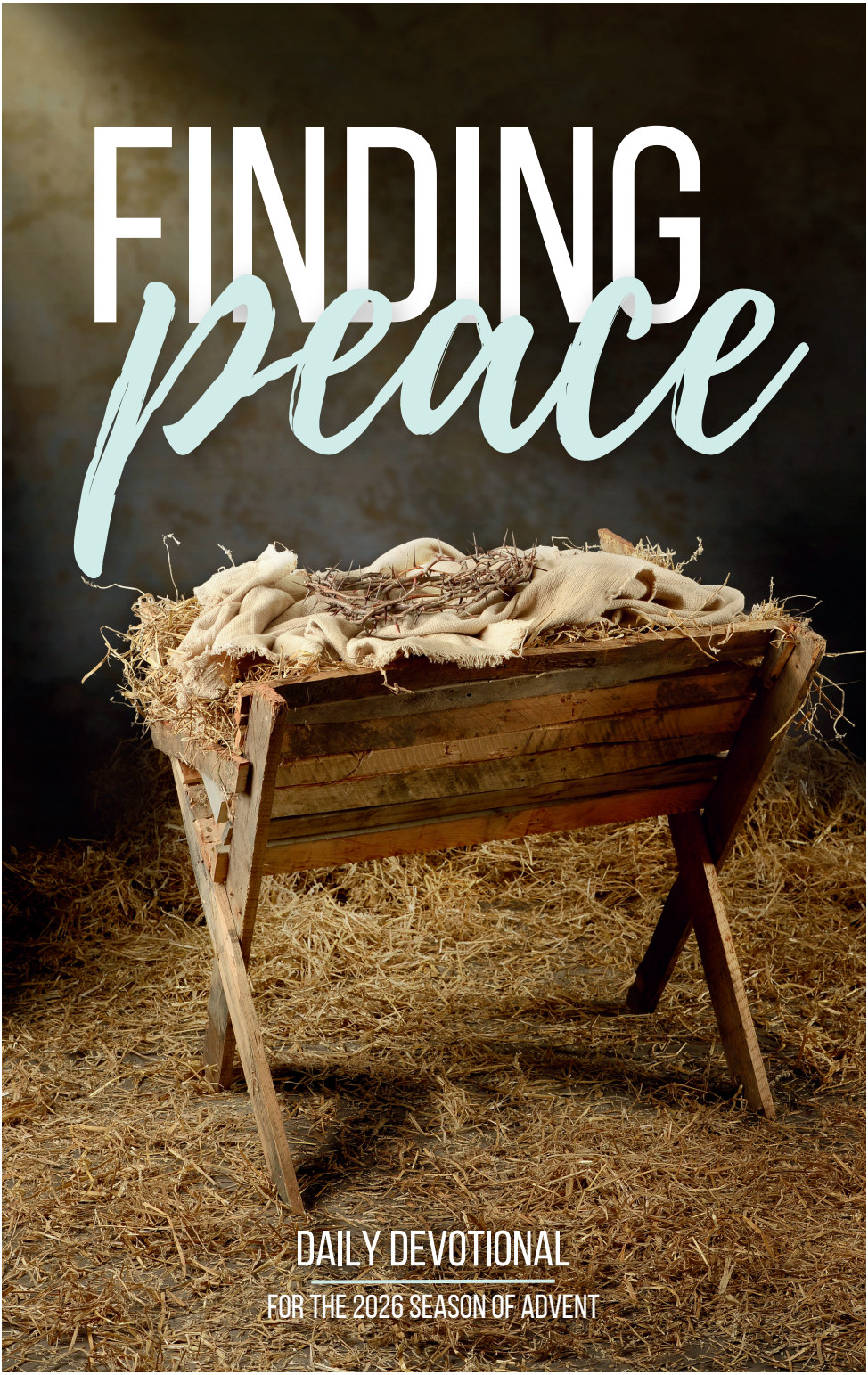
FINDING *peace*



DAILY DEVOTIONAL

FOR THE 2026 SEASON OF ADVENT

INTRODUCTION

There isn't one of us who doesn't want peace. We dream of feeling at peace and hope for peace in our conflicted world. Maybe you have even said to yourself, "I will feel more at peace when I complete ____ (fill in the blank)." Maybe it is when the Christmas shopping is completed, the decorations are up, the house is clean or the calendar finally slows down. The challenge is that we finally finish that thing or we have some time of quiet we still don't feel at peace. There is always something else to do, another worry on our minds, or another challenge waiting around the corner.

