Sunday Advent Guide

Christmas with
Faith Alliance Against Slavery and Trafficking



Compiled by FAAST

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A Human Trafficking Advent Guide

It may seem odd to have an Advent guide that focuses on human trafficking. Many times, when we focus on human trafficking, we focus on the horror and tragedy that the victims and survivors have suffered. And yes, those stories must be told. But we also need to look to after; after they have been removed from exploitation, and to the future they have. To the restoration many survivors find. To the hope, peace, joy, and love they find in Jesus Christ. To the power of redemption that those working with survivors see and experience. If we don't look for the positives, then it is easy to get discouraged and believe there is no way to end this tragedy. But we know this is wrong. We know there is hope through Jesus Christ, not just for us, but for every person. For the trafficked and for the trafficker. For the after-care worker and for the buyer. It is our prayer that in using this guide, you will find that hope, not just for you, but for all individuals.

This Advent guide will look at four topics: hope, peace, joy, and love. Each week has a Bible verse, suggested songs, and a prayer. In addition, each week has a story from either a trafficking survivor or an aftercare worker on how they have found/seen each theme in Jesus Christ.

Our Hope

FAAST hopes that this guide will bring you closer to Christ during this Advent season. We desire that you will have a better understanding of what Christ's birth meant for each one of us. We hope that you will find encouragement from the stories, that we can suffer through tragedy and hardship, but, through Jesus Christ, we can become stronger. We hope that you learn more about God's restoring work for each of us through survivors of trafficking. And we hope that this will serve as a start for discussion for your church and your family.

How to Use This Guide

Each week, there will be a different topic for study for each Sunday of Advent. For each Sunday, you will find a verse that highlights the theme for the week to be read, a story from a survivor of human trafficking or an aftercare worker, and suggested songs to be incorporated into your worship. We realize that each church uses different translations; we have used the NIV translation here. Please feel free to use whichever translation you or your church prefers. We have put the lyrics to the songs we are suggesting, as well as links to where you can access the instrumental accompaniment. Some of the songs we suggest are in the public domain, while others may not be. Please be cognizant of your church's worship rules and pay for any rights when required. While the daily Advent is typically only in December, the first Sunday of Advent for 2025 is 30 November. Please plan accordingly.

Included in this guide are stories from survivors and those working in the fight against human trafficking to help highlight each theme for the week. Our vision is that these stories would be read to the congregation, along with the prayer, or in your home, if you are using this individually. You can also print out the stories and place them in your bulletins. We are thankful for those who were willing to share their stories with us, and the world. We hope you find their



stories to be educational, moving, and enlightening. Know that some survivors have asked for their names to be changed for their protection, which we have done. These have been noted throughout the guide when done.



The Advent Candles

First Sunday of Advent/First Candle: Light of Hope

Introduction:

Hope is defined as "to cherish a desire with anticipation: to want something to happen or be true." We have all experienced hope at different times in our lives. It is vital to help us get through those difficult periods in our lives, knowing that there will be an end. The hope that Jesus provides for us, though, is a different hope, a more fulfilling hope. A hope that has us looking forward instead of to the past. In the Bible passage, we see the hope the coming Christ brings us. A future full of truth and grace. On those more difficult days, the knowledge that Jesus has granted us such grace gives us hope. It is the ultimate hope. Some days it may be harder to fight for this hope than others, but as our story of hope reminds us, we need to fight for that hope when others cannot do it themselves.

Bible Passage:

Isaiah 11:1-10 - "Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge, and the fear of the Lord. And He will delight in the fear of the Lord, and He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear; But with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; and He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. Also, righteousness will be the belt about His loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist. And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. Also, the cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious."

Connecting the Verses to Human Trafficking:

The leader described by Isaiah is one that we all hope for. He is one who will not just judge based on what he sees or hears, but by the truth of the situation for all people with righteousness and faithfulness. How will he do that? Because the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him. Through this, He will have discernment thanks to the spirit of wisdom and understanding that will guide HIm. He will have the spirit of counsel and strength to attend Him. He will have the spirit of knowledge, and most importantly, He will have the fear of the Lord. Those who have been wronged need not fear, but those who have harmed others should. They will not be saved because they have money or they can speak elegantly. No, this Branch will see through everything to the truth of the situation. It is with righteousness and fairness that He will care for the poor and afflicted. Who are the poor and the afflicted? The poor are those who have less



economically. The afflicted is anyone who suffers from physical or mental pain. This includes those who have suffered trauma, including those who have been victims of human trafficking. This Branch will bring us a just society where those who believe in Him, even those who have endured much on this earth, will find justice, healing, and restoration. The end of the passage shows us what it will be like when His reign comes, and how the church will look. Predator and prey will be no more, and all will worship together in harmony.

Story of Hope from a Person Vulnerable to Trafficking:

We are thankful to The Salvation Army World Service Office (SAWSO) for sharing this story of hope with us. You can learn more about SAWSO and its anti-trafficking work on its <u>website</u>.

At 14, Amy* was trafficked from the United States into Mexico. Over the next five years, she endured violence, isolation, and the erasure of her identity. Her documentation was destroyed, and she was kept under tight control by a trafficker who was both manipulative and dangerous. At 19, desperate for a way out, Amy found a brief moment to reach out to her mother.

Her mother, overwhelmed but determined, turned to The Salvation Army's Santa Clarita Corps in Southern California. What followed was a quiet, coordinated effort involving Salvation Army staff in the U.S. and Mexico, the U.S. Embassy, and anti-trafficking specialists. Despite the risks and limited communication, a plan was developed to meet Amy discreetly and bring her to safety.

