



“Advent and Christmas at Red Hill” The Compass: The Daily Office

Welcome to the Advent and Christmas seasons! The Advent season is a time for preparation; preparing your mind, heart, and soul to behold the wonder of Christmas. Each week in Advent will take us a step closer to the celebration of Christmas! The profound truth we celebrate is that the manger in Bethlehem holds the creator of the universe, the One who became like us so that we could become like Him!

As you prepare this Advent, we once again encourage you to engage the spiritual discipline of the “*Daily Office*.” The *Daily Office* is an ancient spiritual practice through which we take time daily to stop, slow down, pray, and simply *be with* our Lord Jesus. The word “Office” comes from the Latin word, “*opus*,” which means “work.” In the ancient church, the Daily Office was understood to be “the work of God.” As Christians, one of our tasks, our “work,” is to pay attention to God throughout the day; to be still long enough to hear the voice of our Father and sense His presence. Author Peter Scazzero notes that the *Daily Office* “...normally takes place at least twice a day, and is not so much a turning to God to *get* something; it is about *being with God*.”¹

Each day there will be two suggested *Offices*. Each *Office* will consist of silence, prayer, sacred reading/scripture, suggested prayers, and a closing affirmation/reflection. It is up to you when you do the *Office*. Some will do the *Daily Office* in the morning and evening, some mid-day (perhaps during your lunch break?) and evening, etc. Start at your own pace and develop your own rhythms. Remember, this is your time to be with Jesus. Enjoy!

Our prayer during these Advent and Christmas seasons is that God will gently, quietly, loudly, and/or fiercely (whatever God decides) deepen your soul and draw you closer to Him. It is for you that Jesus came to earth. Because God would rather experience Hell for you than to spend an eternity without you!

Happy Advent and Merry Christmas!
Pastor Seth and Pastor Joel

¹ Peter Scazzero. *Begin the Journey With the Daily Office: Remembering God's Presence Throughout the Day*. (New York: New Life Fellowship, 2008).

Ideas for "Advent Family Time"

If you are part of a family with young children, here are some suggestions that may help facilitate a meaningful Advent time for your family. Or, use these suggestions with others who are meaningful to you and from whom you desire a deeper personal connection:

- Choose a regular time and place to gather and create a "holy" (set-apart) atmosphere. Lower the light in the room, light candles, start a fire in the fire place, play some music that is special to you. Make this a time that is "guilt-free" and anticipated; not "another thing" to do!
- Keep the time brief: 10-15 minutes depending upon the ages and "temperament" of your children.
- Use the *Daily Offices* provided, or create your own devotional times. Involve the children as much as possible! Here are some suggestions:

*Light a candle or the candle on an Advent Wreath.

*Read a scripture passage (or have your child read it from a children's Bible.)

*Discuss the weekly sermon theme or daily reflections from the *Daily Office*.

*Sing a song that you and/or your children know (Christmas Carols are ok☺.)

*Participate together in a special family activity: baking cookies, make a Christmas tree ornament, and/or draw a picture.

*Share prayer requests and pray together.

*Have a special snack or treat.

*Blow out the candles—important!

Whatever you decide to do just remember—it is a time just to be with God and each other! Enjoy!

Sunday, December 2nd Advent Week 1

☐ Day #1--Monday, December 3rd.

Morning or Mid-Day Daily Office I

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 37:7 "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him."

Prayer:

"Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope. This is my comfort in my distress, that your promise gives me life." (Psalm 119:49-50)

Sacred Reading:

Mark 1:1-8

Matthew 12:18-21

Pray:

Give thanks for friends, family, and personal circumstances. Pray for those who do not know or trust the Lord. Ask the Lord to give you the words and wisdom to share your faith with someone in your life.

Affirmation/Reflection:

"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are a "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God." (2 Corinthians 1.20)

Mid-Day or Evening Daily Office II

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 46:10 “Be still and know that I am God.”

Prayer:

“Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know thee as thou art revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of thy love. Amen. (“Evening Prayer I,” *The Book of Common Prayer*).

Sacred Reading:

Isaiah 40:10-11

Psalm 10

Pray:

The Lord’s Prayer.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“Christmas is the promise that the God who came in history and comes daily in mystery will one day come in glory. God is saying in Jesus that in the end everything will be all right. Nothing can harm you permanently, no suffering is irrevocable, no loss is lasting, no defeat is more than transitory...Jesus did not deny the reality of suffering, discouragement or disappointment, frustration, and death; he simply stated that the Kingdom of God would conquer all of these horrors, that the Father’s love is so prodigal that no evil could possibly resist it.” (Brennan Manning, *Reflections for Ragamuffins*. Cited in: *A Guide To Prayer For All Who Seek God*, Norman Shawchuck and Rueben P. Job, Eds).

