



Devotions in Songs,  
Scriptures  
& Prayers

Advent – Christmas – Epiphany  
December 1, 2019 – January 6, 2020

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December 1, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!

### The Grace of Advent Waiting

“O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.” (O Come, O Come, Emmanuel – Sacred Advent Classic)

“I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.” (Psalm 130:5-6)

Today, Sunday, is the First Sunday of the Season of Advent and begins our Advent Journey to the Manger in Bethlehem and the Birth of Jesus...Advent is a season of spiritual preparation and expectant waiting as we anticipate the Birthday of Jesus and as we await the Second Coming of Christ...

We are a people who don't wait well and often we're not in a good rhythm of spiritual waiting...The waiting at Christmas that we are accustomed to looks like this: waiting in line at the toy store; waiting in line at the fast-food drive-through; being put on hold by the customer service representative; waiting in line to mail a package; waiting for Christmas goodies to bake; waiting for someone to host the Christmas gathering; and the waiting list goes on and on...

Yet, with spiritual discipline, we can be a people who actively wait with hopeful expectation...We wait for the coming Messiah by reading our Bibles daily and being in prayer at all times...We dynamically wait in loving service of those in need...We wait as we gather with fellow believers to worship and praise God...We wait for the One who will redeem us and restore us to the Joy of God's Salvation...Advent is a time to simply wait, wait, wait...

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Advent-Waiting...thank you for inviting me to wait in the midst of simplicity...forgive me when I get impatient and I don't wait well...help me to wait expectantly with hope and spiritual discipline...God of Advent-Waiting, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 2, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“Sweet little Jesus Boy/They made You be born in a manger/Sweet little Holy child  
Didn't know who You was/Didn't know You'd come to save us Lord/To take our sins  
away/Our eyes was blind/We couldn't see/We didn't know who You was/Long time ago  
You was born/Born in a manger low/Sweet little Jesus Boy  
The world treat You mean, Lord/Treat me mean too/But please, Sir, forgive us Lord/We  
didn't know 'twas You/Sweet little Jesus Boy/Born long time ago/Sweet little Holy child  
And we didn't know who You was!” (Sweet Little Jesus Boy, Christmas Classic)

“Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and  
honor.” (Psalm 8:5)

As we wait during Advent, around every corner the world looms to put us down and  
strives to belittle you and me...The marketplace continually tries to sell us a false bill of  
goods...The neighborhood taunts that we ought to keep up with the Joneses...The  
sanctuary declares membership means you can be like us...The homestead name-calls  
and ridicules the weak and their weaknesses...The playground is overrun with bullies  
who don't play by the rules and have no respect for anyone...The shadow of the steeple  
mocks us with lies and deceit...The world parish harasses us with disparaging and  
demeaning behavior...Sweet Little Jesus Boy, We Didn't Know Who You Was...

As we embrace Advent Waiting, even though each step of the day the world looms to  
put us down and strives to belittle you and me, we are reminded by the Psalmist-of-Old  
that God created you and me with great dignity and respect, and declared that each one  
of us is vitally important and of infinite worth...In the marketplace we are wise enough to  
know when a deal is too good to be true...In the neighborhood we don't give in to the  
siren-calls that distract us from the ways of God...In the sanctuary we can discern that  
discipleship means to be like God...In the homestead we affirm the weak and our  
weaknesses aren't exploited...On the playground bullies are dethroned and everyone  
plays fairly on a level playing field...In the Shadow of the Steeple truth prevails and  
honesty is revered...In the World Parish we are embraced with the empathy of the  
Golden Rule...Listen to the words of the Christmas Spiritual, “Sweet Little Jesus Boy” ...

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of the Infinitely Worthy...thank  
you for creating me in your image...forgive me when I forget whose and who I am...help  
me live a glorified and glorifying Life...God of the Infinitely Worthy, Loving Father and  
Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 3, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!” (Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus” encourages praise this way!)

“I love you, Lord; you are my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; My God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the power that saves me, and my place of safety.” (Psalm 18:1-2 NLT)

Tuesday, the third day of Advent, and we are continually reminded of the greatness of God and the need for our awesome God...We wait with eager expectation, longing anticipation, and daily praise for the God who has been our help in ages past and, indeed, our hope for years to come...We don’t have enough descriptive words to sing God’s praise, yet we do the best we can with the words we have...Hallelujah!

Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Ubiquitous, Invincible, Prevenient, Justifying, Sanctifying, Perfecting, Sovereign, Righteous, Holy, Pure, Protector, Redeemer, Sanctuary...Hallelujah!!

All Powerful, Everywhere, All Knowing, All-Over-the-Place, Can’t Defeat Him, Always First, Forgiving, Blessed, Makes Everything Right, Just-What-the-Doctor-Ordered, Supreme, Good, Untainted, Defender, Liberator, Safe Haven...Hallelujah!!!

Let’s Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Hallelujah...thank you for exceeding my words of praise for you...forgive me when I limit you to words...help me sing praise, laud, honor and glory to you...God of Hallelujah, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 4, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“Blessed be the God of Israel, who comes to set us free, who visits and redeems us, and grants us liberty. The prophets spoke of mercy, of freedom and release; God shall fulfill the promise to bring our people peace.” (Blessed Be the God of Israel, sacred Advent classic)

“We pondered your love-in-action, God, waiting in your temple: Your name, God, evokes a train of Hallelujahs wherever It is spoken, near and far; your arms are heaped with goodness-in-action.” (Psalm 48:9-10)

The Name of God transcends all other names and just the hearing of God’s Name causes you and me to bow in Holy Reverence, to shout with joy, to clap our hands, to smile from ear-to-ear, to sing praise, to dance with jubilation, to serve cheerfully and willingly...Everywhere we go when we see love-in-action we hear Your Name...Around every corner, over yonder and right here we experience goodness-in-action and Your Name is music to our ears...In the marketplace Your Name towers over Gates, Jobs, Rockefeller, Midas...In the neighborhood Your Name is better known than Mr. Rogers...In the sanctuary Your Name rises above Wesley, Luther, Calvin, Hobbes...In the homestead Your Name is more wholesome than Ozzie and Harriet...On the playground Your Name receives more cheers than Prescott, Patrick, Altuve, Williams, Curry, Vivians, Brady, Trout, Manendez, Earnhardt, Federer, Euker, Smalls, all put together...In the Shadow of the Steeple Your Name shines above the Smiths, Joneses and Simpsons...In the World Parish Your Name is more renowned than the sum of these: Churchill, Henry VIII, Kahn, Alexander the Great, Bonaparte, Mandela, Lincoln...The Season of Advent brings to all our senses the numerous Names of God...Ponder this: What is your favorite Name of God?

Let’s Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Love-in-Action...thank you for goodness-in-action on my behalf...forgive me when I don’t recognize Your Name...help me speak Your Name by the actions of my daily living, Hallelujah...God of Love-in-Action, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 5, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“I need a silent night, a holy night/To hear an angel voice through the chaos and the noise/I need a midnight clear, a little peace right here/To end this crazy day with a silent night.” (I Need a Silent Night, Amy Grant, Contemporary Christmas Anthem)

“Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You **are** the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day.” (Psalm 25:4-5)

Today, we wait all day long, from dawn’s early light through twilight’s last gleaming to the time of a midnight snack, and we find disappointment in every tick of the clock...The marketplace insists on teaching you and me the tricks of the trade without instructing us on the ins-and-outs of the trade...The neighborhood has the lights on but no one’s at home...The sanctuary has hardened hearts, clogged minds and closed doors...The homestead has no milk in the refrigerator...The playground has no goals to shoot for and the see-saw is broken...The Shadow of the Steeple is ramshackle...The World Parish is overwhelmed with distress and disenchantment...As we wait, I Need a Silent Night...

Today, we wait on God all day long, from dawn’s early light through twilight’s last gleaming to the time of a midnight snack (maybe some birthday cake), and God always takes our hand and leads us in the ways of right living...In the marketplace God schools us in the foundational truth of the trade...In the neighborhood the lights are on and all the folks are delighted to see us...In the sanctuary hearts are softened, minds are teachable, and doors are always open...In the homestead the welcome mat is out and there’s milk in the refrigerator...On the playground the merry-go-round is greased and the slides are waxed...In the Shadow of the Steeple all is up to code...In the World Parish grace abounds and compassion is limitless...As we wait it’s like every day is our birthday...HHMM, and today, is my birthday! And, I Need a Silent Night!