Amy's mother flew to Mexico, and with temporary travel documents secured, the two were reunited and returned to Los Angeles. Amy was welcomed into a confidential Safe House operated by The Salvation Army's Orange County Anti-Trafficking Services. Today, she is safe, supported, and making progress on her own terms.

Suggested Songs:

Come Thou Long Expected Jesus – Charles Wesley, Mark E. Hunt

1: Come, thou long-expected Jesus, Born to set thy people free; From our fears and sins release us; Let us find our rest in thee. Israel's strength and consolation, Hope of all the earth thou art; Dear Desire of ev'ry nation, Joy of every longing heart.

2: Joy to those who long to see thee, Dayspring from on high, appear; come, thou promised Rod of Jesse, of thy birth we long to hear! O'er the hills the angels singing news, glad tidings of a birth: "Go to him, your praises bringing; Christ the Lord has come to earth."

3: Come to earth to taste our sadness, he whose glories knew no end; by his life he brings us gladness, our redeemer, Shepherd, Friend, Leaving riches without number, born within a cattle stall; this the everlasting wonder, Christ was born the Lord of all.

4: Born thy people to deliver, Born a child, and yet a King, Born to reign in us for ever,



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.

<u>O Holy Night</u> – Placide Cappeau

1: 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!

Chorus: Fall on your knees
Oh hear the angel voices
Oh night divine
Oh night when Christ was born
Oh night divine
Oh night divine

2: Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming Here come the wise men from Orient land The King of Kings lay thus in lowly manger In all our trials born to be our friend

3: Truly He taught us to love one another His law is love and His gospel is peace Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother

And in His name all oppression shall cease Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,

Let all within us praise His holy name

<u>In Christ Alone</u> - Keith Getty and Stuart Townend

In Christ alone my hope is found, He is my light, my strength, my song; This Cornerstone, this solid ground, Firm through the fiercest drought and storm

What heights of love, what depths of peace, When fears are stilled, when strivings Cease!

My Comforter, my All in All, Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand:
Till He returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand



When Hope Came Down - Kari Jobe

So this is how it was
A silent night like any other,
When heaven sent the one,
The one we will call our savior,
And redemption begins,
In a stable in Bethlehem,

(Chorus)

All of the angels lift up their voices,
And filled the night with Hallelujah's,
God is with us now,
Everyone come and join the heavenly
chorus,
Our savior King is here before us,
All to hear the sound
the song creation sang,
When Hope Came Down,

So this was truly God,
Wrapped in a tattered blanket,
Love was finally here,
Sleeping while the world awakened,
And redemption begins,
With a baby in Bethlehem,

(Chorus)

All of the angels lifted up their voices And filled the night with Hallelujahs, God is with us now, everyone come and join the heavenly

chorus

Our Savior King is here before us, All to hear the sound The song creation sang When Hope Came Down,

So let us sing Redemption Song, Let us worship Christ the Holy one, We were lost, but we were found, When Hope Came Down, When Hope Came Down.

(Chorus)

All of the angels lifted up their voices,
And filled the night with Hallelujah's,
God is with us now,
Everyone come and join the heavenly
chorus,
Our savior King is here before us,
All to hear the sound
The song creation sang
When Hope Came Down,

When Hope Came Down, Oooo When Hope Came, When Hope Came Down.

Suggested Prayer:

Gracious Father, all hope springs from you. You proclaimed hope when Man first sinned. You gave hope to Noah and his family when destruction came. It was for your hope that Abraham left the land of his fathers and journeyed to a better land. Your hope brought Rebekkah to Isaac and delivered Joseph to an exalted place.

Eternal Word of God, all hope springs from you. You walked with Abraham, are the source of and answer to the Law, and came to the prophets. Indeed all scripture proclaims your coming. You are good news for the poor, you release the captives, provide sight to the blind, and free the oppressed. Your death, resurrection, ascension, and return give hope to all humankind.



Glorious Spirit, all hope springs from you. You rested on the prophets, functioned as a stronghold for David, and an agent of restoration and renewal for an exiled people. Your very fruit is hope. You groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons and daughters, the redemption of our bodies. Without your work, we have no hope because we could not find Truth.

Lord God, thank you for being the source of hope, and we pray that you give hope to trafficking survivors; that they see you, feel your presence, and understand how true and great hope in You is and can be. Amen.



Second Candle/Sunday of Advent – Light of Peace

Introduction:

When a person, or even an entire community, faces vulnerabilities and inequalities that make them susceptible to human trafficking, it is hard to feel at peace. Socioeconomic and language disparities make exploitation easier to happen, as well as keep them isolated from any reporting and response systems. However, as our story of peace shows this week, when people and organizations find ways to address these disparities and vulnerabilities, individuals and communities can begin to find peace and safety, instead of fear. Then there will come a day, as Isaiah foretold, when all peoples, no matter their socioeconomic or language disparities, will stream to the house of God. There they will find peace and security, for he will judge righteously and justly, and provide for His people. While God's peace will be complete, we can help usher in His peace by helping to work to remove vulnerabilities, like socioeconomic and language disparities, from a community or a person's life, to help make them less likely to be a victim of human trafficking.

Bible Passage:

Isaiah 2:1-5 - "The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in HIs paths." For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war. Come, house of Jacob, and let us walk in the light of the Lord."

