

Advent 2020

Welcome to Advent 2020! The banner below normally hangs at the top of the stairs just prior to entry into our worship space. This year is not a normal year; yet, “Hope, Peace, Joy and Love” never fade. The Holy Spirit has written those words into our hearts. No matter what we experience or endure, the four candles of Advent and what they represent are a guide to assist us on our journey through Advent leading up to Christmas. Perhaps, more than any other year, as you light your candles and await Christ’s coming, take time to dwell and rest silently in the glow of their light and center yourselves, if but for a while, reflecting on each of these words, “Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.”



We invite you to decorate your Advent wreath and send us a photo. We might even place it on our website and Facebook page (no names of course). Send a copy to Pastor Chad (pastor@wbbethany.org) or Paula (blcsecretary@lcom.net).

Pastor Chad created a Google Site with additional spiritual practices, resources and links to each daily reading during this season. You can access it at: <https://sites.google.com/view/blcadvent2020/home>

Advent 1—Sunday, November 29

⁸Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. ⁹Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people. — Isaiah 64:8-9 (NRSV)



Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy

SPEAK the words from the first verse of *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus* (ELW 254).

Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us;
let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art,
dear desire of ev'ry nation,
joy of ev'ry longing heart.

PRAY

O Lord, our God, as we light this candle
may it remind us of the hope we have
through the light of your Son. Where all hope
seems lost, shine into our hearts, minds, and souls
the hope that is everlasting. As we wait patiently,
We do so abiding in your abundant love
for us and all people, through your dear Son,
Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

LIGHT one blue candle.

DWELL in the word of God.

*But if we hope for what we do not see,
we wait for it with patience.*
Romans 8:25 (NRSV)

WAIT silently and peacefully in the hope we have in
Jesus Christ.

REFLECT alone or together on how God might mold
and shape you this Advent to be a vessel of hope
in the world. Where do you need shaped by the
hands of the potter as you wait for the Lord?

BLESS one another saying, "May Christ, the light of
hope shine upon you and scatter the darkness
from before your path. Almighty God, Father,
✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and
forever. Amen."

Archbishop Desmond Tutu is quoted as saying, "Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness." One can only imagine the darkness, which had surrounded the people of God as they were held captive by Babylon. The prophet Isaiah reminds them there is hope. God is their loving parent. It is God who formed them and is still at work molding them into beautiful vessels that showcase God's glory to the nations. The light shining amidst their darkness is the knowledge of the covenant God made long ago to Moses when Israel found themselves once again in a foreign land in which God said, "I will take you as my people, and I will be your God." (Exodus 6:7) Their hope was the promise God's covenant was as true then as it was for their ancestors living in Egypt hundreds of years earlier.

This Advent, we find ourselves in a rather precarious position. So many mornings, I sit in the dark nave in which the people of Bethany have gathered faithfully for 125 years and I lament the likelihood it may sit dark this Advent season. Yet, then my eyesight is directed to that continual flicker of light from the sanctuary lamp that glows at all times. That relatively small spot of light is enough to help me recollect the abundance of hope we have through the true Light who comes to us at Christmas and is with us at all times and in all places.

There is always hope!

There is always light!

There is always the
promise God is still
at work in us, mold-
ing us into beautiful
vessels that radiate
the light of Christ to
a world in which can
often seem so dark.



Advent 2—Sunday, December 6

Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts. — Psalm 85:8 (NRSV)

Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy



SPEAK the words from the third verse of *He Came Down* (ELW 253).

He came down that we may have peace;
He came down that we may have peace;
He came down that we may have peace;
Hallelujah forevermore.

PRAY

O Lord, our God, as we light this second candle may it remind us of the peace we have in you. In those places of our lives that seem out of control, the fears we harbor, the guilts that bind us, pour out the abundant peace that comforts, strengthens, forgives and heals through your dear Son, Jesus Christ, my Savior and Lord. Amen.

LIGHT two blue candles.

DWELL in the word of God.

*Jesus woke up and rebuked the wind,
and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!"
Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm.*
Mark 4:39 (NRSV)

WAIT silently and peacefully in the joy of Christ's coming.

REFLECT alone or together on a time when you experienced the overwhelming peace of Christ. What does that peace look like? Feel like? Where do you need peace this Advent?

BLESS one another saying, "May Christ, the light of peace, shine upon you amidst your Advent waiting bringing calmness through his presence. Almighty God, Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. Amen."

When I was a child, I recall being almost mesmerized each Christmas Eve during the singing of *Silent Night, Holy Night!* While I still was not quite sure exactly what was happening, I knew it was something special as the lights dimmed, the small candle I was holding shined brightly alongside all the others gathered, and our voices echoed the beautiful words of that beloved Christmas hymn. It may have been the first real experience of the peace of Christ I can recall. It's as if, for just a moment, things would come to a halt and in that place there was a very real sense of Christ present. It is a peace I feel each and every Christmas Eve. It is a peace I long for in a season that can get so hectic and out of control. While we may not have the opportunity to gather in person this year, I know Christ's peace knows no limits and has no boundaries. It will draw near in our homes.

