



*ENCOUNTERING GOD
TOGETHER THIS CHRISTMAS*

ADVENT

A FRIENDS AND FAMILY GUIDE

ADVENT

*ENCOUNTERING GOD
TOGETHER THIS CHRISTMAS*

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Created by the Church on the Move Content Team



TABLE *of* CONTENTS

4	What Is Advent?
6	About This Advent Guide
8	How to Prepare
10	Week One: <i>The Thrill of Hope</i>
24	Week Two: <i>The Promise of Peace</i>
38	Week Three: <i>The Anticipation of Joy</i>
52	Week Four: <i>The Giving of Love</i>
66	Christmas Eve
69	Appendix A: <i>The Christmas Story</i>



WHAT IS ADVENT?



THE HISTORY OF ADVENT

Christmas has long since gone commercial, hasn't it? When many people think of Advent, they think of plucking chocolates from behind the window of an Advent calendar that counts down the days to Christmas. We have the brilliant holiday marketing minds at *Cadbury* to thank for that. They created the first *chocolate* Advent calendar in 1958.

The word *advent* actually comes from the Latin ***adventus***, which simply means “arrival.” Advent is the coming, the arrival, of the presence of God Himself—*God with us*. For hundreds of years, followers of Jesus from a wide variety of church traditions around the world have set aside the four weeks leading up to Christmas as a meaningful season of **celebration and anticipation**. That's what we're up to here.

CELEBRATION

In celebration, we remember the earnest expectations and fervent prayers of faithful saints of old who longed for the coming of their Messiah to rescue them from Sin and all its cronies. Humanity called upon the name of the Lord, and God answered. He **arrived** *living and breathing and walking among us*. Advent is a way to experience their joy as we put their ancient, Spirit-inspired words on our lips as a community.

ANTICIPATION

So Advent is something that really *happened*, but Advent *will happen* again. Jesus is coming back. At His first coming, the future kingdom of God burst into the present with Jesus' incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Our spiritual enemies were disarmed. Yet our world is not what it will be as we await the reign of our good king. We live in the “already but not yet” of Jesus' kingdom. At Advent, we give voice to “kingdom come” prayers of our own, looking expectantly for Jesus' return. In that way, this is a season of both **celebration and anticipation**.

For Christians, Christmas is less sentimental than we think. Advent allows us to be honest about what's wrong with our world and to freely celebrate Christmas as good news—King Jesus has come; King Jesus will come again!

PARTICIPATION

Beginning on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, each of the four weeks of Advent leading up to Christmas Eve will focus on a different theme of celebration and anticipation—**hope, peace, joy, and love**.

Jesus said, “I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:20).

Encountering God is not only possible this Christmas season, Jesus said it's a matter of opening the door. Will you let Him into your home? He's waiting.



ABOUT THIS ADVENT GUIDE



If the whole idea of celebrating Advent is new to you, you're in good hands. This book will guide you through weekly Advent Gatherings and a series of **Advent Candle-Lighting Liturgies** to do together with your family and friends. In addition, we'll offer resources for how to create space to **encounter God daily** and make the most of this season with the people you love.

WEEKLY GATHERINGS

This Christmas season we want you to consider connecting with a few friends or family members once a week (**Sunday evenings** if you can) to enjoy community and encounter God together.

There's a pattern you may have noticed most people tend to fall into during the Christmas season. We spend more, consume more, eat more, and do more in December than any other month of the year. For this reason, Christmas can be one of the least emotionally healthy seasons of the year. We believe it doesn't have to be. In fact, we're inviting you to resist that pattern. As the famous Christmas carol proclaims, "Let every heart prepare Him room." Make room for these Advent Gatherings. You won't regret it.

CANDLE-LIGHTING LITURGIES

This Advent guide will walk you through how to prepare for your gathering, and it will give you step-by-step directions for how to participate in each Advent Candle-Lighting Liturgy in your home (*liturgy* is just a word for a thoughtful order of worship). The Advent Candle-Lighting Liturgy itself will take 10–15 minutes. The duration of the rest of the gathering is up to you.

OTHER RESOURCES

We've included a **Weekly Advent Journal** as a space for you to jot down your reflections on what happened at each gathering (as a host or a guest). You might write about a good memory you were reminded of, something funny someone said, or an expression of how you felt. Mostly, though, this is a place to preserve what you sensed God was speaking to you.

We've also included something we're calling **Daily Advent**. This is a set of simple practices designed to help you see the choose-your-own-adventure expressions of worship to God available in everyday life.

Daily Advent practices are a way to protect yourself from the unintentional consequences of the modern pace of life. In his book, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, John Mark Comer defines daily worship practices as "a schedule and set of practices to order your life around the way of Jesus in community. (They are) a way to keep from getting sucked into the hurry, busyness, noise, and distraction of regular life. A way to slow down. A way to live into what really matters... key relationships with family and community... a healthy soul. You know, the good stuff."



HOW TO PREPARE

**FOR WEEKLY GATHERINGS
WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS**



Here is what you'll need for Weekly Gatherings & Candle-Lighting Liturgies:

FRIENDS OR FAMILY

- Friends don't let friends do Advent alone.
- If you're able to meet in person, we recommend it.
- If not, gathering via video call works too.

ADVENT CANDLES

- **Traditional**

If a more festive approach suits you, here's what you'll need:

- Advent wreath, your choice of greenery
- A candelabra/candleholders
- Three purple candles (Hope, Peace, and Joy—Weeks 1–3)
- One pink candle (Love—Week 4)
- One larger white candle at the center (Christmas Eve)

- **Non-traditional**

- Any candles will do
- Add one candle each week leading up to Christmas Eve

HOST HOME(S)

- **Find a Host**

- You might offer to host or share the honor of hosting with others.

