



# **Advent Devotional**

Dear Friends in Christ,

I pray that this Advent you are able engage deeper in a relationship with your God who loves you so much that he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Lord and Savior!

I encourage you to create some space in your home to worship, to experience family devotional time, light the Advent Candles, to read scripture, to pray, and to write to God. Share with God your hopes, dreams, and fears. Invite Christ to come, praying this holy prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus, Come." In every moment throughout this season when you need to remember how much God loves you, whisper this as a breath prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus, Come" and actively experience that God is with us.

This devotional is meant to draw you closer to God. Often, we rush our prayers (*Dear God, Thank you. Amen.*) While there is no need for our prayers to drone on and on, if we slow down to write to God, we may just have more time to reflect. Perhaps each member of your family takes time to write a response. Invite your children to write or dictate thoughts to you. If you are comfortable, hang your letters up in your home as a reminder of God's active presence.

Note how each day, you grow more comfortable sharing your life and your heart. You may find you truly feel drawn closer (to each other and to God) by the end of this Advent Season. Perhaps, God becomes more real as you write letters. My hope is that your faith becomes more incarnational as we celebrate the miracle of the incarnation together!

In God's Love,

Pastor Beth

## First Sunday of Advent -Sunday, November 29th

Pray together:

**Come, Lord, Jesus Come. Come into our home. Come into our hearts. As we light the Advent candle now, set our hearts on fire for you. We seek you. We want to know you. We pray right now, that you will tear down the barriers in our lives so we may come closer to you, not just in this Advent season, but every day. We hold to the hope and truth Lord Jesus, that you seek us, you want us, and you love us. AMEN.**

Read Isaiah 64:1-9

Isaiah 64:1-9

New Revised Standard Version

64 O that you would tear open the heavens  
and come down,  
so that the mountains would quake at your  
presence—  
2 as when fire kindles brushwood  
and the fire causes water to boil—  
to make your name known to your  
adversaries,  
so that the nations might tremble at your  
presence!  
3 When you did awesome deeds that we did  
not expect,  
you came down, the mountains quaked at  
your presence.  
4 From ages past no one has heard,  
no ear has perceived,  
no eye has seen any God besides you,  
who works for those who wait for him.  
5 You meet those who gladly do right,

those who remember you in your ways.  
But you were angry, and we sinned;  
because you hid yourself we transgressed.  
6 We have all become like one who is  
unclean,  
and all our righteous deeds are like a  
filthy cloth.  
We all fade like a leaf,  
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us  
away.  
7 There is no one who calls on your name,  
or attempts to take hold of you;  
for you have hidden your face from us,  
and have delivered us into the hand of our  
iniquity.  
8 Yet, O Lord, you are our Father;  
we are the clay, and you are our potter;  
we are all the work of your hand.  
9 Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord,  
and do not remember iniquity forever.  
Now consider, we are all your people.

**Write a letter to God here or in a journal your own words using Isaiah 64 as a template:**

Dear God,

I need you to come... into my life.

Tear open \_\_\_\_\_(where are the places you need God to come most in your life?--  
heart, finances, relationships, discipleship, etc).

I remember when you did awesome deeds in my life that I did not expect.

*Name the signs of God you have experienced:*

No one is as great as you are Lord.

God, I confess...

*What are the things you need to let go of? What are things you are holding on to? What are the regrets, sin, shame you are afraid to talk about? Give it all to God.*

*Jesus comes, not in spite of these, but to lift your burden, to heal your pain, to forgive you from sin, and free you from shame. Give it all to God.*

God, I am here because you love me. I am the clay and you are the potter.

I am the work of your hand.

Dear God- help me to see the way you see. Help me to love, like you love.

You came for me.

Let me live for you.

I am yours.

I am your child,

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*Your name*

## Second Sunday of Advent - December 6th

Pray Together:

**Come, Lord, Jesus Come. You are the source of our hope, comfort, and peace. Now in this moment, prepare our homes, our families, our hearts to receive you. Give us boldness to know that your word stands forever. Give us the peace to know you, lift us up in strength. Lift us now, and take all of our fears. You gather us in and love us. As we light this candle prepare our lives to welcome your peace. Amen.**

Read Isaiah 40: 1-11

**40** Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God.

<sup>2</sup> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her  
that she has served her term,  
that her penalty is paid,  
that she has received from the Lord's hand  
double for all her sins.

