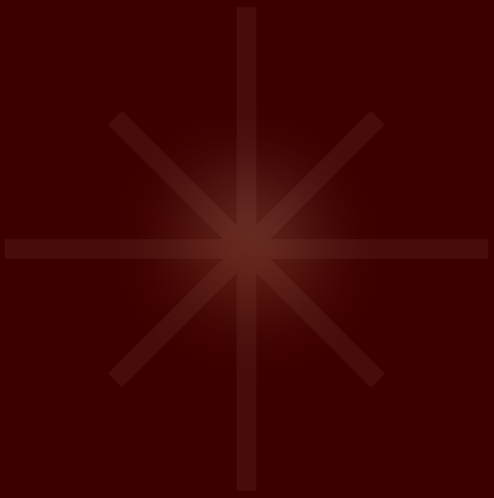


Closer Than We Knew

Hidden In Plain Sight

ADVENT 2026



Heaven came to earth, but not in the way anyone imagined.

Two disciples walked the road to Emmaus, trying to make sense of a story that hadn't turned out the way they'd hoped. Jesus was the One who would redeem Israel, but He had been crucified; everything seemed lost.

What they didn't realize was that Jesus was walking right beside them on that road.

He listened to their disappointment. He opened the Scriptures. They sat at the table together. When Jesus broke the bread, their eyes were opened.

He had been there all along.

From the manger to the cross to an ordinary table in Emmaus, God was doing something far greater than anyone could have imagined.

This Advent, you're invited to consider the ways our expectations shape what we see. To remember that God is present and at work, even when life unfolds differently than we'd hoped.

And perhaps, in the ordinary moments and unexpected places of our own stories, we'll discover what those disciples discovered around the table.

Jesus was closer than they knew.

And maybe He's closer than we know, too.

Hidden in PlainSight

CONTENTS CURATED BY FAITHCOV STAFF

ADVENT 2026

This guide walks you through Advent and down the road to Emmaus with two travelers who find themselves walking alongside a familiar stranger.

These weekly devotions, songs, and connection events are brought to you by Faith Covenant Church Staff and Leaders.

We invite you to ponder and enjoy!

SCAN THE QR CODE TO LISTEN TO OUR ADVENT 2026 PLAYLIST

Week 1: HOPE

Read: Luke 24:13–24

Songs:
1. **Lilies & Sparrows** by Jess Ray
2. **Your Home** by Blacknall Arts

A poem on Hope
by David Gate

Hope is nocturnal
It comes from the light
But does not belong there
Preferring the darkness
To sharp brightness
For it has no purpose
Where hearts will believe
Happily what they see
So it makes a home
In the deep shadows

When Hope Feels Lost

From Anthony Apeles

When the disciples were walking on the road to Emmaus, they were carrying broken dreams. Jesus had been crucified, and their hopes seemed buried with Him. As they walked away from Jerusalem, they believed the story was over.

What they didn't realize was that Jesus was walking beside them.

We all experience moments when hope feels lost. A prayer goes unanswered, a relationship changes, or a difficult circumstance leaves us disappointed and confused. Like the disciples, we often focus on what we can't understand rather than on what God may still be doing.

The Emmaus story reminds us that God's plans are bigger than our perspective. What seemed like defeat was actually the beginning of the greatest victory in history. Even when we cannot see Him, Jesus is present, guiding us and working on our behalf. When hope feels lost, trust that God is still writing your story.

Prayer: Lord, when disappointment clouds our vision, help us to trust that You are near. Renew our hope and remind us that Your plans are always greater than we can see. Amen.

Practice: Take a Walk

Go for a walk alone or with a friend, and reflect on something that hasn't been what you expected. Ponder how Jesus might be walking with you in ways you haven't seen.

Hope Makes Room

CONNECT

Sumner Santa Parade. Saturday 12/5 3:30-4:30 PM

What if hope isn't only about waiting for something better to happen, but recognizing that Jesus is already present in what's happening now?

The life we're living right now isn't just a waiting room for the life we're hoping for... and that doesn't invalidate our current grief or disappointment. It makes room for it.

Hope makes room for both our present reality and the nearness of Jesus. Because hope isn't just about what God might do someday.

It's trusting that He is present and at work right here, right now.

Reflection: Where might you be waiting for God to change your circumstances, when He's inviting you to experience His presence within them?