Every Advent we long for the peace that is described in our scriptures. We hope for peace in our homes, in our relationships, in our hearts and in a world that feels divided and uncertain. Yet the peace Christ brings at His birth brings far greater peace than just an absence of conflict or a quiet moment in our busy lives. The peace of Jesus is the deep, restoring peace that makes us whole and draws us into right relationships with God, ourselves, one another and all of creation. It is a peace that doesn't require everything in our lives to be perfect. It is a peace that meets us right where we are.

As Elders, Deacons, Staff, Members and the Pastor worked on this devotion we discovered something: Christ's peace is surprisingly difficult to put into words! We hope that these stories, scriptures and moments capture a bit Christmas peace and help you find it this season. Enjoy this Advent season as we prepare with the the peace that comes with our Savior's birth!

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2026

Let it begin with me!

One of my favorite hymns/songs:
Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.
With God as our Father/ Mother, children all are we.
Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.
Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.
With every breath I take, may this be my solemn plea.
To take each moment and live each moment with peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.

Our lives are so busy. Our to-do lists get longer and longer. Do we stop and sit for a moment to meditate or express our gratitude for a new day of life, for the sunshine, for the beauty outside the front window, for a friend who is by our side in joy and in sorrow.

During this Advent season, let the anticipation of the birth of Christ fill your heart and spirit with joy and peace!

PRAYER: Jesus, Show me the small signs of Your peace in my days. Amen.

WRITTEN BY | KAREN MCDANIEL
MEMBER

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2026

One of the things that I have always struggled with is being a bit hot-headed while driving. I try to never be the problem in traffic and specifically try not to take actions that impact others negatively. While many others do not share this same approach and rather exert pure selfish actions on the road impacting others without care it seems, this is where my aggravation takes over. I have always said that Jesus' command to "love thy neighbor" was completely impossible.

And under our own strength, it is.

But Advent reminds us that where human effort fails, God steps in. I have always had a soft heart for small children as they have an innocence about them that adults do not. While driving one day recently, someone did something in traffic that would normally have upset me but somehow, I thought to myself, that person was once an innocent child that I would not have anger toward for doing something on an equal scale. Reflecting that this person was once an innocent child helped me to have empathy I never thought possible. I believe that this revelation came from God through the Holy Spirit.

Ever since that day, I have much more peace when driving and when dealing with people in general. It reminds me that we are all God's children, and He desires to see us through that same lens of love. God truly can give us the ability to love others where we can't on our own, and the peace that we receive from this is what we all need this season.

PRAYER: Lord, Thank you for stepping in where our strength fails. Help us to walk in Your peace this Advent season. Amen.

WRITTEN BY | DOUG FENTON
CUSTODIAN

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2026

In the mid- 80's, I came across a wonderful music book and cassette tape called: "Christmas with Placido Domingo". Wow! What a great collection of songs for Christmas, all sung by the world- renowned tenor. Before I saw the song, I read some of the Christmas story in Luke 2, which ended with these words: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, good will toward men". Then I heard him sing the song:

"The Gift of Love" , Words by Mary Katherine Rielly, Music by Placido Domingo, Jr.

The Father gave His Son to fill the world with glory; He sent his only one to bring us peace.The shepherds on the hill were startled by the angels. The earth around them stilled at news of joy.

Praise the Son of God and thank His Father, His gift of love fulfilled, His light for all to see: Glory to God, Praise Him forever, Share his good news with all who wait in hope.

The Father gave his Son to fill the earth with glory. He sent his only one to give His holy peace.

Glory to God, Praise Him forever. His gift of love fulfills His light for all to see. Glory to God, Glory to God. Praise the Child who came to save the world. He's our gift from God, our Lord.

Domingo's first name means "peaceful" and the song reminds us: the Gift of Love: Peace.

PRAYER: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward all". Thank you, God, for peace and love in our challenging world. Alleluia! Amen.

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WRITTEN BY | REV. ED SPENCE
HONORABLY RETIRED

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2026

He felt peaceful on vacation, and thought, "How can I get this feeling all the time?"

ALL THERE IS with Anderson Cooper is one of my favorite podcasts. During each poignant episode, he explores his grief through interviews with people who have experienced their own losses. Cooper's recent interview with Lenard McKelvey, a nationally syndicated radio host, professionally known as "Charlemagne Tha God," caught my attention as they discussed their experiences with grief and faith. The church that Charlemagne's family attended during his childhood taught the expression "Faith Over Fear". This expression is common in Christian communities meaning that people should entrust their lives and fears to God. He grew up believing that expressing doubt meant that he was unfaithful and, even worse, that he was weak. He learned to never disclosed his real stressors, having been taught to politely answer "Just fine!" whenever a church member asked, "How are you?" As an adult, Charlemagne rarely allowed himself to reveal his hurts and fears or to give much attention to the pain of others. He finally realized that his self protection kept him from having authentic relationships with those he loved, and stifled the peace that he had cultivated while on vacation.