- **Prepare Food**

- Plan to share a meal together.
- Make it as simple or as extravagant as you like; the point is to be together in celebration and anticipation.

- **Have Fun**

- Play music.
 - We have created an Advent Spotify Playlist for you (search “COTM Advent”).
- Prepare an activity for the kids.



WEEK ONE

The Thrill of Hope

CANDLE-LIGHTING LITURGY

*Enjoy yourselves when you gather. Eat. Talk. Laugh. Play. Just be sure to set a time before everyone leaves to take 10-15 minutes to walk through this **Advent Candle-Lighting Liturgy** together. You'll read a Psalm together, have a couple of people read scriptures for the group, light a candle, sing a song, and pray together. This guide will walk you through each step.*

01 | READ OVERVIEW

Host:

“If you wanted to describe a feeling of anticipation of a future that is better than the present, what kinds of words would you use?”

(Pause for answers.)

Hope is not optional for healthy humans. We need hope to survive. Without hope, we're stuck in our circumstances and can't see our way out of the darkness.

Tonight each of us are putting **hope** in **something**. It could be a new relationship status, something we want to purchase, or someplace we want to be. But true **hope** is different than this. Biblical hope is not about getting new things. Biblical **hope** is about **a Person** (Jesus) who makes **us** new. Real **hope** is a new heart with Jesus at the center bringing us new wisdom, a new community, and new life.

Tonight, we're going to explore that kind of hope together in Scripture, prayer, and worship. Let's begin.”

02 | READ A PSALM TOGETHER

Host:

“We'll start by reading the following selections from **Psalm 42** aloud **together**. Let's read slowly, and let these ancient words be the prayer of our hearts tonight:

Participants:

*As a deer pants for flowing streams,
so pants my soul for You, O God.*

*My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and appear before God?*

*My tears have been my food day and night,
while they say to me all the day long,
“Where is your God?”*

*Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me?*

Hope in God;
*For I shall again praise Him,
My salvation and my God.*

03 | CREATE SILENCE

Host:

“Now let’s create a few moments of silence. Palms up. Eyes closed. Breathe deeply. Exhale. For the next few moments, see yourself offering anything that’s troubling you up to God. Be being filled with the Spirit of God. Let Him fill your imagination with hope of a better future with Jesus.”

(Take 1–3 minutes. Break the silence with a short prayer about hope to conclude this section.)

04 | READ SCRIPTURE

Choose a child (if available) and another reader for this section.

Host:

“_____ & _____ will be reading our next passages of Scripture tonight.”

Child (if available):

*“The eyes of God
are on the ones
who honor Him,
who find their hope
in His eternal love.”*
(from **Psalm 33:18**)

Reader:

“This beautiful prophecy from Isaiah reminds us of the hope God’s people found in expressing their deep longing for their messiah to come:

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress.

*The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned.*

*You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.*

*For the yoke of his burden and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor, you have broken.*

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;
He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.*

The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.'

This is the Word of God."

Participants:

"Thanks be to God!"

05 | LIGHT THE CANDLE

Choose one person (a child if available) to **light the first candle** (purple) and someone to read.

Host:

"Tonight _____ is going to light our first Advent candle. This is the **hope** candle. The light of this fire represents the spark of hope.

What does this **hope** represent for you tonight?"

(Pause for responses.)

Reader:

"These verses tell us what happened
when the light of hope invaded our world through Jesus.

One of Jesus' closest friends poetically described it like this in **John 1:9-14**.

*“The true light, which gives light to everyone,
was coming into the world.*

*He was in the world,
and the world was made through Him,
yet the world did not know Him.*

*He came to His own,
and His own people
did not receive Him.*

*But to all who did receive Him,
who believed in His name,
He gave the right to become children of God,
who were born, not of blood
nor of the will of the flesh
nor of the will of man,
but of God.*

*And the Word became flesh
and dwelt among us,
and we have seen His glory,
glory as of the only Son from the Father,
full of grace and truth.’*

This is the Word of God.”

Participants:

“Thanks be to God!”

06 | SING A SONG

Host:

“Let’s sing an old, beautiful Christmas carol. Sing badly if you must, but **sing you must!** This is a safe space for loud singing, so sing loudly!”

O HOLY NIGHT

Participants:

*O holy night, the stars are brightly shining;
It is the night of the dear Savior’s birth;*

*Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.*

*A thrill of hope the weary soul rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn;*

*Fall on your knees,
O hear the angel voices!
O night divine!
O night when Christ was born.
O night,
O holy night, O night divine.*

*A thrill of hope the weary soul rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn;*

*Fall on your knees,
O hear the angel voices!
O night divine!
O night when Christ was born!
O night,
O holy night, O night divine.*

07 | PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER

Host:

“Let’s take a moment to pray for one another. These don’t need to be long, eloquent prayers. But let’s lift one another up by name before God in prayer.”

(Ask for prayer requests, and allow time for everyone to pray who wants to pray.)

08 | CONSIDER THE FUTURE

Choose one person from your gathering for the final reading.

Host:

“_____ will be doing our final Scripture reading tonight. This one comes to us from the book of Revelation.”

Reader:

“The purpose of this reading is to turn our hearts from what *has happened* in the coming of Jesus and awaken our hopes for what *will happen* at Jesus’ return.

Come quickly, Lord Jesus.

