

DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Making Room: Welcoming Christ, Preparing Our Hearts

Week 1: Making Room for Hope

November 29–December 5, 2026

Theme Scripture: Isaiah 64:1–9; Mark 13:24–37

Big Idea: We can trust God with an unfinished future while remaining faithful in the present.

Sunday, November 29

Making Room for Hope

Scripture: Isaiah 64:1–9

Reflection

Advent begins with longing. That may seem like a strange way to begin a season we usually associate with decorations, familiar music, and preparations for Christmas. We might expect the Church to begin with something cheerful. Instead, Isaiah cries out, “Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down.” It is the prayer of people who are tired of waiting, tired of uncertainty, and tired of wondering when God will finally do something.

Perhaps that is exactly where Advent needs to begin. We live in a world filled with unanswered questions. We worry about our families, our health, our finances, our communities, and the future. Sometimes we wonder whether the world is becoming better or simply more complicated. Even within the Church, we face decisions that require us to trust God without knowing every detail of what lies ahead.

Isaiah reminds us that faith does not require pretending those questions do not exist. Faith gives us permission to bring our uncertainty honestly before God. We do not have to manufacture optimism or convince ourselves that everything will turn out exactly as we hope. We simply have to remember that the future remains in God's hands.

For Trinity, this Advent season comes as we prepare for a new chapter of ministry. We know where we are going, but there are still details to work through and adjustments ahead. We can look toward that future with anticipation while remaining faithful to the ministry God has entrusted to us today. Advent reminds us that hope is not dependent upon having everything settled. Hope grows from trusting the One who accompanies us through every season.

We do not have to see the whole road to trust the One who walks with us.

Prayer

God of hope, we come before You carrying questions, concerns, and expectations about the future. Help us bring our uncertainty honestly into Your presence. Remind us that our lives are held in Your loving hands and that Your faithfulness does not depend upon our ability to see what comes next. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Name one hope you have for your own life and one hope you have for Trinity's next chapter. Write them down and pray for them throughout Advent.

Monday, November 30

When God Seems Silent

Scripture: Psalm 13:1–6

Reflection

The psalmist begins with a question many faithful people have asked: “How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?” It is not the kind of prayer we usually place on Christmas cards, but it belongs in Advent. Waiting can be exhausting, especially when we cannot see evidence that anything is changing.

Sometimes we imagine that faithful people never question God. Yet Scripture is filled with people who struggled to understand what God was doing. Abraham waited for a promised child. Hannah prayed through years of disappointment. Israel endured exile. Mary would eventually face questions she could not fully answer. Their faith did not eliminate uncertainty. It gave them somewhere to bring it.

There may be seasons when God's presence seems difficult to recognize. We pray for healing, reconciliation, peace, or direction, and the answers do not arrive as quickly as we hope. During those times, we may begin to wonder whether God is listening.

The remarkable thing about Psalm 13 is that the writer continues praying. Even the question “How long?” is an act of faith because it assumes someone is listening. The psalm ends with a declaration of trust, not because every problem has disappeared, but because the psalmist remembers God's steadfast love.

Advent invites us to do the same. We can acknowledge the silence without concluding that God is absent. Sometimes hope begins with the simple decision to keep praying.

Prayer

Listening God, hear the questions we struggle to express. When answers seem distant and Your presence difficult to recognize, help us remain open to Your love. Give us patience in waiting and courage to continue trusting You. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Spend five minutes in quiet prayer today. Instead of trying to find the right words, simply bring one unanswered question into God's presence.

Tuesday, December 1

The Potter's Hands

Scripture: Isaiah 64:8

Reflection

Isaiah offers one of Scripture's most beautiful images of our relationship with God: “We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.” It is an image of trust, but also of transformation.

Clay does not become a useful vessel without being shaped. The potter works patiently, pressing, turning, adjusting, and sometimes beginning again when the shape is not quite right. The process may not always look graceful, but the hands of the potter are working toward something meaningful.

Our lives often feel unfinished. We may wish we were more patient, more courageous, more forgiving, or more certain about what we believe. We may look at our circumstances and wonder why everything seems to be taking so long. Yet Isaiah reminds us that being unfinished does not mean being abandoned.

God is still shaping us.

The same is true of congregations. Churches are not completed works of art that must remain exactly as they are forever. They are living communities being shaped by God's Spirit. Sometimes that shaping happens through growth and celebration. Sometimes it happens through difficult decisions, changing circumstances, and the need to imagine ministry differently.

The comfort of Isaiah's image is that we are not simply being pushed around by circumstances. We belong to the loving hands of God. Our task is to remain open to the shaping.

