

Christmas

Journey



Many Christians celebrate the season of Advent. This is the time in the church year when we prepare, wait for, and anticipate the birth of Jesus.

Traditionally, there are four Sundays during this time. Each Sunday has an assigned theme for that week:

December 3: Hope

December 10: Peace

December 17: Joy

December 24: Love

This booklet will be your guide on your journey through the season of Advent. Each Sunday you will light a new candle. This will be a time for the family to come together, be present with one another, and prepare for the upcoming week.

Included on each Sunday will be something called "Faith5." More information about Faith5 can be found at www.faith5.org. The five points of this are:

Share

Read

Talk

Pray

Bless

These will be explained in more detail on each Sunday.

It is my hope this booklet will help you and your family draw closer to each other and closer to God throughout the Advent and Christmas seasons.

Peace and Love,

James M. Potts

Director of Family Ministries

First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood, FL

Sunday, December 3, 2017

Isaiah 64:1-9

Faith⁵:

Share the good points and bad points about your day.

Read the scripture passage and reflection.

Talk about the scripture and the reflection together.

Pray for one another. Pray for one another's good points and bad points that happened.

Bless one another. A blessing is a short prayer showing love, favor, and protection.

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence— 2 as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil—to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! 3 When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. 4 From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. 5 You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. 6 We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. 7 There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. 8 Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. 9 Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

Reflection:

We Cannot create peace through selfishness, but by opening ourselves to hope. Hope is what is left when your worst fears have been realized and you are no longer optimistic about your future. Hope is what comes with a broken heart willing to be mended. This is not a season for passive waiting and watching. It is a season of wailing and weeping, of opening up our lives and our souls with active anticipation and renewed hope....And so we do not lose heart; rather, we live with our hearts broken open so that compassion, caring, and God's reckless love can find a way into our hearts and the heart of the world. ~Patricia E. De Jong¹

Lighting of the Advent Candle: The Candle of Hope

In a world of war, famine, and disease, where children grow up as orphans, where families go hungry and entire regions face destruction by illness, God, we call upon you to come.

In a world where so many have lost hope, we call upon you, Lord of Hope, to come.

In this season of Advent, we wait for the coming of Hope into our world. We await the birth of the Christ-child, the coming of God into our lives in a new way.

Come, Messiah, Come, and Save Us.

(Light the first blue candle)

Prayer: Dear God, we pray for the hope that is in Christ to come into our lives in a new way. May we become hope that is alive in our world. Amen.

¹ from "Daily Feast: Meditations from Feasting on the Word, Year B" (pp. 2, 8).

Monday, December 4, 2017

Micah 4:1-2

In days to come the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised up above the hills. Peoples shall stream to it, and many nations shall come and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Reflection:

The people of Israel were told this by the Prophet Micah. This was a promise to them: that God would teach them. They had the hope of what was to come. What is something for which you have hope for the future?

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray for the hope that is in Christ to come into our lives in a new way. May we become hope that is alive in our world. Amen.

Tuesday, December 5, 2017

Psalms 79:13

Then we your people, the flock of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever; from generation to generation we will recount your praise.

Reflection:

This verse gives us the promise reminding us we belong to God. And because of the care and love God has shown to us, we will give God thanks and praise now and forever. How do you give God thanks?

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray for the hope that is in Christ to come into our lives in a new way. May we become hope that is alive in our world. Amen.

Wednesday, December 6, 2017

Mark 13:32-37

32 “But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. 34 It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. 35 Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, 36 or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. 37 And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

Reflection:

While the world's busyness may seem to be pointed toward Christmas, it is seldom pointed toward the coming Christ child. As Advent progresses, the number of shopping days left before the big day offers a countdown that stresses us out and keeps us up late. We may not be physically asleep; quite the opposite. But in our wakefulness to worldly ways, we fall asleep to the spiritual season, and so we need a wake-up call. ~Lillian Daniel²

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray for the hope that is in Christ to come into our lives in a new way. May we become hope that is alive in our world. Amen.

Thursday, December 7, 2017

Psalms 85:8

Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.

Reflection:

There have been a lot of bad things which have happened around the world recently. That can be scary. This verse tells us that God will bring peace. This is something for which we are very hopeful.

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray for the hope that is in Christ to come into our lives in a new way. May we become hope that is alive in our world. Amen.

² from “Daily Feast: Mediations from Feasting on the Word: Year B” (p. 9)

Friday, December 8, 2017

Psalm 85:10-11

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.