Charlamagne's big takeaway was "You can't hear what you don't reveal".

PRAYER: Lord, We want a deeper relationship with You and our church family. Guide us as we reveal our own vulnerabilities and help us to hear the pain of others. Flood us with the peace of Your unconditional love in the midst of a world in turmoil. Amen .

WRITTEN BY | LUELLEN BROWN
MEMBER

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2026

"*Be still and know that I am God*."

I have to be honest, sometimes I struggle with peace, even with God. My mind and soul get restless. I really do trust God, but then when I pray, I don't wholly surrender to Him/Her and don't feel completely at peace. Thankfully God loves me unconditionally and is understanding and forgiving of me. He/She gifts me with their peace even though I don't deserve it. It's an indescribable feeling that overwhelms me.

I tend to feel God's peace more in my morning devotional time. God knows that I'm a morning person and know that I listen better at this time, before I get distracted with my "To Do" list. I get up early and embrace the sunrise with the beautiful sunshine, as I sit at my kitchen table or on my patio table with a hot cup of tea. I read at least one devotional, sometimes share thoughts with friends about what I've read, and have alone time with music and God. It is a glorious and precious time. God time is good time. It's a peaceful time.

Do you have a special time with God when you feel His/Her peace?

PRAYER: Father in Heaven, Thank You for meeting us where we are. Help us to hear Your still small voice today. Amen.

WRITTEN BY | LIZ JOHNS
DEACON

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2026

Have I been so focused on asking God to change someone else, that I have overlooked what He may be doing in my own heart? Am I allowing past hurt to steal the peace God wants me to experience today? Can I trust God to lead me toward healing, even if the relationship never becomes what I hoped it would be?

Remember, peace does not always mean reconciliation, and forgiveness does not require you to forget what happened. Sometimes, peace means accepting what you cannot change, releasing what you were never meant to carry forever, and trusting God to heal the places that still hurt.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, Thank You for being our refuge in times of hurt and disappointment. Thank You for hearing our prayers, even when we did not fully understand what You were doing in our life.

Lord, thank You for drawing us closer to You and teaching us that our peace does not have to depend on another person's actions. Thank You for giving us the strength to face our pain, the grace to forgive, and the wisdom to understand that forgiveness does not mean the hurt never happened. Help us continue to release the things we cannot control. When old wounds resurface, remind us that You are still with us. When we struggle to understand why certain things happened, help us trust Your plan. Teach us to protect our peace without carrying bitterness, and to forgive without denying the truth of our experiences.

Father, help anyone who is struggling with hurt caused by someone they love to know that healing is possible. Remind them that they do not have to wait for another person to change before they begin to heal. May they find comfort in Your presence and discover the peace that only You can give. Thank You for showing me that even when You do not change a situation the way we expect, You can still do a beautiful work within us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

WRITTEN BY | JESSICA WERNAU
FAMILY MINISTRIES COODINATOR

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2026

The word "peace" is frequently used as a goal for resolving disagreements among nations. I think of my own country as a promoter of peace—of being a peaceful nation. And yet history documents that out of our 250-year existence, there have only been about a dozen years when the U.S. was not engaged in a war, conflict or some type of military action.

There wasn't a feeling of peace in the world when I was a teenager. I remember walking past houses on my way to high school and seeing bomb shelters being built after Nikita Kruschev threatened to destroy America. A former ally was now an enemy. How could this be?

My high school choir sang with fervor "Let There Be Peace on Earth" and "Let It Begin With Me". When it became clear that world leaders weren't bringing about world peace, some members of my generation decided to let peace begin with smoking pot and using other substances. That didn't bring peace either.

Where then does peace reside? The "Let There be Peace" song is partially on target. Peace has to begin with me. Peace is wonderful to experience but not always easy to maintain. Worry and tension interfere with it. In these moments Jesus' words about giving peace are so important. His peace is different than the peace that the world offers. His peace brings comfort when needed, grace when least deserved and steadfast love when all else is uncertain.

PRAYER: Jesus, Thank you for sticking with us every day. Still our heart, to allow Your peace to envelope us and be shared with others. Amen.

WRITTEN BY | CYNDI REIGHARD
ELDER

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2026

Peace Doesn't Mean Perfect

I've always been someone who has a plan, life goals, a desire to do better and be better. Whether it's helping someone else, managing my life's responsibilities, or simply navigating the day, I've felt there's something I need to do next to move things forward.

And sometimes, it's exactly those thoughts that get in the way of my peace.

It's taken me time to see that no matter how organized I am, how much I study, how hard I work, or how much I care about the people around me, life doesn't go as planned. There will always be something to worry about, another hurdle to overcome, or a situation I can't control.