Let’s Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of the Path of Truth...thank you for leading me along paths of righteousness...forgive me when I’m a slow learner...help me wait with readiness and enthusiasm...God of the Path of Truth, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 6, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“Tears are falling, hearts are breaking/How we need to hear from God  
You've been promised, we've been waiting/Welcome Holy Child/Welcome Holy Child

Hope that you don't mind our manger/How I wish we would have known  
But long awaited Holy Stranger/Make yourself at home/Please make yourself at home

Bring your peace into our violence/Bid our hungry souls be filled  
Word now breaking Heaven's silence/Welcome to our world/Welcome to our world

Fragile finger sent to heal us/Tender brow prepared for thorn  
Tiny heart whose blood will save us/Unto us is born/Unto us is born

So wrap our injured flesh around You/Breathe our air and walk our sod  
Rob our sin and make us holy/Perfect Son of God/Perfect Son of God  
Welcome to our world!” (Welcome to Our World, Contemporary Christmas Anthem)

“O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, And you have healed me.” (Psalm 30:2)

Some days you and I just don't feel like getting out of bed, head under the pillow, covers pulled up tight, and to say the least we seem to be under the weather...The marketplace suffers from the blue flu...The neighborhood is quarantined...The sanctuary is broken hearted...The homestead is sick and tired of being sick and tired...The playground finds you and me injured and limping...The Shadow of the Steeple is weak and weary...The World Parish is wounded and fallen...“Tears are falling, hearts are breaking; how we need to hear from God.”...

Some days you and I just don't feel like getting out of bed, head under the pillow, covers pulled up tight, and to say the least we seem to be under the weather...We cry to God for help and he hears us and he heals us...The marketplace is healthy as a bull...The neighborhood has the quarantine lifted...The sanctuary experiences mended hearts...The homestead is vigorous and energetic...The playground finds you and me at one hundred and ten percent...The Shadow of the Steeple is recharged...The World Parish is on its feet and restored...“Fragile finger sent to heal us/Tender brow prepared for thorn / Tiny heart whose blood will save us/Unto us is born.”...

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Healing...thank you for healing me when I am down-and-out...forgive me when I try to self-diagnose and try to heal myself...help me seek your healing presence at the first sign of being sin sick, weary and worn...God of Healing, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 7, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“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 every nation, joy of every longing heart.” (Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus, Sacred Advent Classic)

“Commit your way to the Lord; Trust in him and he will act.” (Psalm 37:5)

Commitment, what a frightening and paralyzing word...Just the mention of commitment causes many to break out in a cold sweat and others to plan their exit...The marketplace is not loyal to, we, the customer, nor you or me the employee...The neighborhood has become rent by the day...The sanctuary caters to the ones with money or the ones perceived with power...The homestead is looking for loopholes and a way out...The playground has no allegiance to the long-term players...The fear of commitment causes you and me to flounder in shallow living...Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus...

Commitment, what an empowering and life-giving word...Just the mention of trusting God causes many to celebrate and others to obey the ways of God...The marketplace honors the tenure of employees and thrives on repeat business...The neighborhood has longtime residents with avenues lined with majestic old growth trees...The sanctuary blesses discipleship and humble service...The homestead embraces multi-generations and adds rooms for future family members...The Playground has provided luxurious recreation and leisurely fun for our grandparents, parents, you and me, and our children...The pleasure of commitment to God allows each of us to experience the depths of abundant living...Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus...

Let’s Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Commitment...thank you for honoring your covenant with me and acting on my behalf...forgive me when my level of commitment is shallow at best...help me trust in your ways and then live in the midst of your steadfast love...God of Commitment, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around...

December 8, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“Said the king to the people everywhere/Listen to what I say/Pray for peace people everywhere/Listen to what I say/The child, the child/Sleeping in the night/He will bring us goodness and light/He will bring us goodness and light.” (Do You Hear What I Hear, Classic Christmas Anthem)

“Let the words of my mouth And the meditation of my heart Be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.” (Psalm 19:14)

Today, Sunday, is the Second Sunday of the Season of Advent and continues our Advent Journey to the Manger in Bethlehem and the Birth of Jesus...Advent is a season of spiritual preparation and expectant waiting as we anticipate the Birthday of Jesus and as we await the Second Coming of Christ...

Sometimes in our waiting it would probably be a good thing if you and I would stop and think before we open our mouths and speak...Many of us struggle with a condition known as “open-mouth-insert-foot”...Often, our tongues are quick and sharp, mean and barbed, selfish and self-serving...We speak as if those we speak to have no feelings, and those we speak about are lower than dirt; and our speaking, more times than we’d care to count, is bitter and brutal, and not flavored with God seasoning...It is no wonder talk is cheap...Do You Hear What I Hear??!!

Sometimes in our waiting it would definitely be a good thing if you and I would stop and think before we open our mouths and speak; taking time to consider, “How’s what I’m about to say going to bring glory to God?”...“Are my remarks offered with grace and kindness?”...“Will my conversation encourage and give confidence to the spirits of my neighbor?”...With training, our tongues can be quick with kindheartedness, consistent with gentleness, overflowing with praise...Then, we can speak as if those we speak to have feelings just like ours; and those we speak about are infinitely worthy and highly valued; and our speaking, without hesitation, is considerate and caring, and seasoned with God flavoring...This talk of ours is pleasing to God...Do You Hear What I Hear??!!

Let’s Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Right Words and Honorable Meditations...thank you for giving me sense enough to know when to speak and when to keep my mouth shut...forgive me when I run-off-at-the-mouth and my words are rude and blunt...help my words and my thoughts be pleasing to you...God of Right Words and Honorable Meditations, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 9, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to follow Jesus. God set the stars to give light to the world. The star of my life is Jesus. In him there is no darkness at all. The night and the day are both alike. The Lamb is the light of the city of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus!” (I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light, sacred Advent Classic)

“Send out your light and your truth; let them guide me. Let them lead me to your holy mountain, to the place where you live.” (Psalm 43:3-4)

None of us wants to be misguided, led astray, ill-advised, sent on a wild-goose-chase...yet there are days that our paths seem to be a maze of dead-ends, heading in the wrong direction, or just going in circles...The marketplace sells us a GPS (Global Positioning System) which hasn't been updated in years...The neighborhood has taken down all the street signs and address numbers...The sanctuary has lost its steeple...The homestead says even though you're lost you're making good time...The playground gives advice by the rock-paper-scissor method...no wonder why we're off-the-beaten-path and on the wide-path going away from God...

None of us wants to be misguided, led astray, ill-advised, sent on a wild-goose-chase...so when we're confronted by bewildering mazes, directions that don't make sense, or running in dizzying circles, we plead to God to send out his light to guide us back into his holy presence...And, God hears our prayers and illumines the path that leads to righteousness and our permanent home with God...The marketplace always has instantaneous GPS updates...The neighborhood has street signs that are clear and address numbers that are bold...The sanctuary has a well-lit steeple pointing to God...The homestead has rolled out the red-carpet...The playground is marked clearly for leisure and recreation...What a relief to be on this Advent Journey to Bethlehem and on this Advent Pilgrimage to be close to God and on the Path of Faith to God's home where we will spend eternity with God...

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Guiding Light...thank you for illumining my path leading to your front door...forgive me when I close my eyes and can't see your light...help me walk forever in your light which guides me safely home...God of Guiding Light, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 10, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree! Thy leaves are so unchanging; Not only green when summer's here, But also when 'tis cold and drear. O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree! Thy leaves are so unchanging!

O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree! How richly God has decked thee! Thou bidst us true and faithful be, And trust in God unchangingly. O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree! How richly God has decked thee! !" (O Christmas Tree, Classic Christmas Anthem)

“But I am like an olive tree, thriving in the house of God. I will always trust in God’s unfailing love. I will praise you forever, O God, for what you have done. I will trust in your good name in the presence of your faithful people.” (Psalm 52:8-9)

By this time in December most of us have put up and decorated a Christmas tree which reminds each of us of a variety of family traditions, a rich faith heritage, and the never ending love of God...Our live trees are evergreens reminding us of the never failing love of God, always alive, and thriving with life...Our trees are illumined with lights, lights of kaleidoscope colors, pure white lights, twinkling lights, and steady glow lights which tell again that Jesus is the light of the world which the darkness will not be able to put out...Our trees will be hung with decorations that symbolize something to each of our families, ornaments that tell stories of Christmas pasts with dates and pictures...Our trees point upward to remind us that God is the central focus of our celebration, as he became God with us in the birth of Jesus, our Emmanuel...

In the next days leading to Christmas, as we wait during Advent, let’s take some time at the foot of our Christmas trees reflecting on God, remembering our families, renewing a commitment to serve our neighbors, just as we spend time at the foot of the Cross on Good Friday preparing for the joy of Resurrection on Easter...O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree!

Let’s Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Evergreen-Christmas-Trees...thank you for the metaphor and symbolism of my Christmas Tree...forgive me when I’m too busy to enjoy the stories of my Christmas Tree...help me hear my Christmas Tree proclaim your love for me, remind me to love my family and that I’m loved by my family, encourage me to serve my neighbors so as to love you best...God of Evergreen Christmas Trees, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 11, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“Said the little lamb to the shepherd boy, ‘Do you hear what I hear? Ringing through the sky, shepherd boy, Do you hear what I hear? A song, a song high above the trees With a voice as big as the sea, With a voice as big as the sea.’” (Do You Hear What I Hear,

“Oh, that my people would listen to me! Oh, that Israel would follow me, walking in my paths!” (Psalm 81:13)

God sends messengers our way to tell us that we are loved; that we are not alone; that God is with us...God sends messengers to show us how to live righteously; how to love our neighbors; how to love God...God sends messengers with songs that proclaim to you and me good news of great joy for all the people; to announce and remind each of us that Jesus Christ is born; that invite us to join the celebration of joy to the world...Are you listening!!!