Day #2--Tuesday, December 4th

Morning or Mid-Day Daily Office I

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 4:4b “.... [W]hen you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.”

Prayer:

Psalm 141:2 “May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.”

Sacred Reading:

Isaiah 1:21-31

Psalm 131

Pray:

For some of the specific needs of your co-workers and/or neighbors.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“The world waits. History waits and labors. Something draws near....the story whose meaning may be our meaning, as we wait for the child to be born. For this is what Gabriel comes to announce, and Mary stands there as still as life....she hears him say, ‘Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name....’ But she knows his name before Gabriel says it.... [T]he angel says, “The child to be born will be called the Son of God.” (Fredrick Buechner, *The Magnificent Defeat*.)

Mid-Day or Evening Daily Office II

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 130:5 “I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope.”

Prayer:

Psalm 130:6-7 “My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen in the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning. O Israel put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.”

Sacred Reading:

Psalm 11

Luke 1:26-33

Pray:

For the United States of America, the President, and for our elected leaders. Ask God for the power to be a good citizen in your community.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“Religious energy is in the dark questions, seldom in the answers. Answers are the way out. Answers are not what we are here for. When we look for answers, we’re looking to change the pattern. When we look at the questions, we look for the opening to transformation.” (Richard Rohr, *Everything Belongs*).

☐ **Day #3--Wednesday, December 5th**

Morning or Mid-Day Daily Office I

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 40:1 “I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry.”

Prayer:

Lamentations 3:21-26 “Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, ‘The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.’ The Lord is good to those who hope in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.”

Sacred Reading:

Isaiah 2:1-11

1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

Pray:

For a specific issue in your life where you are waiting on God.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“We are constantly reminded that our lives move out in many directions, carrying in their weight the burden of our thoughts, our concerns, our dreams, our hopes, our longings... We know somewhat concerning our own longings and yearnings. We know what it is like to lay claim to the strength of our heritage and the guidance of our own faith. We know what it is like to share in the common worship, caught up in the sweep of our own religious tradition. We know the comfort of the familiar landscape that enables us to find our way even in the darkness of our sin and sorrow.” (Howard Thurman, *The Centering Moment*).

Mid-Day or Evening Daily Office II

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 27:14 “Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.”

Prayer:

“Prepare the royal highway; The King of Kings is near! Let every hill and valley A level road appear! Then Greet the King of Glory, Foretold in sacred story: Hosanna to the Lord, For he fulfills God’s Word!” (“Prepare the Royal Highway,” vs. 1. Taken from Evangelical Lutheran Worship, #264).

Sacred Reading:

Psalm 12

Luke 20:19-26

Pray:

Thank God for those who have led the way for you in your faith journey. (I.e. Parents, grandparents, a Sunday school teacher, etc.) Who are you leading the way for in their faith journeys? Seek God’s wisdom and direction.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“O great God, you are the rock upon which I must build my life. You have called me out from the shifting sand of a life lived in estrangement from you. You have made my soul for your peace and you will not despise my longing for the holiness of your deep love. O Holy One, remind me again that your love and your sovereignty will not be defeated by anything—even the gates of Hades. Amen.” (Adapted from Thomas Merton, *A Book of Hours*, 147.)

☐ Day #4--Thursday, December 6th

Morning or Mid-Day Daily Office I

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Isaiah 30:18b “For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!”

Prayer:

“God’s people see him coming: Your own eternal king! Palm branches strew before him! Spread garments! Shout and sing! God’s promise will not fail you! No more shall doubt assail you! Hosanna to the Lord, For he fulfills God’s Word!” (“Prepare the Royal Highway,” vs. 2. Taken from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, #264.)

Sacred Reading:

Isaiah 2:12-22

Luke 1:39-56

Pray:

For our Red Hill Lutheran School staff, teachers, and principal. Pray for our local schools (your child’s school), teachers, and administrators.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“Waiting is first of all a waiting together. One of the most beautiful passages of scripture is Luke 1:39-56, which tells us about Mary’s visit to Elizabeth. What happened when Mary received the words of promise? She went to Elizabeth. Something was happening to Elizabeth as well as to Mary...I find the meeting of these two women very moving, because Elizabeth and Mary came together and enabled each other to wait. Mary’s visit made Elizabeth aware of what she was waiting for...Mary affirmed Elizabeth’s waiting. And then Elizabeth said to Mary, ‘Blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled’ (Luke 1:45)...These two women created space for each other to wait: They affirmed for each other that something was happening worth waiting for.” (Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Eternal Seasons*.)

Mid-Day or Evening Daily Office II

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Titus 2:13 “.... [W]e wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and savior, Jesus Christ...”

Prayer:

Psalm 18:1-3 “I love you, Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; the Lord is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call to the Lord, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.”

