



Unwrapping Advent: Celebrating the Wonder of Jesus' Arrival Then and Now

Adapted from Margaret Feinberg

DEVOTIONALS : 27 - 30 Nov. & 1 - 3 Dec. 2022

I learned a long time ago that I need to set aside time in December to sit still. To be quiet. To make space for my soul, to reserve some of my attention for prayer, journaling, God's Word.

My celebration of Jesus on December 25th is so much richer and more meaningful when I make room, daily, to turn my eyes to



Jesus throughout the month of December.

I invite you to clear some space in your December to listen, to be quiet, to turn your eyes to Jesus.

Dear Friend,

If you're like me, the weeks leading up to Christmas are all too often filled with lists and to-dos. Instead of living in wild expectation of Jesus's birth, I find myself standing in lines at grocery stores, boutiques, and big box stores.

Yet, Advent beckons us to prepare for the arrival of a tiny infant whose frame was so small you could cradle him in the palm of your hand.

Advent comes from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming." The Latin derived the word from the Greek word "Parousia", which is used when describing the Second Coming of Christ. The purpose of Advent is two-fold. The first is a celebration of the first arrival of Christ; the second is an anticipation of Christ's return. Advent gently reminds us of the "now" and "not yet" that comes with being people of faith.

- Advent reminds us of the importance of waiting.
- Advent whispers our need for a Savior.
- Advent teaches us God's timing is always better than ours.

Whether you're new to celebrating Advent or you've observed Advent for many years, I want to encourage you to begin nurturing a sense of awe and anticipation in your life for Christ. From the events surrounding His miracle-studded arrival to His unforgettable life, death, and resurrection, those who encountered Jesus Christ were taken back with a profound sense of wonder.

As you prayerfully consider and reflect on the following devotionals:

- Ask God to open your eyes to Him and His handiwork even more.
- Ask God to reveal more of His truth, character, and presence in your life.
- Prepare to be astonished by the work God is doing in and all around you during this season of waiting.

I pray that as these devotional adventures are unwrapped, you will once again experience the awesome wonder of Christ's transforming birth.

WEEK ONE: WAITING EXPECTANTLY

Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him. —Psalm 62:1

Advent calls us to wait. Just as Abraham and Sarah waited for Isaac. Just as the Israelites waited in oppression and in the desert. Just as the prophets waited to hear a word from God. Just as humanity waited for a Savior.

We wait.

Most of us are all too familiar with the waiting rooms of life. We wait for graduation. We wait for a spouse. A child. A job. A promotion. A diploma. A prodigal to return. A diagnosis. A cure. Another round of chemotherapy. A retirement party. Life is filled with seasons of waiting that become the breeding ground for insecurities and self-doubts as we anticipate what's next.

The story of the Israelites waiting for the Messiah reminds us when it comes to waiting, the darkness always precedes the dawn. The journey of God's people was marked by slavery, oppression, hunger, death, disease, war, and much more.

We shouldn't be surprised when in our waiting the light begins to dim. We look up only to discover we're surrounded by inky blackness. Such darkness doesn't mean God has left, but the opposite.

God is ever-present in our weakness, in our waiting.

Waiting is not a passive activity, but an active one. The Hebrew word for wait, "yachal", means to "wait expectantly" and to "wait in hope." Waiting can also be understood as meaning to "long for." Waiting invites us to grasp for God.

Our job is to wait. Never losing hope that the flickers of that first light will come. The wonder of Advent is that though you wait, we wait, all of humanity waits—we do not wait alone. God is with us.

Prayer | Dear Heavenly Father, In the midst of my waiting, reveal Yourself to me anew that I may know with full confidence I do not wait alone. In Jesus' name, amen.

Dig Deeper | Look up the following passages: Psalm 24:4-5, Isaiah 26:8-9, and Lamentations 3:25-26.

- What does each passage reveal about waiting on God?
- Which is most meaningful to you right now?
- How do you sense God is transforming you as you wait on Him?

Christmas Melody | Find this song on Spotify, iTunes, or YouTube this week and spend time reflecting: "Winter Snow" by Audrey Assad.

Mediation: During the season of Advent, we are called to seek the light of Christ, even in the midst of darkness. We are invited to face the darkness in our own lives and in the world around us. The prophets assure us that the darkness will not overcome us. They call us to watch for the light. We are called to wait, to hope, to trust in promises made. As we make this Advent journey in faith, we invite God's light to dispel the darkness. We ask for the grace to set down all those burdens that darken our hearts as we search for the light. We ask for the gift of attentiveness that we may truly see God's loving presence within and among us. And we ask for renewed faith that we might be light for others.

Prayer: God who dispels all darkness,
Come to be with us, in each one of our situations;

Come to live among us, live with us and in us;
Come to fill the distances that divide and separate us;
Come to reconcile us with You and with one another.
God of Light, open our hearts to the mystery of your love and the invitation of your grace. Let our complacency give way to conversion and our judgments to compassionate acceptance of others. Turn oppression to justice and transform conflict to peaceful accord. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who draws near, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER & CONCERNS

HOW CAN WE PRAY FOR YOU TODAY?