Oh, that we the children of God would practice Holy Listening, listening with all our senses...Holy listening calls for us to listen with our ears; to listen with our eyes; to listen with our sense of touch; to listen with our sense of smell; to listen with our sense of taste...The Season of Advent and our journey of faith becomes an adventure of Holy Listening, to the truth of God, which will lead us in the ways of God, and enhances our relationship with God...Today, lets reflect upon those things of God that our senses are hearing...Are you listening!!!

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Holy Listening...thank you for giving me all of my senses as hearing-aids to listen better...forgive me when I hear without listening...help me listen to your truth and allow it to guide me safely into your loving arms...God of Holy Listening, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You!  
Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 12, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King, Born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring. By thine own eternal spirit rule in all our hearts alone; By thine all sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.” (Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus, Sacred Advent Classic)

“Praise the Lord; praise God our savior! For each day he carries us in his arms. Our God is a God who saves! The Sovereign Lord rescues us from death.” (Psalm 68:19-20)

Advent is a season in which each of us prepares our hearts, lives, and living for the coming of the Messiah to save us from our deadly separation from God...When we are separated from God we are spiritually dead and we need a savior...God ultimately sends us a Savior in the One born in a Manger in Bethlehem, a Friend who walks beside us each day, a Rescuer who carries us when we can go no further, a Healer who mends us when we are broken, a Redeemer who dies and is Resurrected so that our sin might be forgiven and we can experience Eternal Life...Advent is a season in which each of us prepares our heart, lives, and living for the coming of the Messiah and to sing praise to God...Hear the words of the great Advent Classic: “Come, thou long expected Jesus!”

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God Who Saves...thank you for picking me up, dusting me off, and sending me safely on my way...forgive me when I don't realize it's you carrying me when I only see one set of footprints in the sand...help me sing praise to you when you rescue me from the grip of sin and the death of hell...God Who Saves, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 13, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“O Holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray; Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell; O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!” (O Little Town of Bethlehem, Sacred Christmas Classic)

“God, you know every sin I've committed; My life's a wide-open book before you.”  
(Psalm 69:5)

You and I can hide nothing from God...God sees us; God sees through us; God sees into us; God sees our hearts...And he knows our trespasses...In the marketplace he knows that we've cooked the books...In the neighborhood he knows that we have coveted our neighbors stuff...In the sanctuary he knows that we have worshiped false idols...In the homestead he knows that we have been mean-spirited and short-tempered...On the playground he knows we peeked at hide-and-seek...You and I can hide nothing from God...

You and I can hide nothing from God...God sees us; God sees through us; God sees into us; God sees our hearts...God knows our sins and he forgives us our trespasses and restores us to the Joy of Salvation...Now that's Grace, Grace, God's Grace...In the marketplace he helps us reconcile the books and he reconciles each of us...In the homestead he helps you and me be content with just what we have and with who we are...In the sanctuary he leads us away from false idols and along the path that leads to righteousness for his name's sake...In the homestead he teaches us to be patient, understanding and compassionate...On the playground he instills in us to play fair and have fun...You and I can hide nothing from God and God withholds nothing from us...Hear a verse from “O Little Town of Bethlehem”...

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God Who Knows Everything...thank you for loving me even though you know everything about me...forgive me when I try to hide from you...help me live in the grace of your forgiveness...God Who Knows Everything, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 14, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“He raced that engine down the track 'round the tree on Christmas day; I was so amazed my dad would play with trains. I saw a sparkle in his eye, then I heard him say, Come on son let's play, I was young once, too!” (The country music group “Alabama” has a Christmas selection, “I Was Young Once, Too” with these lyrics.)

“And now, in my old age, don't set me aside. Don't abandon me when my strength is failing.” (Psalm 71:9)

Rodney Dangerfield always lamented that he never got any respect and he probably could have waxed poetically as he proclaimed the woes of getting older...At times this ole world is not very gracious when it comes to affirming those with advancing birthdays...The marketplace wants old money in the hands of younger entrepreneurs...The neighborhood resists becoming a retirement community...The sanctuary wants a 30 year old pastor with 40 years' experience...The homestead declares if you're too old to pull your weight it's time to put you out to pasture...The playground restricts usage to those 35 years old and younger...Our children are getting older and we're getting older, too...HHMM...And to think, we were young once, too...

Rodney Dangerfield always lamented that he never got any respect and he probably could have waxed poetically as he proclaimed the woes of getting older...At times this ole world is not very gracious when it comes to affirming those with advancing birthdays...However, our God declares that we are all infinitely worthy, and seems to not be bothered by the accumulation of birthdays...With God: The marketplace values longevity and company loyalty...The neighborhood builds community on the shoulders of patriarchs and matriarchs...The sanctuary depends on the older generations to share faith lessons and traditions with future generations...The homestead respects those with graying hair and/or hair that turns loose, and always has a place of honor for the elderly at the family breakfast table...The playground trusts that those with more birthdays coach those with less birthdays...Our children are getting older and we're getting older...HHMM...And to think, we were young once, too...

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of the Aging...thank you for counting on me no matter my age...forgive me when I use my older age as an excuse not to be an active disciple...help me celebrate a lifetime of birthdays...God of the Aging, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 15, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“Do all the good you can, [In the marketplace] by all the means you can, [In the neighborhood] in all the ways you can, [In the sanctuary] in all the places you can, [In the homestead] at all the times you can, [On the playground] to all the people you can, [In the World Parish] As long as you ever can!” (John Wesley)

“This I know: God is on my side! I praise God for what he has promised; Yes, I praise the Lord for what he has promised. I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me?” (Psalm 56:9-11)

We celebrate this Third Sunday of Advent in a Spirit of Joy as we continue our expectant waiting as people of action, ministry, and mission, knowing God is on our side...God promises that he is for us, that he can be trusted, and through thick and thin we should not be afraid...With God in your corner and mine, why should we ever be afraid of what mere men and women can do to us...This Third Sunday of Advent in a Spirit of Joy we continue our expectant waiting as folks of action, ministry, and mission, knowing God is on our side, and you and I live daily to replicate the marching orders of John Wesley: “Do All the Good You Can; As Long As You Ever Can!”

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God for Me...thank you for promising to be on my side...forgive me when I don't trust you to keep your promise...help me to have the grace and confidence to do all the good I can...God for Me, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 16, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“Love came down at Christmas, love all lovely, love divine; Love was born at Christmas: star and angels gave the sign. Worship we the Godhead, love incarnate, love divine; worship we our Jesus, but wherewith the sacred sign? Love shall be our token; love be yours and love be mine, Love to God and to all men, love for plea and gift and sign.”  
(Love Came Down at Christmas, Sacred Christmas Classic)

“Their hearts were not loyal to him. They did not keep his covenant. Yet he was merciful and forgave their sins and did not destroy them all. Many times he held back his anger and did not unleash his fury!” (Psalm 78:37-38)

Time and time again we fall short of the glory of God, we find faux allegiances to give our undivided attention, we do not keep our end of the bargain, we continually run astray, and we are on the verge of piling the last straw upon the camel’s back...The marketplace is steaming mad and isn’t going to take it any more...The neighborhood is furious for lack of consideration and respect...The sanctuary seethes in anger as friendships are betrayed...The homestead thinks nothing of breaking promises...The playground grovels continually that the sides are unfair...All torment is about to break loose and we realize that we need a big dose of Grace that comes from our Savior...

Time and time again we fall short of the glory of God, we find faux allegiances to give our undivided attention, we do not keep our end of the bargain, we continually run astray, and we are on the verge of piling the last straw upon the camel’s back...Yet, the Advent Season invites you and me to prepare for the long-awaited Messiah who will forgive us of our sins, free us from the guilt of our sins, and restore us to the Joy of God’s Salvation...The marketplace becomes a place of mercy and justice...The neighborhood becomes a place of second chances and do-overs...The sanctuary becomes a place of unconditional love and acceptance...The homestead becomes a place where our word is our bond and integrity rules the day...The playground becomes a place where we play fair, and there’s never heard a discouraging word and the skies are not cloudy all day...God chooses to break loose with love, mercy and grace when he comes down at Christmas, incarnate in Baby Jesus born in a manger in Bethlehem...Indeed, this is good news of great joy for you and me and all people...Hear the words of “Love Came Down at Christmas”...

Let’s Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Mercy...thank you for giving me second chance after second chance after second chance...forgive me when my heart is not loyal to you and I don’t keep your covenant...help me live in the midst of your Prevenient, Justifying, Sanctifying, Perfecting and Amazing Grace...God of Mercy, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 17, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part; Yet what I can I give him: give my heart.” (In  
the Bleak Midwinter, Sacred Christmas Classic)

“Hear me, LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.” (Psalm 86:1)

Too many times when we hear the phrase “poor and needy” and apply a mental picture to these words, we picture someone else, people who live far away from us, those in other countries that don’t have the luxuries and resources that are at our finger tips...and indeed, these are some of God’s poor and needy...