*‘Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life,
bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb
through the middle of the street of the city;*

*Also, on either side of the river, the tree of life
with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month.
The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

*No longer will there be anything accursed,
but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it,
and His servants will worship Him.
They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.*

And night will be no more.

*They will need no light of lamp or sun,
for the Lord God will be their light,
and they will reign forever and ever.*

*“And behold, I am coming soon.
Blessed is the one who keeps the words
of the prophecy of this book.”*

This is the Word of the Lord.”

Participants:

“Thanks be to God forever.”

09 | PRAY A FINAL PRAYER

Host: “Let’s pray.”

(Pray a closing prayer.)

10 | PRONOUNCE A FINAL BLESSING

Host:

“We like to dismiss our gatherings by pronouncing a blessing on all who attend. This priestly blessing is found in **Numbers 6**, and it has been spoken over the people of God for the last 3500 years.”

Host (or a child):

*“Now may the Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.”*

Host:

“Thanks for worshipping with us tonight. We’ll see you next week.”

[END OF CANDLE-LIGHTING LITURGY]

WEEKLY JOURNAL

WEEK ONE | A THRILL OF HOPE

Today's Date:

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Who was here tonight? Anyone **you wish** could have been here?

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What **happened** tonight? What was **said**?

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Anything else **on your mind**?

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What do you sense **God is speaking** to you tonight?

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DAILY ADVENT

WEEK ONE | A THRILL OF HOPE

For Daily Advent, we are recommending three open-ended practices ready for your own personal expression. **This is not a list of more to-dos** in what may be an already busy Christmas season for you. These practices are easy for you, your friends, and your family to implement together, whatever each day looks like.

1. **God first.**
2. **Resist distraction.**
3. **Practice gratitude.**

Opportunities to encounter God's presence will present themselves to you every day in the simplest ways. This list is a daily reminder that God wants to speak to you and through you.

01 | GOD FIRST

Start every day in quiet before God.

Don't let your phone or laptop be your first touch, your first gaze, or the first expression of your wants and wonder. Give the first few moments of your day to God. It could be five minutes; it could be an hour or two. Be intentional about putting God first in your day and throughout your day, and watch what happens.

- Pray (talk to God simply, honestly).
- Read Scripture (maybe a chapter of Proverbs a day).
- Listen (jot down what He says, and share it with someone).

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How's your hope? Be honest with God about your level of hope right now. Jot down your basic wants, deepest desires, and current disappointments. Allow God's Spirit to reshape your hopes by His presence throughout the day.

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02 | RESIST DISTRACTION

The big idea of **Resist Distraction** is saying *no* to the **little things** that derail your focus from the **big things** that make a good life good. Resisting distraction makes you **more present** for the people you love and the God you're hoping to encounter in this season. Resisting distraction means less digital and more *real*.

Resistance

- **Limit your social-media intake.**
(We recommend less than 30 minutes a day.)
- **Limit your news consumption.**
(We recommend less than 20 minutes a day.)
- **Limit your binge watching.**
(We recommend no more than two shows per night.)
- **Clear your schedule of unnecessary busyness.**

Freedom

- **Go for a long walk or run with friends or family.**
- **Read a good book, play music, or have a spontaneous dance party.**
- **Make something with your hands.**
- **Do a puzzle, or play board games.**
- **Have a good conversation.**

☐ MON ☐ TUES ☐ WED ☐ THUR ☐ FRI ☐ SAT ☐ SUN

03 | PRACTICE GRATITUDE

Make it your daily ritual to practice gratitude before God. **Philippians 4** tells us that gratitude in the present moves us out of anxiety about the future.

- Write something that makes you anxious. (Then cross it out.)

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- Write one thing that makes you grateful today. (Circle, underline, bold it.)

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- Express gratitude toward others.
 - One day this week, make a point to share your gratitude in a meaningful way to someone you know and love.

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WEEK TWO

The Promise of Peace



CANDLE-LIGHTING LITURGY

*Enjoy your meal and fellowship together. **Set a time** before everyone leaves to walk through this Advent Candle-Lighting Liturgy together. Before you get started, light the **Hope** candle (the first purple candle). Gather everyone at the set time, and begin.*

01 | READ OVERVIEW

Host:

“Last week we started our Advent season talking about the theme of **hope**. This week we’re talking about another big idea connected to the Christmas story, and that’s the idea of **peace**.

Does anyone remember what the angels sang when they appeared to the shepherd boys after Jesus was born? (*Pause for responses.*) That’s right.

They said, “Glory to God in the highest! **Peace** on earth to those with whom He is pleased.”

At beauty pageants, sometimes contestants are asked, “If you had one wish, what would you wish for?” What do they always answer? “World peace”, of course! Yes, that’s a good answer, but what is **peace** exactly? In the Bible, it’s the word *shalom*, and it does mean an end to war and conflict, but it also means “complete” or “whole”— maybe another way to say it is “not broken.”

Our world is broken. It’s interesting that the angels said that Jesus, the Messiah, would come to bring **peace**. But how does Jesus *un-break* our world? How does He bring wholeness and completeness to God’s good world? Tonight, we’re going to explore that kind of **peace** together in Scripture, prayer, and worship.”

02 | READ A PSALM TOGETHER

Host:

“Let’s begin by reading the following selections from **Psalm 23** aloud. Make these ancient words the prayer of your heart tonight.”

Participants:

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul.

*He leads me in paths of righteousness
for His name's sake.*

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff,
they comfort me.*

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”*

03 | CREATE SILENCE

Host:

“Now let’s create a few moments of silence. Palms up. Eyes closed. Deep breath. Exhale. See yourself offering anything that’s troubling you to God.”