<sup>3</sup> A voice cries out:  
"In the wilderness prepare the way of  
the Lord,  
make straight in the desert a highway for  
our God.

<sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.

<sup>5</sup> Then the glory of the Lord shall be  
revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

<sup>6</sup> A voice says, "Cry out!"  
And I said, "What shall I cry?"  
All people are grass,  
their constancy is like the flower of the  
field.

<sup>7</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades,  
when the breath of the Lord blows upon  
it;  
surely the people are grass.

<sup>8</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades;  
but the word of our God will stand  
forever.

<sup>9</sup> Get you up to a high mountain,  
O Zion, herald of good tidings;<sup>[a]</sup>  
lift up your voice with strength,

O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,<sup>[b]</sup>  
lift it up, do not fear;  
say to the cities of Judah,  
"Here is your God!"

<sup>10</sup> See, the Lord God comes with might,  
and his arm rules for him;  
his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.

<sup>11</sup> He will feed his flock like a shepherd;  
he will gather the lambs in his arms,  
and carry them in his bosom,  
and gently lead the mother sheep.

<sup>12</sup> Who has measured the waters in the  
hollow of his hand  
and marked off the heavens with a span,  
enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure,  
and weighed the mountains in scales  
and the hills in a balance?

<sup>13</sup> Who has directed the spirit of the Lord,  
or as his counselor has instructed him?

<sup>14</sup> Whom did he consult for his  
enlightenment,  
and who taught him the path of justice?  
Who taught him knowledge,  
and showed him the way of  
understanding?

<sup>15</sup> Even the nations are like a drop from a  
bucket,  
and are accounted as dust on the scales;  
see, he takes up the isles like fine dust.

<sup>16</sup> Lebanon would not provide fuel enough,  
nor are its animals enough for a burnt  
offering.

<sup>17</sup> All the nations are as nothing before him;  
they are accounted by him as less than  
nothing and emptiness.

18 To whom then will you liken God,  
or what likeness compare with him?  
19 An idol? —A workman casts it,  
and a goldsmith overlays it with gold,  
and casts for it silver chains.  
20 As a gift one chooses mulberry wood<sup>[c]</sup>  
—wood that will not rot—  
then seeks out a skilled artisan  
to set up an image that will not topple.  
21 Have you not known? Have you not  
heard?  
Has it not been told you from the  
beginning?  
Have you not understood from the  
foundations of the earth?  
22 It is he who sits above the circle of the  
earth,  
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;  
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,  
and spreads them like a tent to live in;  
23 who brings princes to naught,  
and makes the rulers of the earth as  
nothing.  
24 Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,  
scarcely has their stem taken root in the  
earth,  
when he blows upon them, and they wither,  
and the tempest carries them off like  
stubble.

25 To whom then will you compare me,  
or who is my equal? says the Holy One.  
26 Lift up your eyes on high and see:  
Who created these?  
He who brings out their host and numbers  
them,  
calling them all by name;  
because he is great in strength,  
mighty in power,  
not one is missing.  
27 Why do you say, O Jacob,  
and speak, O Israel,  
“My way is hidden from the Lord,  
and my right is disregarded by my God”?  
28 Have you not known? Have you not  
heard?  
The Lord is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He does not faint or grow weary;  
his understanding is unsearchable.  
29 He gives power to the faint,  
and strengthens the powerless.  
30 Even youths will faint and be weary,  
and the young will fall exhausted;  
31 but those who wait for the Lord shall  
renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like  
eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.

**Write a letter to God here or in a journal your own words using Isaiah 40 as a template:**

Dear God,

You speak comfort to me, but it is hard to hear your comfort amid the cacophony of chaos in the world.

There are so many sounds, worries, and distractions that demand my attention. I feel worried about (*list your worries and give them over to the Lord*)

The noise of my worries are often overwhelming.

Dear God, help me turn my worries into worship. Help my voice to cry out to you. I want to be prepared to live in your peace. *How can God prepare your heart for a deeper relationship with Jesus?*

There are many things changing in the world right now. "The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of God will stand forever."

I want to rely on you, Lord. You love me. You sent Jesus. You are with me.

*What gets in the way of relying on God? Who do you trust? Who do you listen to? How can you listen to God's guidance?*

I am unsure about how things will go and what path to take. Straighten my path and make my way clear. *Talk/Write to God about some of the unknowns in your life. Ask for direction for decisions.*

Dear God, help me see that the way you have for me is not hidden. You, Lord never dismiss me or disregard me. Help me know you and see you.