He Opened the Scripture

Luke 24:25-27

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken!
Wasn't it necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and enter into his glory?"
Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted for them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures.

Reflection: Where might God be inviting me to make peace visible this week?

Songs:
1. **Farther Along** by Josh Garrels
2. **Let There Be Peace** by Matt Maher

Week 2: Peace

From Dean Soule

In a contentious world, followers of Jesus are called to be messengers of peace. But what if we don't know where to find it? We may know that peace is more than "serenity" or avoiding problems. Peace is God putting broken things back together. Peace and true justice often look alike.

Each year, Advent challenges us to ask: "where can we find that kind of peace?"

After Jesus's death, on the road to Emmaus, two of Jesus's followers are grieving his death. Peace seems far away.
Then, Jesus himself walks alongside them, but they don't recognize him. Jesus shows them that the Messiah dying and rising again was God's plan all along. This was, of course, still confusing to them. But a little later, Jesus reveals himself to those disciples, and the peace that felt elusive would break through the confusion.
Perhaps we are like those disciples now. We hear the words of peace but struggle to believe. The promise of Advent is that when despair and confusion surround us, the peace that seems so far away will be revealed. Indeed, we will see that the Prince of Peace himself has been walking next to us all along.

Peace doesn't require understanding

CONNECT

Parents Night Off, Friday 12/11 5-9 PM

We often think peace will come when we finally understand. When the questions are answered, the uncertainty is gone, and life starts making sense again.
But what if peace doesn't require understanding?

There will always be things we can't explain, situations we can't resolve, and questions that don't have easy answers. And sometimes, the harder we try to figure everything out, the more restless we become. Jesus doesn't promise us all the answers. He offers us Himself.

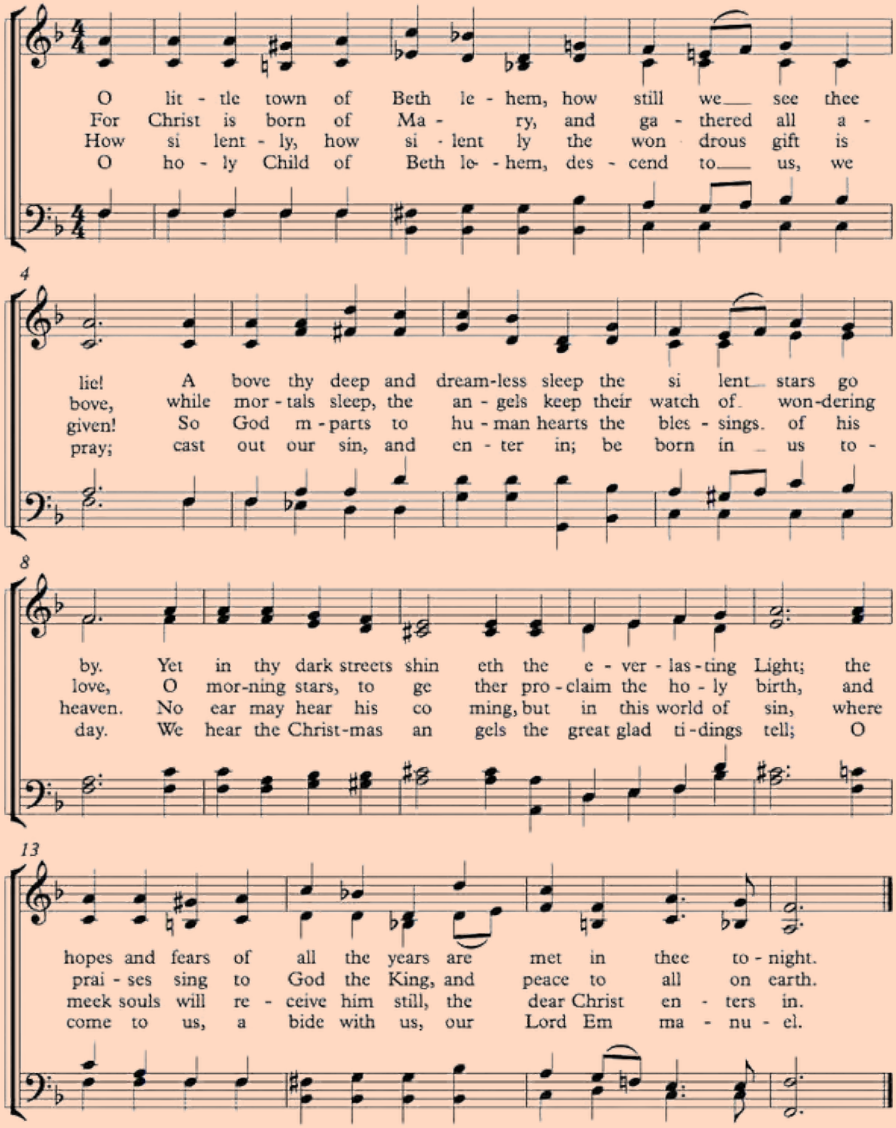
Maybe that's what it means to experience the peace that surpasses understanding. Not that our questions disappear or our circumstances suddenly make sense, but that we can rest in the presence of Someone we trust, even when we don't know what comes next.