Connecting the Verses to Human Trafficking:

Isaiah offers an invitation to the people of Israel to go to God, learn his ways, walk in His paths, and in HIs light. When we learn His ways and walk in His path, we truly understand HIs law, which ensures His justice. We understand that His justice is not just deciding between good and bad, but God's justice is a restoration to the right order. A place where peace will reign, and the tools that were once used to harm others will no longer be needed and will be abolished. Instead, these tools will be transformed to help provide for the people. Nations and people will not need to fear oppression and harm. Those who suffer from hunger and are therefore vulnerable to human trafficking will find that vulnerability taken away. Those who fear being hurt or harmed by others will no longer suffer. While we still await the complete fulfillment of peace and shalom that is spoken of here, Isaiah tells the people that we help usher in and are advocates for this peace when we walk in God's ways, path, and light. Let us all accept this invitation given by Isaiah.



Story of Peace from a Person Working with Community Awareness:

We are thankful to our Affiliate Partner, SIL Global, for sharing this story of peace with us. You can learn more about SIL and its anti-trafficking work on its <u>website</u>.

Community programs raise awareness around human trafficking risks in South Asia.

What would you do if someone you love suddenly disappeared without a word? An enticing job opportunity or relationship promised better opportunities nearby, but no one has heard from them since. Where do you turn for help? Contacting the local authorities is difficult; the language barrier makes it hard to communicate, and social prejudice raises a high risk of being dismissed or humiliated. It seems that very little can be done but to wait and hope.

This is a terrible reality for many communities worldwide who are disproportionately targeted by human traffickers. Language and socioeconomic disparities leave them more vulnerable to exploitation, and these same factors isolate them from systems of reporting and response. Rural communities in South Asia are one such hotbed of trafficking activity, where low daily wages, social media lures, and limited information in local languages leave thousands of people at greater risk.

Beginning in March 2024, SIL worked closely alongside a local partner in this region to organize a series of interactive activities in local tea gardens. Using three widely spoken community languages, these day camps connected people to trafficking prevention information in a way they could easily understand. Workshops, short films, songs, and dances in these three local languages all played a part in presenting this key information in a deeply relatable and culturally appropriate way. This approach helped participants connect with the material emotionally and practically, which in turn ensured better levels of engagement and retention. One community member confirmed the significant impact this made, saying, "The way you conducted the program made it easy for us to understand. Thank you for teaching us—we will stay vigilant and cautious."

As trusted leaders in the community, local pastors helped encourage people to attend and become better informed on this topic. A member of a local NGO also shared real-world examples of the different ways people are trafficked and simple steps individuals can take to protect themselves. Armed with this new information, one person stated, "I am truly grateful for this program and the information shared today. It has opened our eyes to the dangers of human trafficking and given us the knowledge we need to protect our community. Thank you for bringing this to us."

As of February 2025, more than 500 adults and 150 children have participated in these awareness-raising campaigns. As part of SIL's Anti Human Trafficking Initiative, plans exist to expand similar camps to more areas and incorporate more material in local languages. Developing ways to support rescue efforts is also underway.



Another pragmatic step includes designating a community security person to liaise with local authorities and encourage timely reporting and diligent follow-up action. Language and social barriers frequently interfere with people's ability to communicate their concerns clearly or to have those concerns taken seriously. For this reason, appointing a respected community leader to the role of security liaison would provide people in rural areas with greater opportunity to report their concerns and apply for proper recourse.

Songs:

Comfort, Comfort Ye My People - Johannes Olearius

1: Comfort, comfort ye My people, Speak of peace, now says our God; Comfort those who sit in darkness, Mourning under sorrow's load; Cry unto Jerusalem Of the peace that waits for them; Tell her that her sins I cover, And her warfare now is over.

2: For the herald's voice is crying In the desert far and near, Calling all to true repentance, Since the kingdom now is here. O that warning cry obey!

Now prepare for God a way! Let the valleys rise to meet Him, And the hills bow down to greet Him.

3: Now make straight what long was crooked,
Make the rougher places plain:
Let your hearts be true and humble,
As befits His holy reign,
For the glory of the Lord
Spreads through all the earth abroad,
And all flesh shall see the token
That His Word is never broken

Glory (Let There be Peace) - Matt Maher

(Verse 1)
One star burns in the darkness

Shines with a promise

Emmanuel

One child born in the stillness

Living within us Emmanuel (Verse 2)

One voice speaks for the voiceless

Hope for the hopeless

Emmanuel

One love brings us together

Now and forever Emmanuel

(Chorus)

We're singing glory, glory
Let there be peace
Let there be peace
We're singing glory, glory
Let there be peace
Let it start in me

(Bridge)

Do not be afraid His love is strong Enough to save us

Nothing stands in the way

His love is strong Enough to lead us



It Came Upon a Midnight Clear - Edmund H. Sears

1: It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, good will to men, from heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.

2: Still through the cloven skies they come with peaceful wings unfurled, and still their heavenly music floats o'er all the weary world; above its sad and lowly plains, they bend on hovering wing, and ever o'er its Babel sounds the blessed angels sing.

Peace Has Come - Hillsong Worship
Behold the star of Bethlehem
The word of God has become flesh
Unto us a child is born
The savior of this broken world

Oh, hear the angel voices
Sing come let us adore him
Peace has come
For our king is with us

Fully God and fully man
He comes for all with open hands
He rules with love on David's throne
All praise belongs to Christ alone

Oh, hear the angel voices
Sing come let us adore him
Peace has come
For our king is with us

Holy, holy, holy Jesus we adore thee 3: And ye, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low, who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow, look now! for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing.

