



FaithWestwood UMC

Study Guide 2025

This Advent season*, we will celebrate how **Love came down at Christmas**, searching the psalms for the longing and anticipation of the One to bring light and salvation to the world. *In case of inclement weather during Advent, a “pocket” online message is being recorded, based upon Luke 1:46-55 (study guide questions for 12/14).

This guide may be utilized by FaithGroups and/or Individuals.

If you would like to connect with a FaithGroup on-site and/or online, please check out the latest **GROW Catalog** on our website faithwestwood.com

Advent Schedule / look for **highlighted** information at the end of each lesson

Be Transformational Advent Challenge / look at the **end** of each lesson

Family Activities / see **INSERT**

Mission Offerings & Activities / look for the **“GOLDEN”** banner on **back page**



© 2025, Study Guide by Rev. Cindi Stewart for FaithWestwood
United Methodist Church, November 30 to December 28, 2025
Mission Offerings & Activities by Director of Caring Ministries Vikki O'Hara
Family Activities (insert) by Director of Family Ministry Leah Dinoso

Week of November 30 / First Sunday in Advent

Hope of All the Ends of the Earth

Message Focus: The psalmist proclaims the **hope** of being in relationship with the LORD God. How do you and I join in **hope** for what is to come for the Advent season?

Psalm 65 (NIV) / For the director of music. A psalm of David. A song.

¹ Praise awaits you, our God, in Zion; to you our vows will be fulfilled.

² You who answer prayer, to you all people will come.

³ When we were overwhelmed by sins, you forgave our transgressions.

⁴ Blessed are those you choose and bring near to live in your courts!

We are filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple.

⁵ You answer us with awesome and righteous deeds, God our Savior,
the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas,

⁶ who formed the mountains by your power, having armed yourself with strength,

⁷ who stilled the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves,
and the turmoil of the nations.

⁸ The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders; where morning dawns,
where evening fades, you call forth songs of joy.

⁹ You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God
are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it.

¹⁰ You drench its furrows and level its ridges; you soften it with showers and bless its crops.

¹¹ You crown the year with your bounty, and your carts overflow with abundance.

¹² The grasslands of the wilderness overflow; the hills are clothed with gladness.

¹³ The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with grain;
they shout for joy and sing.

Opening

- Intro: Reflect on the things that bring you **hope** in this season.
- Pray: God of Advent days, fill me with **hope** in this season, drawing me closer to You and to Emmanuel. **AMEN.**

Observing

Background: **Psalms are sacred songs or hymns, prayers, and poems contained in the biblical Book of Psalms and used in Jewish and Christian worship.** The Book of Psalms contains 150 song-prayers written by 10 to 12 authors including King David, King Solomon, Asaph (Levite priest/musician), and other anonymous authors. Themes in the psalms include: **praise & worship / thanksgiving / lamentation & hope / justice & righteousness.**

- Read **Psalm 65:1-4.** As David is **praising God as God of the temple** in these verses, what do you hear about God and the relationship to his people and to David?
- What do these verses suggest about **individual** and/or **corporate worship**?

(Week of November 30)

- Read **Psalm 65:5-8**. In these verses, as David is **praising God as the hope of the entire world**, which “awesome & righteousness deeds” are celebrated through creation?
- As you consider the **entire world**, what is most **awe-inspiring** to you?
- Read **Psalm 65:9-13**. In these verses, as David is **praising God’s creation on the earth**, how does God provide and how do God’s people respond?
- As the psalm concludes, even the **earth rejoices** – what does this look & sound like?

Reflecting

- Looking at the **psalm, which words, phrases, and/or verses** inspire **hope**?
- As we hear about the **rejoicing of heaven & earth**, how does this help us to look forward to the **birth narrative of Jesus**?
- Where do you find that sense of longing for **hope** today in **worship / entire world / creation on earth**?

Sending Forth

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, read and/or sing UMH #204: ♪ **Emmanuel, Emmanuel, his name is called Emmanuel. God with us, revealed in us; his name is called Emmanuel. AMEN.**
- **Be Invitational Advent Challenge:** Reflect/journal on the **hope** you are seeking this Advent season. Find a **prayer partner** for the season in which to share your **hope**!