*Refer to Isaiah 40: 28-31- What are the ways you have known God? What are the ways you have heard God? How do you see the everlasting work of God in the world? In your life? Be specific. In your own life, how has God given power to you? When have you felt your strength renewed, not of your own energy, but from the Lord?*

Whenever I am afraid of what is ahead of me and whenever I am weary, I will wait for you Lord. Be with me in this waiting. As I light candles and pray. As I see the candlelight flicker before me, let this light show me that you are with me even as I wait.

Love,

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*Your Name*

## Third Sunday of Advent - December 13

Pray Together

**Come Lord, Jesus, Come. Be with us now as we pause to spend time in worship. We pray that right now we will invite you to bind up our broken hearts and to release us from the pain we hold onto that keeps us captive in shame, sadness, and destruction. Raise us up and repair us with the resilience only you can make possible. You deliver us Lord! As we light the Advent Candles today, give us the words to acknowledge who you are and all you are doing in our lives! Amen.**

Read Isaiah 61: 1-4; 8-11

The Good News of Deliverance

61 The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
because the Lord has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the  
oppressed,  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint  
spirit.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the Lord, to display his  
glory.  
4 They shall build up the ancient ruins,  
they shall raise up the former  
devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.  
8 For I the Lord love justice,  
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;

I will faithfully give them their recompense,  
and I will make an everlasting covenant  
with them.  
9 Their descendants shall be known among  
the nations,  
and their offspring among the peoples;  
all who see them shall acknowledge  
that they are a people whom the Lord has  
blessed.  
10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,  
my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for he has clothed me with the garments of  
salvation,  
he has covered me with the robe of  
righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a  
garland,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her  
jewels.  
11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it  
to spring up,  
so the Lord God will cause righteousness  
and praise  
to spring up before all the nations.

**Write a letter to God here or in a journal your own words using Isaiah 61 as a template:**

Dear God,

You have come to this world to save me.

You became incarnate because you love me.

You have called me to follow you.

You send me to share the good news of your saving grace and mercy.

Dear God, you sent Jesus:

*-To Bind up my broken heart-- Write to God and share all the ways your heart feels broken right now...*

*-To Proclaim liberty when I feel captive-- Write down the ways you feel stuck in life. What are some of the barriers you face each day? What holds you back? What walls have been built up over the years? Where do you need to be set free?*

*-To Comfort me when I mourn- How has God/ is God bringing you comfort in the times you are sad and grieving? Be specific as you recount and become more aware of God with you bringing you comfort.*

*-To Provide for me in every need- How is and how has God provided for you?*

-To Give me gladness and joy instead of grief- *How is Jesus bringing Joy to your life? If there was a garland or a banner of gladness hanging in your home- what would it say?*

To Build up, raise up, and repair-- *What ways does the Lord build you up? Who has God put in your life to raise your spirits, to help you recover, and to repair your spirit when you are hurting?*

Dear God, you do all this and more in my life. I want to tell the world about you. I'm not always sure if all the world is ready to hear me. But, right now I commit to sharing all that you are doing to bless my life with two people.

I will tell \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ what you have done for me Jesus.

I love you Lord!

Love,

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Your name*

## The Fourth Sunday of Advent -- Sunday, December 20

Pray Together:

**Come Lord Jesus, Come. Build my life Lord Jesus into a life that is ready to serve you. Forgive me, when I focus on the things that I want rather than what you want Lord Jesus. Give me clarity to see what you are calling me to do and the wisdom to know when you lead me, and the grace to accept when you equip me. Make me ready to respond with willingness. Let me say, "Here I am" and not, "But Lord, I want instead..." You Lord, are the one who gives the instructions. Give me the discipline to follow. Amen.**

Read 2 Samuel 7: 1-11,16

God's Covenant with David

7 Now when the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, 2 the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." 3 Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you." 4 But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: 5 Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? 6 I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. 7 Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why

have you not built me a house of cedar?" 8 Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; 9 and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. 10 And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, 11 from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. 16 Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

**Write a letter to God here or in a journal your own words using 2 Samuel 7: 1-11 as a template:**

Dear God, Here I am writing to you because I am seeking you. I don't want to seek glory. I don't want to seek riches. I want to know you.