And that's where faith takes over. Psalm 46 reminds us to "be still." For someone like me, who likes to just figure things out, those two words can be surprisingly difficult.

Faith means accepting I don't have all the answers. It means trusting God in ways that I can't see. It means giving myself permission to simply be still. That's the peace I want. Not a perfect life, but a heart that trusts God in the middle of it all.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, Help us to recognize when we are trying to carry the burdens that belong to You. Give us the wisdom to know when to act, when to be still, and remind us that true peace comes from trusting in You. Amen.

WRITTEN BY | AUDREY DIEKEN
MEMBER

MONDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2026

" By faith, Noah being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith." (Hebrews 11: 7) Our peace is found through Christ.

Noah's faithfulness to God was evident by his obedience to God. Noah lived inland not close to an ocean or lake. He must have never dreamed of a world-wide flood. Yet, he had great faith and went forward building an extremely large ark and filling it from the animal kingdom.

Noah understood the character of his Creator. His faith motivated his actions, despite what all the people in town thought. By Noah's faith in the Lord alone he bore much fruit in the building of the ark. His faith motivated his actions and also revealed him as an "heir of the righteousness that comes by faith"

Through faith in God's promises alone, we are likewise regarded by the Lord as righteous. (Romans 4:16) We find our peace in Christ alone.

I walk each day by faith alone. My peace is found in returning always to Christ's lap and his uplifting arms. Like Noah our faith in Christ brings us peace.

PRAYER: Dear God, Your ways are good and Your timing is perfect. Teach us to trust in Your wisdom and goodness. Please grant us the faith to live in bold obedience, by Your guidance, not our own sight. Your ways lead to us in the still waters. In Jesus's name, we pray. Amen.

WRITTEN BY | SUSAN VANDENBERG
ELDER

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2026

To be honest I have been ignoring Kelsy's email about advent devotional. I am missing my partner of over fifty years; how will I cope with Advent without Jeanette?

As I looked for peace I reflected on the scripture reading John 14: 1-6, which was part of Jeanette's memorial service. Spencer and Claire delivered that piece of scripture, and I thought of how well they delivered the scripture.

As I read the scripture several times, I was comforted through the knowledge that Jeanette is in a better place, and she is at peace with our Lord.

I have gained some measure of solace as I consider the way forward. If I am having a difficult day, I will try to return to these passages and little by little move forward.

As Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me."

Just as we say in worship, Peace be with You.

PRAYER: Jesus, Help us as we grieve this season to find Your peace as we miss those dear to us. Amen.

WRITTEN BY | GORDON PARNELL
ELDER

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2026

Peace in the Desert

It is easy to get caught up in the busyness of life, especially during the season of Advent. I've grown so accustomed to that fast pace that now, as my schedule has opened, I've had to learn how to accept tranquility. One of the ways I find peace is by taking a walk in the beautiful desert near my home. When I'm alone, I take a deep breath and feel the calm settle over me — the birds chirping, the rustling breeze, the beauty around me, the sound of my footsteps grounding me. In those moments, peace seems to glide over me, steadying my thoughts and reminding me of God's presence.

Other times I walk with Dave, and the peace looks different. Our conversations calm my nervous system, make me laugh, and bring me happiness. Whether I'm alone or with a friend, the desert becomes a place where God restores my spirit. What an amazing world God created for us — a world where peace meets us in both solitude and companionship.

PRAYER: God of peace, Thank You for meeting us in the quiet places and in the people we love. Help us slow down, breathe deeply, notice the beauty around us, and receive Your shalom this Advent. Amen.

WRITTEN BY | STEPHANIE KINSEY
ELDER

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2026

"*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*" - Philippians 4:6-7

My Journey to Peace Through Prayer: There was a time in my life when I experienced deep hurt and pain because of my father's choices. His actions affected me in ways that were difficult to explain, and I carried that hurt in my heart. In the midst of my pain, I turned to God in prayer. I made it my goal to pray for God to change my father's heart, believing that if God could change him, perhaps the hurt I carried would finally go away. As I continued to pray, I focused so much on asking God to change my father that I did not realize God was working on something within me. I wanted God to change his heart, his decisions, and his behavior. But God, in His wisdom, was doing a work in my heart, too.

Through prayer, I began to grow closer to God. I learned to bring my pain, disappointment, and questions to Him. Slowly, my prayers became more than requests for my father to change. They became moments when God comforted me, strengthened me, and helped me see that I did not have to remain bound by the hurt I had experienced. God taught me that peace does not always come from seeing someone else change. Sometimes, peace comes when God changes the way we carry our pain. He showed me that forgiveness was possible, even when the hurt was real and the relationship did not return to what it once was.