O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing!

4: For lo! the days are hastening on, by prophet seen of old, when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling, and the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing

Peace has come For our king is with us

Oh, come let us adore him Oh, come let us adore him Oh, come let us adore him Christ the Lord

Oh, come let us adore him Oh, come let us adore him Oh, come let us adore him Christ the Lord

Oh, hear the angel voices Sing come let us adore him Peace has come Sing come let us adore him

Peace has come
For our king is with us
Peace has come
Four our king is with us



Suggested Prayer:

Heavenly Father, you are the source of peace. Your peace was a reality when you created the universe and pronounced it good. Your peace was in the Garden of Eden when you created men and women in your image and you pronounced us to be very good. We broke that peace with the first sin and continue to break that peace daily with our thoughts, attitudes, actions, and inaction. We were and still remain slaves to sin, owing a debt we could not pay.

Conquering Son, you are the source of peace. You are the Prince of Peace. When we broke the peace, you came to earth to bring peace. You paid the price, freeing us from slavery, back into a peaceful relationship with You. Our peace is restored because of your advocacy before the throne of God as we enter your household, not as slaves but by heirs.

Wonderful Spirit, you are the source of peace. You bring us to peace by drawing us to God. You show us peace in times of trouble and sustain our freedom from sin. You lavish peace on us by building the Church. You produce peace in the Church through your counsel. Any peace in our lives exists because of you.

Lord God, we thank you for being the source of peace. We pray that you bring peace to trafficking survivors and traffickers alike. We pray that they find not only peace in their earthly lives, but also find peace with You, that we might live forever in abiding peace together.

Amen



Third Candle/Sunday of Advent - Light of Joy

Introduction:

One may think that happiness and joy are similar things, as they are synonyms. Happiness, however, is a reaction to external circumstances and is often temporary. Joy, or at least Biblical joy, is internal and something that can be cultivated. One's joy grows as their contentment and relationship with God grow. It can have an outward manifestation, as we see in the Bible passage, because God's joy will radiate from a people. It is contagious to others, as they too, cultivate God's joy and experience his goodness and redemption. We also see this in our story from a survivor, that as the entire family experienced God's healing and restoration, they were able to express their joy that they didn't have before.

Bible Passage:

Isaiah 52:7-9 - "How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings happiness, who announces salvation, and says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!' Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices, they shout joyfully together; for they will see with their own eyes when the Lord restores Zion. Break forth, shout joyfully together, you waste places of Jerusalem; For the Lord has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem."

Connecting the Verses to Human Trafficking:

The temple was believed by the Jews to be where God resided. Once the temple, as well as Jerusalem, were destroyed, it was believed that God had abandoned them. But He had not. He was with them in their exile, and there would come a day when, just as He rescued His people from slavery in Egypt, they would be freed from exile in Assyria. His messengers would bring the good news that God still reigns. With His reign comes salvation and peace. This news will be shouted joyfully for all to hear from the mountaintops, and the watchmen will be joyous when they hear the news. The waste places will shout joyfully together, for they will have redemption and comfort. The waste places are not just speaking about those who are still living in a ruined and destroyed city, but it is speaking about those who are now considered unclean and in need of purification. They will shout in joy together because they will find salvation, purification, redemption, and comfort in God's reign. If we were to go back to verse six, though, we see the phrase "in that day." The amazing thing about that phrase is that when it is used, it does not mean just for the people who were originally being addressed. The phrase actually has a timelessness to it, meaning it can and should be applied to each day: past, present, and future. Therefore, when David joyfully danced before the Ark of the Covenant, bringing it into the city of Jerusalem was that day. John leapt in joy when the Messiah was near; that was that day. It is today, when someone finds salvation in Jesus, whether they be enslaved, a victim of trafficking, or a trafficker. When we find Jesus, we, too, should be like the messengers announcing with joy the peace, salvation, comfort, and redemption we find in Him.



Story of Joy of a Survivor of Human Trafficking:

We are thankful to Mariel Aira Mateo of World Hope International for sharing this story of joy with us. If you want to learn more about World Hope International and its work bringing hope in hard places, such as addressing human trafficking, visit www.worldhope.org.

Healing isn't linear. It doesn't happen overnight. But when surrounded by care, trust, and practical support, it can transform lives. That's exactly what happened for Althea (not her real name), a survivor of Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) in the Philippines.

After enduring unimaginable trauma, Althea was safely reintegrated with her family through the support of World Hope International (WHI) Philippines. From that point on, her WHI social worker walked alongside her family, every step of the way.

Althea became part of WHI's HILOM ("healing") sessions—trauma-informed healing workshops designed for survivors like her. Over time, she began to speak more freely and smile more often. Each session gently opened a door to healing, and her progress even showed measurable improvement through trauma assessments.

But healing isn't just personal—it's communal.

In 2023 and 2024, Althea and her family participated in special bonding events, including family strengthening activities designed to restore trust and connection. For a family shaken by trauma, these moments brought laughter, togetherness, and healing.

Simple gestures brought additional comfort. During the 2024 Christmas season, Althea's family received groceries and new sandals—humble gifts that offered warmth and dignity. When Typhoon Kristine struck later that year, WHI provided emergency relief, ensuring they didn't feel abandoned in the storm's aftermath.

As part of the family's reintegration plan, WHI also supported Althea's mother with a livelihood grant. With this, she started a small business offering printing and ID card laminating services—empowering her to contribute financially and regain confidence in providing for her family, while also keeping Althea safe from future harm.

Together, they've turned a painful past into a hopeful future.