Prayer

Loving Potter, thank You for continuing to work within us even when we feel unfinished. Shape our hearts toward compassion, courage, patience, and hope. Help us trust Your hands as You prepare us for the people You are calling us to become. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Reflect on one area of your life where God may still be shaping you. Consider what quality God may be inviting you to develop during this Advent season.

Wednesday, December 2

Stay Awake

Scripture: Mark 13:24–37

Reflection

Jesus tells his followers to keep watch because they do not know when the master of the house will return. His words can sound unsettling, especially when surrounded by images of cosmic upheaval. Yet the central invitation is not to live in fear. It is to remain attentive.

We often think waiting means doing nothing until something happens. But Jesus describes a different kind of waiting. The servants are entrusted with responsibilities while the master is away. They are expected to remain faithful to the work already given to them.

Advent waiting works the same way. We do not simply count the days until Christmas. We pay attention to the ways God is already present and active around us.

There are people who need encouragement today. There are neighbors who need food today. There are relationships that need patience and forgiveness today. There are opportunities to practice generosity and welcome today.

For a congregation anticipating a move, it can be tempting to focus so much attention on the future that we overlook the ministry available in the present. We may find ourselves saying, “Once we get settled, then we can begin.” But Jesus reminds us that faithfulness does not have to wait for ideal circumstances.

God has given us meaningful work right now.

Prayer

Watchful God, awaken us to Your presence in the ordinary moments of our lives. Keep us from becoming so consumed with tomorrow that we overlook the opportunities for love and service before us today. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Look for one opportunity to serve someone today that you might ordinarily overlook. Respond to it without postponing the action until a more convenient time.

Thursday, December 3

Hope Is Not Wishful Thinking

Scripture: Romans 5:1–5

Reflection

Paul tells the Romans that suffering can produce perseverance, perseverance can produce character, and character can produce hope. Then he makes a remarkable declaration: “Hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.”

Christian hope is not the same as wishful thinking. Wishful thinking depends upon circumstances turning out the way we want. Hope depends upon God's faithfulness, even when circumstances remain difficult.

That distinction matters because life does not always follow our preferred plans. People become ill. Relationships change. Financial circumstances shift. Congregations face unexpected challenges. We can do everything responsibly and still encounter situations we did not anticipate.

Hope does not deny those realities. It gives us courage to live faithfully within them.

Paul is not suggesting that suffering is good or that God sends hardship simply to teach us lessons. Rather, he reminds us that hardship does not have to have the final word. God's love remains present, and that love can sustain us through circumstances we would never have chosen.

Advent hope is rooted in the conviction that God has not abandoned the world. The coming of Christ is the great declaration that God continues moving toward us with grace.

Prayer

God of steadfast love, help us distinguish hope from the expectation that everything will happen according to our plans. Give us confidence in Your presence and courage to remain faithful through difficult circumstances. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Think about a difficult season you have experienced. Identify one person, act of kindness, or unexpected source of strength that helped you through it. Give thanks for that reminder of hope.

Friday, December 4

The Light We Cannot Yet See

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2–7

Reflection

Isaiah speaks of people walking in darkness who have seen a great light. It is a powerful image because darkness can make even familiar surroundings seem uncertain. We may know the road, but without light we hesitate to take the next step.

The promise of light does not mean the darkness was imaginary. It means the darkness will not have the final word.

That is the message of Advent.

There are moments when the world seems overwhelmed by division, violence, injustice, and fear. We may wonder whether our small efforts to make things better accomplish anything meaningful. Yet Isaiah reminds us that light often appears precisely where darkness seems strongest.

We do not need to illuminate the entire world by ourselves. We are called to reflect the light of Christ wherever we are.

A kind word can interrupt despair. A generous gift can ease someone's burden. A welcoming congregation can help someone discover belonging. A faithful act of service can become evidence that compassion is still alive.

Those actions may seem small, but light does not have to be large to make a difference in darkness.

Prayer

God of light, shine into the places where fear and discouragement have taken hold. Help us recognize the hope You are bringing into the world and become reflections of that hope through our words and actions. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Bring a little light into someone's day. Offer encouragement, practical assistance, or companionship to someone who may be experiencing a difficult season.

Saturday, December 5

Hope for the Journey Ahead

Scripture: Lamentations 3:21–26

Reflection

The writer of Lamentations speaks from a place of profound sorrow. Jerusalem has suffered devastation, and the future is uncertain. Yet in the middle of grief comes a

declaration of hope: “Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning.”

Those words are powerful precisely because they do not come from someone whose life is easy. They come from someone who has witnessed loss and still believes God's mercy remains.

Advent hope is like that. It does not require us to forget what has been difficult. It allows us to carry our memories, questions, and concerns into the future with the confidence that God's compassion will meet us there.

As this first week of Advent ends, we are reminded that hope is not something we manufacture through positive thinking. It is something we receive as we remember God's faithfulness.