Sacred Reading:

1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

Luke 20:27-40

Pray:

For a situation where you need the Lord’s strength.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“Our salvation comes from something small, tender, and vulnerable, something hardly noticeable. God, who is the creator of the universe, comes to us in smallness, weakness, and hiddenness. I find this a hopeful message. Somehow, I keep expecting loud and impressive events to convince me and others of God’s saving power; but over and over again, I am reminded that spectacles, power plays, and big events are the ways of the world. Our temptation is to be distracted by them, and made blind to the ‘shoot that shall sprout from the stump.’” (Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Eternal Seasons*).

□ Day #5-Friday, December 7th

Morning or Mid-Day Daily Office I

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 16:1-2 “Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge. I said to the Lord, ‘You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.’”

Prayer:

Psalm 17 “Hear, O Lord, my righteous plea; listen to my cry. Give ear to my prayer—it does not rise from deceitful lips. May my vindication come from you; may your eyes see what is right. Though you probe my heart and examine me at night, though you test me, you will find nothing...”

Sacred Reading:

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Luke 20:41-47

Pray:

Where do you think God is “hiding” in your life? What do you believe God may be saying to you or wanting to do through you? Pray about this.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“Unless the worker lives a life hidden with Christ in God, he is apt to become an irritating dictator instead of an indwelling disciple. Many of us are dictators, we dictate to people and to meetings. Jesus never dictates to us in that way. Whenever our Lord talked about discipleship, He always prefaced it with an “IF,” never with an emphatic assertion—‘You must.’ Discipleship carries an option with it.” (Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*).

Mid-Day or Evening Daily Office II

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 17:7-8 “Show me the wonder of your great love, you who save by your right hand, those who take refuge in you from their foes. Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings.”

Prayer:

“Then fling the gates wide open to greet your promised king! Your king, yet every nation its tribute too may bring. All lands will bow before him; their voices join your singing: Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God’s word!” (“Prepare the Royal Highway,” vs.3. Taken from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, #264.)

Sacred Reading:

Isaiah 3:8-15

Luke 1:5-20, 23-25

Pray:

For those struggling with loneliness, fear, and anxiety.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“It impresses me, therefore, that all the figures who appear on the first pages of Luke’s Gospel are waiting. Zechariah and Elizabeth are waiting. Mary is waiting. Simeon and Anna, who were there at the temple when Jesus was brought in, are waiting. The whole opening scene of the good news is filled with waiting people. And right at the beginning all those people in some way or another hear the words, ‘Do not be afraid. I have something good to say to you.’ (Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Eternal Seasons*.)

□ Day #6--Saturday, December 8th

Morning or Mid-Day Daily Office I

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

“Savior of the nations come; Show the glory of the Son! Ev’ry people, stand in awe; Praise the perfect Son of God.” (Savior of the Nations, Come” *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, #263.)

Prayer:

“His is no earthly kingdom: It comes from heav’n above. His rule is peace and freedom and justice, truth, and love. So let your praise be sounding for kindness so abounding: Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God’s Word!” (“Prepare the Royal Highway,” vs.4. Taken from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, #264.)

Sacred Reading:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Luke 21:5-19

Pray:

For those who are in need around the world and for all leaders to work for justice, integrity, and mercy for their people.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“For many, waiting is a dry desert between where they are and where they want to go. And people do not like such a place. They want to get out of it by doing something. In our particular historical situation, waiting is even more difficult because we are so fearful....People are afraid—afraid of inner feelings, afraid of other people, and also afraid of the future. Fearful people have a hard time waiting, because when we are afraid we want to get away from where we are...The more afraid we are, the harder waiting becomes. That is why waiting is such an unpopular attitude for many people.” (Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Eternal Seasons*.)

Mid-Day or Evening Daily Office II

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 139:1-2 “O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.”

Prayer:

Psalm 139:4-6 “Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord. You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.”

Sacred Reading:

Isaiah 4:2-6

Psalm 148

Pray:

For tomorrow: ask God to prepare your heart and mind for worship.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“To wait open-endedly is an enormously radical attitude toward life. It is trusting that something will happen to us that is far beyond our own imaginings. It is giving up control over our future and letting God define our life. It is living with the conviction that God molds us according to God’s love and not according to our fear. The spiritual life is a life in which we wait, actively present to the moment, expecting new things will happen to us, new things that are far beyond our own imagination or prediction. That, indeed, is a very radical stance in a world preoccupied with control.” (Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Eternal Seasons*.)

**Sunday, December 9th
Advent Week 2**

Day #1--Monday, December 10th

Morning or Mid-Day Daily Office I

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Habakkuk 2:20 “But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.”

Prayer:

“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas. We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day. We who are anxious over so many things look forward to your coming among us....We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light. To you we say, ‘Come Lord Jesus!’”