Although my relationship with my father was never the same, I reached a place where I could forgive him and find peace despite what had happened. Forgiveness did not erase the past, excuse his choices, or mean that everything between us was restored. Instead, it allowed me to release the weight of my hurt and trust God with what I could not change. I went to God asking Him to change my father's heart, but along the way, He changed mine. What began as a prayer for someone else became a journey of healing, spiritual growth, and a deeper relationship with Him.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, Help us to forgive and let that forgiveness bring us peace. Amen.

WRITTEN BY | JESSICA WERNAU
FAMILY MINISTRIES COORDINATOR

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2026

I wasn't sure if I would write a devotional as I haven't really thought about being at peace. But then I thought about all my losses over the years: My daughter, Jenn at the age of 21 in 2004, a bonus daughter in 2021 followed by her father and my husband. Then in 2023, I lost my bonus son and the last real connection to my daughter. In 2025, I lost my mother and just this past July, I lost a bonus son-in-law just before his daughter was getting married. I could have turned into a very angry person, full of grief but then I remembered, that God gave His only son and how He didn't dwell in His grief.

God and my loved ones would not want me to be sad all the time. They would want me to LIVE! I honor all of those I have lost by trying to do just that. I take joy in the simple fact that the sun still shines and watching a hummingbird at my feeder can give me a little peace. I do still grieve but I have chosen to give myself certain days where I allow myself to remember them with my whole heart. This allows me to be a better and happier person, the other days of the year. I am able to laugh again and you might actually catch me smiling more.

Grief will always be there but I am at peace knowing that someday I will once again be able to hold my loved ones in my arms at the feet of God.

PRAYER: Lord, We ask You to help those grieving to learn how to find peace and joy again. May they find joy in knowing they will be able to hold their loved ones again, at Your feet. Amen.

WRITTEN BY | COLETTE HUGHES
OFFICE MANAGER

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2026

Peace is elusive when I turn on the news shows. There is very little positivity there. It is bothersome because I have cared about justice my whole life, and there seems to be no justice, no care, no concern by our government for those struggling and by fellow Americans who call others names! And then I recall the crowds awaiting Jesus wherever he went, and it is clear that even during the life of Jesus, peace and love were hard to find. However, Jesus taught a new way, became the good news, the hope, the love. He was even called the Prince of Peace! During the occupation of that land, he reached out to people and gave them hope, an example of how to be, and he showed us, too, how to bring hope and peace to those around us by reaching out to people, to those we meet in our lives: in the grocery store, in our neighborhoods, or in our churches. When we touch a life for good, we unleash peace in their hearts and in our own. A small gesture might make someone's day! Let's reach out for peace!

"Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint and all kinds of herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God." – Luke 11:42

PRAYER: Jesus, Help us unleash peace in the lives of those around us. Amen.

WRITTEN BY | LYNN KINSEY
MEMBER

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2026

While there are seasons in our lives where it is more difficult to see or experience peace. When tasked with the question, I really needed to think about it for a few days. The season I personally find myself in, that so many have already experienced or are in currently are called the 'sandwich' years. The years where your kids still need your guidance whether they want it or not, and your parents also need guidance/support...also whether they want it or not. Juggling both of these very important tasks on top of balancing work, marriage, caring for your home, pets, and let's not forget to make time for self-care.

So, where is the peace in all of this when you don't have time for self-care?

We can find peace in so many places. We just need to be more observant or thoughtful in our observations. It could be the quiet before the day gets started, or the quiet before the day ends. It can be waking up extra early to walk the dogs in the cool weather, while the sun is rising, or sitting down after a long day watching the sunset in the evening. Or it can be as simple as sharing a meal with a friend. Supporting a friend who is going through a hard season themselves and realizing you are not alone. All of these are just ordinary daily activities that all can provide peace in your lives, you just have to pay attention.

PRAYER: Dear God, Thank You for providing us all with peace hidden in our daily lives. Please help us all to be more thoughtful in our observations and recognize it everyday. Amen

WRITTEN BY | SUSAN HERNANDEZ
CLERK OF SESSION

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2026

Unfortunately, we live in a time that is not filled with peace as wars rage on Ukraine, Iran, Africa, and other countries around the globe. We also don't have much peace in our own country filled with political violence, bullying and partisanship that pits Americans against Americans. We are inundated with news that can easily frustrate us and not make us as hopeful as we would like to be as we try to follow Christ, who always spoke for peace and was the ultimate peace maker.