Advent Special Events this Week

Sunday, November 30 from 3 to 5 pm – Movie: “The Best Gift” (chapel)

Advent Study is available on Mondays from 6 to 8 pm in flex room & chapel.

Wednesday, December 3

9 to 11 am – UWF Christmas Party & Silent Auction

Light breakfast & Sarpy Serenaders & items galore (fellowship hall)

5 to 7 pm – Neighborhood Drive-Thru Food Collection (EAST entrance)

MidWeek Meals from 5:15 to 6:30 pm / Student Ministry MidWeek from 6:30 to 7:45 pm

Saturday, December 6 from 6 to 7:30 pm – Live Nativity (plus Food Collection)

After driving thru the parking lot, enjoy cocoa & cookies in fellowship hall.

Week of December 7 / Holy Communion

Mountains Bring Peace

Message Focus: As the psalmist proclaims sentiments about a righteous king, may God's glorious name be blessed forever! How might you and I anticipate the One who will bring **peace** to the earth?

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 (NIV) / Of Solomon.

¹ Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness.

² May he judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice.

³ May the mountains bring prosperity to the people, the hills the fruit of righteousness.

⁴ May he defend the afflicted among the people
and save the children of the needy; may he crush the oppressor.

⁵ May he endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon, through all generations.

⁶ May he be like rain falling on a mown field, like showers watering the earth.

⁷ In his days may the righteous flourish and prosperity abound till the moon is no more.

¹⁸ Praise be to the Lord God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvelous deeds.

¹⁹ Praise be to his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory.

Amen and Amen.

Opening

- Intro: Reflect on the things that bring you **peace** in this season.
- Pray: God of Advent days, fill me with **peace** in this season, drawing me closer to You and to Emmanuel. **AMEN.**

Observing

- For each section, reflect on the **words / phrases / verses** that point you to **peace**.
- Read **Psalm 72:1-3**. This **psalm** of Solomon prays for **God's reign** to come thru the **reign of the king**. What do you hear are the **qualities of the ideal ruler**?
- Some translations say "**peace**" instead of "**prosperity**" for verse 3 – how might these words be interchangeable from an old testament perspective?
- Read **Psalm 72:4-7**. A **righteous king** was a gift, and the people longed for his reign to endure! What is the king's **agenda** presented in verse 4, and how do verses 5-7 celebrate this **righteous king**?
- Read **Psalm 72:18-19**. As the psalmist praises the Lord God of Israel, how do you imagine the **whole earth** being filled with **his glory**?

Reflecting

- How does this psalm of a Davidic king invite us to look forward to Jesus fulfilling and exceeding the **qualities** of the **King of Kings** and the **Prince of Peace**?
- This psalm repeats the themes of **justice / righteousness / prosperity (peace)** – how did our **faith ancestors long** for these qualities, and how do **Christians long for them today**?

Sending Forth

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, read and/or sing UMH #204: ♪ **Emmanuel**, Emmanuel, his name is called Emmanuel. God with us, revealed in us; his name is called Emmanuel. AMEN.
- **Be Invitational Advent Challenge**: Reflect/journal on what it means for Jesus Christ to be the **King of Kings** and **Prince of Peace** in your life. Write your own **psalm** (song, prayer, or poem) reflecting how Jesus brings **peace** to you and share it.

Advent Special Events this Week

Wednesday, December 10

5 to 7 pm – Neighborhood Drive-Thru Food Collection (EAST entrance)

MidWeek Meals from 5:15 to 6:30 pm

Student Ministry MidWeek from 6:30 to 7:45 pm

Pray for those preparing for the C.A.K.E. Christmas Pageant!

Plan to attend the Christmas Pageant on Sunday, December 14 at 10 am.

Week of December 14 / **10 am ONLY worship**

C.A.K.E. Christmas Pageant

Celebrate Joy and Kindness with our Family Ministry Christmas Pageant and C.A.K.E. (Christmas Acts of Kindness Experiment) + Cake Reception to follow!