Sacred Reading:

Isaiah 8:16-9:1

John 1:9-10

Pray:

For our school families at Red Hill Lutheran School.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“The child is yours. The plan is yours. The idea is yours. And forgive me for asking but...is this how God enters the world? The coming of the angel, I’ve accepted. The questions people asked about the pregnancy, I can tolerate. The trip to Bethlehem, fine. But why a birth in a stable, God? Any minute now Mary will give birth. Not to a child, but to the Messiah. Not to an infant, but to God. That’s what the angel said. That’s what

Mary believes. And, God, my God, that's what I want to believe. But surely you can understand; it's not easy. It seems so...so...bizarre." ("Joseph's Prayer," from Max Lucado, *Cast of Characters: Common People in the Hands of An Uncommon God*.)

Mid-Day or Evening Daily Office II

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

"Lord in your mercy, hear my prayer."

Prayer:

"*Maranatha!* Come, Lord Jesus! The true light is coming—he gives light to everyone. The light of Christ surrounds us—behold his glory! The presence of God is in our midst—hidden—yet real! How can this be? God became man. Emmanuel! God is with us!"

Sacred Reading:

Psalm 41

Luke 22:39-53

Pray:

For those who are struggling at work and the unemployed.

Affirmation/Reflection:

"We believe in One God, the Father Almighty, Who made the heaven, and the earth; the seas and all that is in them. And in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made flesh for our salvation, And in the Holy Ghost, who preached through the prophets of the advents of Christ, of His birth of a Virgin, His Passion, His Resurrection from the dead, And the Ascension to heaven in the flesh Of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, And His coming from heaven in the glory of the Father, To gather up again all things unto Himself, And to raise up all flesh of all humanity." (Adapted from the creed of St. Irenaeus, AD 180.)

Day #2--Tuesday, December 11th

Morning or Mid-Day Daily Office I

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 130:6 "*My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning....*"

Prayer:

"Cause us, O Lord our God, to lie down in peace, and raise us up, O our King, unto life. Spread over us the tabernacle of thy peace; direct us aright through thine own good counsel; save us for thy name's sake; be thou a shield about us..." (From: *The Prayer Book for Jewish Sailors and Soldiers*, 1914.)

Sacred Reading:

Isaiah 12:2-6

John 1:9-14

Pray:

For our military men and women who will be spending Christmas away from family and friends. Also, pray for their families.

Affirmation/Reflection:

The union of God with humankind is a theme throughout the scriptures. The Advent and Christmas season vividly brings to our minds the union of the divine with the human. "The Word became flesh" is John's description of this union in John 1, verse 14. We ponder the union of Christ, the Word made flesh, when we participate in Holy Communion. We celebrate that Jesus is present in the breaking of the bread and through that

brokenness; we are united with our heavenly Father. Also, it is Jesus' union with us, the church, also referred to as "the body of Christ," which is sent into the community to share God's peace, love, and desire to unite with all people for the purpose of forgiveness, healing, and redemption. It is through the church that once again, and continually, the Word becomes flesh.

Mid-Day or Evening Daily Office II

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 39:4a, 12a "Show me, O Lord, my life's end and the number of my days...Hear my prayer, O Lord, listen to my cry for help..."

Prayer:

"Before the ending of the day, Creator of the world, we pray that you, with steadfast love, would keep Your watch around us while we sleep. From evil dreams defend our sight, from fears and terrors of the night; tread underfoot our deadly foe that we no sinful thought may know. O Father, that we ask be done through Jesus Christ, your only Son; and the Holy Spirit, by whose breath our souls are raised to life from death. (John Mason Neale [1818-1866] in *The Book of Common Prayer*.)

Sacred Reading:

Psalm 45

Matthew 13:44-52

Pray:

For children from abusive and/or broken homes. For those children in foster care and/or group homes.

Affirmation/Reflection:

"Things don't happen until it's time for them to happen. The Bible has a poetic way of putting it: Things happen *in the fullness of time*. Time ripens history. The unlikely becomes eminently possible. God acts in the ripening of time. *Pleroma* is the Greek word for that fullness. Ancient Christians used the term to talk about the consummation of the world—its end, when everything that was becoming has become, when Christ will be all in all. But what if each small ripening in life is part of the *pleroma*? What if the fullness of time is *becoming* every day, or even several times a day, to be a part of its becoming? (Barbara Cawthorne Crafton, *Let Us Bless The Lord*.)

Day #3--Wednesday, December 12th

Morning or Mid-Day Daily Office I

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Zechariah 2:13 "Be still before the Lord, all mankind, because he has roused himself from his holy dwelling."

Prayer:

"O shelter us beneath the shadow of thy wings; for thou, O God, art our Guardian and our deliverer; yea, thou O God, art a gracious and merciful King; and guard our going out and our coming in unto life and unto peace from this time forth and forevermore." (From: *The Prayer Book for Jewish Sailors and Soldiers*, 1914.)