We don't have to understand everything to be held by the One who does.

Reflection: What would it look like to stop searching for an explanation and simply rest in the presence of Jesus?

O Little Town Of Bethlehem

Phillips Brooks — Lewis H. Redner



©MichaelKravchuk.com

Week 3: Joy

Luke 24: 28-32

Practice: This week, when something makes you smile, laugh, or pause in wonder, resist the urge to rush past it. Stay in that moment a little longer. Take a moment to thank Jesus for his nearness.

Songs:
1. **Ordinary** by Hannah Kerr
2. **Christmas Morning** by The McClures

Week 3: Stay With Us

From Lynda Randolph

As the disciples in this passage are walking to their village after the resurrection, Jesus (though they did not recognize him yet) has been opening the scriptures and prophecies to them in a way that demonstrates that Jesus had always been the plan for our redemption. He has conquered death, but his disciples struggle to believe. They ask him to stay with them for a meal to continue the conversation and Jesus reveals himself to them fully.
They come to understand that his birth, life, death, and resurrection usher in mercy, forgiveness, salvation, and joy.

Joy is a soul deep knowing that God is in control–even in our darkest moments or toughest circumstances. Joy is far different from the fleeting and fickle happiness. Joy comes when we truly bathe ourselves in the truth of scripture, God's story of redemption, and our own acceptance of the gift that is salvation through Jesus. Joy is available despite our circumstances because we know how our stories will end–with Jesus in heaven.
This holiday season, choose to cultivate joy by asking Jesus to stay with you. Find him and the joy he gives in the scriptures, in prayer, and in communion with others. His joy is the real gift.

"Joy is not something we achieve. It's something that interrupts us."
- Kate Bowler

CONNECT

Family Service followed by Cookies & Carols
12/13 @ 10 AM

Joy has a way of interrupting us.

It can show up unexpectedly, right in the middle of grief, uncertainty, or an otherwise ordinary day.

Sometimes it's laughter that catches us off guard, a moment of unexpected kindness, or something beautiful that makes us stop and take notice.

And maybe that's one of the ways Jesus reminds us of His nearness.

Maybe joy isn't the absence of sorrow, but a beautiful interruption that reminds us sorrow isn't the whole story.

Reflection: What are your ordinary moments of joy this Christmas, and have you seen Jesus in them?

Their Eyes Were Opened

Luke 24:30-35

Reflection: The disciples' encounter with Jesus changed what they did next. This week, consider how your time with others might leave them feeling more loved, encouraged, or hopeful.

Songs:
1. **The Day the Lord Has Made** by Jess Ray
2. **Come to the Table** by Sidewalk Prophets
3. **Who Would Have Dreamed** by Sovereign Grace

Week 4: LOVE

From Kristal Locke

After Jesus' death and the women's amazing resurrection report from angels, Cleopas and another were on the road to Emmaus, downcast. They thought power and redemption did not look like suffering and defeat. Jesus joins them, but they do not recognize him. He called them foolish and slow to believe what the prophets had spoken, yet they asked him to stay with them.

Then Jesus enters in. Like entering Mary's womb to physically come into the world, he enters their dwelling place. *"He was at the table with them. He took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them."* The guest becomes the host.
He uses the simple, ordinary elements of bread and wine to explain the significance of his sacrificial death. Then *"Their eyes were open and they recognized him."* Then he vanishes. They immediately return to Jerusalem saying, *"It's true! The Lord has risen."*
You are made in the image of God. If you believe in the risen Lord, Jesus, you are filled with the Holy Spirit. When you join tables this Christmas season, will people see Christ in you through your love, gratitude and generosity?

