

# ALL OF JESUS



ADVENT DEVOTIONAL



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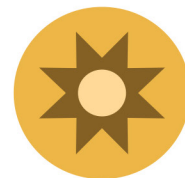
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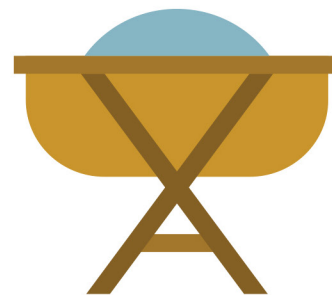
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*"I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."*

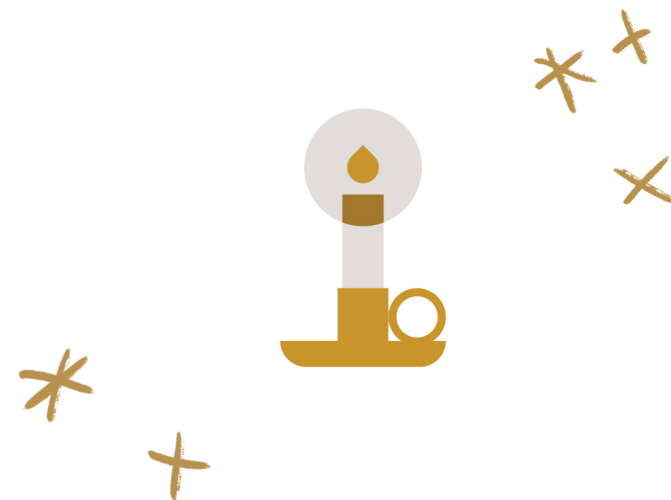
—LUKE 2:10b-11



## INTRODUCTION

# Remembering Jesus

BY EMILY SMITH



“Advent” is a word that can drum up quite a few connotations in our minds. For some, it indicates a festive season. For others, it means an arrival. Perhaps it brings a sense of preparation or causes your mind to dwell on waiting and longing. It could evoke a focus on worship.

But what about remembering?

Remembering is a prominent theme in Scripture—a call from God on each of our lives and on the whole of creation to keep our Creator constantly at the forefront.

As Christians, we have a multitude of practices that aid us in our remembering—we attend church, we partake in Communion, we read Scripture, and we sing worship songs, all continually bringing us back to the simple gospel.

We honor God as good and faithful—God as who He really is—when we *remember* Him. And so, while Advent marks many emotions and experiences, it is also an outworking of this holy command. As a Body of believers, we together have received a call to a great, collective remembering—and this

Advent season, let us remember Jesus Christ, our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace (see Isa. 9:6).

Jesus is our hope—the One who renews our strength to walk forward in obedience. Jesus is our peace—the One who provides rest and assurance that surpasses understanding. Jesus is our joy—the One who has won for us reconciliation with the Father. Jesus is our love—the One who equips us to be compassionate toward others and devoted to Him.

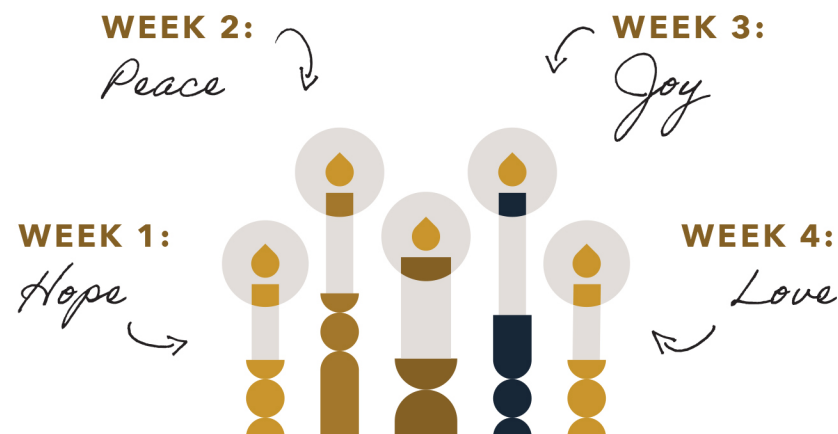
We must remember Christ Jesus. We must remember the power of the gospel. We must remember the peace that is ours only because of Him. We must remember both His humanity and His divinity. We must remember that He is coming soon.

We must take care, lest we forget our Jesus, who became Emmanuel—fully human and dwelling among us—to “reconcile to himself all things . . . by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (Col. 1:19–20).