Sacred Reading:

John 1:14

Pray:

For those who struggle with depression. If you know someone personally, pray for them specifically.

Affirmation/Reflection:

In John 1:14, the phrase, "made his dwelling among us," in the original Greek literally says "pitched his tent" or "tabernacled." "If this calls to mind images of the Old Testament dwelling place for God, it is no accident. God

is with us, Emmanuel in the flesh. If there be any doubt, the tabernacle contained the glory of God, and in seeing Jesus, John tells us we “beheld his glory.” The Old Testament texts remind us what he will do—or has done—and call us to sing and shout, for our salvation, and ‘great is the Holy One of Israel among you.’” (Brother Maynard, *That You Might Believe*.)

Mid-Day or Evening Daily Office II

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 119:10a, 11 “I seek you with all my heart...I have hidden your word in my heart.”

Prayer:

“Gracious God, we give you thanks for the day, especially for the good we were permitted to give and to receive; the day is now past and we commit it to you. We entrust to you the night; we rest securely, for you are our help, and you neither slumber nor sleep; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sacred Reading:

Isaiah 9:1-7

Psalm 47

Pray:

For those who are experiencing financial hardship and loss of employment.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“The story that Christianity tells, of course, claims to give more than just a clue, in fact, to give no less than the very meaning of life itself and not just some lives but of all our lives... Where does the story of God and man begin...? Biblically speaking, you would have to say that it begins in Genesis...before the great ‘Let there be light’ of Creation...But that amounts to saying that it has no beginning in time at all...Yet it is also in time, the story of the love between God and man. There is a time when it begins, when it is coming but not yet here, and this is the time Mary was in when Gabriel came to her. It is Advent: the time just before the adventure begins, when everybody is leaning forward to hear what will happen even though they already know what will happen and what will not happen, when they listen hard for meaning, their meaning, and begin to hear, only faintly at first, the beating of unseen wings.” Fredrick Buechner, *The Magnificent Defeat*.)

☐ Day #4--Thursday, December 13th

Morning or Mid-Day Daily Office I

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Isaiah 30:15 “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength...”

Prayer:

Psalm 90:1-2, 4 “Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.”

Sacred Reading:

Isaiah 9:18-10:4

Psalm 50

Pray:

For an area or situation in your life where you tend to “hold back” from God. Is there a sin, an attitude where you refuse to repent and seek God’s transformation?

Affirmation/Reflection:

“Spiritual” is not just something we *ought* to be. It is something we *are* and cannot escape, regardless of how we may think or feel about it. It is our nature and our destiny.” (Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*.)

Conclude With Silence (2-3 Minutes)

Mid-Day or Evening Daily Office II

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 23:1a, 2b “The Lord is my shepherd...he leads me beside quiet waters.”

Prayer:

Psalm 25:1-3a, 4-5 “To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; in you I trust, O my God. Do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me. No one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame...Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.”

Sacred Reading:

Isaiah 9:18-10:4

Matthew 3:1-12

Pray:

For God to prepare the heart of someone in your life, that they may grow in faith and hope in Jesus.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“The expectation of Advent is anchored in the event of God’s incarnation. The more I come in touch with what happened in the past, the more I come in touch with what is to come. The Gospel not only reminds me of what took place but also of what will take place. In contemplation of Christ’s first coming, I can discover the signs of his second coming. By looking back in meditation, I can look forward in expectation. By reflection, I can project; by conserving the memory of Christ’s birth, I can progress to the fulfillment of his kingdom...I pray that Advent will offer me the opportunity to deepen my memory of God’s great deeds in time and will set me free to look forward with courage to the fulfillment of time by him who came and is still to come.” (Henri Nouwen, *The Genesee Diary*.)

Day #5-Friday, December 14th

Morning or Mid-Day Daily Office I

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Zephaniah 3:17 “The Lord God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.”

Prayer:

“Watch, Lord, with those who wake, or watch, or weep tonight; and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend your sick ones, O Lord Jesus Christ; rest your weary ones; bless your dying ones; soothe your suffering ones; pit your afflicted ones; shield your joyous ones; And all for your love’s sake. Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Amen.” (St. Augustine of Hippo.)

Sacred Reading:

Psalm 40

2 Peter 2:17-22

Pray:

For those who have lost loved ones recently and during the holidays in the past.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“The whole purpose for which we exist is to be thus taken into the life of God.” (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*.)

Mid-Day or Evening Daily Office II

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 123:1 “I lift up my eyes to you, to you whose throne is in Heaven.”

Prayer:

“The day is gone, its hours have run, and You have taken count of all the scanty triumphs grace has won; the broken vow, the frequent fall; through life’s long day and death’s dark night, be our light. In our midst, the lonely sit; we’re painfully aware of it. Let the Joyful song be lifted high, so we can find some peace of mind; through life’s long day and death’s dark night, be our light—Be our light.” (Jenny Moore, from the hymn by F.W. Faber.)