Some of the time when we encounter the phrase “poor and needy” we allow the image to be of folks closer to home, those in poverty in our own country; those whose home is a cardboard box under a bridge; whose next meal comes from a shelter and/or a garbage dumpster; those who have an unclean hygiene, dirty clothes, and they certainly don’t look like us, talk like us or act like us...and indeed, these are some more of God’s poor and needy...

However, the psalmist identifies you and me as the “poor and needy” and perhaps that’s an acclamation that we’d rather not claim...the poor and needy are “them” not “us”, please don’t place us in the midst of them...not us Lord...and indeed, you and I, whether we like it or not, are part of God’s poor and needy...

Now, our prayers for the “poor and needy” become up close and personal, more urgent and immediate, more pleading and begging, more consistent and regular, more focused and directed, more humble and compassionate, more loving and gentle...We realize that when it comes to needing a Savior everyone becomes the poor and needy; and God in his love, mercy and grace hears our prayers, and answers us with Emmanuel born in Bethlehem, named Jesus because he would save his people from their sin...

Advent-Christmas calls “us” the poor and needy to love and care for “us and them” the poor and needy, and we become God’s living answers to our own prayers, just as Jesus lives in our midst as living answered prayers...and indeed, we are all God’s poor and needy...Hear these words from “In the Bleak Midwinter”...

Let’s Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of the Poor and Needy...thank you for loving someone like me...forgive me when I ignore, take for granted, and overlook the poor and needy...help me always plead the cause of the down and out, and serve without hesitation all your children...God of the Poor and Needy, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 18, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“Hail to the Lord’s Anointed, great David’s greater Son! Hail in the time appointed, his reign begun! He comes to break oppression, to set the captive free; to take away transgression, and rule in equity.” (Hail to the Lord’s Anointed, Advent Sacred Classic)

“He has paid a full ransom for his people. He has guaranteed his covenant with them forever. What a holy, awe-inspiring name he has!” (Psalm 111:9)

Today invites you and me to take a look at the decorations, lightings, signs and symbols of the Advent-Christmas Seasons and let them paint a mosaic which points us toward the God of Creation, the God Incarnate in Jesus, Emmanuel, Jesus, the One who will save his people from their sin and free them from the guilt of their sin and restore them to the joy of God’s Salvation, forever...What are your 7 favorite symbols and or decorations that help prepare you for Christmas...Here are my 7 Favorite Decorations/Symbols of Advent–Christmas:

“The Advent Wreath and Christ Candle”

“The Christmas Tree in the Sanctuary”

“The Christmas Tree in My Home”

“The Nativity Scene”

“Christmas Angels”

“Poinsettias”

“Mistletoe”

Let’s Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Salvation...thank you for paying my ransom in full...forgive me when I fail to be impressed by your Holy Name and your mighty acts on my behalf...help me see the signs of the season and know they point to you and your awesome amazing grace...God of Salvation, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 19, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“Alleluia, alleluia/For our Lord God Almighty reigns/Alleluia, alleluia/For our Lord God Almighty reigns/Alleluia/Holy, holy/Are you Lord God Almighty/Worthy is the Lamb/Worthy is the Lamb/You are holy/Holy are You Lord God Almighty/Worthy is the Lamb/Worthy is the Lamb/Amen! (Agnus Dei – Amy Grant)

“Shout your praises to God, everybody! Let loose and sing! Strike up the band! Round up an orchestra to play for God, Add on a hundred-voice choir. Feature trumpets and big trombones, Fill the air with praises to King God.” (Psalm 98:4-6)

Today as we are making final preparations for our celebrations of Christmas, the Birthday of Jesus, worship with fellow believers, and the gathering of families and friends...Music has always been part of grand celebrations and music is part of the Advent-Christmas seasons' festivities, rituals, traditions, and get togethers...

We each have our own sacred music favorites as well as those selections from the secular music archives that warm our hearts and help us recall fond Christmases of a younger year...Just curious, what are your top 7 Advent-Christmas favorites?

And, as you know this is an inquiry that has no right or wrong answer! So here are my top 7 selections:

“Hallelujah Chorus” by Handel

“12 Days of Christmas” by Straight No Chaser

“Agnus Dei” by Amy Grant

“Carol of the Bells” by Trans-Siberian Orchestra

“O Holy Night” by Point of Grace

“Noel” by Lauren Daigle and Chris Tomlin

“Not the Way It Seems” by Jean Watson

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of a Joyful Noise...thank you for encouraging me to experience the music of the seasons, Advent and Christmas...forgive me when I just let the music go in one ear and out the other...help me strike up the band, round up the orchestra, and sing boldly with Christmas Praise...God of a Joyful Noise, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 20, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“The magi, as you know, were wise men--wonderfully wise men--who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. O all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.” (The Gift of the Magi, a short story by O. Henry)

“Let this be recorded for future generations, So that a people not yet born will praise the Lord.” (Psalm 102:18)

Today our waiting is bringing us closer to the ending of Advent which will yield to the beginning of Christmas with the birth of Jesus in the manger of Bethlehem...The incarnation of God, come as Emmanuel, is one of the greatest stories ever recorded and shared forward from generation to generation, and we read and reread this narrative each year at Christmas...

And we also have other favorite stories that we read and reread each year at Christmas, and share them forward with our children and our children's children...again today, I'm just curious, what are your top 7 favorite Advent-Christmas stories/poems/books?

This too is merely an inquiry with no right or wrong answer! So, here are my top 7 selections:

“The Christmas Story” Luke 2:1-20  
“A Christmas Carol” by Charles Dickens  
“The Best Christmas Pageant Ever” by Barbara Robinson  
“How the Grinch Stole Christmas” by Dr. Seuss  
“The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry  
“The Polar Express” by Charles Van Allsburg  
“Twas the Night Before Christmas” by Clement Moore

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of the Greatest Story Ever Told...thank you for the stories of Advent-Christmas that have been shared forward to me...forgive me when I don't read my favorite Christmas Stories to the next generation...help me read and reread the Advent –Christmas Stories so that my grandchildren and their grandchildren will praise the Lord...God of the Greatest Story Ever Told, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 21, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“That’s what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown!” (Linus from “A Charlie Brown Christmas”)

“Hallelujah! Thank God! And why? Because he's good, because his love lasts. But who on earth can do it—Declaim God's mighty acts, broadcast all his praises? You're one happy man when you do what's right, One happy woman when you form the habit of justice.” (Psalm 106:1-3)

Today is day 21 of our 24 day Advent Journey to the Manger of Bethlehem and experiencing the birth of the Messiah, Jesus the Christ...Along our way of faith we have access to a variety of media resources that are able to remind us that God is good, all the time; and all the time, God is good...TV and movies bring the stories of Advent-Christmas into our living rooms year after year, and they enhance the joy of the seasons as we are reminded to do the right thing and practice acts of justice...

Even as we seem to be overwhelmed with non-stop movies and bombarded with TV-reruns, there happen to be those TV-shows and movies that become our favorites, and it doesn't matter how many years in a row we've watched them, we'll watch them again...Just for fun, what are your top 7 Advent-Christmas TV-shows and/or movies...

By now, you've caught on to me, and this is merely an inquiry with no right or wrong answer! So, here are my top 7 TV-Movie favorites:

“A Christmas Carol” by Charles Dickens starring Patrick Stewart

“It's a Wonderful Life” starring Jimmy Stewart

“The Polar Express” with Tom Hanks

“Home Alone 2: Lost in New York”

“A Charlie Brown Christmas”

“A Christmas Story”

“The Santa Clause”

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God Good All the Time...thank you for providing me a wonderful life...forgive me when I forget the true meaning of Christmas...help me keep the spirit of Christmas each day of the year...God Good All the Time, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 22, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“In the first light of a new day/No one knew He had arrived/Things continued as they had been/While a new born softly cried/But the heavens wrapped in wonder/Knew the meaning of His birth/In the weakness of a baby/They knew God had come to earth/As His mother held him closely/It was hard to understand/That this baby not yet speaking/Was the Word of God to man/He would tell them of His kingdom/But their hearts would not believe/They would hate Him and in anger/They would nail Him to a tree/But the sadness would be broken/As the song of life arose/And the First born of creation/Would ascend and take his throne/He had left it to redeem us/But before His life began/He knew He’d come back not as a baby/But as The Lord of ev’ry man/Hear the angels as they’re singing/On the morning of His birth/But how much greater will our song be/When He comes again to earth/When He comes again/Hear the angels as they’re singing/On the morning of His birth/But how much greater will our song be/When He comes again to Earth/When He comes to rule the Earth!/When He comes back, When He comes back/To rule the Earth!” (In the First Light, Contemporary Christmas Anthem)

“Your statutes, LORD, stand firm; Holiness adorns your house for endless days.” (Psalm 93:5)

Today, we gathered at your house, Loving God, on this 4th Sunday of Advent to worship and praise you as we are journeying to Bethlehem...Our trek to Bethlehem is a walk that brings us closer to you each day that we walk and with every step that we take...At least once a week our faith pilgrimage brings us to your house as we pause with other pilgrims to declare who we are and whose we are...