***Study Guide* Focus:**

Luke 1:46-55 (NIV) / Mary's Song

⁴⁶ And Mary said:

"My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name.

⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;

he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful

⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors."

(Week of December 14)

Opening

- Intro: Reflect on the things that bring you **joy** in this season.
- Pray: God of Advent days, fill me with **joy** in this season, drawing me closer to You and to Emmanuel. **AMEN.**

Observing

- Background: “**Mary’s Song**” / **Magnificat** offers Christians a beautiful view of what it means to be a **servant of the LORD** and to be praising God for His power, holiness, and mercy.
- Read **Luke 1:46-49**. These verses remind us of **what God has done for Mary**. How does this **anticipate** what **God will do** for the poor, the powerless, and the oppressed of the world?
- Read **Luke 1:50-55**. These verses celebrate the triumph of God’s purposes for all people everywhere through God’s mercy and mighty deeds through **many reversals** of what people might expect – which of these **reversals** are most surprising to you?
- Read **Luke 1:46-55** all at once. Which **words / phrases / verses** inspire you and your **joy** today, and why?

Reflecting

- Reflect on the **longings of Mary** (and others) for the Messiah to arrive. According to the verses, which gifts will Mary’s child bring into the world?
- As Mary **rejoices** because of what she has already experienced, how will her **joy** be made complete in all that is to come?
- Thinking about what **God / Christ / The Holy Spirit** have done for you: when has **your soul** been able to **glorify the Lord**, and when has **your spirit** been able to **rejoice in God your Savior**?

Sending Forth

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, read and/or sing UMH #204: ♪ **Emmanuel, Emmanuel, his name is called Emmanuel. God with us, revealed in us; his name is called Emmanuel. AMEN.**
- **Be Invitational Advent Challenge:** Find a creative way to spread some **joy** among family & friends or even in your neighborhood through writing notes, making goodies or a meal, or offering to provide a service – keep it simple yet **joyful**.

Advent Special Events this Week

Pray for those preparing for Music Sunday on December 21 at 9 & 10:45 am.

Week of December 21 / Christmas Music Sunday

Unfailing Love

Message Focus: The psalmist proclaims how the LORD loves righteousness and justice and how the earth is full of his unfailing love. How might we seek righteousness and justice in our day and wait for the LORD?

Psalm 33:1-9, 20-22 (NIV) /

- ¹ Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him.
² Praise the Lord with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.
³ Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.
⁴ For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.
⁵ The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.
⁶ By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.
⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses.
⁸ Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere him.
⁹ For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.

²⁰ We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.
²¹ In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.
²² May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you.

Opening

- Intro: Reflect on the things that help you feel **love** in this season.
- Pray: God of Advent days, fill me with **love** in this season, drawing me closer to You and to Emmanuel. **AMEN.**

Observing

- Background: Because of **God's unfailing love**, the righteous may place their trust and hope in the LORD God Almighty! *Revised Common Lectionary* abbreviated this suggested psalm; verses 10-12, 13-15, and 16-19 continue to praise God in creation.
- Read **Psalm 33:1-5**. If the **whole earth** is full of God's **unfailing love**, what is the best way for God's people to respond with **praise**? In verses 4-5, how does the psalmist describe **God's Word and deeds**? What does the **Lord love**?
- Read **Psalm 33:6-9**. God's **creation** is praised – how does this part of the passage reflect what we hear in the **creation story** in Genesis 1?
- [Come back to this if time allows, read **verses 10-12, 13-15, and 16-19** and reflect on these aspects of creation].
- Read **Psalm 33:20-22** (concluding verses of this psalm). The people are encouraged to **wait**, to **trust**, and to **put their hope** in God – which attributes of **God** make this possible?
- Take a few moments to list all the **attributes and characteristics of God** listed in our focus verses.