Sometimes I make plans and I try to masquerade my own plans as yours. *Do you ever try to convince yourself that something you want is what God wants? Read over 2 Samuel 7: 5-7 Are you trying to build something that isn't what God has asked for?*

Sometimes, I want to be noticed or to have shiny things because I compare myself to others. *Why do you do the things you do? Want the things you want? Where does your drive and motivation come from?*

Dear God, free me from the desire to be well-liked, to be noticed, to be understood, or to have others agree with me.... *Who do you worry about impressing? Write it down to God, hold nothing back. This is a safe place for conversation- just you and God. Acknowledging the pressure you feel and the people who cause worry in your life.*

Help me Lord, to know what really matters. I cannot please everyone. I will not fulfill the wants of everyone. Being a servant and saying yes to you, is what true greatness is really about. Humble me and help me to serve you Jesus, my Savior.

*Reflect upon this quote Dr. Roberta Bondi shares in her book "To Love as God Loves":*

*"Humility as the early monastics describe it has nothing to do with passivity, nor anything to do with deliberately cultivating a poor self-image. Being a doormat is not being humble, nor is giving up the self in order to serve the needs, desires and whims of another person who is not God.*

*Humility is not sniveling, nor is it daydreaming gentle thoughts while the world's violence goes on around it...[Humility] calls for the renunciation of all deep attachments to what the world holds dear: goods, social advancement, the satisfaction of appetites at the expense of others, the right to dominate others in any personal relationship.*

*But if humility is hard, it is also powerful. Humility has to do with taking and accepting radical responsibility for the things that happen in life."*

*Where do you need to experience humility in your life right now? What does humility feel like to you? What does being humble mean to you?*

Humbly your servant,

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*Your name*

## Christmas Eve- Thursday, December 24

Pray

**Come, Lord Jesus Come. Tonight, we light the Christ candle in the center of our advent circle. May the light of Jesus fill the darkness in our lives. We pray that we will make room for Jesus Christ to be in the center of our lives. This year has been a weary journey trudging through murky darkness. The nation has experienced loss like none other. Over 250,000 people have died from COVID-19 alone. Death, destruction, disturbance, and disunity-- all seem to be adding to the darkness around us. We need your light, Lord Jesus. Help us know that in the midst of loss, you are the God who multiplies joy. You are the burden breaker, miracle worker, and way maker. We want to know you Jesus. As we light the Christ candle help us to know that you are our: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace, Amen.**

Read Isaiah 9: 2-7

2 The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined.

3 You have multiplied the nation,  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as people exult when dividing plunder.

4 For the yoke of their burden,  
and the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

5 For all the boots of the tramping warriors  
and all the garments rolled in blood

shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

6 For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 His authority shall grow continually,  
and there shall be endless peace  
for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time onward and forevermore.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

**Write a letter to God here or in a journal your own words using 2 Samuel 7: 1-11 as a template:**

Dear God,

There are so many moments in my life that I have walked in darkness. Sometimes it is because that is all I could see, other times I have chosen to walk in darkness, rather than pursue the path of your light. Help me choose to live in your light, even when, especially when the darkness appears to be so great. *What are the dark places in your life that compete for your attention (addictions, fears, anxieties)? What choices do you have to choose light over darkness (Example spend time with family, caring for your well-being or be consumed by binge watching TV, playing video games, overworking)?*

Lord, you gave us Jesus to be our all in all.

God you are my Wonderful Counselor (*What does it mean to you to call God your Wonderful Counselor?*)

God, you my Mighty God (*What does it mean to say that God is mighty in your life? How? Where? Specifically, why does this make a difference?*)

God, you are my Everlasting Father (*Many of us have wonderful parents, but not everyone grows up with loving and supportive parents. What is it like for you to call God Everlasting Father? Try saying it out loud. Break the words apart-- What is meant by God is Everlasting? What does it mean that God is Father? How do these names connect to your soul?*)

God you are my Prince of Peace. (*Does peace seem like a far-off concept or is it something you can actually experience? What does peace feel like for you? What is a peaceful place? What is required for you to experience peace? When was the last time you felt complete peace? Reflect on the ways Jesus brings peace to your life.*)

Dear Jesus, you are my Lord and Savior. I place my whole life under your authority. You established me just as you have established your kingdom and you will uphold me, lead me and guide me. I need nothing more. Thank you for coming into the world for us, Jesus! Thank you for being in my life!

Gratefully Yours,

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*Your Name*