Sacred Reading:

Psalm 54

Matthew 11:2-15

Pray:

For the hungry; for those who suffer from unjust governments.

Affirmation/Reflection:

The stories of divine “Hiddenness” are present in many of the Biblical narratives. Moses was hidden away as a child; his deliverance is a favored story even today. When Moses grew, he asked to see God’s face, but the answer was that God would hide Moses in the cleft of a rock and cover him with his hand as his goodness passed by. So, too, Jesus was hidden away as a child, but he had come to reveal God. Jesus revealed God’s glory. And God’s desire that humankind stop hiding from God and receive God’s grace and love. Hiddenness in the Bible is reflective of both humankind’s shame and fear of God’s judgment, and God’s promise that He will go anywhere to get us; hiding in places where we least expect God—bread, wine, water, an infant in Bethlehem, and suspended upon a cross.

Day #6--Saturday, December 15th

Morning or Mid-Day Daily Office I

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 119:105 “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

Prayer:

Psalm 119:73, 76 “Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands. May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant.”

Sacred Reading:

Psalm 55

Pray:

Ask God to prepare the hearts of those who will be visiting Red Hill at one of our Christmas services.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“Instead of complaining that God had hidden himself, you will give him thanks for not having revealed so much of himself; and you will also give him thanks for not having revealed himself to haughty sages, unworthy to know so holy a God. Two kinds of persons know him: those who have a humble heart, and who love lowliness, whatever kind of intellect they may have, high or low; and those who have sufficient understanding to see the truth, whatever opposition they may have to it.” (Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, Section IV.)

Mid-Day or Evening Daily Office II

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 119:81 “My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in your word.”

Prayer:

Psalm 119:34-37, 41 “Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart. Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight. Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain. Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word. May your unfailing love come to me, O Lord, your salvation according to your promises...”

Sacred Reading:

Isaiah 10:20-27

Luke 3:1-9

Pray:

For those persecuted and imprisoned for the sake of the Gospel.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“Advent creates new men and women. Look up, you whose eyes are fixed on this earth, you who are captivated by the events and changes on the surface of this earth....Look up, your redemption is drawing near. Something different than you see daily, something more important, something infinitely greater and more powerful is taking place....God will come, Jesus will take possession of you and you will be redeemed people! Lift up your heads, you army of the afflicted, the humbled, the discouraged....The battle is not lost, the victory is yours—take courage, be strong! There is not room here for shaking your heads and doubting, because Christ is coming.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *A Testament to Freedom: The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*.)

**Sunday, December 16th
Advent Week 3**

Day #1--Monday, December 17th

Morning or Mid-Day Daily Office I

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 136:1 “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever.”

Prayer:

Psalm 136:2-5 “Give thanks to the God of gods, his love endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord of lords: His love endures forever. To him who alone does great wonders, his love endures forever. Who by his understanding made the heavens, His love endures forever.”

Sacred Reading:

John 1:1-13

Pray:

For someone, or some situation, you have heard or read about in the news.

Affirmation/Reflection:

Christmas is so naturally a time for children. The youngest children seem to grasp hold of Jesus as “The Baby Jesus,” Someone they can relate to as a child, just like them. We recall that knowing God requires “childlike faith,” but as adults we struggle so much to have it. Perhaps in the wonder that John’s prologue conveys, we can

find it again in a sense of awe at how impossible yet how certain is the miracle of birth, and the fulfillment of the hope that he will come to us...simply because he loves us. It isn't something we can fully reason, but as we accept it, the truth begins to unfold in our hearts.

Mid-Day or Evening Daily Office II

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 136:1 "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever."

Prayer:

Psalm 136:6-9 "(To God)... who spread out the earth upon the waters, His love endures forever. Who made the great lights, His love endures forever. The sun to govern the day, His love endures forever. The moon and stars to govern the night, His love endures forever."

Sacred Reading:

Isaiah 11:1-9

Psalm 61

Pray:

For our church musicians: Jason Harney, Marty Schaefer, Isaiah Coughran, Linda Brown and the Chancel Choir, as they prepare for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Affirmation/Reflection:

"Go forth...God's strength to guide you, his might to uphold you, his wisdom to guide you; God's eye to watch before you, his ear to hear you, his word to speak for you; God's hand to guard you, his way to lie before you, his shield to protect you; God's hosts top save you, From the snares of the devil, From every temptation, From every foe, Afar and near, alone or in a multitude, today and always." (Adapted from the *Lorica of St. Patrick*.)

☐ Day #2--Tuesday, December 18th

Morning or Mid-Day Daily Office I

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 27:1a "The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?"