May the peace of Christ sustain and comfort you in your Advent waiting!



Advent 3—Sunday, December 13

⁴⁶And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. — Luke 1:46-49 (NRSV)



Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy

SPEAK the words from the first verse of *He Came Down* (ELW 253).

He came down that we may have joy;
He came down that we may have joy;
He came down that we may have joy;
Hallelujah forevermore.

PRAY

O Lord, our God, as we light this third candle may it remind us of the joy we have in you. At all times and in all places help us follow your will to rejoice always, through your dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

LIGHT two blue candles, and the pink candle.

DWELL in the word of God.

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing,
¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NRSV)

WAIT silently and peacefully in the joy of Christ's coming.

REFLECT alone or together on the joy we have in Christ Jesus. How do we rejoice always, even amidst a global pandemic? How does joy reshape our mindset?

BLESS one another saying, "May Christ, the light of joy, shine upon you leading you to rejoice always through his amazing grace. Almighty God, Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. Amen."

Several weeks following the onset of COVID-19 I found my spirit to be weary and exhausted. Our world had suddenly been turned upside down almost overnight.

Mary's world, too, was instantly turned upside down. She went from being a young, peasant girl to quickly being made aware she would give birth to the Messiah.

Mary gives us a model to guide us in those moments when life seems to spin out of control. Just before she gives us this beautiful song we hear she is perplexed and in fear of the Angel Gabriel's sudden presence and announcement. Yet, it is the love God has for her that helps her move from a place of fear and uncertainty to a place of joy and recognition that God is at work in her.

Naming my joys, thanksgivings and what I am grateful for is a spiritual discipline I began practicing following the first several weeks when my soul was heavy. I have found the Spirit began to fill my cup with great joy as daily I name and reflect on the greatness of God and all God has done for me, our congregation, and the countless blessings in my life and our life together.

It does take work, which the name spiritual practice or discipline implies, but if we stick to it the Holy Spirit will draw us closer to God, a joy like none other and set our eyes on the things of God and God's presence and goodness in our lives and in the world.

Advent 4—Sunday, December 20

¹ | will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever;
with my mouth | will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.
² | declare that your steadfast love is established forever;
your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. — P salm 89:1-2



Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy

SPEAK the words from the first verse of *He Came Down* (ELW 253).

He came down that we may have love;
He came down that we may have love;
He came down that we may have love;
Hallelujah forevermore.

PRAY

O Lord, our God, as we light this candle may it remind us of the great love you sent to the world in the birth of your Son. When our cups run empty, fill them up again with the love freely and unconditionally given through your dear Son, Jesus Christ, my Savior and Lord. Amen.

LIGHT the pink and three blue candles.

DWELL in the word of God.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.
John 3:16 (NRSV)

WAIT silently and be filled with the great love Christ has for you.

REFLECT alone or together on how you might share the love of Christ with someone this Advent and Christmas season?

BLESS one another saying, “May Christ, the light of love, cast the warmth of his love in your heart on these wintry days. Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. Amen.”

It’s that time of the year again in our household in which we start watching Christmas movies. There is one that gets watched over and over in the weeks leading up to Christmas, *Elf*. Without going into great detail, Buddy the main character, was raised at the North Pole and has long thought of himself as an elf. However, he returns to New York City where he is reunited with his father whom he has never met. Full of energy and excitement he begins to sing, “I love you. I love you. I love you.” He simply cannot let the love he has for his father be contained any longer and wants everyone within earshot to hear.

That’s the same sort of energy and passion I hear from the psalmist as he sings of God’s great love. He wants everyone to hear and join in singing. While Advent is a season of waiting patiently for the coming of our Lord, preparing our hearts to receive him, that does not mean we need sit idle. We still proclaim, even with reckless abandonment, our great love for God which flows from God’s great love for us.

“I love you. I love you. I love you.” It might just be a way to enter into this final week of Advent and welcome the Christ child as each day we stop amidst the busy last few days leading up to Christmas day and let the Lord of love know how much we love him for coming into the world, dying, and raising to new life so we might too.

Nativity of our Lord

Christmas Eve or Christmas Day

But the angel said to them [shepherds], "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."
Luke 2:10-11 (NRSV)

Christmas Candle Lighting Liturgy

SPEAK the words from the second verse of *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly* (ELW 276).

Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping
Vigil till the morning new
Saw the glory, heard the story
Tidings of a gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,
Praises voicing, greet the morrow:
Christ the child was born for you!
Christ the child was born for you!

PRAY

O Lord, our God, this final candle reminds us of one true light that casts aside all darkness. We give thanks for his birth, death and resurrection and place our hope that he will come again and gather us into the heavenly banquet that has no end. This we pray, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

LIGHT all candles.

DWELL in the word of God.

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

John 1:1-4 (NRSV)

WAIT peacefully and joyfully in the light of Christ.

REFLECT on where you have seen the light of Christ over the last 4 weeks of Advent.

BLESS one another saying, "May Christ, the light of the world, burn brightly in and through you today, tomorrow and always. Almighty God, Father, ✙ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. Amen."