Yet, our journey to Bethlehem is more than just a four week sprint to the manger, our journey to Bethlehem is cumulative of all our journeys to Bethlehem...In fact, when we leave the Empty Tomb of Easter each of our steps starts taking us toward and closer to Bethlehem, and when we leave with the wisemen at Epiphany to return home, our steps are taking us toward and closer to the Cross of Good Friday and the Resurrection of Easter...

Thus our faith journey of Advent-Christmas-Epiphany and Lent-Easter can't be separated, rather they share the same mission of preparing our hearts, lives and living for a closer relationship with God, a servant attitude concerning our neighbors, and further maturing of our faith...And our faith habits and practices are repeated yet they never get old as they continue to produce fruit and abundant living...Today, we continue in the progress and process of our long obedience in the same direction toward God as our pace is taking us to the Manger of Bethlehem and the birth of the Savior of the World...Indeed, I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light!!!

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Holiness...thank you for opening the doors of your house each week along my faith journey...forgive me when I'm in too big of a hurry to pause, and worship and praise you...help me live in the midst of your holiness each step of my faith journey forever and ever...God of Holiness, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around...

December 23, 2018 – 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“Chestnuts roasting on an open fire”/“And I’ve brought some corn for popping”/“Love and joy come to you, and to your wassail, too”/“When they pass around the coffee and the pumpkin pie”/“Oh, bring us a figgy pudding” (Food mentioned in Christmas Carols)

“Let them praise the Lord for his great love and for the wonderful things he has done for them. For he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.” (Psalm 107:8-9)

Today, as our journey brings us closer to Christmas we have been invited to festive events, parties and get togethers which have included delectable foods that not only curb our hunger but satisfy our sweet tooth...We are blessed in so many ways and these occasions of fellowship and food provide us with fond memories of loved ones, friends, and most of all our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace...

As we serve our plates at the meals of the season, we each have our favorite festive foods of Advent-Christmas...I’m wondering, what are your 7 favorite foods of Advent Christmas...

Since there are no right or wrong answers, don’t be bashful and send me your top 7 food favorites of Advent-Christmas...Here are my top 7 favorite Holiday Foods:

“Wheat Thins, Cream Cheese and Pepper Jelly”  
“Steak/Salmon, Mashed Potatoes, and Salad”  
“The Bread and Cup of Communion”  
“Debbie’s Christmas Fudge”  
“Chicken-Bacon Nuggets”  
“Red Velvet Cake”  
“Crab Dip”

Let’s Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God Who Satisfies the Hungry and Thirsty...thank you for keeping me well fed and quenching my thirst...forgive me when I take for granted all the wonderful things you do for me...help me savor and enjoy the food and fellowship of the Advent-Christmas Seasons...God Who Satisfies the Hungry and Thirsty, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 24, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Advent Waiting

“O Holy Night! The stars are brightly shining/It is the night of the dear Savior's birth!/Long lay the world in sin and error pining/Till he appear'd and the soul felt its worth./A thrill of hope the weary soul rejoices/For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!/Fall on your knees/Oh hear the angel voices/Oh night divine/Oh night when Christ was born/Oh night divine/Oh night divine!” (O Holy Night, Sacred Christmas Classic)

“Praise God, everybody! Applaud God, all people! His love has taken over our lives; God's faithful ways are eternal. Hallelujah!” (Psalm 117)

Today, Tuesday, Christmas Eve, the 24th day of Advent, and this evening we arrive at the Manger in Bethlehem as, “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” yields to “Silent Night” and “Joy to the World”...We hear the message from the Christmas Angel declare: “Don't be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.” Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, “Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”...Indeed, “O Holy Night!”

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Christmas Eve...thank you for coming to me in Jesus who will live in my life as Lord and Savior...forgive me when I don't join the congregation in giving you a standing ovation...help me allow my Lord Emmanuel to abide within me, Hallelujah...God of Christmas Eve, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 25, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Christmas

“Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her king; let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven, and nature sing!” (Joy to the World, Sacred Christmas Classic)

Saints before the altar bending, Watching long in hope and fear, Suddenly the Lord, descending, In His temple shall appear: Come and worship, Come and worship, Worship Christ, the newborn King! (Angels from the Realms of Glory, Sacred Christmas Classic)

“Lord, give me your unfailing love, the salvation that you promised me.” (Psalm 119: NLT)

Wednesday, Christmas Day, the 1st of the 12 days of Christmas, and no better way to keep Christ in Christmas than to join with our brothers and sisters of faith in Worship, Meditation, Prayer, Service, Sabbath, offering, Praise, Fellowship... Today is Jesus' Birthday and to begin the celebration we each receive a birthday gift from God and that is the gift of love and grace through the Birth, Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus...

As we receive, open and allow our lives to be changed by this ultimate Christmas Gift, your life and mine is transformed by the forgiveness of our sins; by being freed of the guilt of our sins; by being restored to the joy of God's salvation; which gives us the hope and strength of living in the Christmas Spirit each day of the year...

Now, since it is Jesus' Birthday, what gift do we each give to the One whose birthday we celebrate... Perhaps we give open hearts; lives with nothing to hide; honor, praise and glory; serving our neighbors in need; and loving one another... And, we commit to living in the midst of the Christmas Spirit each and every day... Hear a verse from “Angels from the Realms of Glory”:

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Christmas Day... thank you for my gift of Jesus on Christmas Day... forgive me when I don't give Jesus my best gift on his birthday... help me keep Christ in Christmas and every day of the year... God of Christmas Day, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 26, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Christmas

“Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Son of Righteousness!/Light and life to all He brings, Risen with healing in His wings./Mild He lays His glory by, Born that man no more may die,/Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth./Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!" (Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, Sacred Christmas Classic)

“Your statutes are wonderful; Therefore I obey them. The unfolding of your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.” (Psalm 119:129-130)

Today, day 2 of Christmas, and now the real work of Christmas begins...to the world, the parties are over, the presents have been opened, the decorations are coming down, and most have returned to their daily vocation...

Yet, we as children of God know that Christmas is a season unto itself...all during the season of Advent people lament a failure to keep Christ in Christmas, and now for many of those same people it's as if Christmas has never happened...

So, the earthly trappings of Christmas have given way to the spiritual discipline of the Spirit of Christmas...Jesus has come into the world as the Light of the world making the truth of God easy to understand for you and me...And the work of Christmas is living the Spirit of Christmas each and every day...Hear a verse of “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”:

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Christmas Light...thank you for Jesus my Christmas Light...forgive me when I don't keep the Light of Christmas shining throughout the year...help me experience the abundant life that comes by grace to simple ole me...God of Christmas Light, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 27, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Christmas

“And our eyes at last shall see Him, Through His own redeeming love; For that Child so dear and gentle, Is our Lord in heaven above; And He leads His children on, To the place where He is gone.” (Once in Royal David’s City, Sacred Christmas Classic)

“I lift my eyes to you, O God, enthroned in heaven.” (Psalm 123:1)

Today, day 3 of Christmas, and we are in the midst of reflecting and processing Christmas...If we are not careful the filters of the world try to influence how we see the 3rd Day of Christmas...The marketplace is focusing upon profits and gift card purchases...The neighborhood has piled wrapping remains with the trash at the curb...The sanctuary has packed away the symbols of the season for another year...The homestead is weary from Christmas activity fatigue...The playground hears the cadence of yet again another mindless game being played...if only we could gaze through the secular to see the Sacred...

Today, day 3 of Christmas, and we are in the midst of reflecting and processing Christmas...If we would allow, the filters of faith can influence how we experience the 3rd Day of Christmas...The marketplace becomes a place of customer service and employee goodwill...The neighborhood experiences the thoughts behind the gifts...The sanctuary still anticipates the arrival of the Wisemen...The homestead takes time for faith, family and friends...The playground looks forward to one more game of marbles or tag or red-rover...And, we are grateful to gaze through the secular to see the Sacred...Hear a verse from “Once in Royal David’s City”:

Let’s Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Heaven’s Lenses...thank you for coming down from heaven as Jesus my savior...forgive me when I don’t lift my eyes high enough to see you...help me experience the abundant life that I see through Christmas lenses...God of Heaven Lenses, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 28, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Christmas

“Well I don’t know if you remember me or not/I’m one of the kids they brought in from the home/I was the red-haired boy in an old green flannel shirt/You may not have seen me – I was standing off alone/I didn’t come and talk to you, ‘cause that’s never worked before/And you’ll prob’ly never see this letter anyway/But just in case there’s something you can do to help me out/I’ll ask you one more time/All I really want for Christmas/Is someone to tuck me in/A shoulder to cry on if I lose/Shoulders to ride on if I win/There’s so much I could ask for/But there’s just one thing I need/All I really want for Christmas is a family!” (Hear are some of the words to Steven Curtis Chapman’s “All I Really Want for Christmas”)

“How wonderful, how beautiful, When brothers and sisters get along!” (Psalm 133:1)