Reflection:

Righteousness is a big word. Sometimes we don't really talk about what it really means. Righteousness can sometimes mean justice, and making things right. Righteousness and peace work together. Only when things are made right, can peace work together alongside with faithfulness and love.

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray for the hope that is in Christ to come into our lives in a new way. May we become hope that is alive in our world. Amen.

Saturday, December 9, 2017

Jeremiah 1:5

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Reflection:

Wow! Isn't this awesome? Before we were born, God already knew who we were and who we were going to become. Jeremiah was scared to do what God called him to do. What is it you hope God will call you to do in the future?

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray for the hope that is in Christ to come into our lives in a new way. May we become hope that is alive in our world. Amen.

Sunday, December 10, 2017

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

Faith⁵:

Share the good points and bad points about your day.

Read the scripture passage and reflection.

Talk about the scripture and the reflection together.

Pray for one another. Pray for one another's good points and bad points that happened.

Bless one another. A blessing is a short prayer showing love, favor, and protection.

LORD, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of your people; you pardoned all their sin. Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts. Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky. The LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. Righteousness will go before him, and will make a path for his steps.

Reflection:

When steadfast love and faithfulness meet in our lives, when righteousness and peace embrace in our business practices, our family relations, or our nation's policies, God's salvation is near at hand. When we work for justice, we make way for God in our world. ~Talitha Arnold³

Lighting of the Advent Candle: The Candle of Peace

In a world of war, violence and abuse, where families live in shelters and children grow up in fear, God, we call upon you to come.

In a world where peace seems to be so far away, we call upon you, Prince of Peace, to come.

In this season of Advent, we wait for the coming of Peace into our world. We await the birth of Emmanuel, God with us, who comes into our lives in a new way.

Come, Messiah, Come, and Save Us

(Light the first and second blue candles)

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray for the peace that only You can bring through your Son, Jesus the Christ. May we walk in the paths of peace. Amen.

³ from "Daily Feast: Meditations from Feasting on the Word: Year B" (p. 12)

Monday, December 11, 2017

Psalm 27:1-5

The LORD is my light and my salvation. Should I fear anyone? The LORD is a fortress protecting my life. Should I be frightened of anything? When evildoers come at me trying to eat me up—it's they, my foes and my enemies who stumble and fall! If an army camps against me, my heart won't be afraid. If war comes up against me, I will continue to trust in this: I have asked one thing from the LORD—it's all I seek—to live in the LORD's house all the days of my life, seeing the LORD's beauty and constantly adoring his temple. Because he will shelter me in his own dwelling during troubling times; he will hide me in a secret place in his own tent; he will set me up high, safe on a rock.

Reflection:

In ancient times, cities were often completely surrounded by a tall, thick wall to protect the people inside. Sometimes this wall had guard towers at the corners, where soldiers would watch for enemy attacks. Some citizens actually lived on farms outside the walls. When soldiers saw an enemy approaching, they would send out a warning so the farmers would know to come inside the city walls. Anyone attacking the city had to climb over the walls to get inside. This put anyone attacking the city in a dangerous position because they were in clear sight of the soldiers' arrows. Just like the walls that surrounded ancient cities, God is our fortress, surrounding us with love and care, and defending us against evil.⁴

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray for the peace that only You can bring through your Son, Jesus the Christ. May we walk in the paths of peace. Amen.

Tuesday, December 12, 2017

Psalm 27:13

I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

Reflection:

David, the author of many of the Psalms, found peace in the promises God had given him. What brings you peace?

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray for the peace that only you can bring through your Son, Jesus Christ. May we walk in the paths of peace. Amen.

⁴ from Deep Blue Kids Bible (p. 628)

Wednesday, December 13, 2017

Psalm 27:14

Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!

Reflection:

During the season of Advent, we do a lot of waiting. We are waiting the arrival of Jesus! How can waiting bring us peace? Do you like waiting? What is good about waiting?

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray for the peace that only you can bring through your Son, Jesus Christ. May we walk in the paths of peace. Amen.

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Habakkuk 2:1a

I will take my post; I will position myself on the fortress. I will keep watch to see what the Lord says to me...

Reflection:

Remember what a fortress is? Why would you put yourself there? What might God tell you if you were there? How might this bring peace?

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray for the peace that only you can bring through your Son, Jesus Christ. May we walk in the paths of peace. Amen.

Friday, December 15, 2017

Psalm 126:2-3

Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, “The LORD has done great things for them.” The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.

Reflection:

What makes you laugh? What makes you happy? When you are happy are you at peace? How can you share that peace and happiness with your family? And your friends?

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray for the peace that only you can bring through your Son, Jesus Christ. May we walk in the paths of peace. Amen.