Reflecting

- Of those **attributes and characteristics of God** listed in our focus verses, which ones speak to you the most this day?
- As **God's love** is experienced in many ways, how do you typically **express your praise** for this gift of love: **voice / instruments / poetry / praying / other:** _____?
- The Advent season is about **waiting** for Christ to come (and return) – reflect on this season of waiting and its challenges and benefits.
- Fill-in-the-blank: “**Because of God's unfailing love, I** _____.”

Sending Forth

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, read and/or sing UMH #204: ♪ **Emmanuel, Emmanuel, his name is called Emmanuel. God with us, revealed in us; his name is called Emmanuel. AMEN.**
- **Be Invitational Advent Challenge**: Reflect on how you might **best** share the gift of **love** this Christmas. Certainly consider the kind of gifts that money cannot buy and write them in the space below:

Advent Special Events this Week

Monday, December 22 at **2:30 pm** and/or **6:30 pm** (chapel)

Blue Christmas Prayer & Healing Worship

These worship opportunities offer a safe place to lament the pain and loss that can make traditional holiday celebrations difficult for many reasons.

Christmas Eve, Wednesday, December 24

3 pm, family-focused w/Little Drummer Band & Ralph's latest adventure

5 & 7 pm, traditional Christmas Eve worship with special music

All worship services on Christmas Eve feature in-pew Holy Communion & candles!

★ **Christmas Eve** ★ / 3 pm / 5 pm / 7 pm

Let Heaven Celebrate! Let the Earth Rejoice!

Message Focus in Worship: The psalmist proclaims, “Sing to the LORD a new song!”

The Gospel reveals the birth of our Savior. As **Love Came Down at Christmas**,
how may our hearts sing **Glory to God in the highest heaven?**

Psalm 96 (NIV) /

- ¹ Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.
² Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day.
³ Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.
⁴ For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods.
⁵ For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.
⁶ Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary.
⁷ Ascribe to the Lord, all you families of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
⁸ Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts.
⁹ Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.
¹⁰ Say among the nations, “The Lord reigns.” The world is firmly established,
it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.
¹¹ Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it.
¹² Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.
¹³ Let all creation rejoice before the Lord, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness.

Luke 2:1-14 (NIV) / The Birth of Jesus

² In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register. ⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “**Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.** ¹¹ **Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.** ¹² **This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”**

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ **“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”**

May God add a blessing to the reading and hearing of this Holy Word. **AMEN.**

Devotion

Pray: **God of Christmas Eve, the gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love have been revealed through the birth of Emmanuel. Draw me closer to You this night and always. AMEN.**

Right now, what is a song on repeat on your mind or on your lips? Whether it is a Christmas carol, popular song, or an all-time favorite, this song speaks to you in many ways. Share how it speaks to you!

The psalmist invites us to sing a **new song** to the LORD. The Gospel passage reveals the birth of Jesus and the response of the angels! Thinking about what God has done, what God is doing, and what God will do in your life, a **new** song may be in order – one that praises and glorifies how **Love came down at Christmas** in the form of a baby: **God-with-us / Emmanuel / Jesus**

This Christmas Eve & Day, for what are you praising & glorifying God?
Speak it / Sing it / Celebrate it!

After sharing your **prayer requests**, read and/or sing UMH #204:
♫ **Emmanuel, Emmanuel, his name is called Emmanuel.**
God with us, revealed in us; his name is called Emmanuel.

Be Invitational Christmas Challenge:

Reflect/journal on your experiences on Christmas Eve and Christmas. In this Advent & Christmas season have you experienced any miracles you would like to celebrate? Share them with family members, friends, and/or neighbors.

***BONUS* Week of December 28 / 10 am ONLY worship** (wear festive attire)
Praise the LORD!

Message Focus: The psalmist proclaims praise for all of creation! In these Twelve Days of Christmas, how might you and I offer our praise for the birth of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

Psalm 148 (NIV) /

- ¹ Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights above.
² Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his heavenly hosts.
³ Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars.
⁴ Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies.
⁵ Let them praise the name of the Lord, for at his command they were created,
⁶ and he established them for ever and ever— he issued a decree that will never pass away.