Today, day 4 of Christmas, is a reminder that we are to love one another; to do unto others as we would have them do unto us; as God first loves you and me, we are to take the initiative and love our neighbor; to turn the other cheek; to walk the second mile; to offer the shirt off our back; to forgive and love unconditionally; to offer radical hospitality; to help bring out the best in people; to get along with folks in a spirit of ease, flow and joy...HHMM...to live in the Christmas Spirit each and every day is a wonderful and beautiful thing, which can only happen if and when we allow Jesus to be Emmanuel, God with us, every step of every day...We are the Body of Christ and that makes us Family...Hear some of the words to Steven Curtis Chapman’s “All I Really Want for Christmas”:

Let’s Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Unity...thank you for showing me how to get along with others...forgive me for being irritable, arrogant and aloof...help me live in peace and harmony each and every day...God of Unity, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 29, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Christmas  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas Day

“Twinkling lights/A chill is in the air/And carols everywhere/Close your eyes, it's almost here/Candles and cards/And favorite movie scenes/The smell of evergreen/As special as it's always been/And I have a dream or two/Maybe they will come true/I know it's true/Time doesn't stand still/Many things can change/But we know some things never will/The memories we share/The songs we always sing/The mystery of life/The hopefulness this season brings/And I have a dream or two/Maybe they will come true/Setting our hopes on a big snow tonight/We'll wake up to a world of white/It's gonna be a Christmas to remember/Light up the fire, play some Nat King Cole/Always sentimental and don't you know that/It's gonna be a Christmas to remember!” (Hear some words of “A Christmas to Remember” sung by Amy Grant)

“I remembered the old days, Went over all you've done, Pondered the ways you've worked, Stretched out my hands to you, as thirsty for you as a desert thirsty for rain.” (Psalm 143:5-6)

Today, day 5 of Christmas, the first Sunday after Christmas Day, is invitation to take an inventory of all the happenings of 2019...As we look back from last January and our journey away from Epiphany and Bethlehem, through the Cross of Good Friday and the Empty Tomb of Easter, and again our long obedience in the same direction toward the God of Advent and the Emmanuel of Christmas, and including today, we view all our happenings of the past year and ask several questions:

- 1) What are our top 5 successes of the past year...
- 2) What would we do differently in 2020...
- 3) What are 3 things from 2019 that we would like to stop doing in 2020...
- 4) What are the things that worked in 2019 to keep doing in 2020...
- 5) What new dream and/or vision would you like to reach toward in 2020...

Part of the work of Christmas is remembering so that we will never forget; remembering that the God of old is the God of now and the God of all that will be; remembering that God is steadfast in love and consistent in action; remembering that God is prevenient and perfecting; God is justifying and sanctifying; remembering that there is no one and nothing greater than God...Hear the words of “A Christmas to Remember” sung by Amy Grant:

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Remembering...thank you for reminding me to remember all that you have done for me...forgive me for forgetting all that you do for me...help me cast my faith memories into the future, with the assurance of strength going forward into the mystery of your hope...God of Remembering, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 30, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Christmas

“Where a prayer could be enough/Our hands open up and give a little more/Crowded hearts make room/Kindness falls like the snow/Tenderness like a row of dominoes/Holy infant Son of God/You are the light inside of every one of us/Miracle on earth/We see your star, feel your peace/You are why this will always be the.../Season of love/A chance to shine in the darkness/To be hope, to give joy/All over the world it's Christmas/The season of love/Christ is here with us/In our hearts, through our hands/Love is the season!” (Hear some words of Jaci Velasquez’s “Season of Love”)

“Your kingdom is a kingdom eternal; you never get voted out of office. God always does what he says, and is gracious in everything he does. God gives a hand to those down on their luck, gives a fresh start to those ready to quit. All eyes are on you, expectant; you give them their meals on time. Generous to a fault, you lavish your favor on all creatures. Everything God does is right—the trademark on all his works is love.” (Psalm 145:13-17)

Today, day 6 of Christmas, we are halfway through the Season of Christmas, with time for us to be still and know that God is God; with time for you and me to listen to God’s still small voice; with time to claim that we are God’s beloved children; with time to acknowledge that we are created in the image of God; with time for each of us to savor the generosity of God’s grace; with time for us to rejoice in the joy of God’s salvation; with time for you and me to experience God’s abundant life; with time for us to live in the midst of God’s eternal kingdom today, right now; with time for us to realize that God always keeps his promises; with time for us to reach up and take hold of God’s helping hand; with time for you and me to contemplate new beginnings; with time for each of us to taste timely daily bread; with time for you and me to be embraced by God’s unconditional love...Wow, and we’re only halfway through the Season of Christmas!!! Hear the words of Jaci Velasquez’s “Season of Love”:

Let’s Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Everything...thank you for giving me time during the 12 Days of Christmas to appreciate all my blessings...forgive me when I try to treat Christmas as a one day holiday...help me experience each and every blessing you have for me throughout the 12 Days of Christmas...God of Everything, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

December 31, 2019 – Intently Haphazard, Each Step an Arrival!  
The Grace of Christmas

“We wish you a Merry Christmas; We wish you a Merry Christmas; We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Good tidings we bring to you and your kin; Good tidings for Christmas and a Happy New Year!” (We Wish You a Merry Christmas, Christmas Carol Classic)

Hallelujah! Praise God in his holy house of worship, praise him under the open skies; Praise him for his acts of power, praise him for his magnificent greatness; Praise with a blast on the trumpet, praise by strumming soft strings; Praise him with castanets and dance, praise him with banjo and flute; Praise him with cymbals and a big bass drum, praise him with fiddles and mandolin. Let every living, breathing creature praise GOD! Hallelujah! (Psalm 150)

Today, day 7 of Christmas, and the final day of 2019...we really try to pack a lot into the Advent-Christmas Seasons and now we add to the agenda New Year's Eve and New Year's Day activities and festivities...

On New Year's Eve let's not lose sight of the One who is the author of all beginnings and new beginnings...May our celebrations, festivities and activities bring praise, honor and glory to God...May the things we do this day be prelude to our joining the people of God in Worship on all the Sundays, in the coming New Year...

Indeed, the best way to ring in and bring in any day and new day; any week and new week; any year and this New Year is bowing our hearts and lives in Holy, Humble, Community Worship...Committing to regular, consistent, dependable attendance in Worship is a great response to our God who through the Incarnation of Christmas, the Cross of Good Friday, and the Resurrection of Easter is making everything for you and me new...

This is exciting good news to transition from concluding 2019 and embarking on the adventure of 2020...and I look forward to sharing the journey of our long obedience in the same direction toward God with each of you...Merry Christmas and a Hope-Filled New Year!!!

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Newness...thank you for making me and everything in my life new...forgive me when I cling to my old ways that separate me from you, my neighbor, and my best self...help me learn from the experiences of this past year and journey ever closer to year in this New Year...God of Newness, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

January 1, 2020 – The Grace of Christmas in a New Year

“Start with God—the first step in learning is bowing down to God; only fools thumb their noses at such wisdom and learning. “ (Proverbs 1:7)

Today is New Year’s Day and our’s is a long obedience in the same direction toward God, concluding a year gone by and taking first steps into a new year that awaits you and me...this long obedience in the same direction toward God is modeling for each of us and countless others that the God of the universe and all creation is also the God for all people, nations, nationalities, races, colors, ethnicities, male and female, young and old, the whosoever, folks like you and me...And we are all on our own long obedience in the same direction toward God, rubbing shoulders with all of God’s People, and realizing that many of these fellow pilgrims don’t look like us, talk like us, act like us, smell like us, and yet we are all children of the living God on a journey of faith...

This New Year’s Day reminds each of us how diverse the Kingdom of God really is, and we are each part of this great diverseness...Think of who you had contact with this past year; who did God send your way that touched your life and to whom did God send you to bless their life; who did God send your way that spoke to you and/or you spoke to them; who did God place in your path this past year that you had interaction with and/or a conversation; who did God have praying for you in 2019, and who did God have you praying for in the year gone by; who did God have serving you through the days of 2019, and whom did God have you serving each of the days of 2019...

Today, as believers, disciples, apprentices, children of God, each of us are stepping into the light of a New Year, 2020...envision who you will come in contact with; who will God send your way to touch your life and to whom will God send you to bless their life; who will God send your way to speak to you and whom will God send you to have a conversation; who will God place in your path for you to have interaction and who will God place in your path for them to interact with you; who will God have you praying for in 2020 and who will God have praying for you in 2020; who will God have serving you in 2020, and whom will you be serving in 2020...May we aspire to be in the right place at just the right time to be instruments and recipients of God’s love, mercy and grace; of God’s Salt and Light; of God-Seasoning and God-Colors...Today, you and I are instruments of the New Year bearing the gifts of God’s Grace for the people of God...Today, may each of us aspire to be recipients of the New Year’s gifts of God’s Grace from the people of God...Today, may we live into the midst and mystery of 2020 and Celebrate that the Grace of God’s message is indeed good news of great joy for ALL the people, which includes you and me, Hallelujah!!!