Today, Althea's story is one of strength, not just survival. Her family is no longer defined by trauma but by resilience, connection, and hope. This transformation is a powerful reminder of what trauma-informed care and compassionate community support can achieve.

Seeing that happen, brings joy not just for the survivor, but for those helping offer support, as well as those hearing about it!



Songs:

Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee - Ludwig van Beethoven

1: Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee, God of glory, Lord of love; Hearts unfold like flow'rs before Thee, Op'ning to the sun above. Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; Drive the dark of doubt away; Giver of immortal gladness, Fill us with the light of day!

2: All Thy works with joy surround Thee,
Earth and heav'n reflect Thy rays,
Stars and angels sing around Thee,
Center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
Flow'ry meadow, flashing sea,
Singing bird and flowing fountain
Call us to rejoice in Thee.

3: Thou art giving and forgiving, Ever blessing, ever blest, Wellspring of the joy of living, Ocean depth of happy rest! Thou our Father, Christ our Brother, All who live in love are Thine; Teach us how to love each other, Lift us to the joy divine.

Mortals, join the happy chorus, Which the morning stars began; Father love is reigning o'er us, Brother love binds man to man. Ever singing, march we onward, Victors in the midst of strife, Joyful music leads us Sunward In the triumph song of life

Joy Has Dawned – Keith Getty and Stuart Townend

Joy has dawned upon the world, Promised from creation:
God's salvation now unfurled, Hope for every nation.
Not with fanfares from above, Not with scenes of glory.
But a humble gift of love:
Jesus born of Mary.

Sounds of wonder fill the sky
With the songs of angels,
As the mighty Prince of Life
Shelters in a stable.
Hands that set each star in place,
Shaped the earth in darkness,
Cling now to a mother's breast,
Vulnerable and helpless.

Shepherds bow before the Lamb,
Gazing at the glory;
Gifts of men from distant lands
Prophesy the story.
Gold, a King is born today,
Incense, God is with us,
Myrrh, His death will make a way,
And by His blood He'll win us.

Son of Adam, Son of heaven, Given as a ransom, Reconciling God and Man, Christ our mighty Champion. What a Savior, what a friend, What a glorious mystery: Once a babe in Bethlehem, Now the Lord of history



Hark the Herald Angels Sing - Public Domain

Hark the herald angels sing "Glory to the new born King Peace on earth and mercy mild God and sinners reconciled" Joyful all ye nations, rise join the triumph of the skies With angelic host proclaim "Christ is born in Bethlehem" Hark the herald angels sing "Glory to the new born King"

Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ the everlasting Lord; Late in time behold him come, Offspring of the virgin's womb. Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see; hail the incarnate Di-e-ty Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel Hark the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King"

Hail! The heaven-born Prince of Peace. Hail the son of Righteousness Light and life to all He brings, risen with the 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 new born King"

Highest Hallelujah - Passion

Jesus Christ, from Heaven down to earth Our salvation through the virgin birth King of glory held within his mother's arms Grace appear, hope for every heart

Holy, Holy

"come let us adore Him" as the angels sing Glory, glory

The highest hallelujah to the newborn king The highest hallelujah to the newborn king

Humble Savior from manger to the cross Our redeemer forever God with us Gift of mercy, Jesus our Immanuel Peace surrounding, love is here to dwell

Holy, holy

"Come let us adore Him" as the angels sing Glory, glory

The highest hallelujah to the newborn king The highest hallelujah to the newborn king Oh come ye faithful you joyful triumphant Oh come with your whole heart and let us adore Him

Oh come behold Him in wonder, in worship Oh come with your whole heart and let us adore Him

Oh sing choirs of angels, in great exultation
Oh come with your whole heart and let us
adore Him

Sing holy, holy

Come let us adore Him as the angels sing Glory, glory

Sing your highest hallelujah to the newborn king

Sing your highest hallelujah to the newborn king

The highest hallelujah to the newborn king



Suggested Prayer:

Exalted Father, you are the source of joy. You are King and robed in majesty. All joy flows from you. Out of your unending joy you created us and we are created to enjoy you forever. We instead continue to make a vain attempt to find joy from other things that are not the source of joy. We were slaves to our vanity and sin, but you did not forget, nor abandon us.

Unending Son, you are the source of joy. While we were still slaves to sin, you died for us. You came to earth that we might have life and have it more abundantly. John the Baptist leapt for joy in his mother's womb at your approach. Your resurrection brings joy to all who believe. Your joy drove the apostles to share the Good News to all nations.

Magnificent Spirit, you are the source of joy. One of your fruits is joy. We know that the Kingdom of God does not consist of food and drink, but rightness, peace, and joy in your teaching and statutes that bring joy to the faithful. Your rivers of life bring joy to the city of God and in joy, you bring forth life from virgins and barren wombs.

Lord God, you are the source of joy; please bring joy to the lives of survivors of trafficking and those fighting it.

Amen



Fourth Sunday/Candle of Advent: Light of Love

Introduction:

God is love. To know Him is to know true love. He shows his love for us in so many ways. The biggest way He showed His love for us is by sending His Son, born of a virgin, to be our Savior and redeemer. When we are in fearful situations, we can rely on his faithfulness. Our story below shows us that even in the hardest of circumstances, even if we don't necessarily feel it at all times, God loves us, and He is Immanuel, always with us.

Bible Passage:

Isaiah 7:10-15 - "Then the Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying, 'Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven.' But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!" Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign; Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good."