*(Take 1–3 minutes. Break the silence with a **short prayer for peace** to end this section.)*

04 | READ SCRIPTURE

Choose a child (if available) and another reader for this section.

Host:

“_____ & _____ will be reading our next passages of Scripture tonight.”

Child (if available):

*“How beautiful on the mountains
are the feet of those who bring good news,
who proclaim peace,
who proclaim salvation,
who say to Zion,
‘Your God reigns!’”*
(from **Isaiah 52:7**)

Reader:

“These verses from **Isaiah 53** tell us the ways in which God promises to give us **peace** through Jesus. Listen closely as I read:

*‘He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.*

*Surely He has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed Him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.*

*But He was pierced for our transgressions;
He was crushed for our iniquities;
upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with His wounds we are healed.’*

This is the Word of God.”

Participants:

“Thanks be to God!”

05 | LIGHT THE CANDLE

Choose one person (a child if available) to **light the second candle** (purple) and someone to read.

Host:

“Tonight _____ is going to light our second Advent candle.

Last week we lit the **Hope** candle. Tonight we light the **Peace** candle (second purple candle).

What would **peace** look like for you right now?” *(Pause for responses.)*

Reader:

“This passage also comes from **Isaiah**. Listen for the promise of peace as I read:

*‘The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.*

*For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon His shoulder,
and His name shall be called*

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

*Of the increase of His government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.’”*

06 | SING A SONG

Host:

“Okay it’s time to sing another Christmas carol together. You know the rules: sing badly if you must, but **sing you must!** This is a safe space for loud singing, so don’t hold back. Let’s sing.”

HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING

Participants:

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!”*

*Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic hosts proclaim,
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!”*

*Hail the heav’n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Ris’n with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise us from the earth,
Born to give us second birth
Hark! the herald angels sing
“Glory to the newborn King!”*

07 | PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER

Host:

“Let’s take a moment to pray for one another. These don’t need to be long, eloquent prayers. But let’s lift one another up to God in prayer now.”

(Ask for prayer requests, and allow time for everyone to pray who wants to pray.)

08 | CONSIDER THE FUTURE

Choose one person from your gathering for the final reading.

Reader:

“The purpose of this reading is to turn our hearts from what has happened and awaken our hopes for what is to come.

These are the words of Jesus found in **John 14**:

*‘These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you.
But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name,
He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*

*Peace I leave with you;
My peace I give to you.
Not as the world gives do I give to you.
Let not your hearts be troubled,
neither let them be afraid.*

*You heard Me say to you, “I am going away, and I will come to you.”
And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe.*

*I will no longer talk much with you,
for the ruler of this world is coming.
He has no claim on Me,*

*But I do as the Father has commanded Me,
so that the world may know that I love the Father.
Rise, let us go from here.’*

This is the Word of the Lord.”

Participants:

“Thanks be to God forever.”

09 | PRAY A FINAL PRAYER

Host: “Let’s pray.”

(Pray a closing prayer.)

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Host:

“Thanks for worshipping with us tonight. We’ll see you next week.”

[END OF CANDLE-LIGHTING LITURGY]

WEEKLY JOURNAL

WEEK TWO | THE PROMISE OF PEACE

Today's Date:

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WEEK TWO | THE PROMISE OF PEACE

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Resist Distraction means saying *no* to the **little things** that draw your attention away from the **big things** that make a good life good. Resisting distraction makes you **more present** for the people you love and the God you're hoping to encounter in this season. Resisting distraction means less digital and more *real*.

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03 | PRACTICE GRATITUDE

Make it your daily ritual to practice gratitude before God. **Philippians 4** tells us that gratitude in the present moves us out of anxiety about the future.

- Write something that makes you anxious. (Then cross it out.)

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- Write one thing that makes you grateful today. (Circle, underline, bold it.)

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- Express gratitude toward others.
 - One day this week, make a point to share your gratitude in a meaningful way to someone you know and love.

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WEEK THREE

The Anticipation of Joy



CANDLE-LIGHTING LITURGY

*Enjoy one another's company, but **set a time** before everyone leaves to walk through this Advent Candle-Lighting Liturgy together. Before you get started, light the **Hope** and **Peace** candles (first two purple candles). Take 10–15 minutes, and walk through this Advent home worship service together.*

01 | READ OVERVIEW

Host:

“The Christmas season is generally a happy time, isn’t it? The lights, the colors, the music, the food, the gifts, and the Christmas movies just put us in a good mood. Most of us would say some of our best memories are Christmas memories. Spending time with the people we love and enjoying the good things life has to offer just tend to give us **joy**.

But for some, Christmas is not a happy season for everyone. In fact, Christmas can be the loneliest season for some people. All the lights and music and parties remind them of someone they don’t have with them anymore—a spouse, a child, a mother or father, a dear friend. Christmas, for them, may have some good memories, but mostly it makes them sad.

Joy is a theme that runs through the whole Bible. Sometimes **joy** is connected to beauty or with kids or to a glass of wine. But the Bible also talks about a kind of **joy** not based on happy circumstances but based on the anticipation of God’s promises. In tonight’s Candle-Lighting Liturgy, together we’re going to consider the **anticipation of joy** in God’s promises.

In the Bible, often the first move toward **joy** is repentance. Repentance is simply giving up on trying to find **joy** our own way, and trusting that the life God wants for us is so much better than we want for ourselves. Let’s start there.”