Let’s Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of 2020...thank you for instructing me with the truth of your WORD as I enter this New Year...forgive me when I’m oblivious to beginnings and new beginnings...help me be an instrument of love, mercy and grace, today and every day; and help me be a recipient of love, mercy and grace, today and always...God of 2020, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

January 2, 2020 – The Grace of Christmas in a New Year

“Words satisfy the mind As much as fruit does the stomach; Good talk is as gratifying as a good harvest. (Proverbs 18:20)

Today, Day 9 of Christmas, a day following a holiday for many and the anticipation of returning to more regular family and business routines...We have been surrounded by unspoken symbols and beauty, especially during these days of Advent-Christmas...Yet, we as God’s supreme creation have the privilege of spoken language, human language...In the beginning, God spoke the world and all creation into being...In the beginning the Word was with God, and the Word was God...Language, the use of words, spoken conversations, verbal communication allows each of us a further way to express ourselves to God and to one another...Attending to our language and the words that we speak is paramount in pleasing God and punctuating our relationships with others...

As the final Days of Christmas give us momentum toward Lent and Easter, along the way of our long obedience in the same direction toward God, here are some words to make sure are part of our vocabulary and dialogues:

“I’m Sorry!”

“Thank You!”

“I Love You!”

“Please, Help Me!”

“Please Forgive Me!”

“How Can I Help You?”

“God, You Are My God!”

“I’m Glad You’re My Friend!”

Let’s Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Word and Words...thank you for teaching me a language of love...forgive me when my words are hurtful and uncaring...help me choose my words wisely, and speak with gentleness and compassion...God of Word and Words, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

January 3, 2020

The Grace of Christmas in a New Year

“Trust God from the bottom of your heart; Don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; He's the one who will keep you on track. Don't assume that you know it all. Run to God! Run from evil!  
(Proverbs 3:5-7)

Today, Day 10 of Christmas, and the Proverbs remind you and me that the Spirit of Christmas is a relationship with God that is lived out every day of the year...During Advent we pray for the coming of Emmanuel, each day of Christmas we experience the nearness of Emmanuel, and following the days of Christmas we trust that God is always with us...We walk in faith, within the will of God, listening for the voice of the Good Shepherd in busy malls and quiet sanctuaries, as we are guided along our long obedience in the same direction toward God, away from the forces and temptations of evil...Oh, the Spirit of Christmas lived every day of the year, indeed, Merry Christmas!!!

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Trust...thank you for leading me along paths of righteousness for your name's sake...forgive me when I try to figure everything out on my own...help me run from evil and run into your embrace of Grace...God of Trust, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

January 4, 2020

The Grace of Christmas in a New Year

“The ways of right-living people glow with light; The longer they live, the brighter they shine. (Proverbs 4:18)

Today, Day 11 of Christmas, the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light; the Wisemen followed a star that guided them to the place of the Messiah; you and I are the people who have been sitting in darkness and seen a great light; each of us has walked the way of the Wisemen guided by a star leading us to the place of the Messiah...

As we are people of light, we are people who glow with the light of the One born in a manger to bring you and me light and life...We are children of God, disciples of Jesus, and we are right-living people in a right relationship with God, our neighbors and our best self...

Each day we move closer and closer to God on our long obedience in the same direction toward God, and the longer we live and the closer we get to God the brighter God's Light shines within us and through us...Indeed, This Little Light of Mine, I'm Gonna' Let It Shine and Merry Christmas!!!

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Light...thank you for shining your light upon me and through me...forgive me when I try to hide in the darkness and shy away from the light...help me be a right-living person glowing with Son-Light, brighter and brighter each day...God of Light Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

January 5, 2020 - The Grace of Christmas in a New Year

“For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6)

Today, January 5, 2020, concludes the Season of Christmas, the 12 Days of Christmas...Including the Season of Advent we have now journeyed 36 days in preparation and celebration of the One born Emmanuel, God with us; named Jesus because he will save his people from their sins; rejoicing in the good news of great joy for all people that a Savior who is Christ the Lord is born...

When the shepherds went to Bethlehem they shared with all who would listen what had been told about Jesus, and they left Bethlehem glorifying and praising God...When the Wisemen came into the presence of Jesus they worshiped and adored Jesus, offered him gifts, and then departed for home different people which took them home differently...

So, what reflections, insights, and blessings are we taking with us as we journey away from Christmas and move toward Ash Wednesday, Lent, and Easter...We are promised a Hope-Filled New Year, just as we have the assurance of each day being filled with Hope because of the Birth, Life, Death, and Resurrection of the Son of God...

I pray that we are closer to God than we have ever been; I pray that once again we have confessed our sins and asked God to forgive us our trespasses; I pray that we have received God's forgiveness and God's gift of grace that frees us from the guilt of our sins; I pray that we live in the midst of being restored to the joy of God's salvation; I pray that these past 36 days have affirmed our relationships with others and others have affirmed us as loving family, loyal friends and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ; I pray that we have been folks who Luxuriously Pray, Leisurely Read Our Bible, Longingly Learn, Lavishly Serve, Laughingly Play, Liberally Give, Lovingly Worship; I pray that our lives and living have been enriched in The Marketplace, The Neighborhood, The Sanctuary, The Homestead, and The Playground...I pray that this Advent-Christmas Season has joined our long obedience in the same direction toward God, already in progress and forever a process...

Emmanuel, Emmanuel...Come, thou long-expected Jesus...It came upon a midnight clear...In the bleak midwinter...The first noel...O holy night...Silent night, holy night...Love came down at Christmas...He is born...Infant holy, infant lowly...Sweet little Jesus boy...I heard the bells on Christmas Day...O come, all ye faithful...Sing we now of Christmas...Joy to the world...Go, tell it on the mountain...Amazing Grace!!!

Let's Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Christmas...thank you for Christmas and my gift of Christmas...forgive me when I take the majesty and mystery of Christmas for granted...help me celebrate the Spirit of Christmas, always in progress and forever a sanctifying process...God of Christmas, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

January 6, 2020  
The Grace of Epiphany  
The Day of Epiphany

Key Verse: Matthew 2:12 (NLT)

**“When it was time to leave,  
They returned to their own country by another route,  
For God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.”**

Today, The Day of Epiphany, is a day layered with meaning for our spiritual lives, our faith journey of Christmas, and our long obedience in the same direction toward God...The Wisemen have traveled out of their comfort zones seeking the One born as good news of great joy for all the people, Emmanuel, Savior of the world...Their quest for the Messiah is fulfilled when they follow the star to the house where they find Baby Jesus with his mother Mary, and they worship the newborn king and offer him gifts of great value...Then when it was time to return home they are warned with instruction to return home by a different road...

Today, the Day of Epiphany, we too are instructed to leave Bethlehem by a different road...Whenever we have an encounter with the Living Christ; when we ask Jesus to forgive us our trespasses; when we receive forgiveness and freedom from the guilt of our sin; when we realize that we are restored to the joy of God's salvation; when we pay homage to our Savior and Lord; we can never return home by the same road because we return home changed, justified, sanctified, and made new...

So, just where does our returning home by a different road take us? It takes us to green pastures, still waters, places where our souls are restored, down paths of righteousness, through dark valleys, to opportunities of radical hospitality, to dwelling with God daily and forever...It takes you and me to the Foot of the Cross of Good Friday and the Stone Rolled Away of the Empty Tomb of Resurrection and the Day of Pentecost when the gift of the Holy Spirit is given and received...It takes each of us to the familiar places of our everyday ordinary lives...It takes you and me places that are mystery, unforeseen and unimagined...It takes us to the Communion Table in the sanctuary, where we experience the means of grace in the Body and Blood of Christ; then we arise and go in peace by a different road with Jesus by our side...Hear the words from the Christmas Carol “What Child Is This”:

*So, bring Him incense, gold and myrrh; Come peasant, king to own Him.  
The King of kings salvation brings; Let loving hearts enthrone Him. This, this is Christ the King whom  
shepherds guard and angels sing. Haste, haste to bring Him laud, The Babe, the Son of Mary.*

Let us Play/Pray: Almighty God and Loving Father, God of Another Route...thank you for showing me a new route home...forgive me when I don't heed your warnings...help me look forward to and long for the new me that goes home daily by a different road...God of Another Route, Loving Father and Almighty God, I Love You! Amen, Make It So, Love All Around, Alleluia...

**An Advent Adventurer's and Christmas Companion's Guide  
through The Holy Days of Advent – Christmas – Epiphany  
Sacred Words and Expressions of Faith  
December 1, 2019 - January 6, 2020**

**Adore** – The deep love and respect given to God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit; worship; homage...

**Advent** – From the Latin word meaning “Coming”...Advent is a season of four Sundays concluding on Christmas Eve, December 24<sup>th</sup>...Advent is a time when we prepare for the coming of the Messiah, the Christ...Simply put, Advent calls and invites each of us to get ready for the Birthday of Jesus; to prepare for the arrival of Christ the King; and to expect Jesus' coming again in final victory as Savior of the world...

**Advent Wreath** – A circular wreath made of evergreens with 3 blue candles and 1 pink candle in the wreath surrounding a single white candle (The Christ Candle) in the center of the wreath...One candle is lit each Sunday of Advent with the Christ Candle being lit on Christmas Eve!...

**Alleluia** – Praise the Lord...

**Behold** – See, Watch, View, Witness from the deep place of your heart using all your senses; a word that draws us near and points us toward God, the Baby Jesus, and the Holy Spirit; it invites and challenges us to all things new in the Message of Great Joy to all People...may we behold with wonder and gratitude this Advent/Christmas/Epiphany...