Connecting the Verses to Human Trafficking:

Ahaz sounds very devout, doesn't he? His country is being attacked on three sides, He is told that he can ask for any sign from God to understand that he doesn't have to rely on foreign powers to survive the attacking forces. He responds by saying he will not ask or test the Lord. Yet, in doing this, he is showing that he is not trusting God, and so God will give him the very thing he refuses to ask for, a sign. A virgin will give birth and name Him Immanuel. As we know from Matthew, Immanuel means God with us, and this was fulfilled when Jesus was born to Mary. He was divinity with us on earth, our savior, and the embodiment of God's love for us. How often, though, are we like Ahaz, facing our own dire circumstances? A person trapped in domestic servitude. Suffering in a marriage with financial, emotional, or physical abuse. Wondering if our job is going to be eliminated. Trusting in God can be difficult when we do not understand how we can get out of the place we are currently in. Yet, Isaiah tells us that we can, and must, trust in God's unfailing love. It is what gives us the confidence to know He will save us from dire situations and our sins. He fulfills his promises, and He is bigger than any opposition we face. So when we are called to trust in God, unlike Ahaz's response, we can rely on God's love for us to save us.

Story of Love from a Survivor of Trafficking:

We are thankful for Project Rescue sharing this story of love with us. If you would like to learn more about the work Project Rescue does and its fight against human trafficking, visit www.projectrescue.com.

Nina was trafficked and forced into a life of exploitation, with her young son held captive in a nearby apartment. The traffickers used her son's safety as leverage, forcing her to work day and night under constant threat.



Nina's heart ached as she was only allowed to see him for a few hours each week, and those moments, though precious, were overshadowed by fear and sadness.

On her son's birthday, she was granted a brief visit. Determined to make it special, despite her circumstances, Nina saved enough money to buy a small cupcake. She took her son to a nearby park, singing him the birthday song and giving him the only gift she could - a loving hug.

It was a bittersweet moment, as she cherished the little time they had together before being forced to return to a life in captivity.

But God's provision and love were at work in Nina's life, even when she couldn't see it. In a miraculous turn of events, she and her son escaped and received care at a safe home where they could finally be together.

No longer under the control of their captors, they experienced the peace and protection that had been missing for so long. For Nina, it was a powerful reminder of God's love, watching over her and her son, even in the darkest times.

On her son's next birthday, the safe home organized a joyous celebration. The house was filled with laughter, as they brought a big cake and presents, and even invited his teachers and classmates.

It was a day filled with love and happiness - everything Nina had once dreamed of but never believed possible.

Nina expressed her deep gratitude, saying it was the best birthday party she could have ever imagined. She felt overwhelmed by the kindness and support they received, knowing it was a reflection of God's love and provision.

Now with her son safe by her side, Nina is filled with hope, trusting in God's plan for their future and the continued safety he provides.

Please pray that Nina and her son continue to find healing and hope in God.

Songs:

Away in a Manger – Public Domain Away in a manger No crib for a bed The little Lord Jesus Laid down His sweet head

The stars in the bright sky Looked down where He lay The little Lord Jesus Asleep on the hay



The cattle are lowing The Baby awakes But little Lord Jesus No crying He makes

I love You, Lord Jesus Look down from the sky And stay by my side Until morning is nigh Be near me, Lord Jesus I ask You to stay Close by me forever And love me I pray

Bless all the dear children In Your tender care And fit us for heaven To live with You there

<u>Silent Night</u> – Public Domain

Verse 1

Silent night! Holy night! All is calm all is bright Round you virgin mother and child Holy infant so tender and mild Sleep in heavenly peace! Sleep in heavenly peace!

Verse 2

Silent night! Holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight Glories stream from heaven afar Heavenly hosts sing Hallelujah Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born!

Verse 3

Silent night! Holy night! Son of God love's pure light Radiant beams from Thy holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace Jesus Lord at Thy birth! Jesus Lord at Thy birth!

Love Comes Down - Matt Maher

I'm searching for a King and kingdom Here among the beggars and the weak The broken and redeemed

I'm finding grace beyond all measure In flesh and blood He hides His majesty Inside of you and me

Why would a King do such a thing? Isn't it beautiful? Isn't it marvelous?

The God of the universe, He became one of us

We cry out and then love comes down again

Faith is found in Him, hallelujah

Oh, glorious beyond all measure Bending low to wash His traitor's feet People just like me

Why would a King do such a thing? Isn't it beautiful? Isn't it marvelous?

The God of the universe, He became one of

We cry out and then love comes down again Hope is found in Him, hallelujah Hallelujah, hallelujah



Isn't it beautiful?

La la la la

Isn't it marvelous?

Hallelujah, so we're singing La la la la

Of the Father's Love Begotten - Aurelius Clemens Prudentius

Of the Father's love begotten,
Ere the worlds began to be,
He is Alpha and Omega;
He the source, the ending He,
Of the things that are, that have been,
And that future years shall see
Evermore and evermore!

O ye heights of heav'n, adore Him,
Angel hosts, His praises sing,
Pow'rs, dominions, bow before Him,
And extol our God and King;
Let no tongue on earth be silent,
Ev'ery voice in concert ring,
Evermore and evermore!

O that birth forever blessed,
When a virgin, full of grace,
By the Holy Ghost conceiving,
Bore the Savior of our race;
And the Babe, the world's Redeemer,
First revealed his sacred face,
Evermore and evermore!