02 | READ A PSALM TOGETHER

Host:

“Let’s all read the following prayer of repentance and joy from **Psalms 51** together. Make these ancient words the prayer of your heart tonight.”

Participants:

*“Have mercy on us, O God,
according to Your steadfast love;
according to Your abundant mercy
blot out our transgressions.*

*Wash us thoroughly from our iniquity,
and cleanse us from our sins!*

*Purge us with hyssop, and we shall be clean;
wash us, and we shall be whiter than snow.*

*Create in us a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within us.*

*Cast us not away from Your presence,
and take not Your Holy Spirit from us.*

*Restore to us the joy of Your salvation,
and uphold us with a willing spirit.”*

03 | CREATE SILENCE

Host:

“Now let’s create a few moments of silence. Palms up. Eyes closed. Deep breath. Exhale. See yourself offering anything that’s troubling you to God.”

*(Take 1–3 minutes. Break the silence with a **short prayer about joy** to end this section.)*

04 | READ SCRIPTURE

Choose a child (if available) and another reader for this section.

Host:

“_____ & _____ will be reading our next passages of Scripture tonight.”

Child (if available):

*“Don’t be so sad;
the joy of the Lord
is your strength.”*

(from **Nehemiah 8:10**)

Reader:

“Tonight’s reading comes to us from **Psalms 16:1–11**.

Let’s listen for the **anticipation of joy** in the coming Messiah.

*‘Preserve me, O God, for in You I take refuge.
I say to the Lord, “You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from You.”*

*The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;
You hold my lot.
The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.*

*I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.*

*I have set the Lord always before me;
because He is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.*

*Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices;
my flesh also dwells secure.*

*For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let Your holy one see corruption.*

*You make known to me the path of life;
in Your presence there is fullness of joy;
at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.’*

This is the Word of God.”

Participants:

“Thanks be to God!”

05 | LIGHT THE CANDLE

Choose one person (a child if available) to **light the third candle** (purple) and someone to read.

Host:

“Tonight _____ is going to light our third Advent candle. So far we have lit the **Hope** and **Peace** candles. Tonight we light the **Joy** candle (third purple candle).”

What does **joy** look like for you in this season?” *(Pause for responses.)*

Reader:

“This passage also comes from **John 15:11–15**.
Listen to what Jesus has to say about how **joy** works.

*‘These things I have spoken to you,
that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*

This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

*Greater love has no one than this,
that someone lay down his life for his friends.*

You are My friends if you do what I command you.

*No longer do I call you servants,
for the servant does not know what his master is doing;
but I have called you friends,*

*for all that I have heard from My Father
I have made known to you.’*

This is the Word of God.”

Participants:

“Thanks be to God!”

06 | SING A SONG

Host:

“Okay, we’re going to sing “Joy to the World” together. You know the rules: sing badly if you must, but sing you must! This is a safe space for loud singing, so don’t hold back. Let’s sing.”

JOY TO THE WORLD

Participants:

*Joy to the world! the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King;
Let ev’ry heart prepare him room,
And heav’n and nature sing,
And heav’n and nature sing,
And heav’n, and heav’n and nature sing.*

*He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders of His love.*

07 | PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER

Host:

“Let’s take a moment to pray for one another. These don’t need to be long, eloquent prayers, but let’s lift one another up to God in prayer now.”

(Ask for prayer requests, and allow time for everyone to pray who wants to pray.)

08 | CONSIDER THE FUTURE

Choose one person from your gathering for the final reading.

Reader:

“The purpose of this reading is to turn our hearts from what has happened and awaken our hopes for what is to come.

These are the words of Jesus in **Revelation 21:1–5**:

*‘Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth,
for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.*

*And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem,
coming down out of heaven from God,
prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

*And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.
He will dwell with them, and they will be His people,
and God Himself will be with them as their God.*

*He will wipe away every tear from their eyes,
and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning,
nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”*

And He who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”

This is the Word of the Lord.”

Participants:

“Thanks be to God forever.”

09 | PRAY A FINAL PRAYER

Host: “Let’s pray.”

(Pray a closing prayer.)

10 | PRONOUNCE A FINAL BLESSING

Host:

“We like to dismiss our gatherings by pronouncing a blessing on all who attend. This priestly blessing is found in **Numbers 6**, and it has been spoken over the people of God for the last 3500 years.”

Host (or a child):

*“Now may the Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.”*

Host:

“Thanks for worshipping with us tonight. We’ll see you next week.”

[END OF CANDLE-LIGHTING LITURGY]

WEEKLY JOURNAL

WEEK THREE | THE ANTICIPATION OF JOY

Today's Date:

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Who was here tonight? Anyone **you wish** could have been here?

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What **happened** tonight? What was **said**?

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Anything else **on your mind**?

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What do you sense **God is speaking** to you tonight?

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DAILY ADVENT

WEEK THREE | THE ANTICIPATION OF JOY

Keep your Daily Advent habits going! **This is not a list of more to-dos** in what may be an already busy Christmas season for you. These practices are easy for you, your friends, and your family to implement together whatever each day looks like.

1. **God first.**
2. **Resist distraction.**
3. **Practice gratitude.**

Opportunities to encounter God's presence will present themselves to you every day in the simplest ways. This list is a daily reminder that God wants to speak to you and through you.

01 | GOD FIRST

Start every day in quiet before God.

Don't let your phone or laptop be your first touch, your first gaze, or the first expression of your wants and wonder. Give the first few moments of your day to God. It could be five minutes; it could be an hour or two. Be intentional about putting God first in your day and throughout your day, and watch what happens.