**Bells** – Bells are rung to announce the arrival of the seasons and proclaim the birth of Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Son of God and Son of Man...

**Bethlehem** – Birthplace of Jesus; about 5 miles from Jerusalem; the City of David, the birthplace of king David...

**Candles** – remind us that God through Jesus is the Light of the world, a light that the darkness of the world can never put out...

**Chrismon** – Christ-Monogram; an ornament made of white and gold pointing to and proclaiming the glory of God...

**Chrismon Tree** – An evergreen tree decorated with Chrismons...

**Christ** – The Anointed One (Greek rendition of Messiah)...

**Christmas** – The celebration of the birth of Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, our Lord and Savior, the Son of God, on December 25<sup>th</sup>...The anticipation of Jesus coming again in honor and glory!...

**Christmas Angels** – Angels, the messengers of God, who help deliver God's message to his people, folks who desperately need to hear about what God is doing in the world for the sake of all people...

**Christmas Season** – A 12 Day Season beginning December 25<sup>th</sup> going through January 5<sup>th</sup> (The 12 Days of Christmas)...These 12 Days invite us to celebrate The Gift of Grace in Jesus in both gift receiving and gift giving, and aspiring to live the Spirit of Christmas each day of the year!...

**Christmas Star** – The Christmas star symbolizes the star of Bethlehem, which according to the Biblical story, guided the three kings, magi or wise men, to the baby Jesus. The star is also the heavenly sign of a prophecy fulfilled long ago and the shining hope for humanity...The Star reminds us that Jesus is the Light of the World and in him is no darkness...

**Colors Red and Green** – Red at Christmas can represent the blood of Jesus that was shed when he died on the Cross so that we would be saved from our sin and restored to God's Salvation for eternity in Heaven...Green at Christmas signifies life, abundant life, eternal life that is present in Jesus Christ and represented by evergreens in our decorations and wreaths...

**Emmanuel** – God with us...

**Epiphany** – The manifestation, revelation, showing forth that the good news of great joy of Jesus revealed God to all folks everywhere (the Gentiles) through the magi, wise men, kings who arrived bring gifts of great value to honor and worship Jesus! The Day of Epiphany is celebrated on January 6<sup>th</sup>...

**Exultation** – Jubilation, Joy, Excitement, Triumph, Enthusiasm, Victory often expressed in song...

**Faith** – Believing and trusting that God loves me by grace through Jesus who forgives my sin, frees me from the guilt of my sin, restores me to the joy of God's salvation which gives me strength and hope for daily living...

**God** – The "Great I Am"; creator of all things; source of our self-worth; Father of Jesus...

**God the Father** – Father of Jesus; also our Heavenly Father...

**God the Son** – Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world...

**God the Holy Spirit** – The presence of God that lives in our hearts, and guides and sustains us in daily living...

**Gold, Myrrh, Frankincense** – Priceless gifts brought by the Gentile Magi, Kings, Wise Men to give to the Newborn King of the Jews, the King of kings, Baby Jesus...

**Grace** – Getting what we don't deserve; The free gift of God in Jesus Christ; a gift we don't deserve, can't buy, can never earn; Jesus, the grace of God, redeems our sinfulness, frees us from the guilt of our sin, and restores us to the Joy of God's Salvation...

**Grace (Prevenient)** – The grace of God that goes before all other things ...

**Grace (Justifying)** – Coming to that moment when we realize we can't save ourselves and we need a savior and we ask Jesus into our hearts to save and redeem us...

**Grace (Sanctify)** – Daily growing closer to God...

**Gloria, in Excelsis Deo** – "Glory to God in the Highest"...

**Glory** – Majesty, Grandeur, Splendor, Dignity, Respect, Reverence to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit...

**Hallelujah** – Praise the Lord...

**Hark** – Pay attention to; Listen to; Hear; Heed..

**Herald** – Harbinger; Forerunner; Messenger; Announcer...

**Homage** – Worship, Reverence, Praise, Love, Adoration, Laud...

**Hope** – believing, expecting, anticipating God to dispense his will upon our daily living...

**Israel** – The children of God; the Nation chosen of God to be his people; the people who mourn in exile and sat in darkness waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue, redeem and restore them to the love of God...

**Jesus** – (to save); Savior; Deliverer; The Son of God; The Son of Man...

**Joseph** – Earthly father of Jesus; engaged to Mary; carpenter in Nazareth...

**Joy** – Is a Fruit of the Holy Spirit experienced near to the heart of God in the midst of daily living both good and disappointing because our hope is in the grace of God through Jesus...

**Justice** – Getting what we deserve...

**King** – In the Kingdom of God, Christ is King; Christ is King of kings in all of creation...

**Laud** – Praise; To proclaim the glory of...

**Light** – Jesus is the light of the world, the light that shines in all dark places and the darkness cannot put the light of Jesus out...Jesus brings us this light for us to receive...

**Life** – Jesus is life, abundant life, eternal life; Jesus brings us this life for us to receive...

**Lord** – Ruler; Christ Jesus is the Lord (Ruler) of our lives; the world; all of creation...

**Love** – God is love; God loves you and me just because he is God and there is nothing we can do to make God love us any more nor any less...the act of care and compassion, love, mercy and grace, forgiveness and hope, all the gifts of God that money can't buy...For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life; God did not send the son into the world to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through him...

**Manger** – A feed trough for animals in a stable; used as the first bed for Baby Jesus...

**Mercy** – Not getting what we deserve...

**Mary** – The virgin mother of Jesus; engaged to Joseph...

**Messiah** – The Anointed One (Hebrew) (Official title given to Jesus)...

**Names of Jesus** – Emmanuel, Wonderful, Counselor, Lord of life, Lord of all; Prince of Peace, Mighty God, Holy One, Son of Righteousness, ...

**Nativity** – From the Latin word 'to be born', 'birth'; specifically the Birth of Jesus; a picture, carving or model representing Jesus Christ's Birth...

**Noel** – Christmas; Christmas Songs; Christmas Carols...

**Omnipotent** – God All Powerful...

**Omnipresent** – God Ever Present; God present everywhere...

**Omniscient** – God All Knowing...

**Peace** – All the good gifts of God that money can't buy...

**Poinsettia** – The people of Mexico and Central America call the brilliant tropical plant the "Flower of the Holy Night." The Poinsettia is a many-pointed star that has become a symbol of the Star of Bethlehem. The Poinsettias' colors are red and green, both colors of life. Red for the color of life that flows in, through and from Jesus to give us Eternal Life; and green for the color of growth and life that is eternal through the grace of Jesus! The white Poinsettia is the color of Pure Light and reminds us that Jesus is the Light of the World!...

**Praise** – Adoration, Acclaim, Laud, Devotion, Love, Reverence, Blessing of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit...

**Redeemer** – Jesus, who redeems us from Hell and our sin which separates us from God; redeems us to a restored relationship with God, a right relationship with our Heavenly Father...

**Righteousness** – Righteousness is of God; Righteousness is perfect love and obedience; God is right All the time; God is always right; Jesus is God's Righteousness; Jesus and God model the ultimate example of a right relationship...

**Rose** – A metaphor for Jesus, our savior, showing the love of God, dispelling darkness, saving us from sin and death...

**Tidings** – Greetings; good news of great joy...

**Savior** – Jesus Christ; Jesus Messiah; The Redeemer of Sins; The Saver of Souls from Hell to Heaven; Our Lord; The Lamb of God; The Son of God; The Son of Man; The Prince of Peace; The King of kings...to save us from our sin; to redeem us from separation from God; to restore us to the joy of God's salvation...

**Shepherds** – The first to hear the angel's story of Good News of Great Joy for All the People; the first to arrive at Jesus' manger in the stable/barn and proclaim what the angel had told them...

**Sin** – Anything that separates you and me from God; an act or lack of action that separates you and me from God...

**Sinner** – One who is separated from god by their actions and/or omissions...one who doesn't know God; One who doesn't believe, trust nor obey God...

**Son of God** – Jesus, fully God; fully Divine...

**Son of Man** – Jesus, fully Human yet with no sin...

**Thither** – To or toward that place; there...

**Truth** – Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; Truth is the Message of God; Truth is the WORD of God; Truth is God's Righteousness and Right Relationships...

**Wait** – An active, dynamic word for the Season of Advent as we anticipate, expect, prepare, and hope for the coming Messiah during this season of Advent, guiding us to the birth and birthday of Jesus...

**WORD** – Jesus...

**Word of God Made Flesh** – Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah...

**Worship** – Praising God with the people of God; Praising Jesus with the congregation of those following the way of Jesus...

**Wreaths** – The wreath is a circular, never-ending symbol of eternal life, unconditional love and the grace of rebirth...Cedar stands for strength and hope...Holly stands for immortality and the red berries remind of Jesus blood, the cup of the new covenant given for the forgiveness of sin for you and me and others...Today, the wreath further invites and guides us to extravagant generosity, liberal giving, and the gathering of family...

# The Springs

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