Saturday, December 16, 2017

Habakkuk 3:18-19

I will rejoice in the LORD. I will rejoice in the God of my deliverance. The LORD God is my strength. He will set my feet like the deer. He will let me walk upon the heights.

Reflection:

Habakkuk was a prophet who was a messenger of God. Habakkuk learned some things from his conversations with God. He talked to God, and God answered him. Habakkuk understood that no matter what happened, his only source of true joy was God. God would rescue him, give him strength, watch over him, and keep him safe—even in dangerous situations—no matter what.⁵

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray for the peace that only you can bring through your Son, Jesus Christ. May we walk in the paths of peace. Amen.

⁵ from Deep Blue Kids Bible (p. 1033)

Sunday, December 17, 2017
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, 23-24

Faith:

Share the good points and bad points about your day.

Read the scripture passage and reflection.

Talk about the scripture and the reflection together.

Pray for one another. Pray for one another's good points and bad points that happened.

Bless one another. A blessing is a short prayer showing love, favor, and protection.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

Reflection:

Joy is something which we are supposed to always have. God wants us to be happy. What does it feel like to be happy? What are some things which make you happy? How can you make God happy, too?

Lighting of the Advent Candles: The Candle of Joy:

In a world of despair, where depression rates run high, where there has been so much sadness and loss, God, we call upon you to come.

In a world where joy is a distant memory, we call upon you, Great God of Joy, to come.

In this season of Advent, we wait for the coming of Joy into our world. We await the birth of the Anointed One, the Promised Child, who comes into our lives in a new way.

Come, Messiah, Come, and Save Us

(Light the first two blue candles and the pink candle)

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray for the joy that is found in Jesus, that those who seek it may truly find it. May we celebrate in the joy found in You. Amen.

Monday, December 18, 2017

Psalm 125:1-2, 4, 5b

The people who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion: never shaken, lasting forever. Mountains surround Jerusalem. That's how the LORD surrounds his people from now until forever from now! LORD, do good to people who are good, to people whose hearts are right...Peace be on Israel!

Reflection:

Psalm 125 uses the image of mountains to show how God protects the people God loves. God's love surrounds us like the mountains that surrounded the city of Jerusalem. That love shields us from harm. God protects us when we face trials and challenges. And God's love for us will never end.⁶

Prayer:

Dear God we pray for the joy that is found in Jesus, that those who seek it may truly find it. May we celebrate in the joy found in you. Amen.

Tuesday, December 19, 2017

Psalm 126:1-3

When the LORD changed Zion's circumstances for the better, it was like we had been dreaming. Our mouths were suddenly filled with laughter; our tongues were filled with joyful shouts. It was even said at that time, among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them!" Yes, the LORD has done great things for us, we are overjoyed.

Reflection:

The psalm looks for signs of God's promise in the dark and difficult times. It first finds them in the remembrance of things past, in the joy and the laughter the people knew when God brought them home from exile and even their neighbors acknowledged God's mighty deeds on their behalf. ~Talitha Arnold⁷

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray for the joy that is found in Jesus, that those who seek it may truly find it. May we celebrate in the joy found in you. Amen.

⁶ from Deep Blue Kids Bible (p. 700)

⁷ from "Daily Feast: Meditations from Feasting on the Word: Year B" (p. 21)

Wednesday, December 20, 2017

Psalm 126:1-3

When the LORD changed Zion's circumstances for the better, it was like we had been dreaming. Our mouths were suddenly filled with laughter; our tongues were filled with joyful shouts. It was even said at that time, among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them!" Yes, the LORD has done great things for us, we are overjoyed.

Reflection:

Psalm 126 is not an exercise in nostalgia. The remembrance of things past has a present purpose. Recalling God's deliverance long ago leads directly to the call for God to use that same transforming power now. ~Talitha Arnold⁸

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray for the joy that is found in Jesus, that those who seek it may truly find it. May we celebrate in the joy found in you. Amen.

Thursday, December 21, 2017

Psalm 126:4-6

Lord, change our circumstances for the better, like dry streams in the desert waste! Let those who plant with tears reap the harvest with joyful shouts. Let those who go out, crying and carrying their seed, come home with joyful shouts, carrying bales of grain!

Reflection:

The natural power of God to turn seeds into grain would be miracle enough. But Psalm 126 makes an even greater statement. The seeds are not ordinary seeds, but seeds of sorrow. The fruit they bear is not grain or wheat, but shouts of joy. ~Talitha Arnold⁹

When you are sad, what makes you happy again?