- Pray (talk to God simply, honestly).
- Read Scripture (maybe a chapter of Proverbs a day).
- Listen (jot down what He says, and share it with someone).

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02 | RESIST DISTRACTION

In general, **Resist Distraction** means saying *no* to the **little things** that draw your attention away from the **big things** that make a good life good. Resisting distraction makes you **more present** for the people you love and the God you're hoping to encounter in this season. Resisting distraction means less digital and more *real*.

Resistance

- **Limit your social-media intake.**
(We recommend less than 30 minutes a day.)
- **Limit your news consumption.**
(We recommend less than 20 minutes a day.)
- **Limit your binge watching.**
(We recommend no more than two shows per night.)
- **Clear your schedule of unnecessary busyness.**

Freedom

- **Go for a long walk or run with friends or family.**
- **Read a good book, play music, or have a spontaneous dance party.**
- **Make something with your hands.**
- **Do a puzzle, or play board games.**
- **Have a good conversation.**

☐ MON ☐ TUES ☐ WED ☐ THUR ☐ FRI ☐ SAT ☐ SUN

03 | PRACTICE GRATITUDE

Make it your daily ritual to practice gratitude before God. **Philippians 4** tells us that gratitude in the present moves us out of anxiety about the future.

- Write something that makes you anxious. (Then cross it out.)

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- Write one thing that makes you grateful today. (Circle, underline, bold it.)

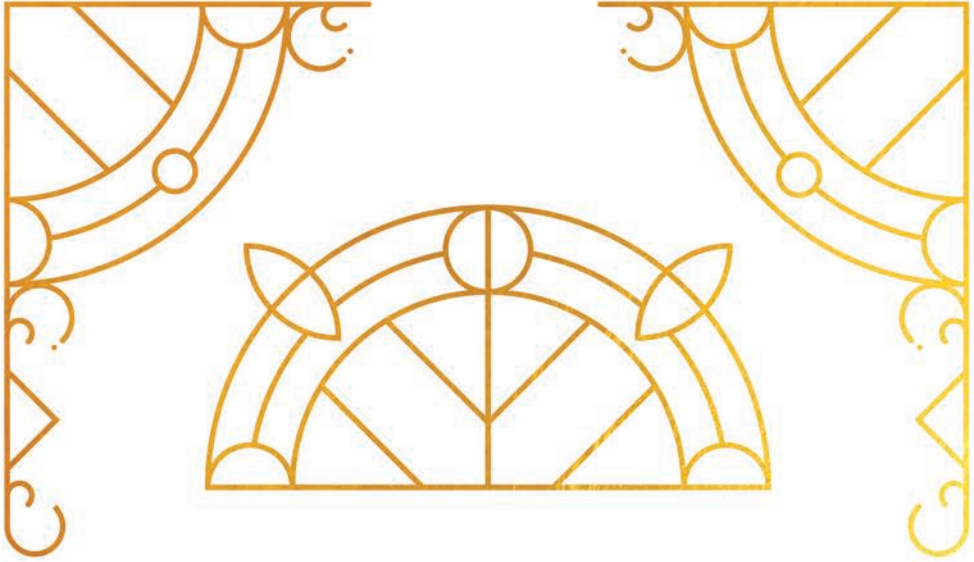
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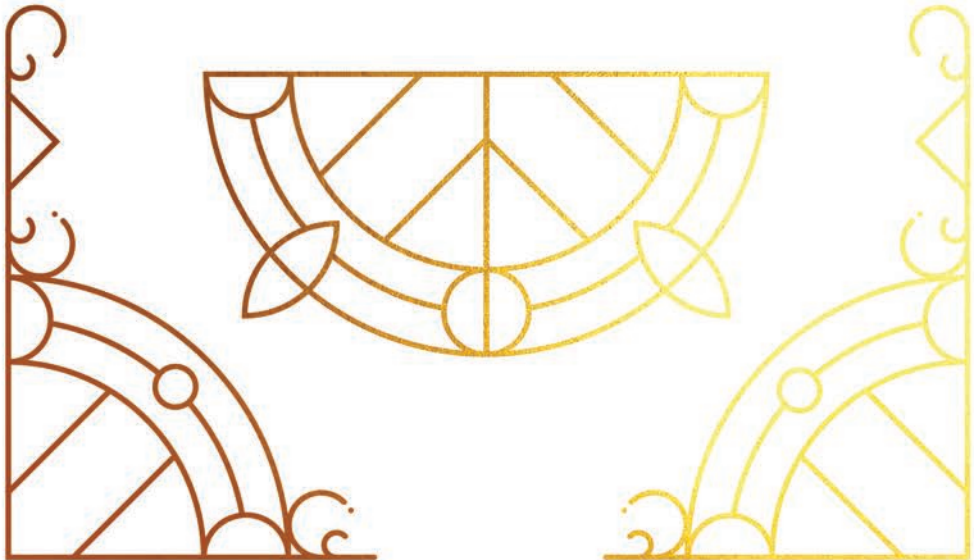
- Express gratitude toward others.
 - One day this week, make a point to share your gratitude in a meaningful way to someone you know and love.

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WEEK FOUR

The Giving of Love



CANDLE-LIGHTING LITURGY

*Enjoy one another's company for a while, just remember to **set a time** before everyone leaves to walk through this Advent Candle-Lighting Liturgy together. Just before you get started, light the **Hope, Peace, and Joy** candles (all three purple candles) before you begin. Take 10–15 minutes, and walk through this Advent home worship service together.*

01 | READ OVERVIEW

Host:

“In this Advent season thus far we have considered the Christmas themes of **Hope, Peace, and Joy**. Tonight we will light the fourth of our Advent candles (pink candle), the **Love** candle.