(Week of December 28)

- ⁷ Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths,
⁸ lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding,
⁹ you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars,
¹⁰ wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds,
¹¹ kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth,
¹² young men and women, old men and children.
¹³ Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted;
his splendor is above the earth and the heavens.
¹⁴ And he has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his faithful servants,
of Israel, the people close to his heart. Praise the Lord.

Opening

- Intro: Reflect on the important lessons you have learned in 2025.
- Pray: **God of Christmastide, as 2025 ends and 2026 is drawing near, guide me and lead me to seek Your will. In the name of Emmanuel, AMEN.**

Observing

- Background: Psalm 148 is the third in the group of five Hallelujah psalms which conclude the Book of Psalms. This song-prayer provides an **invitation to all creation and creatures** to join in the **praise** of the LORD.
- Read **Psalm 148:1-6**. These verses represent **praise** from the **heavens**. How are the **heavens** declaring **praise** to the Lord? Again (in this series), how do you see a reflection of the creation story within these verses?
- From verse 6, what **decree** did God issue which will never pass away?
- Read **Psalm 148:7-14**. These verses represent **praise** from the **earth**. As these verses expand the creation story from Genesis 1, which additional details are included?
- From verse 13, God's name alone is **exalted** – what have you learned through **Love came down at Christmas** that helps you to claim this **holy and exalted praise**?

Reflecting

- Through **Advent and Christmas**, how did you experience the **longing** of our faith ancestors through the **psalms** (and additional passages)?
- Reflect on your own sense of **longing** and **waiting** through this sermon series. How did the invitation to offer **praise** encourage you on your journey?

Sending Forth

- After sharing your **prayer requests**, read and/or sing UMH #204: ♪ **Emmanuel, Emmanuel, his name is called Emmanuel. God with us, revealed in us; his name is called Emmanuel. AMEN.**
- **Be Invitational Advent Challenge**: Reflect/journal on your **New Year's resolutions / goals**. Share them with a trusted prayer partner to make them a reality!

Mission Offerings & Activities

11/30 – Thanksgiving Bag Giveaway. Today's mission offering will be used to cover expenses incurred when purchasing supplies needed to meet the pantry's goal of filling 250 Thanksgiving meal bags. **Activity:** Pick up one or more "Christmas Love in Action" baskets at the Family Ministry table, and fill and return by next Sunday, 12/7. (Baskets are available on the orange Family Ministry table and will be gifted to children of our FaithWorks Pantry patrons.)

12/07 – Helping Hands. Today's mission offering supports our Helping Hands Fund which offers short-term financial assistance to people in our own church family facing an unexpected financial need. **Activity:** Remember to bring at least four (or more) items from the green "Four or More" list each month – to help meet the increasing needs of those facing food insecurity in our community.

12/14 – Family Ministry. Give generously to today's mission offering to help support the many seasonal activities of our Family Ministry team. (Pageant, Live Nativity, etc.) **Activity:** Continue adding new and gently used household items for The Furniture Project to the collection tubs in the foyer and inside the west entrance, under the coat rack.

12/21 – FaithWorks Pantry. Today's mission offering will help us purchase items in bulk to keep our pantry shelves stocked during this season of increased food insecurity. **Activity:** Keep the fingers of our dedicated Blanketed with Prayer ministry team members busy crocheting hats, scarves, prayer shawls, and baby blankets. Donations of scrap and new yarn may be added to tubs in the west vestibule any time.

12/24 – Greater Love: FaithWorks Pantry. Give generously to today's mission offering for our **Greater Love Fund**. Today's offerings will be designated to allow our pantry team to purchase food in bulk to keep our pantry shelves stocked during this season of significantly increased food insecurity in our community. **Activity:** Continue to donate at least four (or more) non-perishable food items from the green "Four or More" list each month. Place them in the large canvas carts in the foyer and on the upper level outside the church office.

12/28 – Iglesia Comunitaria. We end our year celebrating our community partnership with our sister United Methodist congregation in South Omaha. Today's mission offering will assist them in purchasing basic equipment (a sound mixer and two lavalier mics) for their new video recording studio. This studio will be used to create videos for small group Bible studies, and to record testimonies and promotional videos, etc.

