Trinity Ecumenical Parish

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Advent Devotional 2025

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Trinity Ecumenical Parish
Advent Devotional 2025

Dear friends in Christ,

As we enter the sacred season of Advent, we invite you to journey with us through this year's Trinity Advent Devotional, a collection of Scripture, reflections, prayers, and questions thoughtfully prepared by members of our Trinity community.

This year, each week of Advent will focus on one of the themes represented by the candles of the Advent wreath: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. Beginning on Sunday, November 30, our daily devotional entries guide us through Scripture readings and reflections that explore these themes, helping us to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. Whether you read it alone, gather with family, or share it with friends, we hope it becomes a space to pause, reflect, and experience the unfolding promise of God's presence in our lives.

We are grateful to everyone who contributed their reflections, to our office staff for formatting and printing this devotional, and especially to Lee Anne DeMonbreum for her dedication in bringing this devotional to life once again.

May this Advent season draw you closer to the hope, peace, joy, and love of Christ, and may our shared reflections as a community enrich your journey toward Christmas.

With peace,
Pastor Sarah

HOPE:
Promises of God's coming

Sunday, November 30 (Advent 1)

Isaiah 2:1-5

1 The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw
concerning Judah and Jerusalem.
2 In days to come
the mountain of the LORD's house
shall be established as the highest of the
mountains
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.
3 Many peoples shall come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of
the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
4 He shall judge between the nations
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation;
neither shall they learn war any more.
5 O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD!

As the bleak midwinter encroaches, with shortening days and growing darkness the Advent wreath draws our attention to Christ's everlasting light, reflecting the glory of God. In 1839, German pastor and missionary Johann Wichern crafted a wreath out of a cart wheel with 20 small red candles on the outer ring (for daily counting) and 4 larger white candles on the inner ring (for weekly reminder) to support household prayer and anticipation of Christmas for families. We continue this centuries-old tradition, albeit usually only with the four weekly candles, to remind us of God's unending love and eternal life (circular shape), God's faithfulness (evergreens), and Christ's presence growing in the world (progressive lighting of candles).

The candle for the first week of Advent represents hope. Hope is one of the three main elements of Christian character along with faith and love. Depending on the translation, the word *hope* appears in the Bible between 129 and 180 times. *Hope* appears in the New Testament in 24 of the 27 books. However, the meaning of the word for *hope* in the New Testament - ἐλπίς (elpis) - differs from use of the word today. Sherry Elaines describes the difference being in the level of certainty that what is desired will be granted. *Hope* for people in biblical times meant that they were waiting with confidence, whereas today, we 'hope' for something that we are not certain will actually happen. Christ is the object of the Christian's hope, and we traverse the Advent season seeking what is represented by the advent candles: hope, peace, joy, and love.

Like the people of the Old Testament times, we long for peace and justice. Isaiah's prophesy takes the weapons created for war in Joel 3:10 - swords and spears - and turns them into peaceful implements for tending the land. Similarly, Hosea 2:18 and Zechariah 9:10 prophesied a time of peace. Max Lucado (2024) describes what we all hope for: "the Earth will be restored to garden-of-Eden splendor, and we will walk on a perfect planet with perfect bodies" Let us navigate prayerfully in this first week of advent with the certainty in this hope.

Our dear Heavenly Father, Thank you for the gifts that you have given us to navigate our life's journey: hope, peace, joy, and love. As the first candle is lit on our Advent wreath, we look through the darkness to you with hope for peace - for ourselves, our families and friends, our communities, and our world. As we count the days through this Advent season, guide us to walk in the light of the Lord. Amen.

-Kim Carter

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Monday, December 1

Isaiah 40:1-5

1 Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.
2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her
that she has served her term, that her penalty is
paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.
3 A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare
the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a
highway for our God.
4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every
mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.
5 Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Hope is a stabilizing anchor in a storm. Going thru adversity, losing a loved one, physical or mental health challenges - all of these can drag a person down and make them very sad and depressed. But those of us with a strong faith in God's comfort know that things are going to get better — we have a confident expectation that things are going to get better! But in the meantime, it can be a Mean Time.

We have trust in the future, we have active anticipation that the Lord will take care of us and our families. We keep looking forward and planning activities that are a source of joy to us and others. We can try to dream again of a better life. We can sit in nature or any other source of quiet joy that helps us move forward, with the assurance that we are on the path that God has planned for us and we are in HIS care.

-Marsha Melkonian

Tuesday, December 2

Mark 13:33-37

33 Beware, keep alert, for you do not know when the time will come. 34 It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. 35 Therefore, keep awake, for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening or at midnight or at cockcrow or at dawn, 36 or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. 37 And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

During the summer of 1990, our family spent time in Boston visiting historical sites, tourist attractions, and the aquarium. One day towards the end of our stay, we splurged and purchased tickets for a whale watch.