Jesus told us **love** is the meaning of life. The greatest commandment, He says, is a commandment to **love**. But there's a problem. In English, we use the word **love** for a whole lot of things. It's not a very precise word. We love our friends. But we might also **love** a particular sports team. We **love** our family. But we also **love** Netflix TM. We **love** God. But we also **love** ice cream. See the issue? If love is the greatest commandment, what does **love** actually mean?

The word **love** in the Bible is often associated with breathtaking acts of trust and sacrifice. In fact, the first time the word **love** is used in the Bible, God puts Abraham's **love** to the test by asking him to make an unthinkable sacrifice. He says, “Take your son, your only son, **whom you love**, and offer him as an offering.” Of course, we know Abraham passed the test. But the point is that in the Bible, **love** is not just a feeling. **Love** is an act, a sacrifice you make, a gift you give.

Tonight we're going to explore the theme of the **giving of love.**”

02 | READ A PSALM TOGETHER

Host:

“Let's all read the following selection from **Psalms 116** aloud. Make these ancient words the prayer of your heart tonight.”

Participants:

*“I love the Lord,
because He has heard my voice*

*and my pleas for mercy.
Because He inclined His ear to me,
therefore I will call on Him as long as I live.*

*Gracious is the Lord, and righteous;
our God is merciful.
For you have delivered my soul from death,
my eyes from tears,
my feet from stumbling;*

*I will walk before the Lord
in the land of the living.*

*What shall I render to the Lord
for all His benefits to me?
I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the Lord!*

*I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving
and call on the name of the Lord.*

Praise the Lord!"

03 | CREATE SILENCE

Host:

“Now let’s create a few moments of silence. Palms up. Eyes closed. Deep breath. Exhale. See yourself offering anything that’s troubling you to God.”

*(Take 1–3 minutes. Break the silence with a **a short prayer about God’s love.**)*

04 | READ SCRIPTURE

Choose a child (if available) and another reader for this section.

Host:

“_____ & _____ will be reading our next passages of Scripture tonight.”

Child (if available):

*“For God so loved the world,
that He gave His only Son,
that whoever believes in Him
should not perish
but have eternal life.”*
(from **John 3:16**)

Reader:

“Tonight’s Scripture reading comes to us from **Psalm 13**.

*‘How long, O Lord?
Will You forget me forever?
How long will You hide Your face from me?*

*How long must I take counsel in my soul
and have sorrow in my heart all the day?*

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

*Consider and answer me, O Lord my God;
light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,
lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed over him,”
lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.*

But I have trusted in Your steadfast love;
*my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.
I will sing to the Lord,
because He has dealt bountifully with me.’*

This is the Word of God.”

Participants:

“Thanks be to God!”

05 | LIGHT THE CANDLE

Choose one person (a child if available) to **light the fourth candle** (pink) and someone to read.

Host:

“Tonight _____ is going to light our last Advent candle before Christmas Eve. We’ve already lit the candles for **Hope, Peace, and Joy**. Tonight we light the **Love** candle.”

In what ways has someone’s **love** been given to you this week?”

(Pause for responses.)

Reader:

“This passage comes from **1 John 4:7–12**.
Listen for the biblical definition of **love** as I read these verses.

*‘In this the love of God was made manifest among us,
that God sent His only Son into the world,
so that we might live through Him.*

*In this is love,
not that we have loved God
but that He loved us and sent His Son
to be the propitiation for our sins.*

*Beloved, if God so loved us,
we also ought to love one another.
No one has ever seen God;
if we love one another,
God abides in us
and His love is perfected in us.’*

This is the Word of God.”

Participants:

“Thanks be to God forever.”

06 | SING A SONG

Host:

“Okay, it’s time to sing! You know the rules: sing badly if you must, but sing you must! This is a safe space for loud singing, so don’t hold back!”

O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL

Participants:

*O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant!
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come and behold Him,
Born the King of angels;
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ, the Lord!*

*Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heav’n above:
Glory to God,
all glory in the highest!
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him,
Christ, the Lord!*

*For He alone is worthy,
For He alone is worthy,
For He alone is worthy,
Christ the Lord.*

07 | PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER

Host:

“Let’s take a moment to pray for one another. These don’t need to be long, eloquent prayers. But let’s lift one another up to God in prayer now.”

(Ask for prayer requests, and allow time for everyone to pray who wants to pray.)

08 | CONSIDER THE FUTURE

Choose one person from your gathering for the final reading.

Reader:

“The purpose of this reading is to turn our hearts from what has happened and awaken our hopes for what is to come.

These are the words of Jesus in **Revelation 5:1–11**.

*‘Then I saw in the right hand of Him who was seated on the throne a scroll
written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.
And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice,
“Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?”’*

*And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll
or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy
to open the scroll or to look into it.*

*And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more!
Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David,
has conquered, so that He can open the scroll and its seven seals.”*

*And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders
fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense,
which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying,*

*“Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals,
for You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
and You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth.”*

This is the Word of God.”

Participants:

“Thanks be to God forever.”

09 | PRAY A FINAL PRAYER

Host: “Let’s pray.”

(Pray a closing prayer.)

10 | PRONOUNCE A FINAL BLESSING

Choose a reader, a child if possible, to read the final blessing.

Host:

“We always like to dismiss our worship services by pronouncing a blessing on all who attend. This is an ancient priestly blessing from **Numbers 6**:

Reader (a child if possible):

“Now may the Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.”