## How to Use This Guide

The Christian tradition of Advent is a season of remembrance, looking ahead, and joyful preparation. Advent spans the four weeks leading up to Christmas, and the passing of each week is represented by lighting a candle with a specific meaning each Sunday—candles of hope, peace, joy, and love.



A fifth and final candle—the Christ candle—is lit on Christmas Eve. The light of these candles is symbolic of the light of Christ, which pushes back the darkness.

Many churches then use the Christ candle to light smaller candles, which are passed throughout the congregation during a candle-light service on Christmas Eve. This practice symbolizes the light of Christ filling the earth as all nations find peace in Him.

Each devotional in this guide includes an invitation, Scripture readings, and a prayer prompt.

Every Sunday during Advent and on Christmas Eve, meditate on the passages listed, ponder the content provided, and discuss or pray through the prompt.

Whether you use this devotional guide over the dinner table, with a small group, or individually, we pray it will enrich your life in Christ this Advent season. May we lean in to experience all that the Lord has for us as we joyfully prepare to respond to His arrival.

## ADVENT WEEK ONE

# *The Candle of Hope*

BY AN ALLIANCE INTERNATIONAL WORKER SERVING  
IN A CREATIVE ACCESS COUNTRY

### READ

For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.

ISAIAH 61:11-12

There are countless times throughout life that we find ourselves anticipating something. Sometimes it takes the shape of dread—like how I feel before I get my blood drawn at the doctor (I hate blood) or before I have a hard conversation with a friend. But, more often, when I refer to anticipation, it is the kind that fills me up with hope for the future—like when I was a little girl

watching presents pile up under the Christmas tree, imagining what wonderful things could be inside, or when it's an extra stressful day at work and I'm looking forward to when I am free to leave. Sometimes, my anticipation blissfully meets my expectations—like a cozy post-work nap. Other times, Christmas morning would roll around, leaving little me with the sinking realization that all that pretty wrapping paper was

hiding was a pair of socks (nothing against socks).

Right now, I am in a unique season of anticipation that some of you in our Alliance family know very well. I am uprooting my life here in the U.S. to move across the ocean to a creative access country. Everything is a goodbye right now. My husband and I have said goodbye to our jobs, our home, our belongings, and soon will say goodbye to our families and community. The cost of leaving is very high. It was difficult to explain to my coworkers when I told them I was leaving.

“You’re going where?!”

“Why on earth would you do that?”

I struggled to answer them, but soon I realized this is because my hope informs my decisions. Or, more appropriately, the One I hope in informs my decisions. My coworkers, who were so baffled at why I would make a change like this, do not answer to the same hope as I do. The truth is that I wouldn't even dream about leaving everything I know if it wasn't for the hope that directs my steps.

When our hope is in Christ, it changes the way we interact with

the world. Money, comfort, and power to do not motivate our actions or our words. In fact, Jesus gives us freedom from those very things that bind our world. “I can do all things through me who gives me strength” doesn't have any power or meaning to it. However, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13) completely transforms the way we live.

I have always loved Isaiah 61. It is my prayer for broken people and places in this world, and I encourage you to sit in the hope that it offers this Advent season.

### PRAY

Reflect on how your hope in Jesus changes the way you live. Thank the Father for transforming your heart and making you into a new creation! Think about what you are anticipating this week and invite the Holy Spirit to examine your life. Are there any areas where you are living for money, comfort, or power that you need to surrender to Him?





## ADVENT WEEK TWO

# The Candle of Peace

BY HEIDI SCOTT

### READ

Stand firm then . . . with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

EPHESIANS 6:14, 15

The moment we accept the gift of Jesus we have access to complete peace. This undeserved and unexplainable peace deepens in us as we walk in faith, yet there are times when we do not feel at peace. Jesus understands our human default towards anxiousness, and He is gentle with us when we falter. What compassion! What love! We can fully trust, fully rest, and fully surrender because He is our peace.

God accepted us at our worst. He saw our most despicable moments—our wretched thoughts and wounding words—yet the invitation to go deeper with Him remains. He extends and expands this same welcome to all peoples and nations—a peace-bringing welcome that comes only from the Prince of Peace.

In the same way, we are called to invite others to follow Him, including those who are different, whether culturally, politically, or socially. Often that feels stretching, uncomfortable, and sometimes just plain hard. But the same welcome He gave to you and me is the kind of self-sacrificing, comfort-sacrificing, power-sacrificing love we are called to give others.