We do not know everything the coming year will bring. We cannot anticipate every challenge or opportunity. But we can trust that the God who has sustained us through the past will remain present in the future.

We do not have to see the whole road to trust the One who walks with us.

Prayer

Faithful God, thank You that Your mercies are new every morning. As we look toward the future, give us courage to trust Your presence and patience to live faithfully in the present. May hope guide our steps and strengthen our love for one another. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Return to the hope you named at the beginning of the week. Pray for it again, and consider one action you can take to help that hope become a reality.

Making Room: Welcoming Christ, Preparing Our Hearts

Week 2: Making Room for Peace

December 6–12, 2026

Theme Scripture: Isaiah 40:1–11; Mark 1:1–8

Big Idea: Preparing the way for Christ involves receiving God's comfort and tending the relationships entrusted to us.

Sunday, December 6

Making Room for Peace

Scripture: Isaiah 40:1–11

Reflection

“Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.” Those words open one of the most beautiful passages in Isaiah. They were spoken to people who had experienced displacement, loss, and uncertainty. Their world had changed, and they needed to hear that God had not forgotten them.

Advent peace begins with comfort. Before God calls us to prepare a new way, God reminds us that we are loved.

That matters because the Christmas season is not peaceful for everyone. Some people carry grief that becomes more noticeable during the holidays. Others face financial pressure, family conflict, illness, or loneliness. Even joyful preparations can become exhausting when we feel responsible for making everything perfect.

Isaiah reminds us that God meets people in the middle of those circumstances. God's comfort does not require us to pretend everything is fine. It gives us permission to acknowledge our weariness and receive grace.

As Trinity prepares for its next chapter, peace will not come simply from having every logistical detail arranged. Peace will grow as we care for one another, listen patiently, and remember that our relationships are more important than any building.

Before we arrange furniture in another location, we can strengthen the relationships that will sustain us there.

Prayer

God of comfort, meet us in the places where we are weary. Bring peace to anxious hearts, comfort to those who grieve, and patience to those facing uncertainty. Help our

congregation become a place where people experience Your tenderness through the way we care for one another. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Reach out to someone who may be feeling anxious, overlooked, or disconnected. Offer a listening ear without trying to solve every problem.

Monday, December 7

Comfort for the Weary

Scripture: Matthew 11:28–30

Reflection

Jesus offers an invitation that many of us desperately need to hear: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Weariness takes many forms. Sometimes it is physical exhaustion from too much work or too little sleep. Sometimes it is emotional fatigue from carrying responsibilities, worrying about loved ones, or navigating difficult relationships. Sometimes it is spiritual exhaustion from feeling that we must always be strong, hopeful, and faithful.

Jesus does not shame people for being tired. He invites them to rest.

That is important during Advent because we can become so busy preparing for Christmas that we forget the One we are preparing to welcome. We fill calendars, purchase gifts, decorate homes, organize events, and try to meet everyone's expectations. Somewhere in the middle of all that activity, peace can become another task on our list.

But peace is not something we accomplish through perfect organization. It begins with receiving the grace of God.

Sometimes the most faithful thing we can do is stop long enough to remember that we are loved even when we are not accomplishing anything.

Prayer

Gentle Savior, meet us in our weariness. Help us release the pressure to do everything perfectly and receive the rest You offer. Restore our strength and teach us to live with greater patience and peace. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Set aside fifteen minutes today without a task to accomplish. Rest, pray, sit quietly, or enjoy something simple that restores your spirit.

Tuesday, December 8

Preparing the Way

Scripture: Mark 1:1–8

Reflection

Mark begins his Gospel not with a manger but with a voice crying in the wilderness. John the Baptist announces that people should prepare the way for the Lord. His message calls people toward repentance, a turning of their lives toward God's purposes.

Repentance is often misunderstood as simply feeling guilty about our mistakes. But biblical repentance is much more hopeful than that. It is the invitation to change direction.

John invites people to examine the paths they are walking and consider whether those paths lead toward the life God desires.

That is a meaningful Advent practice. We can ask whether our habits, attitudes, and relationships are making room for Christ's peace. Are we holding onto resentment? Are we refusing to listen to someone? Are we allowing fear to shape our decisions? Are we so attached to being right that we have forgotten how to be kind?

Preparing the way for Christ may begin with something as ordinary as an apology, a conversation, or a willingness to reconsider an assumption.

Peace does not simply arrive because we wish for it. We participate in preparing the way.

Prayer

God who calls us toward new life, help us recognize the places where our attitudes and actions need to change. Give us humility to acknowledge our mistakes, courage to seek reconciliation, and grace to prepare a more peaceful way. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Consider one relationship or habit that needs attention. Identify a small step toward healing, honesty, or reconciliation.