Host:

“Thanks for worshipping with us tonight.”

[END OF CANDLE-LIGHTING LITURGY]

WEEKLY JOURNAL

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DAILY ADVENT

WEEK FOUR | THE GIVING OF LOVE

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FINAL GATHERING

Christmas Eve

CANDLE-LIGHTING LITURGY

*This may be the most intimate of your Advent gatherings with close family and friends. Tonight will be the culmination of the Advent season as we light the **Christ** candle together.*

HOW TO PREPARE

We invite you to tune in to **COTM.live** for a special Christmas Eve service and our final Advent candle lighting.

- Prepare your five Advent candles—four in a circle and one in the middle. Thus far we've lit the **Hope, Peace, Joy**, and **Love** candles.
- Tonight we will light the **Christ** candle together (the large white candle in the center of your wreath).

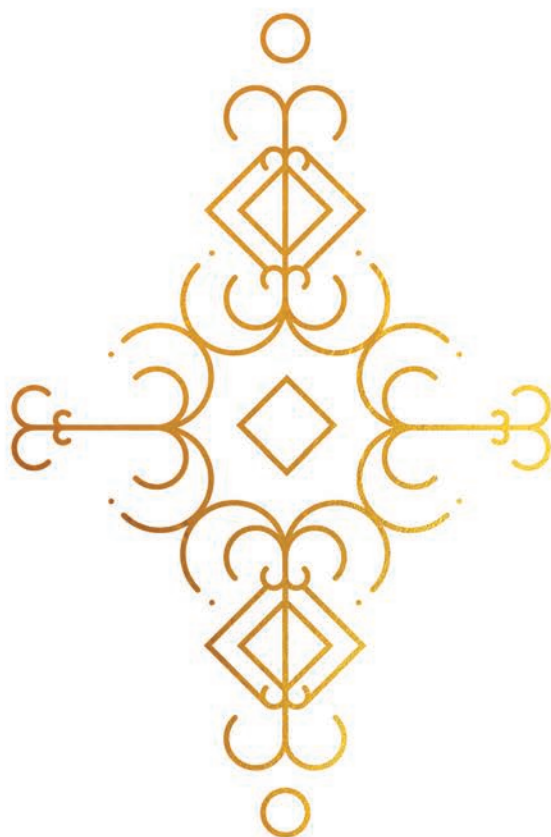
Follow the lead of our hosts. Just as we've done in our previous gatherings, we'll read Scripture, sing, pray, and light our candles together.

Stay tuned to Church on the Move's social media pages or **churchonthemove.com** for more details.

PRAY FOR YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

As you and your friends and family prepare to join us, pray for all the people gathered in all the homes tuning in, the body of Christ united in celebration, anticipation, and participation in the **Hope, Peace, Joy**, and **Love** of our Savior.





APPENDIX A

In case you'd like to read the Christmas story from Scripture with family or friends, here are a collection of passages from the Gospels surrounding the birth of Jesus.

MARY'S GOOD NEWS

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David.

And the virgin's name was Mary.
And he came to her and said,
“Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”

But she was greatly troubled at the saying
and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.
And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary,
for you have found favor with God.
And behold, you will conceive in your womb
and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus.

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.
And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David,
and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever,
and of His kingdom, there will be no end.”

And Mary said to the angel,
“How will this be since I am a virgin?”

And the angel answered her,
“The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you;
therefore, the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.
For nothing will be impossible with God.”

And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord;
let it be to me according to your word.”
And the angel departed from her.



JOSEPH'S DREAM

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.

When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

And her husband, Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying,

“Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife,
for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus,
for He will save His people from their sins.”

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call His name Immanuel”
(which means, God with us).

When Joseph woke from sleep,
he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him:
he took his wife but knew her not until she had given birth to a son.

JESUS IS BORN IN BETHLEHEM

In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus
that all the world should be registered.

This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria.
And all went to be registered, each to his own town.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee,
from the town of Nazareth, to Judea,
to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem,
because he was of the house and lineage of David,
to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

And while they were there,
the time came for her to give birth.
And she gave birth to her firstborn son
and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger
because there was no place for them in the inn.

And he called His name Jesus.

SHEPHERDS WORSHIP

And in the same region, there were shepherds out in the field,
keeping watch over their flock by night.

And an angel of the Lord appeared to them,
and the glory of the Lord shone around them,
and they were filled with great fear.

And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold,
I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.
For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby
wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was with the angel
a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,
"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace
among those with whom He is pleased!"

When the angels went away from them into heaven,
the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing
that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph,
and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying
that had been told them concerning this child.
And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.
But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God
for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.



WISE MEN WORSHIP

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him.”

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’”

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found Him, bring me word, that I, too, may come and worship Him.”

After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose, went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

JOSEPH'S WARNING

Now when the wise men had departed,
behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said,
“Rise, take the child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell
you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy Him.”
And he rose and took the child and His mother by night
and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod.
This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet,
“Out of Egypt, I called my son.”

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men,
became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem
and in all that region who were two years old or under,
according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.

Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:
“A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted,
because they are no more.”

But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord
appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying,
“Rise, take the child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel,
for those who sought the child's life are dead.”

And he rose and took the child and His mother and went to the land of Israel.
But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea
in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there,
and being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee.

And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord,
they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth,
so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled,
that He would be called a Nazarene.

And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom.
And the favor of God was upon Him.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son,
that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.
For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world,
but in order that the world might be saved through Him.”