Early the next morning, we boarded the boat and set off for the designated location. Before too long, the captain announced that we were approaching the area where whales commonly appear and directed us to the starboard side railing. Suddenly, people started shouting, "There!", "I see one!", "Look, over there!" Brian was only 6 at the time, but we all became children that day: screaming, laughing, pointing, eyes bright with excited anticipation. After 17 consecutive days of rain and cloudy weather, this morning had dawned sunny and beautiful. The whales seemed to be playing in grateful celebration. It was a mesmerizing, breathtaking, and unforgettable experience.

In these verses from Mark's Gospel, the word "watch" appears four times. The meaning of this term is not passive, like observing a sunset or a play. No, we are to be aware, be diligent, pay attention, stay awake, be perceptive of our surroundings; to watch with intensity and eager expectancy. Jesus's Second Coming is coming, and we are to watch and wait with patience, anticipation, and hope.

-Jackie Stanley

Wednesday, December 3

Isaiah 35:1-6
[1] The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus [2] it shall blossom abundantly
and rejoice with joy and shouting.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the LORD,
the majesty of our God.]]
[3] Strengthen the weak hands
and make firm the feeble knees.
[4] Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
"Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you."
[5] Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf shall be opened;
[6] then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness
and streams in the desert;

Throughout the Bible there are stories of God's people wandering in the desert wilderness. These are powerful images that are relatable, perhaps not literally, but certainly through our own experiences. In my life, images of a sun baked desert and an endless landscape of nothingness conjure up a sense of feeling alone, vulnerable, lost and hopeless. But as we see repeatedly throughout the Bible, God uses these desert experiences as a time of reflection and transformation which might not otherwise occur. I am continually amazed in my own life that when I get caught up in feelings of being distraught, overwhelmed, lost, depressed or lonely, something always occurs to remind me that I am never really alone at all…that God is always with me. It happens way to often to merely be a coincidence, to the point where I am repeatedly assured that God is at work in my life.

I have had the good fortune to see the desert of Death Valley in bloom. A stunning sight with fields of yellow flowers spreading through the desert and up the sides of the barren hills. A long shallow pool of water stretching for miles across the normally arid basin offering a stark contrast to the dusty and cracked desert floor. Isaiah offers the hopeful longing of what it looks like to persevere through the dry periods in the desert sun. A time when water returns to the desert and brings new growth and beautiful blooms. A time of hope where the lame will walk and the blind will see; all of which was, and continues to be, fulfilled through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

Prayer: Good and gracious God, give us strength and peace in our times of loneliness or despair. Help us to trust and recognize that You are always with us and at work in our lives. Open our eyes so that we might see Your glory and majesty all around us. Renew us with Your Holy Spirit so that we might reflect Your glory to others and be a beacon of hope and encouragement to those who are lost or lonely. Help us always remember that like the desert that bursts forth in bloom, through You, all things are possible. Amen.

-Lee Anne DeMonbreum

Thursday, December 4

Micah 5:2-5
2 But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.
3 Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.
4 And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth,
5 and he shall be the one of peace.

This passage is a prophetic statement foreshadowing the coming of Jesus in the humble town of Bethlehem ("small among the clans"), referred to as "Ephrathah", meaning fruitful, an appropriate name for the eventual birthplace of Christ. In his message Micah references "the abandonment of Israel", after the past destruction of the Davidic kingdom, its continuing loss of territory, and its people who were rejecting God. Though Israel was feeling "abandoned", Micah was inspiring hope for its people in the coming of a ruler whose origins were "of old", "ancient times", implying an eternal one, already chosen. Referencing the "shepherd" of his flock", Micah connects both the past and future promises of a God who will bring *strength* and *majesty* in His name. *"He will be our peace."* What a wonderful reminder that God is omnipotent, forever present, never forsaking us. Even in times of darkness, we have a God who stands strong, who brings healing, hope and wholeness.

Lord, we give thanks that you are a God of peace and hope. Just like Israel, our country is in a time of disruption, darkness and division. People are hurting, hungry for hope, and fearful. Help us to be bearers of your light, building bridges of trust so that we can come together in peaceful conversation and compromise. As we stand firmly on your foundation, may we bring your hope through listening ears, empathetic hearts and acts of kindness. We pray these things in your holy and precious name.

-Debbie O'Donnell

Friday, December 5

Isaiah 9:2-7

2 The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.
3 You have multiplied exultation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
4 For the yoke of their burden
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
5 For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
6 For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders,
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
7 Great will be his authority,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

"The People Who Waited in Darkness"

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. — Isaiah 9:2

In this season of Advent, we most often think of what we are waiting for. Lots of THINGS. Maybe we're waiting for something to happen. Maybe for someone to come home. Maybe for just an end to this year! But what if Isaiah also speaks to us of that which is waiting for US? Or One who is waiting for us. Yes, we light the candles each week, but Who is keeping watch for us? When? How?

When we are in darkness and tempted to give up hope, whose hope endures, when all other hopes have been denied or simply flickered away? Isaiah spoke to a weary people, surrounded by fear and uncertainty, yet dared to proclaim that a light was already dawning.