Christ, to Thee with God the Father,
And, O Holy Ghost, to Thee,
Hymn and chant and high thanksgiving
And unwearied praises be:
Honor, glory, and dominion,
And eternal victory,
Evermore and evermore

Suggested Prayer:

Loving Father, your eternal love for the Son and the Spirit extends beyond time itself. You showed love to us before we first loved you. You showed love to Adam and Eve in the garden, but they spurned that love. You showed love to Israel in bringing them to the promised land, but they rejected you, instead offering their worship to the hollow love of other gods. We continued in Israel's unfaithfulness seeking entertainment, wealth, and worldly pleasures, but you still love us.

Humble Son, you loved us beyond measure. You chose frail humanity as a vessel to contain the uncontainable. Your love was seen by all in your incarnation, teaching, and healing as you dwelt



amongst us. None of these acts of love compares to your sacrifice on the cross. Because of your death and resurrection, we can be reconciled to God. Your love continues to manifest itself in our justification, sanctification, and eventual glorification.

Wonderful Spirit, you are a daily manifestation of love in our lives. Your common grace enables every act of love we witness in the world today. You enable the Church to love and without love we are nothing. You empower us to love not only our friends and families but also our enemies.

Lord God, you are love. Please help us to love trafficking survivors and traffickers alike.

Amen.



The Final Candle/Christmas day

Introduction:

We have reached the final day of Advent; the reason we have ultimate hope, peace, joy, and love. Because God sent His son to this earth to live among us, as we see in our Scripture today, it means that one day we can fully enjoy His hope, peace, joy, and love. This world can be daunting, but we can face everything because of Jesus Christ. Looking back over the four weeks of Advent, we take encouragement and confidence from those who were not just victims of human trafficking, but through the love, hope, peace, and joy of Jesus Christ, are survivors. They have found restoration on earth, but will find total freedom in heaven, as we hope you will too.

Bible Passage:

Isaiah 9:1-7 - "But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them. You shall multiply the nation, you shall increase their gladness; they will be glad in your presence as with the gladness of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For you shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian. For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult, and cloak filled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire. For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this."

Connecting the Verses to Human Trafficking:

Today, we celebrate Advent, the arrival of Christ. Isaiah tells us that He is our hope, joy, love, and peace. He is our hope as our Wonderful Counselor. As our Wonderful counselor, He provides hope in his guidance, advice, wisdom, and comfort. Those who were in gloom and anguish have hope that they will be restored, taken out of the darkness and into the light, the comfort of our Wonderful Counselor. He is our joy as our Mighty God. We rejoice that it is his strength that protects us. It is his might that breaks the rod of oppression, freeing us from those who want to oppress and harm us. Most importantly, it is his might that the power of sin has been destroyed. He is love as our Eternal Father. As His sons and daughters, his love is eternal and displayed as He provides, protects, cares, protects, and disciplines us. He ensures we have what we need, and we know that we can trust in Him to provide for and take care of us. He is our peace as our Prince of Peace. His rule ensures peace. Not just a peace that means no more wars or fighting, but a peace that establishes true justice and righteousness. A peace that gives each person, no matter what their experience, true shalom. All of this is possible, did and will happen, because of God, the Lord of hosts, zeal for His people, for us.



From One Working in the Anti-Trafficking Movement:

Written by Kelly Leary, FAAST Coordinator. To learn more about the work FAAST does, visit our website at www.faastinternational.org.

Merry Christmas. This is the day that the entire Advent season has been leading to. Today, we celebrate His birth and the beginning of His life on earth. His coming to earth fulfilled the prophecies (including Isaiah's prophecy in today's passage), and we long for the day when we will see the complete fulfillment. It is through His coming to earth that we can have hope, joy, peace, and love in a way that we could never experience without Him. When we are in the midst of trials and tribulations, it can be difficult to remember that it is through Him that we can find these things. But as we have seen over the past four weeks, if trafficking survivors can find hope, peace, joy, and love in Jesus Christ, we can as well.

The birth of Jesus brings us hope. We should find hope in the prophecies that were fulfilled with His coming. Prophecies throughout the Old Testament and prophecies given to Mary, Zechariah, the shepherds, and the Magi in the New Testament. They all found hope in Jesus. And we should, too. Hope that we are not alone and that God is always with us. Hope that all of our sins will be forgiven and we will one day experience full restoration: physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Only Jesus can provide us with this hope. It is this hope that allows a person who is suffering violence, abuse, and manipulation to reach out for help and be rescued. Jesus can provide ways out of situations that are harmful to us, and promises to never leave us. We can be secure in our hope in Jesus that He can rescue us, but also restore and heal us from any pain and suffering we have experienced. He is our hope.

The birth of Jesus brings us peace. But this is not just any peace or contentment. This is a peace that, as Philippians 4:7 says, "surpasses all understanding" and "will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." This peace allows us to not only forgive others for sins committed against us but also allows us to forgive ourselves when we sin. It is a peace that allows us to face turmoil and temptation with the knowledge that Jesus Christ can help us resist. It is a peace that allows us to know that God has a plan for our lives, even if we don't understand what it may be, and if we trust Him, He will guide us. This peace gives us contentment in our souls that allows us to overcome any and all obstacles.

Only Jesus can provide this peace. It is through Jesus that communities that are targeted because of their socioeconomic status and language minority disparities can find peace in His care and protection of His people. He will provide ways and caring people who will come and help educate them, so their vulnerability to trafficking is reduced. He is our peace.

The birth of Christ brings us joy. Only God's good news is capable of providing true joy to a person. The good news is He reigns and He gives us salvation. As we grow closer to Him, as our relationship deepens, and we understand true contentment in God, our joy grows. As our joy



grows, it reflects out of us for others to see, and we pray that they want to experience this joy as well.