"Christ the child was born for you. Christ the child was born for you." Ever since I typed those words in the column to the left, I have been pondering them. Jesus Christ was born for me.

So often we might tell someone "Jesus loves you!" Or, we may say, "God loves the world!" No doubt this an important part of our calling as disciples. Lest we forget, after the shepherds journey to Bethlehem and see the infant Jesus lying in a manger, they make known this good news of great joy and we are sent each week to do the same.

Yet, it is also important we remind ourselves that Jesus loves us. In last week's comments, I suggested the possibility of a practice in which the final week of Advent we let the Lord of Light know just how much we love him. Perhaps, on this day we remind ourselves just how much he loves us.

Christ the child was born for you! You are loved!



Advent Daily Bible Readings



YEAR B 2020/2021 — Advent

This **Church Year Calendar, Propers and Daily Lectionary** uses the *Revised Common Lectionary* as it appears in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (2006). Scripture references are from the *New Revised Standard Version* of the Bible.

The appointed psalm refrain for Sundays and festivals is from the verse in parentheses.

DAY AND DATE	FIRST READING	SECOND READING	PSALM
Thu — Nov. 26	Zechariah 13:1-9	Revelation 14:6-13	Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
Fri — Nov. 27	Zechariah 14:1-9	1 Thessalonians 4:1-18	Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
Sat — Nov. 28	Micah 2:1-13	Matthew 24:15-31	Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
Sun. Nov. 29 — First Sunday of Advent <u>Readings</u> Isaiah 64:1-9 Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 (7) 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 Mark 13:24-37 <u>Prayer of the Day</u> Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection waken us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and keep us blameless until the coming of your new day, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.			
Mon — Nov. 30	Micah 4:1-5	Revelation 15:1-8	Psalm 79
Tue — Dec. 1	Micah 4:6-13	Revelation 18:1-10	Psalm 79
Wed — Dec. 2	Micah 5:1-5a	Luke 21:34-38	Psalm 79
Thu — Dec. 3	Hosea 6:1-6	1 Thessalonians 1:2-10	Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
Fri — Dec. 4	Jeremiah 1:4-10	Acts 11:19-26	Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
Sat — Dec. 5	Ezekiel 36:24-28	Mark 11:27-33	Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
Sun. Dec. 6 — Second Sunday of Advent <u>Readings</u> Isaiah 40:1-11 Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13 (13) 2 Peter 3:8-15a Mark 1:1-8 <u>Prayer of the Day</u> Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.			

Advent Daily Bible Readings

Mon — Dec. 7	Isaiah 26:7-15	Acts 2:37-42	Psalm 27
Tue — Dec. 8	Isaiah 4:2-6	Acts 11:1-8	Psalm 27
Wed — Dec. 9	Malachi 2:10—3:1	Luke 1:5-17	Psalm 27
Thu — Dec. 10	Habakkuk 2:1-5	Philippians 3:7-11	Psalm 126
Fri — Dec. 11	Habakkuk 3:2-6	Philippians 3:12-16	Psalm 126
Sat — Dec. 12	Habakkuk 3:13-19	Matthew 21:28-32	Psalm 126

Sun. Dec. 13 — Third Sunday of Advent

Readings

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
 Psalm 126 (3) or Luke 1:46b-55 (52)
 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
 John 1:6-8, 19-28

Prayer of the Day

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Mon — Dec. 14	1 Kings 18:1-18	Ephesians 6:10-17	Psalm 125
Tue — Dec. 15	2 Kings 2:9-22	Acts 3:17—4:4	Psalm 125
Wed — Dec. 16	Malachi 3:16—4:6	Mark 9:9-13	Psalm 125
Thu — Dec. 17	2 Samuel 6:1-11	Hebrews 1:1-14	Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
Fri — Dec. 18	2 Samuel 6:12-19	Hebrews 1:5-14	Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
Sat — Dec. 19	Judges 13:2-24	John 7:40-52	Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

Sun. Dec. 20 — Fourth Sunday of Advent

Readings

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
 Luke 1:46b-55 (52) or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26 (1)
 Romans 16:25-27
 Luke 1:26-38

Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that would obstruct your mercy, that willingly we may bear your redeeming love to all the world, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Mon — Dec. 21	1 Samuel 1:1-18	Hebrews 9:1-14	Luke 1:46b-55
Tue — Dec. 22	Zephaniah 3:8-13	Romans 10:5-13	Psalm 96
Wed — Dec. 23	Zephaniah 3:14-20	Romans 13:11-14	Psalm 96

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Readings

Thu. Dec. 24 — Nativity of Our Lord I — Christmas Eve

Readings

Isaiah 9:2-7
Psalm 96 (11)
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the rightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Fri. Dec. 25 — Nativity of Our Lord II — Christmas Day

Readings

Isaiah 62:6-12
Psalm 97 (11)
Titus 3:4-7
Luke 2:[1-7] 8-20

Prayer of the Day

All-powerful and unseen God, the coming of your light into our world has brightened weary hearts with peace. Call us out of darkness, and empower us to proclaim the birth of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Daily Bible Readings From:

<https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Congregations-and-Synods/Worship/Lectionary/YearB#Advent>

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