That Light that waits for us, reminds me of that old porch light, long ago, in my old home place. When I would come home, after dark, that enduring light would call to me and light my path to home and family. Isaiah's waiting light did not come from a bulb (that eventually burns out.) That enduring Light does not come from human aspirations and illuminations. That Light will not come from our knowledge, our morality, our best intentions for the world and our fellow human beings.

That Light has come from a fragile infant, born in darkness to bring us "goodness and light." Isaiah's prophetic word proclaims that the Eternal Light begins in humility, God's and then our own. TEP Friends, we come to Light, believing in that dawning light, even before we see Him, or even after we believe we have seen it all or seen enough. Advent calls us back to the porch light of God's home, in Bethlehem and then, in our own, as He is born in the dark, and we are born, in His Light. He, the Light, is home, waiting for us.

Prayer: Light of the manger, the porch and of world, shine in our darkness. When fear and weariness cloud our vision, remind us of your promise. Make us bearers of your light, that peace and justice may overcome darkness and be enkindled again, through your homecoming, in us. Amen.

-Father Stephen Stanley

Saturday, December 6

Matthew 3:1-12

1 In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 2 "Repent, for the
kingdom of heaven has come near." 3 This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,
"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord;
make his paths straight.' "
4 Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and
wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region around the Jordan were going out to him, 6 and
they were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins.
7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for his baptism, he said to them, "You
brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Therefore, bear fruit worthy of
repentance, 9 and do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor,' for I tell you,
God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 10 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the
trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.
11 "I baptize you with water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I, and
I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is
in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will
burn with unquenchable fire."

As I reflect on Mathew's story of John preparing the way for Jesus, I find myself wondering how and why I prepare during the season of Advent. Repentance is the theme of John's preparing the way of the Lord. John says we prepare in two ways. First by communal and private repentance to make our lives "straight", meaning turning our hearts, minds and "muchness" (as Pastor Janet says) to God. Second by not making assumptions about ourselves and our "straight paths".

We have nothing to fear from admitting what is not right and asking for help and forgiveness.

Where have our paths bent crooked? Where have our spiritual journeys turned resting points into end points where we are comfortable and free of responsibility (we have always done it this way!). What are we not dealing with that needs to be named, challenged, nurtured or admitted to? (things done and left undone as in our weekly confession).

Repentance is not merely saying I am sorry for what I have or have not done but the commitment to change our ways.

Prayer:
Lord let me prepare for the coming of Jesus by nurturing forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration of my faith and by wholly giving my heart, my mind and my "muchness" to God. Amen.

-Sandy Ohlerich

PEACE:
God's reign brings peace, wholeness, reconciliation

Sunday, December 7 (Advent 2)

Isaiah 11:1-5

1 A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
2 The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
3 His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see
or decide by what his ears hear
4 but with righteousness he shall judge for the poor
and decide with equity for the oppressed of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
5 Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

To truly understand this passage from Isaiah, we first look back to Chapter 10. Here, Isaiah speaks the words of God in judgment—not only against the enemies of His people, but also against those within Israel who have turned from righteousness. God's anger burns against those who make unjust laws, who oppress the poor and take advantage of the weak. He asks them piercing questions: *"What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help?"* (NIV)

The warning is unmistakable. Human power, human pride, human plans—all will crumble before the justice of God. Isaiah then turns his focus to Assyria, the mighty nation that stood against Israel. They were feared by all, yet God declares that He Himself will bring them down: *See, the Lord, the LORD Almighty, will lop off the boughs with great power. The lofty trees will be felled, the tall ones will be brought low.* —Isaiah 10:33 (NIV)

What a picture this is—the mighty trees, symbols of human strength and self-importance, brought low by the hand of God. And when all seems cut down and lifeless, Isaiah shows us something wondrous: from the remaining stumps, a tender shoot begins to grow.

Out of judgment comes renewal. Out of desolation, new life. This small sprout represents the hope of something different—a people who listen to God, who walk humbly with Him, who bear fruit that reflects His righteousness. No longer proud and self-reliant like the trees before, this new growth is rooted in faith, in reverence, and in dependence on God alone.

Through this image, Isaiah invites us to imagine a new world shaped by God's justice and peace. A world where the strong and the weak live together in harmony. A world where hope is not built on human power, but on divine mercy.

And then comes the fulfillment of that promise—Jesus, the tender shoot from the stump of Jesse. Born in humility, yet carrying all the hope of the world within Him. He is the life that springs from what was cut down. He is the promise that grows even in our barrenness.

Jesus is the sprout that takes root in our hearts, transforming what was dead into something alive and fruitful. Through Him, the old is gone, and the new has come. In Him, we find our hope, our peace, and the power to live in the fear of God—walking in His righteousness, bearing the fruit of His Spirit, and growing ever deeper in His love.