Regardless of all this negativity, we should try to use this time of Advent to re-energize ourselves through our love of Christ, we can bring peace to those around us and in our community. While we can't stop wars, we can be role models of kindness and bringing peace to one another. It can start with opening our ears and hearts to others, as we truly listen to one another's concerns and love with our hearts unconditionally.

We should use this time as an opportunity to engage in the many Mission del Sol projects that promote peace and love within our community. Projects like Family Promise, I-Help, East Valley Men's Center, and Meals on Wheels to name a few. Participating in these can bring personal peace as you give peace to others. Hopefully, it inspires those we help to spread peace and love to others they interact with. It starts small, but can grow big.

PRAYER: Dear God, Please help me be the peace that I would like to see in the rest of the world and follow the commandment Jesus gave us to love one another. Amen.

WRITTEN BY | STEVE ROWE
ELDER

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2026

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" - Luke 2:13-14

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. - John 14:27

When I was a small child, my mom attended a concert presented by an international children's choir based in Long Beach, California. She loved the final song, composed especially for the choir, and "Let There Be Peace on Earth," soon joined the repertoire of songs sung to my sister and me at bedtime.

I have loved this song all my life. It was often the last song Mom sang and many times I fell asleep before she finished singing. Throughout my life I have sung "Let There Be Peace on Earth," often silently, when I needed to calm down, deal with a troubling world, or plan actions I need to take. The lyrics have always been a comfort. *"Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be. With God, our Creator, we are family. Let us walk with each other, in perfect harmony."*

It wasn't until years later, I learned that the co-composer, Jill Jackson-Millller, wrote the lyrics following a very troubling time in her life, stating that "the life-saving joy of God's peace and unconditional love" guided her pen. During this Advent season, may we be led by the joy of God's peace and love as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, "Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now. With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow: to take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally. Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me." Amen.

WRITTEN BY | JAN PALMER
MEMBER

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2026

"*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."* - John 14:27

Jesus preparing His disciples. . . so much uncertainty in their hearts and minds, and then Jesus says "Peace I leave with you". It is a gift, "peace I give to you".

Does this refer to the restoration of humanity's relationship with God? By carrying out His Father's plan, Jesus knows that everything God promised is now available through Him, through His Son, through Jesus. But did the disciples understand this? When I imagine their thoughts and fears as they wondered how life would be when Jesus left them, Jesus was promising the very salve, the ointment, the soothing news - "I'm leaving you the gift of peace".

He told them He would prepare a PLACE for them and Thomas asked Him about the WAY to that place - following these exchanges between Jesus and His disciples, Jesus commands in this verse, "be rid of fear - don't let your heart be afraid!"

PRAYER: Jesus, We hear You, we are not afraid . . . most of the time. Forgive us when we let doubt and fear creep into our daily thoughts. Turn us back to Your promise. You have given us the GIFT OF PEACE! Lord, fill our heart with Your SHALOM." Shalom Shalom! Amen.

WRITTEN BY | DOROTHY HANSON
DEACON

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2026

Whenever I have the opportunity to preach, I always conclude worship with the Aaronic blessing from Numbers chapter 6. I have a very specific reason for using this as a benediction, but that's a longer conversation for a different day.

It was during the Israelites' 40 years of wandering during the Exodus that God instructed Moses to tell Aaron and his sons to use these words to bless God's people. The people faced incredible hardships for more than a generation, and desperately needed word of God's peace to maintain their resolve on the journey towards the Promised Land.

Today, most of us are not wandering the desert in search of a home, but some of our neighbors are. Many of us know where our next meal is coming from, but some of our neighbors do not. Many of us bask in the love that God showers upon us every day, but some of our neighbors do not. And many of us live under the peace of hope in the message of the Gospel, but some of our neighbors have no reason to hope for anything other than to live another day. That's why these ancient words recorded in the Book of Numbers remain vital today. I have come to appreciate a gender-neutral reading of the original verses: "May God bless and protect you; may God's face radiate with grace toward you; may God look upon you with kindness and give you peace."

PRAYER: God, Continue to fulfill Your promise of peace to all Your people, this day and every day. Amen.

.

WRITTEN BY | GEORGE PHOHASKA
COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER, INTERIM STATED CLERK

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2026

"Coming Soon!"

"Welcome to the Christmas season!" That's the message I've been receiving even before Halloween pumpkins have disappeared. Stores are filled with artificial garlands and trees, inflatable Santas and reindeer and talking figurines…all accompanied by flashing strings of lights and a continuous string of Christmas music, sacred and secular. It's what we have come to expect, as the way to announce the coming of the season, and how we are encouraged to prepare for it.

This year I was struck by a simple canvas tent in the parking lot of one of our big box stores. There were no flashing lights or loudspeakers. There was just a sign: "Coming soon!" This was where you would be able to find the "real" Christmas trees. Not yet… but soon! A quiet spot, a peaceful spot, unlit, no flash or sparkle… just an announcement… "Coming soon!" Apart from all the noise was a promise: "The REAL THING is coming!"

