Wherever God's people gather in the name of Jesus, we bear witness to this truth: God has entered into the mystery of humanity and, in doing so, has declared it once more "very good."

So when the angels return to heaven, when the shepherds go back to their fields, when the Magi begin their long journey home, and the star fades from the sky, what remains is the radical mystery of the Word made flesh. Christmas is not ultimately about a scene—it is about a Savior. Not about the moment—but the movement of God toward us.

The challenge before us is not merely to celebrate the incarnation but to live it. To see Christ born again among us—in each new day, in every act of compassion, in each encounter with the other. The Word has become flesh. The divine has taken up residence in the ordinary. Joy to the world!

May the **Light** of the **Christ Child** shine in your home and in your heart at Christmas and all year through!

Merry Christmas!

THE LIGHT HAS COME!

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