-Les and Karlyn Daenzer

Monday, December 8

Romans 15:5-7
[5] May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, [6] so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. [7] Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Here we are. Once again in the Advent season we are reflecting on the year behind us and preparing our minds and hearts for the upcoming year. The second Advent candle represents the peace that Christ's birth brings and calls on us to seek and spread peace.
These words from Paul's letter to the Romans are a call to the Gentiles to come together and focus on glorifying God. Our example is Christ, who accepted all: the sinners, the outcasts, the rich and poor. Paul is encouraging unity, harmony and acceptance to collectively glorify God.
The message is relevant for us today in this time of polarization, hate, extremism and isolation. Paul is asking us to focus on God and Jesus Christ. We are asked to build community, encourage justice, promote equality and praise God in one voice.

Prayer:
Dear Lord. Help all of us, here at Trinity Ecumenical Parish, to heed Paul's words. Help us focus on you and the needs of our community. Our differences have no meaning if we follow Paul's instructions, as we are all children of God.

-Tom Curling

Tuesday, December 9

Psalm 72:18-19
[18] Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things.
[19] Blessed be his glorious name forever;
may his glory fill the whole earth.
Amen and Amen.

Kings…they lead. How would God have them lead? We've been learning about David, son of Jesse, in Youth Group. Psalm 72 makes clear the qualities of an ideal king; perhaps David's reflections from lessons learned during the years God was shaping him for kingship. David…both sheep and shepherd…not unlike us. David…described by God as a man after His own heart…that could also be like us. "Praise God who alone does these marvelous deeds" - like shaping us into the leaders He calls us to be.

Psalm 72 closes with, "this concludes the prayers of David, son of Jesse." To us this means that David was praying that through the power of God, Solomon would be blessed in the ways of godly kingship. We too should pray that God would equip us through His power to be godly leaders. What stood out to us in reading the whole psalm is that lives following a godly leader will, through God's power, be recognized by things like justice, prosperity, righteousness, community, agreement, worship, praise, rescue, glory, hope, life-giving rain, sunshine, and restoration. These all speak peace to us. Which of these speak peace to you?

In our lives peace is a hard thing to reach through our own power, but with God and a strong community it can be easy to find daily peace through our faith. This advent let's praise the perfect King – our Messiah – for the many and varied ways He brings peace to our lives now and forever more. "May the whole earth be filled with His glory."

-Trinity Youth Group

Wednesday, December 10

Isaiah 11:1-6

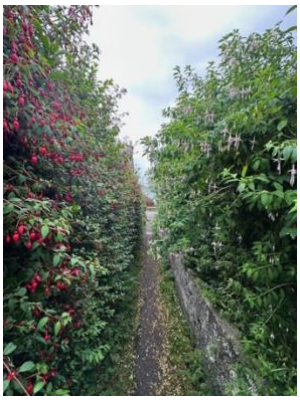
1 A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
2 The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
3 His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see
or decide by what his ears hear,
4 but with righteousness he shall judge for the poor
and decide with equity for the oppressed of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. 5 Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist and faithfulness the belt around his loins.
6 The wolf shall live with the lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the lion will feed together, and a little child shall lead them.

Gracious God,
As we gather around the Jesse Tree, we remember your promise: from the stump of Jesse, new life comes forth. In this season of waiting, help us see your hope growing in unexpected places.
Let your Spirit of wisdom and peace rest upon us. Shape us to be people of justice and compassion, that we may reflect the harmony of your coming kingdom, where wolf and lamb live together, and a child leads with love. Bless those who will gather tonight for our Wednesday evening Advent gathering. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
- *A prayer inspired by Isaiah 11:1-6*

Thursday, December 11

Psalm 85:8-13

I will listen to what God the Lord says;
he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants—
but let them not turn to folly.
9 Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.
10 Love and faithfulness meet together;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.
11 Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,
and righteousness looks down from heaven.
12 The Lord will indeed give what is good,
and our land will yield its harvest.
13 Righteousness goes before him
and prepares the way for his steps.



Where do you find peace, that feeling of comprehensive well-being? Recently, members of our choir traveled to the island of Iona, Scotland to practice, fellowship, and sing together. The island is a place of deep peace, where the hustle and bustle of daily life slows to a leisurely stroll, and the roots of Celtic Christianity permeate the land. It's easy to feel at peace there. But what about our daily lives? I find peace in the music of the church, in the smiles and helpfulness of the members of Trinity, in the beauty of the well-tended church grounds, in the way my fellow staff members enjoy being together and working together, and in knowing that God smiles on all of this. Our unity brings me peace and joy and I pray that it will be a beacon to those beyond our walls. God has been so good to us.

Gracious God, Thank you for giving us your good creation. Help us to walk in love and faithfulness, that we reflect your grace to all we meet. May your peace abound in our hearts and lives. Amen

-Sharon Witherell

Friday, December 12

James 5:7-8
[7] Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. [8] You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

Bible verses often remind me of songs. I wonder if the same inspiration of Biblical writers might also be at work in song writers and in listeners who hear their music.