So, light the candle of peace and remember, peace for all is here, with us and for us. Jesus is the only source of true and lasting peace that spills into every dark, troubled, and broken corner. We get to be light carriers that radiate peace. *All of Jesus for All the World!*

Think of someone you know who is different, difficult, or even divisive. Ask God how you can demonstrate peace to them, offering them the same grace and welcome He gave to you.

### PRAY

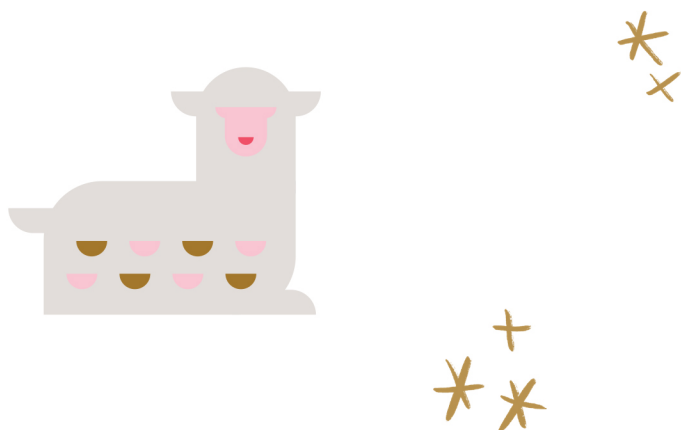
*Lord, thank You for the real peace that can only be found in relationship with You. Fill me to overflowing! As the candle of peace shines light into dark spaces, use me to shine Your light to those who have no peace. Amen.*



## ADVENT WEEK THREE

# *The Candle of Joy*

BY TERRI ALTHAUS



### READ

For the joy set before him he endured the cross,  
scorning its shame, and sat down at the right  
hand of the throne of God.

HEBREWS 12:2

When the world asks—almost demands—that we enjoy Christmas, the Advent of Christ invites us into a deeper joy.

In Scripture, joy is experienced when something good is received or something wonderful has happened. The nativity story overflows with it: Zechariah and Elizabeth receive their son, John; John leaps in Elizabeth's womb at the presence of Jesus; and Mary realizes that salvation is coming for God's people.

Songs of joy fill the air around us during the Christmas season. But isn't it true that often there is a minor key in the soundtrack? Life's disappointments and sorrows are the real context into which this joyful message comes. During one Christmas season, I had the joy of giving birth to our son. During another, we lost our oldest daughter to a ravishing disease.

The thing about joy, though, is that it can still be present, and growing, in the most difficult times of life. Unlike enjoyment, joy can't be fabricated. It is a fruit of the Spirit in us and our response to gifts from God. Perhaps joy occurs in

the presence of a trial, when we become more aware of the eternal reality that there is a greater symphony being written by the great Composer. Christ Himself went through the experience of the Cross with His eyes set on what was to come—the joyful victory that became our greatest gift.

### PRAY

Read Romans 5:3–5 and take a moment to thank God for your trials. Practice gratitude and remind yourself that God works everything for good, even suffering.

What sorrowful strain may be present for you in this season? Where can Jesus enter, allowing you to experience all of Him? Take a moment of silence and stillness before God and invite Him to compose His song of joy in you.

This gift of God we'll cherish well,  
That ever joy our hearts shall fill.

How great our joy!

Great our joy!

Praise we the Lord in

Heaven on high!

(Friedrich von Spee, "How Great Our Joy," trans. Theodore Baker)



## ADVENT WEEK FOUR



# The Candle of Love

BY HEIDI RUFENER

### READ

For you created my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

PSALM 139:13-16

As I sit and think about how deeply I love my grandchildren, I realize there is absolutely nothing they could ever do to diminish that love. It is steady, unconditional, and unmatched. I cherish time with my children and

grandchildren because my love for them runs deep and wide.

Imagine, for a moment, the One who created you from the very beginning—how much He delights in you and looks upon you with joy. You

are His, created in His image, yet with your own beautiful uniqueness. He loves you—your personality, your dreams, your goals, and your desires. He loves simply being with you. Emmanuel—God with us.

I think back on the many years I spent wishing I could be someone else. I realize now how that must have grieved the heart of God. I doubted my abilities and questioned my dreams and the way I connected with others. But then I came to understand—the God of heaven made me exactly the way He intended—and He loves me. And He loves you too.