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray for the joy that is found in Jesus, that those who seek it may truly find it. May we celebrate in the joy found in you. Amen.

⁸ from "Daily Feast: Meditations from Feasting on the Word: Year B" (p. 21)

⁹ from "Daily Feast: Meditation from Feasting on the Word: Year B" (p. 22)

Friday, December 22, 2017

Psalm 126

When the LORD changed Zion's circumstances for the better, it was like we had been dreaming. Our mouths were suddenly filled with laughter; our tongues were filled with joyful shouts. It was even said at that time, among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them!" Yes, the LORD has done great things for us, we are overjoyed. Lord, change our circumstances for the better, like dry streams in the desert waste! Let those who plant with tears reap the harvest with joyful shouts. Let those who go out, crying and carrying their seed, come home with joyful shouts, carrying bales of grain!

Reflection:

This is no jingle-bells joy bought with a swipe of a credit card. The seeds of this joy have been planted in sadness and watered with tears. This is the honest joy that often comes only after weeping has tarried the night. ~Talitha Arnold¹⁰

Where and in what ways have you planted seeds of sorrow? Seeds of Joy?

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray for the joy that is found in Jesus, that those who seek it may truly find it. May we celebrate in the joy found in you. Amen.

Saturday, December 23, 2017

Psalm 89:1

I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

Reflection:

What do you think the author of this Psalm means that they will "sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever?" What do you think "steadfast" means? Do the people you love bring you joy and happiness? Is God happy when we show our love for God? Does God's love make you happy?

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray for the joy that is found in Jesus, that those who seek it may truly find it. May we celebrate in the joy found in you. Amen.

¹⁰ from "Daily Feast: Meditations from Feasting on the Word: Year B" (p. 22)

Faith:

Share the good points and bad points about your day.

Read the scripture passage and reflection.

Talk about the scripture and the reflection together.

Pray for one another. Pray for one another's good points and bad points that happened.

Bless one another. A blessing is a short prayer showing love, favor, and protection.

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 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 ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel said to 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 holy; he will be called Son of God. 36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Reflection:

Luke tells us that not only is redemption possible; it has already happened. Because of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, the holy continues to break into our lives, to bring us closer to the completion of creation and the already-and-not-yet reign of God. ~Kimberly Bracken Long¹¹

As Advent winds to a close, reflect on how this season has truly been a time of preparing for the coming of Christ into the world.

Lighting of the Advent Candles: The Candle of Love

In a world where churches lie empty, doors are shut, and people seem to have no room for religion anymore, God, we call upon you to come.

In a world where so many claim not to believe anymore, we call upon you, El Shaddai, God Almighty, to come.

In this season of Advent, we wait for Your Presence to be felt in our lives again. We await the birth of Jesus, the Savior of All, who comes into our lives in a new way.

Come, Messiah, Come, and Save Us

(Light all the blue and pink candles)

¹¹ from "Daily Feast: Meditations from Feasting on the Word: Year B" (p. 36)

Prayer:

Dear God, we pray that our faith may be renewed once again, and may we relive the wonder of your love in our lives. In the name of Jesus the Christ, we pray. Amen.

Sunday, December 24, 2017

Christmas Eve

We light the Christ (white) candle to symbolize God's promise fulfilled. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace to all on whom his favor rests.

Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Prayer

Living God, on this holy night we gather—
to stand with shepherds, amazed at your glory;
to sing with angels, rejoicing in your work;
to wait with Joseph, trusting in your promise;
to sit with Mary, cradling your love.
May the good news of this night inspire us
to tell the world of our great joy:
for to us is born a Savior
the Messiah, the Lord.
Glory and praise to you forever!
Amen

Blessing

The Lord look upon you with favor
and give you peace.

Monday, December 25, 2017

Christmas Day

John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Reflection:

If we are paying attention, we recognize too that God is in the ordinary moments of our life—in the making of lunches and the folding of laundry, in daily kisses good-bye, in the moment when we look into the eyes of one whom the world considers unlovely at best and unworthy of notice at worst. It is why we aim to live the Christian life by not only talking about it or thinking about it, but by doing it—why our prayers are not only those of the heart, but those of the hands and the feet. ~Kimberly Bracken Long¹²

On this holy and joyful day, take extra time to sit quietly, to breathe in the pace of Christ, to revel in the amazing gift of God that we celebrate on Christmas Day.

Prayer:

Glory to you, O God, in the highest heaven; and on earth, peace among all those with whom you are pleased! May that, one day, be the entire world. Amen.

¹² from "Daily Feast: Meditations from Feasting on the Word: Year B" (p. 46)