Prayer:

"Lord, grant me peace when I worry about trying to shop and not having enough money to buy things we want for our friends and family. Grant me the peace to remember that the spirit of Christmas dwells in our homes and hearts and not in the mall. Grant me the peace to understand that the true gift of Christmas doesn't come from a store but comes from your son, the Prince of Peace. Amen."

Sacred Reading:

Isaiah 11:10-16

Psalm 66

Pray:

For God to prepare your heart and mind for worship tomorrow.

Affirmation/Reflection:

"This isn't the way I planned it, God. Not at all. My child being born in a stable? This isn't the way I thought it would be. A cave with sheep and donkeys, hay and straw? My wife giving birth with only the stars to hear her pain?...This doesn't seem right...No bed to rest her back. Her pillow is a blanket from my donkey. My house for her is a shed of hay and straw. The smell is bad, the animals are loud. Why, I even smell like a

shepherd myself. Did I miss something? Did I, God?" ("Joseph's Prayer," from Max Lucado, *Cast of Characters: Common People in the Hands of An Uncommon God.*)

Mid-Day or Evening Daily Office II

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 27:1b "The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?"

Prayer:

"To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul: in you I trust. Do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me. No one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame, but they will be put to shame who are treacherous without excuse. Remember, O Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old." (Psalm 25:1-2, 6.)

Sacred Reading:

Revelation 20:11-21:8

Pray:

For the Pastors, Ushers, Altar Guild, and all those who will be serving at one of the Christmas services tomorrow.

Affirmation/Reflection:

"God to enfold me; God to surround me; God in my speaking; God in my thinking; God in my sleeping; God in my waking; God in my watching, God in my hoping; God in my life; God in my lips; God in my soul; God in my heart; God in my suffering; God in my slumber; God in mine ever-living soul; God in my eternity." (Carmina Gadelica.)

□ Day #3--Wednesday, December 19th

Morning or Mid-Day Daily Office I

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 95:1 "Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation."

Prayer:

"Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my savior! For he took notice of his lowly servant, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me." (Adapted from the *Magnificat*, in Brother Maynard, *Praying Advent with The Gospel of John.*)

Sacred Reading:

Psalm 45 and 46

Pray:

Thank God for sending Jesus to this world to save and redeem this world.

Affirmation/Reflection:

"What child is this, who laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping? Whom Angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds watch are keeping? This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and Angels sing. Haste, haste to bring Him laud, the Babe, the Son of Mary." (Traditional Carol, *What Child is This?* ELW #296.)

Mid-Day or Evening Daily Office II

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 99:1a "The Lord reigns, let the nations tremble..."

Prayer:

“The day of joy returns, Father in Heaven, and crowns another year with peace and good will. Help us rightly to remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the songs of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and the worship of the wise men.” (Henry Van Dyke.)

Sacred Reading:

Psalm 89:1-29

Pray:

For the homeless and for all those separated from family this Christmas.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding? Good Christian, fear: for sinners here, the silent Word is pleading. This, this is Christ the King whom shepherds guard and Angels sing. Haste, haste to bring him laud, the Babe, the Son of Mary.” (Traditional Carol, *What Child is This?* ELW #296.)

☐ **Day #4--Thursday, December 20th**

Morning or Mid-Day Daily Office I

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

“Joy to the world, the Lord has come!”

Prayer:

“Close the doors of hate and open the doors of love all over the world... Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting. Deliver us from evil, by the blessing that Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clean hearts.” (Henry Van Dyke.)

Sacred Reading:

Psalm 2

Pray:

For those that must work today: police officers, fire fighters, and hospital workers.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“Nails, spear, shall pierce Him through, the Cross be borne, for me, for you: Hail, hail, the Word made flesh, the Babe, the Son of Mary! This, this is Christ the King whom shepherds guard and angels sing. Haste, haste to bring Him laud, the Babe, the Son of Mary. (Traditional Carol, *What Child is This?* ELW #296).

Mid-Day or Evening Daily Office II

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 97:1 “*The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice.*”

Prayer:

“May the Christmas morning make us happy to be thy children, and the Christmas evening bring us to our bed with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.”

Sacred Reading:

1 John 4:7-16

Pray:

For all retail workers during the Christmas “buying season.”

Affirmation/Reflection:

“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. (Traditional Carol, *What Child is This?* ELW #296).

☐ **Day #5-Friday, December 21st**

Morning or Mid-Day Daily Office I

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 98:1 “Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things...”

Prayer:

“For peace in our country, for the victims of violence everywhere, for those struggling for peace and justice, for churches in conflict situations, for a world without war and violence...” (World Prayer for Peace from the Vancouver Assembly of the World Council of Churches.)

Sacred Reading:

Psalm 28 and 30

Pray:

For world leaders and all those in authority in world governments.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“Raise, raise, the song on high, the Virgin sings her lullaby: Joy, joy for Christ is born, the Babe, the Son of Mary! This, this is Christ the King whom shepherds guard and angels sing. Haste, haste to bring him laud, the Babe, the Son of Mary.” (Traditional Carol, *What Child is This?* ELW #296.)

Mid-Day or Evening Daily Office II

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 98:4a “Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth...”

Prayer:

“Father, may the light of Jesus be the light that leads me home to you. I often feel as though I am in the dark, alone, lost. Yet, you have come to bring me into your presence and you will never let me go. My God, I offer to you this day. For all that has passed, for all that is yet to come: all of it is in your hands, Almighty God and Father. Amen.”

Sacred Reading:

John 1:3-13

Pray:

For those who have lost jobs.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“A light shone in the darkness, but the darkness cannot grasp it. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; He is the Bread of Life. Christ is the Resurrection and the Life; He is the Light of the world. We have beheld the glory of Jesus, the Christ, who is the only Way to the Father. He alone is the Gate and the True Vine, he is the Good Shepherd. Before time began, he was all this, and more.” (Brother Maynard, *Praying Advent with the Gospel of John*).

☐ **Day #6--Saturday, December 22nd**

Morning or Mid-Day Daily Office I

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 99:5 “Exalt the Lord our God and worship at his footstool...”

Prayer:

“Lead me from death to life, from falsehood to truth, lead me from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead me from hate to love, from war to peace, let peace fill our beings, our world and our universe.” (World Prayer for Peace from the Vancouver Assembly of the World Council of Churches.)

Sacred Reading:

John 13:20-35 / 1 John 5:1-12

Pray:

For those suffering from mental illnesses and their families.

Affirmation/Reflection:

Today is the “Feast of Saint John.” “John, the son of Zebedee, was a fisherman and one of the twelve. John, his brother James, and Peter were the three who witnessed the light of the Transfiguration. John and James once made known their desire to hold positions of power in the Kingdom of God. Jesus’ response showed them that service to others was the sign of God’s reign in the world. Tradition has attributed authorship of the gospel and the three epistles bearing his name to the apostle John. John is a saint for Christmas through his proclamation that the Word became flesh and lived among us, that the light of God shines in the darkness, and that we are called to love one another as Christ has loved us.” (“John, Apostle and Evangelist.” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *Sundays and Seasons, Year B.*)

Mid-Day or Evening Daily Office II

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 100:3a “Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his...”

Prayer:

“Lord, you have made me: all that I am. You have given me my temperament, my abilities, my drives and my passions. I ask that I may bring you glory in all that I do with the “me” that you have made. Help me to live, love, laugh, and learn in this life that you have given me, for the purpose of serving you more completely and loving you more fully. Amen.”

Sacred Reading:

Psalm 97 / Proverbs 8:22-30

Pray:

That God will prepare your heart for worship tomorrow.

Affirmation/Reflection:

“Knowing God’s heart means consistently, radically, and very concretely to announce and reveal that God is love and only love, and that every time fear, isolation, or despair begin to invade the human soul this is not something that comes from God...very few people know that they are loved without any conditions or limits. This unconditional and unlimited love is what the evangelist John calls God’s first love. ‘Let us love,’ he says, ‘because God loved us first’ (1 John 4:19). The love that often leaves us frustrated, angry, and resentful is the second love, that is to say, the affirmation, affection, sympathy, encouragement, and support that we receive from our parents, teachers, spouses, and friends...The radical good news is that the second love is only a broken reflection of the first love and that the first love is offered to us by a God in whom there are no shadows.” (Henri Nouwen, *Eternal Seasons.*)

Sunday, December 23rd
Advent Week 4

Silence (2-5 Minutes)

Psalm 107:8-9 “Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!
9 For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.”

Prayer:

“Saving God, who came to earth for us, we praise you for your everlasting love, your endless patience, and for the greatest gift you could possibly give to us, the possibility of Salvation through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.”

Sacred Reading:

Galatians 3:6-14

Pray:

For those traveling this Christmas season.

Affirmation/Reflection:

Shout for joy
The whole earth.
And everything within
Rejoice!
For Light has come into the world
The mountains sing
The seas resound
To the praise of your name
Salvation
Once promised is here on earth
The angels' song
Rings in the air
A child has been born
Hallelujah!
The Savior of the world is here...” (www.faithandworship.com/prayer_advent)

Monday, December 24th Christmas Eve:

“Born for You”

**3:00 and 5:00 pm, Live Nativity and Carols;
7:00 and 9:00 pm Traditional Candlelight and Carols.**

Tuesday, December 25th Christmas Day:

“The Eternal in Time”

10:00 a.m. with Holy Communion.

Sunday, December 30th. First Sunday in Christmas:

“The Father’s House”

8:30 and 10:00 am

*May you find the peace, joy, hope, and love that only Jesus can give! Merry Christmas from your family
at Red Hill Lutheran Church and School!*