In the Old Testament (I Kings 19:11-13), the prophet Elijah was looking for a word from God in troubled times. He looked for that word in all the places one might expect…a great wind…an earthquake…fire. But the word came in a "still small voice," speaking out of the silence. It was the real thing.

These weeks of Advent leading up to Christmas will be filled with noise and hectic activity. But take some time be at peace, to listen, in silence, for "the still small voice" proclaiming what the season is REALLY all about. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* (John 3:16)

PRAYER: "Loving God, May Your still small voice of love break through all the noise and distraction that often makes this season. Help us to experience Your peace as we celebrate and share Your deep love for the world. Amen.

WRITTEN BY | REV. DR. TERRY PALMER
HONORABLY RETIRED

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2026

"*You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.*" - Isaiah 26:3

I've owned my insurance agency for over 35 years, and I've experienced plenty of ups and downs. But recently, changes within my company made running my agency more difficult. I worried about losing a significant portion of my income and even wondered if I might have to close my business.

During those difficult months, I spent a lot of time talking to God. I prayed for guidance and repeatedly told Him, "God, I don't know how this will work out, but I trust You."

A few months later, a new district manager came into my life who genuinely cared about my future. He helped me navigate the changes and showed me a path forward. Since then, things have turned around, and much of my stress has lifted. This experience humbled me and brought me closer to God. I've thanked Him many times for guiding me through it. I've learned that God's peace doesn't mean life will be free of problems. It means trusting that He is with us, even when we can't see the way forward.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, Thank You for walking with us through uncertain times. Help us trust You when we don't have the answers and find peace in knowing we are never alone. Amen.

WRITTEN BY | MIKE HERMANN
ELDER

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2026

Sometimes finding peace means it needs to start with finding your inner peace. For me, one of the ways I find peace is through hiking. This fall, I did something I hadn't done since I was about 12 or 13 years old..backpacking! My backpacking adventures as a kid were with my father who really enjoyed it. I wasn't quite as big a fan, but that was probably because I would have rather been playing baseball at the time. So, when my cousin called me earlier this year to invite me on a ten-day backpacking trip on the Wonderland Trail (it goes around Mr. Rainier), I was a bit apprehensive and to be honest , I was a little scared wondering if I could actually do it. My cousin reminded me it wasn't going to be a land speed race and we'd take our time to enjoy our surroundings, totally cut off from our phones and the world for a couple weeks.

I'm soooo glad I accepted his invitation. It was amazing to be out with God's nature and beauty. Long talks with my cousin about our youth, trials and tribulations, our parents, spouses, ;) children and life lessons. It was so very peaceful and despite the physical challenge, aches and pains, the experience filled me with joy. Living away from the world and living in God's nature helped regenerate my batteries. I came back from the trip with a more positive heart and mind. I wish for you during this Advent season, to find a time to get away from all the hustle and bustle to enjoy the quite beauty of what God gave us in nature. It will bring peace to your heart as it did mine.

PRAYER: Dear God, Please help us take the time to appreciate all You have provided in the world and be filled with Your love and peace. Amen.

WRITTEN BY | STEVE ROWE
ELDER

MONDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2026

One of the greatest lessons I learned is that peace is not the absence of pain; it is the presence of God in the middle of it. Sometimes, we pray for God to change a person, a situation, or a circumstance because we believe that is the only way we can finally have peace. We ask Him to soften someone's heart, change their behavior, or help them understand the pain they have caused us. While we wait for that change, we can become discouraged when things do not happen the way we hoped.

But God can work in ways we never expected. While we are praying for someone else, He may be drawing us closer to Him. He may be teaching us how to forgive, how to surrender our hurt, and how to trust Him with the things we cannot control. That does not mean God ignores our pain or that the wrong someone has done to us does not matter. It means our healing does not have to depend on that person changing. We can forgive without pretending the hurt never happened. We can love someone while maintaining healthy boundaries. We can acknowledge that a relationship has changed and still move forward with peace in our hearts. My experience taught me that I could not control my father's choices, but I could allow God to work in my own heart. Through prayer, I found the strength to release the bitterness, the grace to forgive, and the peace to continue my journey without allowing my past hurt to define me. God did not necessarily change my circumstances in the way I originally asked Him to. Instead, He changed me in ways I did not know I needed. And sometimes, that is the miracle of prayer.

PRAYER: Jesus, We know You are at work in us. Help us to lean into Your peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

WRITTEN BY | JESSICA WERNAU
FAMILY MINISTRIES COORDINATOR

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2026

This past year brought its challenges and finding peace wasn't always easy. But I'n finding my way back to it in the simplest ways.