- As we prepare for our Charge Conference, on 1 December 2022 @ 7:00 p.m. the Leadership and Nomination Committee is humbly and urgently reaching out to fill leadership positions for all committees and boards. Fifth Ave. United Methodist Church, is seeking fresh, creative and innovative leadership. Please recognize God's call for you to serve your church. **You may not think you have the gift, talent, and/or time to serve, but all are called to work in the kingdom. Good is calling you; inviting you to step forward and serve God's church and God's people. Will you say. "Yes?" We need you!**
- **Mr. Ralph Hensel.** A Celebration of Life Service was held on Saturday, November 19, 2022 for Mr. Ralph. Continue to pray for Ms. Bonnie and the family! Cards and notes for can be mailed to Mrs. Bonnie Hensel, 629 Highland View Drive, West Bend, WI 53095.
- **Bro. Bob Krell,** prayers for strength and continued healing. Please mail cards and notes of prayer and encouragement to: Bro. Bob and Mrs. Jean Krell, 804 Lenora Drive, West Bend, WI 53090
- Ms. Biancha Martinelli is asking for prayers and care for her best friend, **Ms. Kelsie Landers** as she attends to the care and welfare of her parents, Mr. Tracy & Ms. Kim Aloha, who are gradually recovering from a traumatic car accident. Your words and prayer for strength and courage for this extensive season of rehabilitation and recovery is greatly appreciated. Please send your cards and notes of care to: Mr. Derrick and Mrs. Kelsie Landers, 26W035 Astor Place, Wheaton, IL 60187.
- **Mr. Chuck Rogge** is still on a journey of healing. He is grateful for the cards and notes of support. Please continue to flood the mailbox with love and support to: Mr. Chuck and Mrs. Sue Rogge, 5011 Hwy. P, West Bend, WI 53095
- **Ms. Linda Green,** sister of Mrs. Debra Matthies, thank you for your continued prayers for strength and courage as her cancer has returned and has metastasized. She is starting another round of chemotherapy and request you prayers that it will be successful. Please send her your cards and notes of support and faith. Her mailing address is: Ms. Linda Green, 2920 Donahue Ferry Road, Pineville, LA 71360.
- **Ms. Jeanne Schacht** passed away on Oct. 7, 2022. A Celebration of Life Service was held on Saturday. October 15, 2022. Card or notes of condolences may be sent to her daughter, Debbie Schacht, at N110 W17051 Ashbury Lane #1, Germantown, WI 53022.
- **Ms. Nancy Whitson** is still admitted at The Pavilion at Glacier Valley. She requests your prayers and support as she continues to journey with health concerns. Please send cards and notes of encouragement to: Mrs. Nancy Whitson, 922 Hickory Street, West Bend, WI 53095
- **Rev. Jean Bartlett** passed away on Oct. 7. A Memorial service was held on Saturday, October 29, 2022 at 11:00am at Waupun United Methodist Church, 199 E. Jefferson St. in Waupun. Condolences can be sent to: Rev. Jon Bartlett, 813 Seymour St., Waupun, WI 53963. Email address: biolon@gmail.com
- **Ms. Sandy Wamser** has been diagnosed with Epilepsy. She is thankful to finally have a diagnosis. Her medical team is working to find the correct treatment. She can't stop thanking her church family for all your love, prayers and support. Special prayers for Mr. Pat as he cares for Ms. Sandy and traveling graces to and from St. Luke's Hospital. Cards and notes can be sent to: Mr. Pat and Mrs. Sandy Wamser, 3742 Pleasant Valley Road, West Bend, WI 53095.

- The Family of the late **Roger Ethan Sacia** would like to express their sincere gratitude to everyone who has shown them kindness in prayers, thoughts, and deeds during their time of bereavement. Your prayers, visits, phone calls, consolation, food, flowers, and other gestures of compassion and love have been uplifting. May God richly bless each of you. Ms. Nobi will be residing in Madison, WI. Cards of condolences and support can be mailed to Mrs. Nobi Sacia, 1626 Jefferson Street, Madison WI 53711.
- We extend our deepest and heartfelt condolences to **Ms. Barb Groth** on the unexpected passing of her beloved son, Russell Groth on September 10, 2022. Ms. Barb, the mother-son bond is something truly special and I know just how close you were with Mr. Russell. We are all here for you during this time and want to express our deepest condolences for your loss. Letter and notes of sympathies can be mailed to: Mrs. Barb Groth, 729 Mitter Circle, West Bend, WI 53095
- **Mr. Dick Simmons**, diagnosed with acute leukemia has discontinued with chemotherapy. John 11:25 reads: Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. The sting of death has been removed for the Christian believer by Jesus our Lord. Mr. Dick, Ms. Shirley and family, we are sending you love, support and prayers during this difficult time. Cards, notes filled with prayers and support can be mailed to: Mr. Dick and Mrs. Shirley Simmons, 2908 Valley Avenue, West Bend, WI 53095.
- Lord, we ask you to plant seeds of courage and hope in **Ms. Lora Santiago**, daughter of Mr. Peter and Ms. Katie Glaser, as melanoma cancer has been found in her leg despite having immunotherapy. Your seeds of love and care through cards and notes can be mailed to: Ms. Lora Santiago, C/O Ms. Katie Glaser, N166 W21211 Glencoe Lane, Jackson, WI 53037.
- **Mr. Len McGinnis, Jr.**, continues to quietly face medical challenges. Your cards and notes of support and well wishes for Mr. Len and Mrs. Shelia McGinnis can be mailed to: 1230 Vogt Drive, West Bend, WI 53095
- Many of our **church family members and friends** are experiencing health concerns. Please join me in praying for their healing and restoration: "loving God, I pray that you will comfort us in our suffering, lend skill to the hands of the healers, and bless the means used for to cure. Give each of us such confidence in the power of your grace, that even when we are afraid, I may put my whole trust in you; through our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen."
- **Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf**, continued prayers for healing and strength as she continues to struggle with illness. You can send emails of prayers and support to: alankempf33@gmail.com; or cards and notes to Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf, 414B. South Pleasantview Road, Plymouth, WI 53073; phone number: 920.838.1830.

Prayer: May our prayers encircle the world and offer light in places of darkness.

May we work as one body to bring justice for the poor and peace for the afflicted. Enkindle hope in our darkened world and announce the dawn of your kingdom once again. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

Pastor Clarissa & Bro. Martin