1 John 4: 12
"If we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us."

CONNECT

Christmas Eve Candle Light Gathering 12/24 @ 4 PM

God, open our eyes to the ways Your love is woven into the everyday moments of our lives. In the people we encounter, the conversations we share, and the quiet kindness we so easily overlook.

Help us remember that the moments we consider small are never insignificant to You. That a listening ear, a seat at the table, a meal shared, or a hand extended in compassion can become beautiful places where Your love is made known.

Teach us to love without needing recognition or something remarkable to show for it. Help us be generous with our attention, patient with one another, and willing to make room for people whose lives look different from our own.

As we celebrate Your coming this Christmas, help us remember that this is how You chose to enter our world. Not from a distance, but right into the middle of our ordinary, messy, beautiful human lives.

You came near. You stayed near. And You are still near.
Amen.

Hidden In Plain Sight

John 1:1-14 , Luke 2

Reflection
Where have you seen God's care in an ordinary moment lately?

Christmas Eve Prayer
Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus to be with us. Help us slow down, see where You're at work, and trust You in the waiting. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Songs:
1. **Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery** by The Grey Havens
2. **Come and See** by DumbRocks

Christmas Eve:

From Shannon Unger

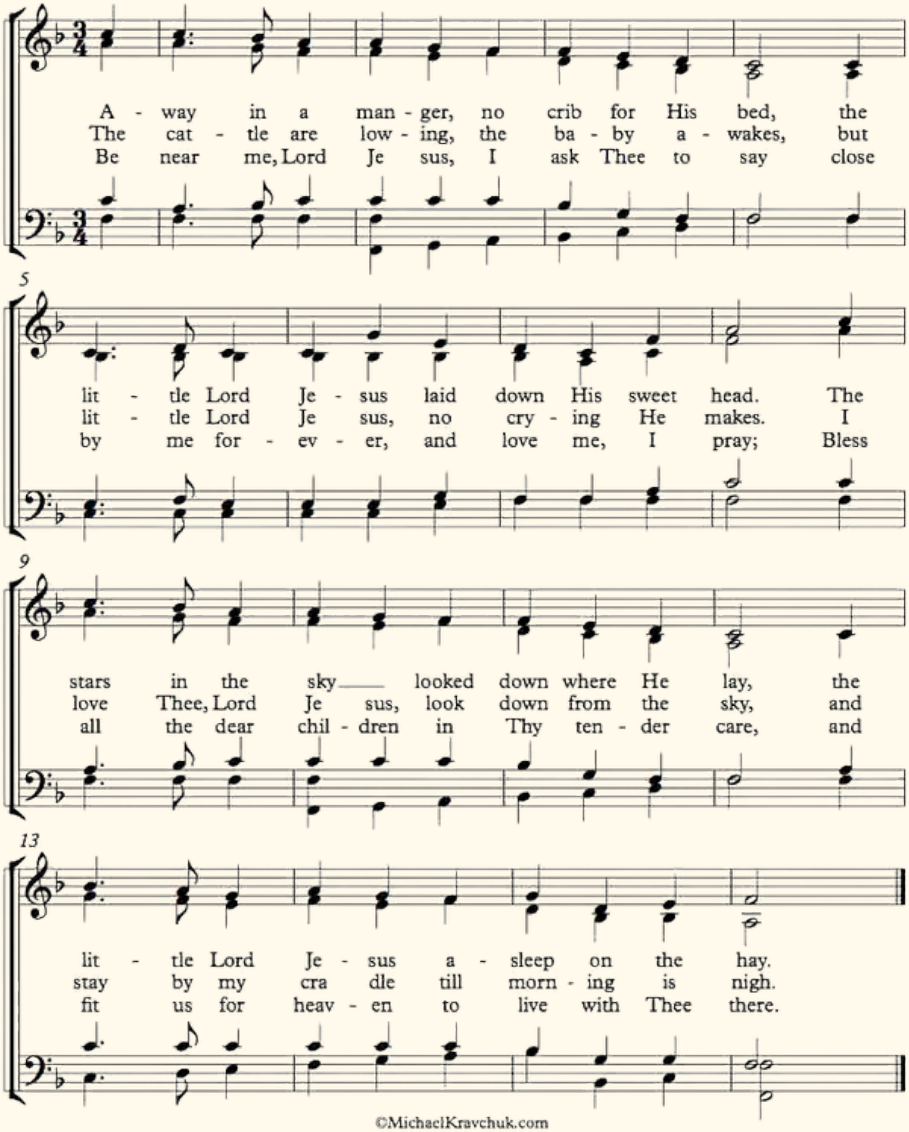
I love that when God sent Jesus into the world, some of the first people to hear the news were shepherds out doing what they did every night.
They hurried to Bethlehem and found Jesus just as the angel had told them, wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. I wonder how many people went about their evening without realizing who had come.