Wednesday, December 9

The Peace of Listening

Scripture: James 1:19–20

Reflection

James offers remarkably practical advice: “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” It sounds simple, but anyone who has participated in a difficult conversation knows how challenging it can be.

We often listen while preparing our response. Instead of trying to understand another person's experience, we begin organizing our arguments. Sometimes we become so determined to explain ourselves that we miss what the other person is actually saying.

Peace requires a different approach.

Listening communicates dignity. It tells another person that their experiences and concerns matter, even when we do not agree with every conclusion they have reached.

This is especially important during seasons of change. People may respond to the same circumstances with very different emotions. One person may feel excited about new possibilities while another feels anxious about losing something familiar.

Neither person needs to be dismissed.

A congregation that practices patient listening creates room for people to move forward together without demanding that everyone experience change in exactly the same way.

Preparing the way begins with the way we treat one another.

Prayer

God of patience, teach us to listen with compassion. Help us resist the temptation to judge too quickly or speak without understanding. May our conversations become opportunities for peace and mutual care. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

During one conversation today, make a deliberate effort to listen without interrupting. Ask a thoughtful question that helps you understand the other person's experience.

Thursday, December 10

The Courage to Forgive

Scripture: Colossians 3:12–15

Reflection

Paul encourages believers to clothe themselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. He also tells them to forgive one another and allow the peace of Christ to rule in their hearts.

Forgiveness is one of the most difficult ways we prepare room for peace.

When someone hurts us, resentment can begin occupying space within our hearts. We replay conversations, remember offenses, and sometimes imagine what we wish we had said. The longer we carry those feelings, the more room they consume.

Forgiveness does not mean pretending the hurt never happened. It does not require us to excuse harmful behavior or remain in unsafe relationships. It means refusing to allow resentment to become the controlling force in our lives.

Sometimes forgiveness leads to reconciliation. Sometimes it leads to healthier boundaries. Sometimes it is a long process that requires patience and support.

What matters is that we remain open to God's healing work.

Advent invites us to consider what we may need to release so that peace has room to grow.

Prayer

Merciful God, help us face the hurts we carry with honesty and courage. Give us grace to forgive where forgiveness is possible, wisdom to establish healthy boundaries, and patience with the healing process. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Reflect on one resentment you have been carrying. Pray for the wisdom to understand what forgiveness or healing might look like in that situation.

Friday, December 11

Peace That Makes Room

Scripture: Romans 12:9–18

Reflection

Paul tells Christians to practice hospitality, share with those in need, and live at peace with everyone as far as it depends upon them. His description of peace is remarkably active.

Peace is more than the absence of conflict. It is the presence of relationships shaped by respect, compassion, and mutual care.

A peaceful community is not necessarily one where everyone agrees. It is one where disagreement does not destroy dignity. People can express concerns honestly, ask difficult questions, and hold different perspectives while continuing to recognize one another as beloved children of God.

That kind of peace requires effort.

It requires patience when someone moves more slowly than we would prefer. It requires humility when we discover that our understanding is incomplete. It requires generosity when another person needs support. It requires courage when someone is being treated unfairly.

As we prepare for a new chapter of ministry, the most important preparations may have little to do with furniture, schedules, or equipment. They may involve the relationships we strengthen and the culture of welcome we create.

A peaceful church is not a perfect church. It is a community committed to practicing love through its imperfections.

Prayer

God of peace, help us become people who make room for others. Teach us to disagree with kindness, speak with honesty, and respond to needs with compassion. May our congregation become a place where Your peace is experienced through our relationships. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Look for an opportunity to make someone feel included today. Offer an invitation, begin a conversation, or reach out to someone who may feel disconnected.

Saturday, December 12

Preparing a Place of Peace

Scripture: Philippians 4:4–9

Reflection

Paul encourages the Philippians not to be consumed by anxiety but to bring their concerns before God through prayer and thanksgiving. He promises that the peace of God, which transcends understanding, will guard their hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

That peace is not dependent upon having every problem solved. It is the assurance that God's presence remains with us even while difficulties continue.

As this second week of Advent ends, we can reflect upon the ways peace begins taking shape within a community. It grows when people listen patiently, forgive honestly, welcome generously, and care for one another.

For Trinity, these practices are especially important as we prepare for a new setting. We can make plans, organize ministries, and prepare physical spaces, but the peace of Christ must shape the relationships we carry into that future.

A new building cannot create a loving congregation. Loving people create a congregation where peace can flourish.

Preparing the way begins with the way we treat one another.

Prayer

Prince of Peace, guide our hearts and relationships as we prepare for Your coming. Help us carry patience, kindness, forgiveness, and compassion into every new season. May Your peace shape the life of our congregation and become a blessing to our neighbors. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Review the relationships you have tended during this week. Choose one action that will help strengthen peace and connection as you move into the coming days.

Making Room: Welcoming Christ, Preparing Our Hearts

Week 3: Making Room for Joy

December 13–19, 2026

Theme Scripture: Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11; John 1:6–8, 19–28

Big Idea: Joy grows as we recognize God's renewing work and share in it.

Sunday, December 13

Making Room for Joy

Scripture: Isaiah 61:1–4

Reflection

The third Sunday of Advent is traditionally associated with joy. Yet the Scripture appointed for this day begins with people who are hurting. Isaiah speaks of good news for the poor, healing for the brokenhearted, freedom for captives, and comfort for those who mourn.

That may seem like an unusual introduction to joy, but it tells us something important. Biblical joy does not require us to deny sorrow. It grows from the conviction that sorrow does not have the final word.

Isaiah imagines people rebuilding ancient ruins and restoring places long devastated. It is a vision of renewal, not because the past was painless, but because God continues working even after loss.

That is a meaningful message for a congregation preparing for change. We can treasure the memories connected to our current setting while also looking forward to new possibilities. We do not have to choose between gratitude for what has been and hope for what may become.

Joy grows when we recognize God's grace in both.

As we celebrate this Christmas season in our familiar surroundings, we can receive these moments as gifts. The decorations, music, worship, friendships, and memories can nourish us for the journey ahead.

The joy we receive here becomes a gift we carry forward.

Prayer

God of joy, meet us in the places where sorrow and gratitude live side by side. Help us recognize Your renewing work and celebrate the blessings of this season. May the joy we receive become encouragement and hope for others. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Recall a treasured church memory and identify the gift within it, such as friendship, welcome, worship, or service. Consider how that gift can continue in the congregation's next chapter.

Monday, December 14

Joy Does Not Deny Sorrow

Scripture: Psalm 30:1–5

Reflection

The psalmist declares that weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. These words do not suggest that grief disappears according to a predictable schedule. They remind us that sorrow is not the only reality we will ever experience.

The Christmas season can make grief especially noticeable. Familiar songs remind us of people who are no longer with us. Traditions may feel different after a loss. Even joyful gatherings can contain moments of sadness.

Sometimes we place unnecessary pressure upon ourselves to feel happy because the calendar says we should. But Christian joy is deeper than constant happiness.

Joy allows us to acknowledge loss while remaining open to beauty, kindness, and hope. We can miss someone and still laugh. We can feel uncertain and still experience gratitude. We can mourn what is changing while celebrating what remains.

God does not ask us to choose between honesty and joy.

Advent invites us to make room for both.

Prayer

Compassionate God, comfort those who carry grief during this season. Help us recognize that joy and sorrow can exist together. Give us freedom to remember, to mourn, to laugh, and to receive the gifts of love that remain. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

If you are grieving someone or something this season, honor that loss in a meaningful way. Light a candle, share a memory, or spend a quiet moment in gratitude for what has mattered.

Tuesday, December 15

The Light Is Already Shining

Scripture: John 1:6–9

Reflection

John's Gospel introduces John the Baptist as a witness to the light. John himself was not the light. His calling was to point others toward it.

That distinction is important.

Sometimes we imagine that faithfulness requires us to solve every problem or become the source of hope for everyone around us. But John reminds us that our calling is to bear witness to the light of Christ.

We do not create God's love. We recognize it and help others see it.

That light often appears through ordinary acts of kindness. Someone visits a lonely neighbor. A congregation provides food for struggling families. A friend offers encouragement during a difficult season. A person who has experienced rejection discovers genuine welcome.

Those moments may not attract public attention, but they reveal something of God's presence.

Joy grows when we begin noticing these signs of grace.

The world contains real darkness, but darkness is not the whole story. God's light continues shining, and we are invited to point toward it.

Prayer

God of light, open our eyes to the ways Your grace is already present around us. Help us recognize kindness, healing, and generosity, and give us opportunities to reflect Your light to others. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Notice three examples of kindness or compassion today. Give thanks for each one and share one of them with someone who may need encouragement.

Wednesday, December 16

The Joy of Being Seen

Scripture: Luke 1:39–45

Reflection

When Mary visits Elizabeth, she receives something deeply important. Elizabeth recognizes the significance of what God is doing in Mary's life and responds with joy.

Mary is facing an extraordinary and uncertain future. She has questions that cannot yet be answered and responsibilities she cannot fully understand. Elizabeth does not dismiss her experience or overwhelm her with advice. She welcomes her and offers encouragement.

Sometimes joy begins when someone sees us.

There is tremendous power in being recognized, valued, and welcomed. A person who feels invisible may discover hope because someone remembers their name. Someone who doubts their abilities may find courage because another person believes in them.

Churches can become places where that kind of joy grows.

We create it when we notice newcomers, encourage volunteers, celebrate gifts, and make room for people who have felt overlooked elsewhere.

Joy is not always something we experience privately. Sometimes it is something we help create for another person.

Prayer

God who sees and knows us, thank You for the people who have encouraged us and helped us recognize our worth. Give us eyes to notice others and hearts willing to celebrate the gifts You have placed within them. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Offer sincere encouragement to someone today. Be specific about the gift, kindness, or contribution you appreciate in that person.

Thursday, December 17

Rebuilding with Joy

Scripture: Isaiah 61:4, 8–11

Reflection

Isaiah speaks of people rebuilding ancient ruins and restoring places devastated for generations. It is a vision of hope becoming action.

Renewal rarely happens all at once. It requires patience, imagination, resources, and people willing to participate in the work.

That is true of communities, relationships, and congregations.

When circumstances change, we may feel tempted to measure everything by what has been lost. But Isaiah invites us to imagine what might be restored, strengthened, or created.

A congregation entering a new chapter has opportunities to ask meaningful questions. How can we become more welcoming? How can we serve our neighbors more effectively? What new relationships might develop? What ministries might become possible?

Joy grows when we recognize that God is not finished working through us.

We do not need to deny the difficulties of transition to celebrate the possibilities it creates.

Renewal is not simply about recovering what once existed. Sometimes it means discovering what can now become possible.

Prayer

Renewing God, give us imagination to see possibilities beyond our present circumstances. Help us approach change with gratitude, wisdom, and courage. May our participation in Your work bring joy and hope to others. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Identify one new opportunity for ministry, service, or connection that might emerge in the coming year. Pray for wisdom and consider how you could help make it possible.

Friday, December 18

Joy That Multiplies

Scripture: Philippians 2:1–4

Reflection

Paul encourages Christians to look not only to their own interests but also to the interests of others. His words remind us that joy grows when we move beyond ourselves.

We sometimes think happiness comes primarily from receiving something we want. Yet many of our most meaningful experiences come from giving. We remember the delight on someone's face when they receive an unexpected gift. We remember helping someone accomplish something important. We remember the satisfaction of knowing another person's burden became lighter because we cared.

Generosity creates joy because it strengthens relationships.

That does not mean giving always feels easy. Sometimes generosity requires sacrifice. Sometimes service interrupts our plans. Sometimes loving another person asks more of us than we expected.

Yet those acts can connect us to something larger than our individual concerns.

The joy of Advent is not meant to remain inside the sanctuary. It is meant to move outward into the community through compassion, kindness, and service.

When we share joy, it has a remarkable way of growing.

Prayer

Generous God, teach us the joy of serving others. Free us from becoming so focused on ourselves that we overlook opportunities to bring encouragement and hope. Let our generosity become a source of joy for our neighbors. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Do something generous today without expecting recognition or repayment. Notice how the experience affects your own sense of joy.

Saturday, December 19

Joy for the Journey

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:9–12

Reflection

When the people of Israel hear the words of the law, they begin to weep. Nehemiah and the other leaders encourage them to celebrate, reminding them that the joy of the Lord is their strength.

Their joy does not come from pretending the past has been easy. They have experienced exile, loss, and the difficult work of rebuilding. Their celebration recognizes that God has remained faithful through it all.

Joy can become a source of strength because it reminds us that our struggles are not the whole story.

As we approach the final week of Advent, we can look back with gratitude upon the people, places, and experiences that have shaped our congregation. We can celebrate the familiar gifts of this Christmas season without turning them into a farewell.

The relationships we cherish are not confined to one location. The worship that has sustained us can continue. The compassion we have practiced can find new expressions. The joy we have shared can accompany us into whatever comes next.

The joy we receive here becomes a gift we carry forward.

Prayer

God of enduring joy, thank You for the memories, relationships, and blessings that have strengthened us. Help us celebrate the gifts of this season and carry their joy into the future. May our gratitude give us courage for the journey ahead. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Share a meaningful church memory with someone today. Talk together about how the love, friendship, or ministry represented by that memory can continue in the future.

Making Room: Welcoming Christ, Preparing Our Hearts

Week 4: Making Room for Love

December 20–25, 2026

Theme Scripture: Luke 1:26–38; Luke 2:1–20

Big Idea: God's love invites us to respond faithfully before every question has been answered, and Christmas reminds us that God comes to dwell among us wherever life takes us.

Sunday, December 20

Making Room for Love

Scripture: Luke 1:26–38

Reflection

When the angel Gabriel appears to Mary, her life changes in a moment. She receives an extraordinary invitation, but she also faces questions that cannot possibly be answered in a single conversation.

Mary does not respond with immediate certainty. She asks, “How will this be?” It is an honest question from someone trying to understand what is being asked of her.

That is one of the most encouraging details in the Christmas story. Mary demonstrates that faith and questions can exist together. She does not need to understand every consequence before she can respond to God.

Eventually she says, “I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled.”

Her willingness becomes part of the story through which God's love enters the world.

Faith often asks something similar of us. We may sense an invitation to serve, forgive, welcome, give, or take a new step, but we cannot know exactly where that decision will lead.

Love requires courage because it asks us to participate before every outcome is guaranteed.

As Trinity prepares for its next chapter, we have an opportunity to consider what faithful love will look like in the coming year. We may not know every detail of our future ministry, but we can decide now that we will remain a welcoming, compassionate, and serving congregation.

Our next faithful yes can become a place where God's love takes flesh.

Prayer

God of love, thank You for Mary's example of courage and willingness. Help us bring our questions honestly before You while remaining open to Your invitation. Give us faith to respond with love even when the future is not completely clear. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Choose one loving commitment you want to carry into the coming year. Write it down and pray for the courage to live it faithfully.

Monday, December 21

Questions Are Welcome

Scripture: Luke 1:29–34

Reflection

Mary is troubled by Gabriel's greeting, and she asks how the angel's announcement can possibly happen. Her questions are not treated as a failure of faith. They are part of her response to an extraordinary invitation.

That is good news for anyone who has ever struggled with uncertainty.

Sometimes religious communities unintentionally create the impression that faithful people should never question anything. We may feel pressure to appear confident even when we are confused, worried, or uncertain.

But Scripture tells a different story. Abraham questioned. Moses questioned. Job questioned. The psalmists questioned. Even Jesus cried out from the cross.

Questions can become a doorway into deeper faith when we bring them honestly into God's presence.

As we approach Christmas, we do not have to pretend that every mystery has been solved. The incarnation itself invites wonder. God enters human life in ways that challenge our expectations and stretch our understanding.

Love makes room for questions because genuine relationships require honesty.

The Church should be a place where people can explore faith without fear of rejection. We can trust God enough to acknowledge what we do not understand.

Prayer

God of truth and grace, thank You that our questions do not frighten You. Give us courage to seek understanding, humility to recognize our limitations, and patience with others who are exploring faith in different ways. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Write down one question about faith or life that you have been reluctant to express. Bring it honestly into prayer without demanding an immediate answer.

Tuesday, December 22

Love Requires Courage

Scripture: 1 John 4:16–19

Reflection

John reminds us that we love because God first loved us. That order matters. Christian love does not begin with our ability to be brave, generous, or faithful. It begins with the assurance that we are already loved.

That love gives us courage.

Mary's willingness to participate in God's purposes did not eliminate the uncertainty surrounding her future. She would still face misunderstanding, difficult circumstances, and experiences she could never have anticipated.

Yet she responded with trust.

Love often asks us to move beyond what feels comfortable. We may need to initiate a difficult conversation, welcome someone unfamiliar, forgive an offense, or offer help when doing so requires sacrifice.

We may also need courage to embrace changes that will allow us to serve others more effectively.

God's love does not promise that every faithful decision will be easy. It promises that we do not face those decisions alone.

When we know we are held in God's love, we become freer to offer that love to others.

Prayer

God whose perfect love casts out fear, strengthen us when love requires courage. Help us move beyond comfort and hesitation so that our lives become expressions of Your compassion and grace. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Identify one loving action you have been postponing because it feels uncomfortable. Consider whether today is the right time to take a first step.

Wednesday, December 23

Making Room for One Another

Scripture: Romans 15:5–7

Reflection

Paul encourages believers to accept one another just as Christ has accepted them. His words remind us that welcome is not merely a pleasant quality of Christian community. It is an expression of the Gospel itself.

God makes room for us.

We are invited to make room for one another.

That sounds simple until we encounter people whose experiences, expectations, personalities, or beliefs differ from our own. Genuine welcome requires more than being friendly to people who already fit comfortably within our circles.

It asks us to notice who may be missing, who may feel overlooked, and who may be uncertain whether there is a place for them.

As we prepare for Christmas, this becomes a particularly meaningful question. Who might be lonely? Who is grieving? Who is struggling financially? Who feels disconnected from family or community? Who has been hurt by religion and wonders whether a church could ever become a place of healing?

Our calling is to help people experience the welcome of Christ.

For Trinity, this commitment will be especially important as we prepare for our next chapter. The most meaningful thing we can bring into a new building is not furniture or equipment. It is a congregation determined to make room for others.

Prayer

Welcoming God, thank You for making room for us in Your love. Open our eyes to people who may feel excluded, forgotten, or uncertain of their place. Help us create a community where all are welcomed, included, and cherished. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Reach out to someone who may be spending Christmas feeling lonely or disconnected. Offer an invitation, a conversation, or another meaningful expression of care.

Thursday, December 24

God Makes a Home Among Us

Christmas Eve

Scripture: Luke 2:1–20

Reflection

The Christmas story begins in remarkably ordinary circumstances. Mary and Joseph are traveling because of a government decree. They arrive in Bethlehem amid crowded conditions, far from the comfort and familiarity of home. When Jesus is born, he is placed in a manger because suitable guest space is unavailable.

It is not the setting we might have chosen for the arrival of the Savior.

We might have expected a palace, a grand celebration, or an announcement delivered to the most powerful people in the world. Instead, God enters human life through vulnerability, uncertainty, and the ordinary struggles of people trying to make their way through the world.

That is one of the most beautiful truths of Christmas. God does not wait for human circumstances to become perfect before drawing near.

God comes into life as people actually live it.

The first announcement of Jesus' birth is delivered to shepherds working through the night. They are not prominent religious leaders or wealthy benefactors. They are ordinary people doing ordinary work. Yet they are invited to witness extraordinary grace.

Christmas reminds us that God's love is not reserved for those who possess influence, wealth, or status. The good news is for all people.

As we gather for Christmas Eve worship, we can treasure the familiar surroundings, music, traditions, and memories that make this night meaningful. We do not need to turn this celebration into a farewell. Tonight is about the birth of Christ.

And the Christ we welcome tonight is not confined to this building.

The same Savior who meets us here will accompany us into the coming year. Wherever we worship, serve, gather, and care for one another, God's presence will remain.

As candlelight spreads through the sanctuary, perhaps we can imagine the love of Christ spreading beyond these walls. Each flame becomes a reminder that we are called to carry God's light into the lives of others.

The Christ we welcome tonight will go with us into every tomorrow.

Prayer

God of Christmas, thank You for coming among us in Jesus Christ. You entered our vulnerable and unsettled world with saving love, bringing hope to the weary, peace to the anxious, joy to the sorrowful, and welcome to those who had been overlooked. As

we celebrate the birth of Christ, help us recognize Your presence in our own imperfect lives. Bless our families, comfort those who grieve, provide for those in need, and make our congregation a living expression of Your love. May the light we share tonight continue shining through our words and actions throughout the coming year. Through Jesus Christ, our Emmanuel, we pray. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

As you participate in Christmas Eve worship or spend time reflecting upon the Christmas story, think of one person whose life you could brighten through welcome, encouragement, or practical care. Make a commitment to act on that thought.

Friday, December 25

Love Has Come to Stay

Christmas Day

Scripture: John 1:1–14

Reflection

John tells the Christmas story differently from Luke. There are no shepherds, no manger, and no journey to Bethlehem. Instead, John takes us back to the beginning of creation and announces that the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

That may be the most astonishing declaration of Christmas.

God has chosen to dwell among us.

Not simply to observe us from a distance. Not merely to send instructions or demand obedience. God enters the human story and shares our life.

In Jesus, God's love becomes visible through ordinary human experience. Jesus knows hunger and fatigue. He experiences friendship and grief. He celebrates, weeps, teaches, heals, and welcomes. He enters the world not to escape its suffering but to transform it through love.

That is why Christmas matters.

The incarnation tells us that our lives matter to God. Our relationships matter. Our struggles matter. Our joys and sorrows matter. The ordinary circumstances of human existence are worthy of God's presence.

Throughout Advent, we have practiced making room for hope, peace, joy, and love. We have considered what it means to trust God with an unfinished future, strengthen relationships, recognize renewing grace, and respond faithfully to God's invitation.

Now Christmas reminds us that God has already made the first move.

Before we made room for Christ, Christ came to make a home among us.

That promise accompanies us beyond Christmas Day. It will remain true when the decorations come down, when ordinary responsibilities return, and when we begin the next chapter of our congregation's life.

We may change locations, but we do not leave God's presence behind. We may face unfamiliar circumstances, but we do not enter them alone.

The love revealed in Jesus is not limited to one season, one sanctuary, or one chapter of our lives.

Love has come to stay.

Prayer

Emmanuel, God with us, thank You for the extraordinary gift of Your presence in Jesus Christ. On this Christmas Day, fill our hearts with gratitude for the love that has entered our world and continues transforming our lives. Help us carry the hope, peace, joy, and love of Advent into every season ahead. Bless our congregation as we prepare for new opportunities of ministry, and remind us that wherever we go, Your presence goes with us. Make our lives places where others can encounter the grace and compassion of Christ. Amen.

Spiritual Practice

Take a few quiet moments to reflect on the four themes of Advent. Complete these sentences: “I am making room for hope by...” “I am making room for peace by...” “I am making room for joy by...” and “I am making room for love by...” Keep these reflections as a guide for the new year.