Only Jesus can provide this joy. It is through Jesus that those who have been abused and sexually exploited by members of their own family can be joyful at reuniting with their non-perpetrating family members. It is through Jesus that they can experience the joy of being home again and find healing and restoration. And one day, thanks to Jesus, we will all be joyful to be in our true home with him. He is our joy.

The birth of Christ brings us love. Only God's love is capable of extending to each person on earth. It does not care about a person's wealth, race, education, housing, or any other issue we as humans focus on. We see Jesus showing love and care to a wide variety of people throughout His life, and the effect that His love has on those individuals. From washing the Disciples' feet to feeding the multitudes that came to hear Him speak, His love for all people shines.

Only Jesus can provide this love. It is a love that heals and restores a victim of trafficking. It is a love that offers deep comfort as they fight for a better future for themselves and their children. It is a love that allows them to see that they are still worthy of love from their children, other individuals, and God. It is God's love that allows them to show that love to those around Him. He is our love.

Today, Christmas Day, we truly understand how much Jesus loves each one of us. And what true love is. God shows His love for us by sending His son to the earth to live as a man, knowing that one day he would die for our sins. It is an unconditional love that extends to and envelops us, no matter who we are or were. It is a love that allowed Jesus to live as a sinless man, but willingly died for us on the cross.

Today we celebrate the birth of Jesus. Our hope. Our peace. Our joy. And our love.

Songs:

Joy to the World – Public Domain

Verse 1

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.

Verse 2

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!

Let men their songs employ;

While fields and floods, rocks, hills and

plains

Repeat the sounding joy,

Repeat the sounding joy,

Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

Verse 3

No more let sins and sorrows grow,

Nor thorns infest the ground

He comes to make his blessings flow

Far as the curse is found,

Far as the curse is found,



Far as, far as the curse is found.

Verse 4
He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove

O Come All Ye Faithful – Public Domain

O come all ye faithful
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold Him,
Born the King of Angels:
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
C come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

O sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing all ye citizens of Heaven above
Glory to God in the Highest:
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
C come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

All hail! Lord we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning,
O Jesus! For evermore be Thy name adored.
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
C come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

<u>The First Noel</u> – Public Domain

The first Noel
The angels did say
Was to certain poor
Shepherds in fields as they lay:
In fields where they
Lay keeping their sheep
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.

The glories of His righteousness, And wonders of His love, And wonders of His love, And wonders, wonders, of His love.

Noel Noel, Noel Noel Born is the King of Israel

They looked up
And saw a star
Shining in the east beyond them far:



And to the earth It gave great light

And so it continued both day and night.

Noel Noel, Noel Noel Born is the King of Israel

And by the light
Of that same star
Three wise men came from the country far;
To seek for a king
Was their intent
And to follow the star wherever it went

Noel Noel, Noel Noel Born is the King of Israel

This star drew nigh
To the north-west;
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest
And there it did
Both stop and stay,
Right over the place where Jesus lay.

Manger Throne - Third Day

What kind of King would leave HIs throne In Heaven to make this earth His home? While men seek fame and great renown In lowliness our King comes down

Jesus, Jesus, precious one How we thank You that You've come Jesus, Jesus, precious one A manger throne for God's own son

You left the sound of angels' praise To come for men with unkind ways And by this Baby's helplessness the power or nations is laid to rest

Jesus, Jesus, precious one How we thank You that You've come Jesus, Jesus, precious one Noel Noel, Noel Noel
Born is the King of Israel
Then entered in
Those wise men three,
Fell reverently upon their knee
And offered there
In his presence

Their gold and myrrh and frankincense Noel Noel, Noel Noel Born is the King of Israel

Then let us all
With one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
That hath made heav'n
And earth of night,
And with his blood mankind has bought.

Noel Noel, Noel Noel Born is the King of Israel Noel Noel, Noel Noel Born is the King of Israel

A manger throne for God's own son

What kind of King would come so small From glory to a humble stall?
That dirty manger is my heart too
I'll make it a royal throne for You

Jesus, Jesus, precious one How we thank You that You've come Jesus, Jesus, precious one A manger throne for God's own son

Precious Jesus
(How we thank You that You've come)
Jesus, Jesus, precious one
A manger throne
(My heart is a throne)
My heart is a throne for God's own son



Suggested Prayer:

Dear Father, thank you for being the source of our redemption. Thank you for having ordained a plan for our redemption from before creation. Thank you for proclaiming the redemption of Christmas through Moses, David, Ruth, and the prophets. Thank you for showing the redemption of Christmas through Noah, Esther, Passover, and the return of the Exiles from Babylon.

Unimaginable Son, thank you for being the source of our redemption. Your birth is the central point of history. Without you, we would be dead in our sins, but you who knew no sin died for us. Your birth is why we sing *Joy to the World*. Your death and resurrection ushered in your Kingdom, your Kingdom will be forever, and your reign is without end.

Precious Spirit, thank you for being the source of our redemption. You have participated in the redemption of every believer in history. Your transformation of our being makes following God possible and without you, the Church's ministry of redemption would fail. Your abiding presence in our sanctification assures us of our final glorification. It is through you that the Kingdom of God is without end.

Lord God, thank you for the Good News and the Redemption made possible by Christmas. This Christmas we ask you to continue to use your Church in the ministry of redemption. Use us in your work to redeem trafficking survivors, buyers, and traffickers.

Amen.



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