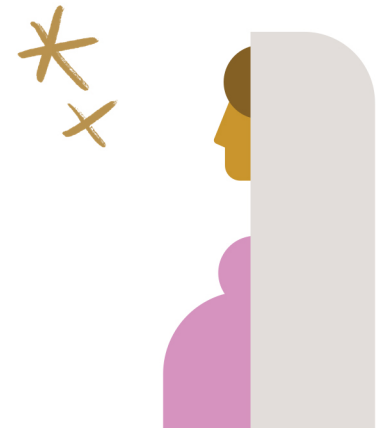
Psalm 139 says He knit us together in our mother's womb. When I looked up the word “knit,” I found it means “to unite or make by interlocking loops.” God formed us piece by piece, carefully weaving together every detail of our lives. He is present in both the beautiful and the difficult moments, caring for every detail because He wove those details Himself. When we walk with Him, our lives are woven together with His.

Are you questioning your personality or your uniqueness? Ask

Jesus to reveal just how deeply He loves you and what plans He has for you. Let Him speak His love to your weary soul. Allow His love to reach into the broken places you've kept hidden from Him. He longs to walk with you—and to be known by you.

### PRAY

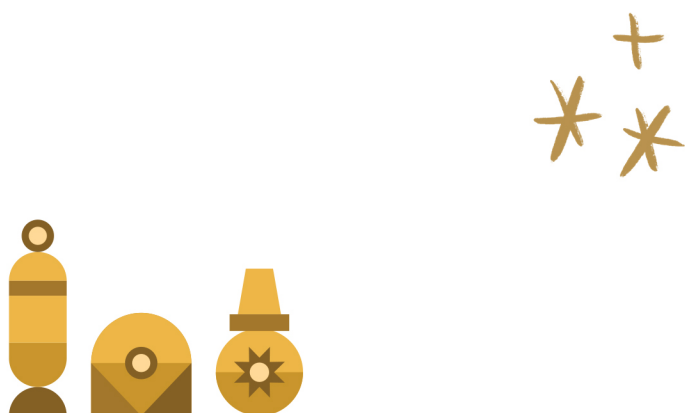
*Lord, will You show me how much You love me in this season? Will You quiet my mind and help me reflect on the fact that You created me and are with me? How do You desire for me to shine Your light to others so that they may see You in me? Thank You for working in my life and bringing life to the broken places.*



## CHRISTMAS EVE

# *The Candle of Christ*

BY MARY SCHAEFFER



### READ

The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

ZEPHANIAH 3:17, ESV

**“T**he Lord your God is in your midst . . .”

As the Christ candle is lit this week, we celebrate Immanuel, God with us. He is not a distant deity, aloof and uninvolved. He is close, active, compassionate, and caring. He is with you.

**“. . . a mighty one who will save.”**

Who would have ever guessed that this mighty One would arrive on planet earth as a helpless newborn?! Apostle Paul tells us that “being in very nature God” (Phil. 2:6), He was willing to enter our world and become one of us. Why? Because of His great love for us. “Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea—the Lord on high is mighty” (Ps. 93:4).

**“He will rejoice over you with gladness.”**

Can you picture Jesus, no longer a baby in a manger, but having lived a perfect life and proven victorious over death? He is seated in the heavens . . . can you picture Him? Rejoicing over you? With gladness? With loud singing? Or, as translated in other versions, taking great delight in you? Sit with that thought for a moment . . . He delights in you.

**“He will quiet you by his love.”**

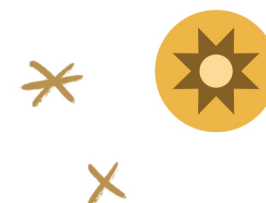
He offers us a refuge in His love, and it is there we find rest, respite, and relief from the stress and anxiety of life. In His presence, we find peace.

**“He will exult over you with loud singing.”**

Some translations say it like this: “He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.” This Christmas season, among all the festivities and gifts and décor, celebrate not only Jesus’ birth, but delight in all of who Jesus is. Listen for his shouts of joy as He also delights in you. He is with you. He is mighty to save. He loves you more than you can imagine.

### PRAY

*Thank you, Lord, for Your incredible love and the gift of Your presence. Throughout this Christmas season, please make me aware each day that You are with me and You delight in me. Amen.*







## **Christmas@SCAC**

[scalliancechurch.com/christmas](https://scalliancechurch.com/christmas)

Check out our Christmas page for service info as well as resources to enrich your Advent season. We look forward to sharing this advent season with you! *Questions? [office@scalliancechurch.com](mailto:office@scalliancechurch.com)*