Hidden in plain sight.

John tells us that the word became flesh and dwelt among us. I keep coming back to those words, **among us.** God loved us enough to come near.
I know how easily I can get caught up in what needs to get done, especially at this time of year. And sometimes I'm so focused on how I hope God will answer a prayer that I miss the ways He's already caring for me. This Christmas, I want to slow down long enough to notice. Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us, even in the most ordinary parts of our day.

Away In A Manger

James Murray



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They Returned Different

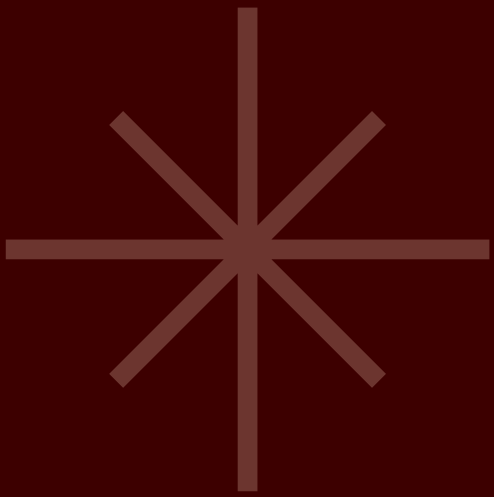
Luke 24:33-35

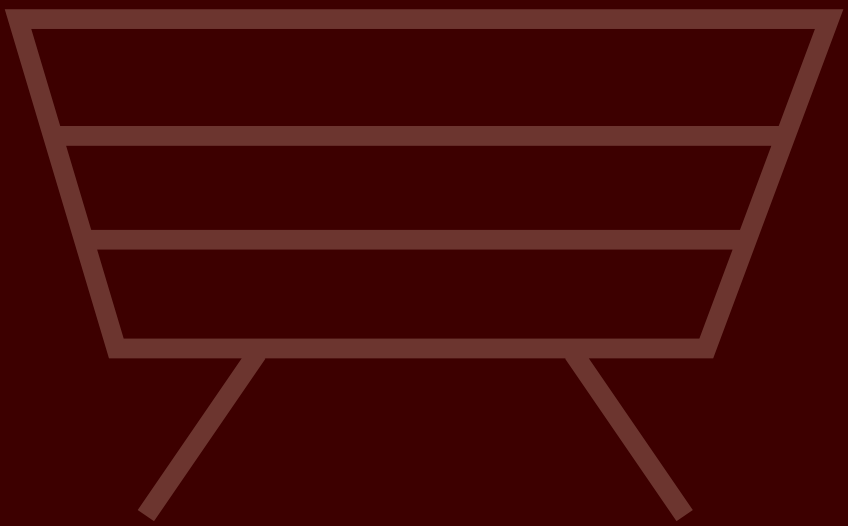
Songs:
1. **May You Find a Light** by The Brilliance
2. **Behold the Lamb** by Andrew Peterson

Week 5

From Chrissy Cuellar

Depending on terrain, it will take the average person a little over 2 hours to walk 7 miles. I enjoy a nice hike, but even I would hesitate to make that journey twice in a single afternoon.
After the two believers who encountered Jesus on the road to Emmaus recognized him, Scripture says they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. It was likely dark by that point, since the day was “far spent” when they arrived (Luke 24:29), but none of that mattered anymore.
They had seen and spoken to the one that had been killed, yet now lived.
How different each journey on the same trail must have felt: one plodding and dreary, speaking in low tones of what had been lost...the second, footweary but thrilling with hopeful energy.
They returned different, though nothing about the journey had changed. The path hadn’t grown any easier—in fact, traveling at night was far more dangerous. Yet everything had shifted.
Where is God’s presence hiding in the ordinary? Where do we nearly miss it because of our routines - seeing only what we expect to? May we find God in those moments where even though nothing changes, everything does.





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