The first song that comes to mind after reading these verses is, *Don't worry. Be happy.*

St. James is telling his readers, "Just wait. You'll see. It won't take long. Jesus is coming soon."

Another song is the beautiful Taize' chant, sung quietly, receptively and patiently,
Wait for the Lord. His day is near.
Wait for the Lord. Be strong, take heart.
While you are waiting this Advent, what song would you sing?...

-Clif Collins

Saturday, December 13

Matthew 1:18-21
[18] Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. [19] Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. [20] But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. [21] She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Prior to the visit from an angel, in Joseph's dream, Joseph must have been in turmoil, unsure of what people's judgment on Mary would be - she was unmarried, with child, at a time when this was not acceptable. Joseph was trying to "hide" the truth, so as to prevent shame upon the couple. After his dream, Joseph was calmed by the angel's message. He found PEACE of mind, knowing the coming birth was so significant. .... "his name shall be Jesus for he will save His people from their sins". It brought PEACE to Joseph & Mary. Eventually, upon the birth of Jesus, born to save His people from sin, PEACE will come to all the nations. What a feeling of PEACE, at last.

Dear Heavenly Father,
Thank you for your steadfast love, your steadfast commitment to your children and your steadfast loving guidance to us in every hour. Thank you for caring for us so deeply to give the gift of your Son in sacrifice for the remission of our sins. I pray we will never take your precious love for granted. I pray we will always praise you every day, in every way. Because of your sacrifice we find peace. We are grateful, gracious Heavenly Father.
AMEN.

-Judien M. Cooper

JOY:
Expressions of rejoicing and praise

Sunday, December 14 (Advent 3)

Matthew 1:22-23
22 All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,' which means, 'God is with us.'

Before each of our boys were born, we spent time in prayer, wondering what to name our new little one. It's such a tender and holy task, choosing a name that will follow them all their lives, one that somehow captures who they are and the hopes we hold for them. A name holds love, identity, and promise. In Matthew's Gospel, Mary and Joseph didn't have to search for the right name. The angel told Joseph, "You are to name him Jesus, for he will save the people from their sins." And Matthew reminds us that this fulfills the words of the prophet: "They shall name him Emmanuel," which means "God is with us." The name Emmanuel captures the very heart of Christmas. It isn't just a title, it's truth. God is with us. Not far away, not distant, but here present in our human story. In Jesus, the Divine took on our flesh and lived among us, crying, laughing, walking, and sharing in our joys and sorrows. From the manger to the cross, God's presence became personal, real, and near. Just as a parent choses a name for their child out of love and hope, God's choice of the name Emmanuel was a declaration of love for the world. This name tells us who Jesus is and what that means for us still today: God is here, in every moment and in every place.
This Advent, as we wait and watch for Christ's coming, may we remember that Emmanuel is not only a name, it's a promise. God is with us, now and always.
Prayer: *Emmanuel, God with us, thank You for drawing near and dwelling among us. May Your presence fill us with hope, comfort, and peace as we await the joy of Christ's coming. Amen.*

-Pastor Sarah Hess

Monday, December 15

Luke 1:26-38
26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. 36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

Holy God, in this Advent season, we pause in wonder and joy at your coming. You spoke your promise to Mary, choosing an ordinary young woman to carry extraordinary grace—and her fearful yes became a song of rejoicing for the world. As Mary received your word, help us welcome your call with the same trust and joy. Calm our worries with the assurance that you are with us and that your Spirit surrounds us with hope. God of the impossible, open our hearts to say with Mary, "Here am I; let it be with me according to your word." Fill us with the joy of your presence, that we may bear Christ's light and praise you with our lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

- *A prayer inspired by Luke 1:26-38*

Tuesday, December 16

Luke 1:39-45

39 In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, 40 where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit 42 and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43 And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? 44 For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

Waiting With Joy and Wonder

A pink candle, representing JOY and anticipation of the arrival of Jesus is used on the 3rd Sunday in Advent. It is a reminder and a call to celebrate the soon arrival of our Messiah.

When I think of the word "joy" other words like delight, jubilation, rejoicing, gladness and triumph come to my mind. Many people are filled with joy when someone they know is having a baby. Many even say, he/she is a "little bundle of joy". When I was blessed to have two children, I felt all the adjectives which are listed above. The difference between my giving birth and the births of the two women in the book of Luke, is that Elizabeth and Mary's births were miraculous and they were chosen to carry out God's plan. Elizabeth, an older woman past childbearing age, is to fulfill the prophesy of a forerunner to the Messiah who will "prepare the way" for Jesus. She is to name him "John." Mary, a young girl around 14 and unwed, is to give birth and carry out the Messianic promise of a Messiah, and name him "Jesus".

In our reading today, Mary travels a distance to visit her cousin Elizabeth who is in her six months. As soon as Mary arrives and speaks, the babe in Elizabeth's womb leaps for "joy". This moment had to be quite moving for both women, for this was when they all recognized the presence of Jesus and their part in bringing about God's plan for the world. They indeed were filled with profound "joy."

But to me the story doesn't begin or end there. It begins with the very strong faith and trust they each had in God and in each other. There were sure to be many rumors and falsehoods about these women and the son they would deliver. How would Elizabeth and Mary face their challenges?

During the three months they are at Elizabeth's home I can see the women bonding; sharing their thoughts and even their anxiousness about their pregnancy. "Did they "wonder" what would lie ahead for them? Since they are in the same situation, I feel both would encourage and be supportive when the other would get down or need help. And last, but not least, I see Elizabeth and Mary uplifting and inspiring one another. They needed and had faith in God; yet they needed each other too. Just like these two women, we need God, and we need each other.

May God's faith, hope, love and joy that Elizabeth and Mary experienced continue to resonate with all as we face life's challenges.

Unexpected and Mysterious

We are called to ponder mystery and await the coming Christ,
to embody God's compassion for each fragile human life.
God is with us in our longing to bring healing to the earth,
While we watch with joy and wonder for the promised Savior's birth.

*** 3rd stanza in ELW hymnal p.258 by Jeannette Lyndholm

-Nancy King

Wednesday, December 17

Philippians 4:4-7
4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

I don't know about you, but recently my anxiety level has gone through the roof. And yet, our current political and economic climate is not really so different from any other period of history. When the Apostle Paul wrote these words to the young church in Philippi, all of his known world was under the domination of the cruel dictatorship of Rome. So, what is there to rejoice about? How are we to rejoice? First, rejoice *in the Lord*. Why? Because *the Lord is near*. How? Through *prayer and supplication* to God. It's so hard to remember when my thoughts spiral out of control in the middle of the night, but prayer really is the answer (not that my prayers are always answered the way I wish for). The promise is that the peace God will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, which echos Jesus's promise to his disciples at the Last Supper (John 14:27), "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

Rejoice! For me, rejoicing is always done best through music, and my favorite Advent hymn is "O come, O come Emmanuel." The refrain "Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel" is the essence of the season. Based on the ancient Advent "O Antiphons" (see articles in Wikipedia for more details), there are seven verses altogether, each one highlighting a different name for the Christ. I love it when we sing all seven!

Prayer: *O come, Emmanuel, and give us the peace that passes all understanding, keeping our hearts and minds close to you. Amen.*

-Gael Chaney

Thursday, December 18

Isaiah 35:1-4
1 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus 2 it shall blossom abundantly
and rejoice with joy and shouting.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the LORD,
the majesty of our God.]]
3 Strengthen the weak hands
and make firm the feeble knees.
4 Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
"Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.

God of joy and renewal, in this Advent season, we rejoice in your promise to make the wilderness bloom. Where life feels dry, you bring blossoms of hope and gladness. Strengthen our weak hands and steady our fearful hearts. Speak again your comfort: "Be strong, do not fear. Here is your God." Fill us with the joy of your restoring presence, that we may walk in your way with courage and share your hope with others. Amen.

- A prayer inspired by Isaiah 35:1-4

Friday, December 19

Psalm 146:5-10

[5] Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD their God,
[6] who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them;
who keeps faith forever;
[7] who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets the prisoners free;
[8] the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.
The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;
the LORD loves the righteous.
[9] The LORD watches over the strangers;
he upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.
[10] The LORD will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.
Praise the LORD

BE JOYFUL ALWAYS: PRAY CONTINUALLY; GIVE THANKS IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES.

The simplest way to find joy in the Lord is to give thanks *in all circumstances*. There is immense Power in praying simply "Thank you, Jesus." This brief prayer is appropriate for all times and all situations because of the Lords great sacrifice for all. I encourage you all to thank Jesus for every good thing as soon as you become aware of it.

When you are feeling down or broken hearted, it is still a good time to thank Jesus. This tiny act of gratitude can brighten your perspective immediately. To deepen your thankfulness, ponder specific things about the Lord that delight you – for instance: His lavish grace, His unfailing Love, His continual Presence. Giving thanks in all circumstances is a joyous discipline; it empowers you to lift up your soul and live close to the Lord.

-Sandee Robinson

Saturday, December 20

Luke 7:18-23

[18] The disciples of John reported all these things to him. So John summoned two of his disciples [19] and sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect someone else?" [20] When the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect someone else?' " [21] Jesus had just then cured many people of diseases, afflictions, and evil spirits and had given sight to many who were blind. [22] And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight; the lame walk; those with a skin disease are cleansed; the deaf hear; the dead are raised; the poor have good news brought to them. [23] And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

Luke 7:18–23 captures a moment of doubt and reassurance, as John the Baptist sends messengers to ask Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" In response, Jesus reminds John of tangible signs of restoration that God has enabled through him: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and God's Good News is proclaimed to the poor and suffering.

During Advent, as we prepare to once again celebrate a humble birth in a stable, this passage invites us to find Joy in the promise of Christ's birth and, later, in his miraculous and everlasting presence– first in the flesh and then in spirit–among God's people. The miracles recounted by gospel writers are confirmations that God is among us and that, through our love of Christ, His everlasting Kingdom of Joy awaits.

-Jerry Hale

LOVE:
God's covenant love shown in Christ; love poured into our lives

Sunday, December 21 (Advent 4)

Isaiah 7:10-14
10 Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, 11 "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." 12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test." 13 Then Isaiah said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel.

How many times does King Ahaz refuse to ask for what he just doesn't see? He doesn't recognize that the words of Isaiah are begging him to trust in God's power over his enemies and are calling him to look for a sign of hope.
How many times do we, God's people, turn away before we begin to really see? To trust that God's enduring presence is with us always. To look for the signs He sends us? He hears our voices and sends us his love in unexpected ways. Isaiah reminds us to keep our eyes open.
How many roads does God give us to walk down so we'll find him? Too many to count. He'll show us the way when we ask for directions. Trust will get us there.
How many years does it take until we realize the answer for King Ahaz and for all of us is to know that He is inside us, around us, blowing in the wind, enfolding us in hope, opening our eyes to find His surprises.
Look: God called a virgin to bear his Son. Emanuel is here. We receive His Gift. Now we see!

-Christine Collins

Monday, December 22

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

The Magnificat is an outpouring of Mary's soul as she glorifies the Lord. She, filled with the Holy Spirit, praises God in recognition of His power and omnipotence. She is deeply humbled that God has chosen her to be a part of his redemption plan. She recognizes that God has looked on her with favor. She is at awe at what has already been revealed to her: the Angel's message, (that she will give birth to the Messiah) the virgin pregnancy and Joseph's acceptance of God's plan.

The Christmas song "Mary Did You Know" asks questions about what Mary knew. There was so much that she didn't know. She humbly put her trust in God for the many unknowns that she would face during her lifetime. Her life as she knew it would never be the same.

WHAT ABOUT US? We can have the same assurance that Mary did by trusting and praying for God's will to be done in our lives. Nothing is impossible for God. He assures us of his continued presence in both life's blessings and when the road gets difficult for us; always seeking and receiving forgiveness when we falter. That gives us reason for PRAISE!

PRAYER: *God of power and might. We praise and thank-you for sending us our Savior. Let us always trust in you as our lives become one of praise to you. AMEN*

-Elaine Mattson

Tuesday, December 23

Luke 1:67-79
67 Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: 68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.
69 He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his child David, 70 as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, 71 that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. 72 Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors and has remembered his holy covenant, 73 the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us 74 that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75 in holiness and righteousness in his presence all our days.
76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, 77 to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins.
78 Because of the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, 79 to shine upon those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Zechariah – such a favored man. He was the first to be informed that God was setting in motion His own visit to earth. Yet, it is in this man that we find inspiration for those times we doubt God, but are willing to obey.

Zechariah - upright in the sight of God; a priest called for a holy appointment in the Temple. Heavily credentialed in a religious sense yet bound by the limitations born of human knowledge; even he wrestled with taking God at His word – to perform a miracle outside the bounds of human logic: to bring a son to a very old man and barren woman. This would be no ordinary son. Zechariah's logic spoke louder than God's promise. And so Zechariah was silenced by God; a priest stripped of his voice…perhaps his other senses needed sharpening.

God's silencing of Zechariah moved him from a place of worldly reason to one of spiritual insight. Perhaps God stripped him of his voice for a higher purpose…that in time he, like the messenger Gabriel, would proclaim that with God, ANYTHING is possible.

All of this precedes today's reading, known by many as Zechariah's song. Described as prophetic and filled with the Holy Spirit, his song unleashed the praise of a man transformed by the loving faithfulness of God. Zechariah's words followed his choice to obey God and name his child John. This naming was a break from cultural tradition and would have taken courage and conviction to claim. This naming, honoring God's command over human tradition, clearly caught the attention of those in Zechariah's midst. His song credits God for enabling him to serve without fear and in holiness and righteousness all his days. Speaking God's words, Zechariah then proclaimed his newly born son's purpose…to go before the Lord and prepare the way for Him, giving people knowledge of salvation through forgiveness of their sins.

All this joyous reality flowed out of the tender-loving mercy and promise of our God. Has the Lord ever emboldened you to speak, act or love in ways that go against the tide? What fears has God delivered you from?

This advent let us surrender our doubts to the One who guides our feet into the path of peace.

-Sharon Sicher

Wednesday, December 24 (Christmas Eve)

Luke 2:1-18

1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4 Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 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 in the guest room.

8 Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. 17 When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them,

So, they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger.
I always chuckle inwardly when I hear this part of the Christmas story read. Without the proper pause from the reader, you hear that Mary, Joseph and Jesus were lying together in the manger. At least, that is what I heard as a child. When I stop to think about that image, the holy family cuddling together basking in the warmth of this new child entering their lives, I am reminded of days in the hospital with my own family. When Anna was born, we would climb into the hospital bed with Tara and Anna. When Josh was born, Anna was there in bed with us. When Sara was born, everyone was in bed embracing the beautiful gift of life that we had been blessed to receive. It is an image of love and family. I imagine Jesus in the hospital with us sharing in our joy.

I remember this image when I face the struggles of life. If I am holding my wife or my children during a difficult time, I imagine Jesus physically in that embrace. As I pray with someone who is struggling, I imagine Jesus holding our hands. When I make the sign of the cross on the forehead of someone who is baptized or make the sign of the cross on someone's forehead as they are dying, I imagine Jesus making that sign, claiming them eternally.

Whether it be my family or my family of faith, Jesus is always there with us. There may not have been room for the Holy Family in the inn but there was room for them to be together. Room for the shepherds, the wisemen, the animals. With Jesus, there is always room for love and community. Love came down at Christmas and lives among us.

So, this Christmas, imagine Jesus at your table with your family, sharing in your joy, sharing in your love. When you are struggling, think of Jesus holding you. When you are making a difficult decision, imagine Jesus talking you through it. Through Jesus, we have become part of the Holy Family. Christmas is not a historical remembrance. It is a birthday party and the one we are celebrating is right there with us. He is always with us. Love came down at Christmas, and it never left!

Prayer: *Gracious God, thank you for the birth of Jesus and for enfolding us into the Holy Family. Help us to know that God's love is always with us through Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, there is always room: room for hope, room for joy, room for love. Help us to remember, Jesus is with us in our joy and in our struggles. He never leaves us. Amen.*

-Pastor Philip Bouknight

Thursday, December 25 (Christmas Day)

John 1:1-14, The Message
[1-2] The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word. The Word was God, in readiness for God from day one. [3-5] Everything was created through him; nothing—not one thing!— came into being without him. What came into existence was Life, and the Life was Light to live by. The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn't put it out. [6-8] There once was a man, his name John, sent by God to point out the way to the Life-Light. He came to show everyone where to look, who to believe in. John was not himself the Light; he was there to show the way to the Light. [9-13] The Life-Light was the real thing: Every person entering Life he brings into Light. He was in the world, the world was there through him, and yet the world didn't even notice.He came to his own people, but they didn't want him. But whoever did want him, who believed he was who he claimed and would do what he said, He made to be their true selves, their child-of-God selves. These are the God-begotten, not blood-begotten, not flesh-begotten, not sex-begotten.[14] The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish."The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood."

There are so many things we appreciate about the Christmas story. As we hear the story from Luke and Matthew's perspective, we hear about young parents-to-be who experience hospitality in a barn while they are traveling. We appreciate a quiet baby swaddled and tucked among the animals. We hear about an amazing crew of visitors: shepherds and more animals and even wandering wise men. There are so many things to love about the Christmas story told this way. But as John tells the story, it loses all the flashiness. John makes us face Christmas without Mary and Joseph, without the angels and the shepherds, and even without baby Jesus in a manger. John's account of God coming near tells the story in poetic ways, equating Jesus with life and light.

Eugene Peterson, a Presbyterian pastor and theologian who wrote *The Message* translation of the Bible, rephrased John 1:14 as "The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood." Although this description lacks the fuzzy animals and the swaddled baby, it still gets the point across that God came and lived among us. With Jesus' birth, the God who created the world and hears our prayers was not distant, but close by . . . in the neighborhood. Neighbors are those people who we see as they walk by our house, or as we drive out of the neighborhood. Neighbors watch our pets, share goodies, witness when we come home and when we turn the lights out for bed. Even if we have long driveways, we recognize our neighbors when we are at the grocery store, the library, or at church. Neighbors can know more about us than family or friends who live at a distance.

God's Word, God's Son, took on flesh and blood moved into the neighborhood . . . and not just any neighborhood, but your neighborhood and my neighborhood. In Jesus, God has come close to all of us, moving in with an abundance of light and love. We celebrate this neighbor who has come to us. And, as good neighbors we welcome Jesus, we introduce him to others, we help others to get to know him. We are excited that God has come near, and we have a responsibility to share that light and love throughout the neighborhood.

May the light of Christ shine for you and through you.
May you experience daily the presence of God close to you . . . in the neighborhood.
May you share that light and life and love that comes from Christ with those around you.
Merry Christmas!

-Pastor Janet Chisom

STEPS TOWARD THE MANGER

TRINITY ECUMENICAL PARISH

Step into Advent with Trinity Ecumenical Parish and experience a season of preparation, promise, and joy as we walk together towards the manger.

Wednesday Evenings in Advent

Meal at 6pm followed by activity or program

Hanging of the Greens Salad Bar

Dec 3 - 6pm

Jesse Tree Event Potato Bar

Dec 10 - 6pm

Cookies & Carols Soup Bar

Dec 17 - 6pm

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Dec 24 - 7pm

Other Advent Offerings:

Trinity Advent Devotional
Avaliable Nov 19

Preschool Christmas Pageant
Dec 10 - 11am

Journey to the Manger
Dec 13 & 14 - 4-7pm