I center myself in the everyday moments; looking at the stars and watching the sunrise in the early mornings, sharing laughter and good conversations with my children and grandson. These times are when I feel closest to God. They're where most of my prayers begin. My soul has searched for peace within myself and for others my whole life.

So often we get caught up in our own daily lives and routines that we miss the bigger picture. I think that my mother had it figured out; her strong faith anchored her. I opened her Bible to a bookmarked page and highlighted the following: Micah 6:8, *"He has shown you O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."*

I believe that when we strive to be kind and Christ-like, peace naturally spreads.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, Help us to be kinder, more accepting, compassionate and understanding; not only of others but also toward ourselves. Open our hearts and minds, help others discover their own paths to peace, allowing it to grow from one person to the next throughout the world. Amen.

WRITTEN BY | DI GRANSBERGEN
DEACON

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2026

I entered the cathedral and inhaled the oldness, the holiness, and looked upward, up the spheres to the heavens and over the colorful glass windows. Showing the story and passion of our Savior and those who knelt at his feet and walked alongside him. No one spoke there, though many sat and meditated, feeling the peace of something so much larger than themselves. The quiet, the majesty, the history, and the suffering of those who searched for God there was overwhelming, but reaffirming. The beauty and higher way enveloped me, and I was at peace.

Our RV sat under large redwood and oakwood trees, a little home under a canopy of green. An acrid smell of decaying leaves, over deep loam, reach my nostrils and a slight breeze made me reach for a sweater, as I sat outside, feeling nature blessing me. Little chipmunks had a home nearby and made their way tentatively toward me, hoping for some treat. Nature there was deep, alive and beautiful, an outdoor cathedral that surrounded and uplifted me. I sighed with gratitude and peace.

Whether man-made, or God-made, beauty, peace, and God go together.

We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. - Romans 5: 2b

PRAYER: Loving God, Open our hearts to the man-made and God-made beauty around us today. Help us to find Your peace there. Amen.

WRITTEN BY | LYNN KINSEY
MEMBER

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2026

My seven grandchildren are among the greatest blessings of my life. Each one brings a special feeling of peace and always brings joy to my heart. Through their kindness, growing faith, and good values, I see beautiful reminders of God's love. Time spent with them gives me a deep sense of peace, gratitude, and wholeness.

Being their grandmother is both a joy and a sacred responsibility. I hope to be a steady spiritual bridge between generations—sharing the wisdom I have gained, praying for them, encouraging them, and loving them unconditionally. More than anything, I want my life to show them what faith looks like in everyday words and actions.

Through the love I share with them, biblical peace becomes something I can see and feel. It is present in the bond we nurture, the faith we pass forward, and the love that connects our family from one generation to the next.

This peace is especially clear when my grandchildren sit beside me in church. I cannot help but smile, and their presence fills my heart with comforting peace.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, Thank You for the precious gift of children. Surround them with Your love, guide them in faith, and help them grow in kindness and wisdom. Teach us to encourage all children, pray for them, and be a faithful example. May our time together continue to fill our hearts with peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

WRITTEN BY | JILL HEWITT
DEACON

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2026

Today there is probably a lot of gifts, phone calls, excited kids, and tired parents who are all glad they made it to today. There may be wrapping paper scattered across the floor, dishes piling up in the kitchen, and things that didn't go quite as planned. But today there is also peace. Peace because a Savior has been born. I have always heard those words from the Angels proclaiming there is "peace on earth" as if it is something we are still waiting for. And if we are talking about a time when there is no war, no hate, no violence, then we are still waiting.

But when I started to think about that first Christmas, I realized all those things were still happening. The Israelites were living under Roman occupation. The Savior of the world was laying in a barn. Mary and Joseph were far from home, and everyone in the Christmas story had their lives turned upside down. That does not sound much like peace.

But maybe it is. Maybe peace is found in a God who shows up in the middle of everything to bring a different kind of peace. Not a peace that makes every problem disappear, but a peace that makes us whole. The peace that reminds us it is about grace, not perfection. A peace that doesn't depend on everything going according to plan, but on the promise that God is with us. That is the good news of Christmas. We don't have to wait until the world is peaceful, our relationships are perfect, or our lives are finally in order to experience the peace of Christ. Because today in the middle of all the joy, exhaustion, celebration, and even the uncertainty of life, peace has come.

May the peace of Christ be with you today and always.

PRAYER: Jesus, Thank you for coming to bring peace into our lives. Amen.

WRITTEN BY | REV. KELSY GUNTHER
PASTOR

Mission del Sol
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH