ADVENT
2026



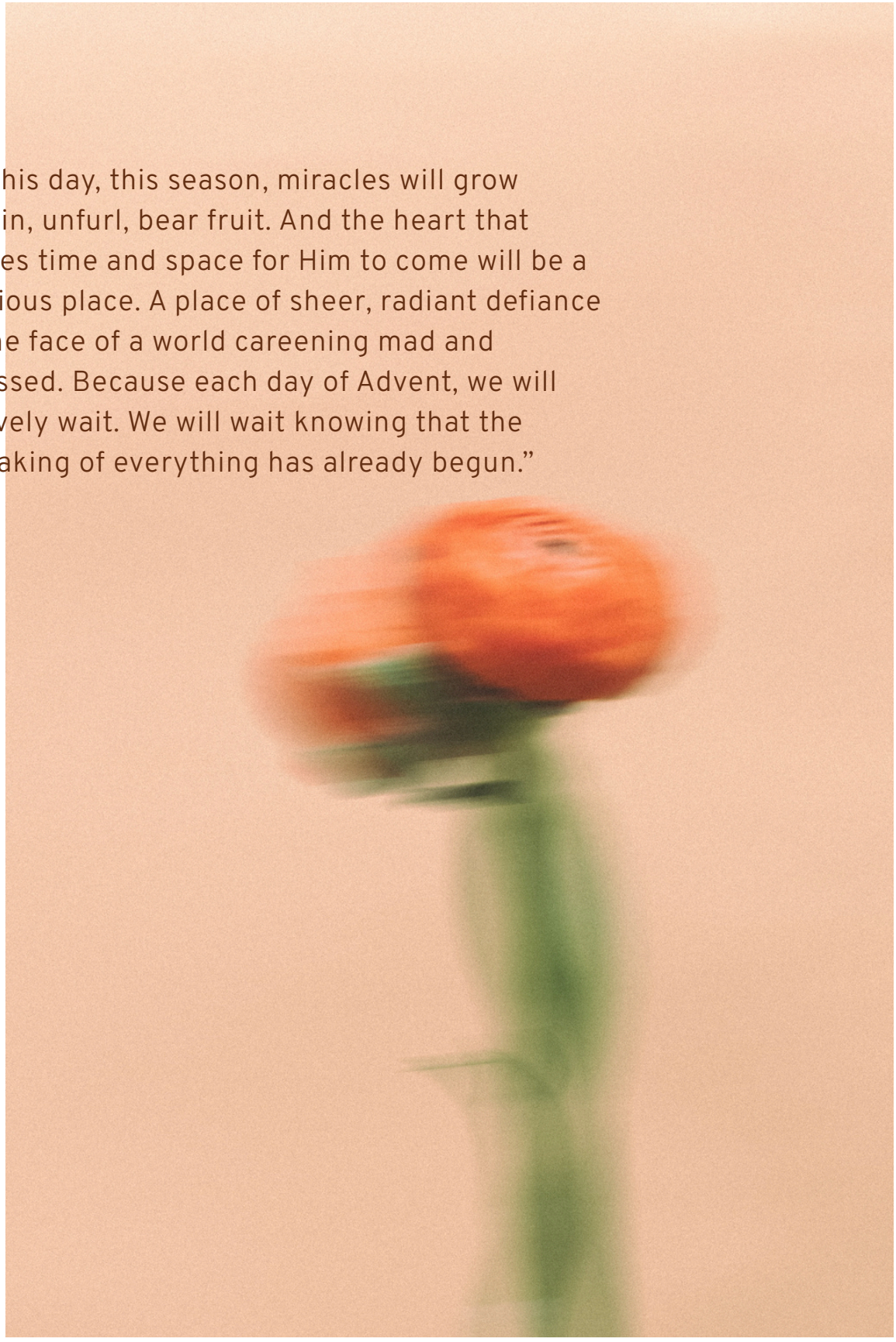
// Reflections



Spotify Playlist

- Open Spotify
- Press the “search” option at the bottom
- Press the camera icon in the top right corner
- Scan the image to the left
- Enjoy curated Advent + Christmas music

“In this day, this season, miracles will grow within, unfurl, bear fruit. And the heart that makes time and space for Him to come will be a glorious place. A place of sheer, radiant defiance in the face of a world careening mad and stressed. Because each day of Advent, we will actively wait. We will wait knowing that the remaking of everything has already begun.”



+ Ann Voskamp

ADVENT:

Meaning + Purpose:
Advent, from the Latin for "coming" or "arrival," is a season the church has observed for centuries. It celebrates Jesus's first coming in humility and anticipates His second coming in glory. It's a time for remembering and rejoicing, for watching and waiting.

Advent invites us into the yearning, praying world of the ancient Israelites as they ached for their Messiah. Strangers in an occupied, oppressive world, they resisted its pull and clung to God's promises, always looking, always waiting. Until He finally arrived.

Jesus.
The infant King.

Advent also turns our eyes forward. We, too, are strangers in a corrupt world, hoping in God's faithfulness and longing for the King's return. So we rejoice in His first coming, praising Him for bringing God's Kingdom to earth and joy to the world, while remaining watchful for His glorious return.

Background + Tradition:
Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and runs until Christmas Eve or, in some traditions, Christmas Day. Churches observe it in many ways, from Advent calendars to candles and wreaths.

However it's practiced, Advent is a significant time in the church's life. A time to slow down and reflect on the King who has come and will come again. A time for asking, "To whom are we giving our allegiance, our life?

SCHEDULE:

Nov. 29:	**HOPE**
Nov. 30–Dec. 5:	**Read + Reflect**
Dec. 6:	**PEACE**
Dec. 7–Dec. 12:	**Read + Reflect**
December 13:	**JOY**
Dec. 14–Dec. 19:	**Read + Reflect**
Dec. 20:	**LOVE**
Dec. 21–Dec. 23:	**Read + Reflect**
Christmas Eve:	**ANTICIPATE**
Christmas Day:	**CELEBRATE**



HOPE

Sunday

Isaiah 64:1-9

At first glance, Isaiah 64 sounds like the cry of someone who has almost lost hope — begging God to tear open the heavens, come down as a warrior, and defeat His enemies. But this plea quickly turns to reflection: God had already come down and made His presence known, doing things the people of Israel never expected while they waited for Him.

To understand this reference to Israel's waiting on God, we must look back at chapter 63, where Isaiah recounts God rescuing Israel from Egypt. After 400 years of slavery, Isaiah tells us that God showed up. He didn't send someone else to rescue them; He came Himself, out of love, to redeem and lead them. His presence went with them in a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night.

But after this incredible rescue, once settled in the Promised Land, Israel grew proud and decided they no longer needed Him. They rejected God, leading to long periods where He *"hid His face from them"* (64:7). Rather than fighting their enemies, God became their enemy (63:10). His presence no longer brought comfort; it brought condemnation.

In response to His seeming abandonment, Israel, through Isaiah, cries out, *"How then can we be saved?"* (64:5). They had waited for God to rescue them before—400 years in Egypt. Now, they would wait again—for about 700 more years, including four centuries of silence between the Old and New Testaments—with little hope, wondering if God would ever show up.

Finally, after years and years of waiting, God answered their prayers with a resounding "Yes!" Yes! There is hope. Yes! You can be saved. Yes! I will show up. Yes! I will come down. Yes! I will defeat your enemies.

So, Emmanuel came down — not as the fierce, powerful warrior Isaiah imagined, but as a child. And in that child, their longing was finally fulfilled; their hope realized. Not only theirs, but also the longings and hopes of the whole world.

Reflection Questions:

1. In what areas of your life are you currently waiting on God?
2. How can Isaiah's message shift your perspective from anxious waiting to active trust?
3. How might God be working in your life right now in ways you didn't expect?

O Holy Night

As performed by: ***Pharaoh Pharaoh***

O Holy night! The stars are brightly shining
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth
Long lay the world in sin and error pining
'Til He appeared and the soul felt its worth
A thrill of hope the weary world 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!

Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming
With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand
So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming
Here come the Wise Men from Orient land
The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger
In all our trials born to be our friend
He knows our need,
  to our weakness is no stranger
Behold your King; before Him lowly bend
Behold your King; before Him lowly bend

Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is love and His Gospel is Peace
Chains shall He break,
  for the slave is our brother
And in His name, all oppression shall cease
Sweet hymns of joy
  in grateful chorus raise we
Let all within us Praise His Holy name
Christ is the Lord;
  O praise His name forever!
His power and glory evermore proclaim
His power and glory evermore proclaim

Weekly Prayer:

Faithful God...

As we embark on this Advent journey, keep our hearts and minds fixed on you. There is much in our world today that grates against **hope.** And yet, you are the God of **hope.** Stoop down to walk these hopeless streets with us. In doing so, point us towards places and people where you are at work. And fill us with divine **hope.**

Amen.

Weekly Practices:

Ideas for embodying **hope:**

- **Name the light.** Share with someone one place you're seeing God at work, however small.
- **Say "*I'm hoping for you.*"** Tell someone something specific you're hoping and praying for in their life.
- **Keep one promise on purpose.** Follow through on the call, visit, or favor you keep putting off.
- **Plant something.** Pot a paperwhite or amaryllis bulb and give it away or keep it in view.
- **Pray "*Come, Lord Jesus.*"** Pray it once a day for a person or situation that seems stuck.

Monday::

Micah 4:1-5

What is this text saying?

What is interesting about this text?

How might God be speaking to you through this text?

Tuesday::

Micah 4:6-13

What is this text saying?

What is interesting about this text?

How might God be speaking to you through this text?

Wednesday::

Micah 5:1-5a

What is this text saying?

What is interesting about this text?

How might God be speaking to you through this text?

Thursday::

Hosea 6:1-6

What is this text saying?

What is interesting about this text?

How might God be speaking to you through this text?

Friday::

Jeremiah 4:1-10

What is this text saying?

What is interesting about this text?

How might God be speaking to you through this text?

Saturday::

Reflection

From this week, what are some things you can be grateful to God for?
What can you be thankful for?

**pause*

What brought about challenges and difficulties for you this week?
Where did you feel sadness, frustration, anxiety, hopelessness?

**pause*

What happened this week that made you feel energized and excited?
Where did you feel joy, happiness, comfort, peace?

**pause*

Ask the Lord to be with you tomorrow and in the coming week.
Seek his wisdom, guidance, provision, and protection.



PEACE

Sunday

Isaiah 40:1-11

Imagine the despair of God's people during the Babylonian exile.

Following Jerusalem's destruction in 586 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar forced the people of Judah on a nine-hundred-mile journey. A brutal journey that, even in Ezra's later day, took four agonizing months. Cut off from the Temple and grieving their brokenness, God's people faced a crisis of faith: Had God forgotten the covenant promise He made to Abraham nearly 1,500 years earlier? Had He abandoned them?

Surely not!

In Isaiah 40:1–11, God speaks a word of peace into Judah's distress. The prophet declares that her warfare or hard service has ended, her sin is pardoned, and the glory of the Lord will be revealed. Why could they trust words like that? Because people fade like grass, but the word of the Lord stands forever. So Judah could be confident that rescue and redemption were coming, and with them a coming Savior.

Looking back, we can see this promise gloriously fulfilled. Roughly seven centuries after Isaiah's prophecy, the Prince of Peace arrived in Bethlehem as a baby — God's word made flesh. In that moment, the glory of the Lord was revealed. And one day, all people will see it together.

The Lord spoke, and it came to pass.

Today, as sojourners awaiting Christ's return, we face our own trials and discouragement. Yet our peace remains sure. Just as God proved Himself faithful to the exiles, He proves Himself faithful to us today. His unchanging Word guarantees that our Savior will return. So when life feels overwhelming, we find true peace by resting on God's promises.

His Word has spoken; it will surely come to pass.

Reflection Questions:

1. Where are you facing despair today? What would peace look like in that context?
2. In what ways does Isaiah's message speak of peace?
3. How might Isaiah's message speak peace into your life during this Advent season?

This Night

As performed by: ***Future of Forestry***

A star hangs overhead
Three kings with faith are led
To find the miracle of God
The stillness in the air
Says something's Holy there
The men arrive and stand in awe

This night, this night, this night
Is like no other, is like no other
This child, this child, this child
Is like no other, is like no other

The shepherds that were near
Still shaken in their fear
Believe the angel from above
They come to kneel beside
To love and glorify
The One who came to earth to love

This night, this night, this night
Is like no other, is like no other
This child, this child, this child
Is like no other, is like no other

Now Ary brings him close
Her voice the baby knows
The two draw closer through the night
The baby feels her breath
She pulls him to her chest
And when he cries she holds him tight

Weekly Prayer:

Gracious Father...

In this life, we often feel anxious and unsettled. We long for control but can only grasp at a vapor. But you are in control of all things. You guide and direct our lives and all of history. Open our eyes and hearts to this reality. So when we are overwhelmed, we can look to you and find **peace**, your inexplicable **peace!**

Amen.

Weekly Practices:

Ideas for embodying **peace:**

- **Leave five minutes early.** Use the margin to let people merge, hold doors, and arrive calm.
- **Say "*I was wrong*" once.** Look for one moment this week to own a mistake plainly, without adding "but."
- **Put the phone in a basket.** Give the people in the room your whole attention.
- **Carry someone's worry.** Ask someone, "*What's weighing on you this week?*" Then do one practical thing about it.

Monday::

Isaiah 26:7–15

What is this text saying?

What is interesting about this text?

How might God be speaking to you through this text?

Tuesday::

Isaiah 4:2-6

What is this text saying?

What is interesting about this text?

How might God be speaking to you through this text?

Wednesday::

Malachi 2:10—3:1

What is this text saying?

What is interesting about this text?

How might God be speaking to you through this text?

Thursday::

Habakkuk 2:1–5

What is this text saying?

What is interesting about this text?

How might God be speaking to you through this text?

Friday::

Habakkuk 3:2–6

What is this text saying?

What is interesting about this text?

How might God be speaking to you through this text?

Saturday::

Reflection

From this week, what are some things you can be grateful to God for?
What can you be thankful for?

*pause

What brought about challenges and difficulties for you this week?
Where did you feel sadness, frustration, anxiety, hopelessness?

*pause

What happened this week that made you feel energized and excited?
Where did you feel joy, happiness, comfort, peace?

*pause

Ask the Lord to be with you tomorrow and in the coming week.
Seek his wisdom, guidance, provision, and protection.



JOY

Sunday

Isaiah 64:1-4, 8-11

Christmas is supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year. At least, that's what we're told. But for many of us, the Christmas season highlights the reality that life isn't quite what it's supposed to be.

Relationships are strained. Loved ones are missing. Worries about tomorrow linger. And beneath the lights, decorations, and celebrations, there's often a quiet longing for things to be different. Into that longing, Isaiah announces some good news.

In Isaiah 61, God promises to bind up broken hearts, proclaim freedom to captives, and exchange mourning for gladness. He promises to rebuild what has been ruined and restore what has been devastated.

God isn't just promising to make difficult circumstances more bearable. He's promising to make broken things beautiful again.

Centuries later, Jesus stands in a synagogue, opens the scroll of Isaiah, reads the opening lines of this passage, and declares, *"Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"* (Luke 4:21). Jesus is the good news Isaiah was announcing. That is the joy of Advent.

Joy isn't found in pretending the world isn't broken. It's found in knowing that Jesus is making all things new. And trusting that He is with us every step of the way.

We still feel sorrow. We still carry burdens. We still wait for things to be made right. But because Jesus has come, we know that brokenness doesn't get the final word. He does.

As people who have received His grace, we're invited to join His work of restoration, bringing hope to the hurting, comfort to the grieving, and glimpses of His coming kingdom to a broken world.

Reflection Questions:

1. Where are you longing for God to bring restoration?
2. What are some joys you've experienced over this past year?
3. How might the joy you've received in Jesus become good news for someone else this Advent?

Christ The Lord Is Born

As performed by: ***The Brilliance***

Stargazing, just waiting for time to pass
A light shone so brightly
  shepherds watched aghast
An angel appearing shone all around
Scared senseless,
  the shepherds did not make a sound

  Oh, alle alle lu jah, sing
  Oh, alle alle alle lu jah
  (Unto us the child is born)
  Ah

Do not fear, I bring news, news of great joy
The angel proclaiming Christ the Lord is born
Go find Him, go quickly to Bethlehem
A child is born this night, God the son of man

  Singing
  Oh, alle alle lu jah, sing
  Oh, alle alle alle lu jah
  (Unto us the child is born)
  Ah

The angels appearing join in one song
All people, all nations, come and join along
A Child, a Savior, the King is born
We gather, we welcome
  Christ the Lord of Lords

  Singing
  Oh, alle alle lu jah, sing
  Oh, alle alle alle lu jah
  (Unto us the child is born)
  Ah

Weekly Prayer:

Lord...

Real **joy** is hard to come by these days. And we often settle for cheap imitations – more stuff, new experiences, achievement, and the like. These do not last, nor does the momentary **joy** attached to them. So, Jesus, we come to you seeking real, lasting **joy.** During this Advent season, grant us your heavenly **joy!**

Amen.

Weekly Practices:

Ideas for embodying **joy:**

- **Sing together.** Start a carol at the table, in the car, or on a neighbor's porch.
- **Play time.** Plan one purely fun thing, like a game night, a light-looking drive, or a snowball-free "snowball" fight with paper.
- **Celebrate out loud.** Find out someone else's good news or small win and make a big deal about it.
- **Let's party!** Throw an impromptu "*just because*" party and invite friends, neighbors, and strangers.

Monday::

1 Kings 18:1–18

What is this text saying?

What is interesting about this text?

How might God be speaking to you through this text?

Tuesday::

2 Kings 2:9–22

What is this text saying?

What is interesting about this text?

How might God be speaking to you through this text?

Wednesday::

Malachi 3:16–4:6

What is this text saying?

What is interesting about this text?

How might God be speaking to you through this text?

Thursday::

2 Samuel 6:1–11

What is this text saying?

What is interesting about this text?

How might God be speaking to you through this text?

Friday::

2 Samuel 6:12–19

What is this text saying?

What is interesting about this text?

How might God be speaking to you through this text?

Saturday::

Reflection

From this week, what are some things you can be grateful to God for?
What can you be thankful for?

*pause

What brought about challenges and difficulties for you this week?
Where did you feel sadness, frustration, anxiety, hopelessness?

*pause

What happened this week that made you feel energized and excited?
Where did you feel joy, happiness, comfort, peace?

*pause

Ask the Lord to be with you tomorrow and in the coming week.
Seek his wisdom, guidance, provision, and protection.



LOVE

Sunday

2 Samuel 7:1-16

Hear me out… **God is head-over-heels in love with you. He is lovesick over you. He is absolutely crazy about you!**

But sometimes His love looks different than we might expect.

Have you ever seen one of those "expectation vs. reality" pictures? That's my life. I've watched God gently crumble up my plans and throw them away. But what came next is actually far more beautiful than anything I expected, because the plans were God's, not mine.

This reminds me so much of David. In 2 Samuel 7, David had settled into his palace but noticed that the ark of God was still in a tent. Why should God live in a tent while he lived in a palace? So David decided to build Him a house. But God had a different plan. Instead of letting David build Him a house, God promised to build David a house, a family line, and to establish His kingdom forever.

I love this!

David wanted to do something for God, but God showed David what He would do for him instead. That promise is what Advent waits for. Centuries later, an angel told Mary that her son would receive *"the throne of His father David"* and reign forever (Luke 1:32–33). Jesus is the house God promised to build!

Sometimes we get so caught up in what we want to do for God that we forget how deeply He loves us. His love doesn't depend on what we accomplish for Him. We are not loved because of how we show up, but because of how God has shown up for us.

God's "no" doesn't mean His love has changed. Even when our expectations crumble, His promises remain. His plans are better than any Plan A, B, or C we could make. So, this Advent season, let God's promises lead you. Because our lives are not measured by what we build for Him, but by what His love has built for us.

Reflection Questions:

1. When and where have you felt God's love most tangibly?
2. In what ways are you currently trying to earn God's love?
3. How might you surrender your life to God's love this Advent season?

Thorn and Thistle

As performed by:
We Are Messengers + Kristyn Getty

To a world of thorn and thistle
Shadowed still by Eden's fall
On a night so unexpected
Enters the Lord of all

In a cold and stony manger
Swaddled in a linen cloth
Into darkness, into danger
Born now is Heaven's love

Holy hands with fragile fingers
Our redemption in His face
To a world of thorn and thistle
Jesus came

Child of Heaven, Man of sorrows
Bitter is the Earth's betrayal
Soon our pride will be the hammer
My sin will be the nail

Holy hands with fragile fingers
Our redemption in His face
To a world of thorn and thistle
Jesus came

See how the roses blooming
(See how)
Breaks through the hardened gloom
(Breaks through the ground)
Sweet fragrance fills the winter air
It's from our Saviour's cry

All rejoice, He comes to rescue
Our redemption in His face
To a world of thorn and thistle
Jesus came

Weekly Prayer:

Oh God...

We are starved for genuine **love!** Our world is full of false **loves** that are loud and selfish and dangerous. They sing us a siren song that captivates our hearts. Our own sense of **love** becomes distorted and warped. You who are **love** sing our hearts a sweeter song. Let us be charmed by your unparalleled **love!**

Amen.

Weekly Practices:

Ideas for embodying **love:**

- **Be present.** Invite someone you don't know well for coffee or a meal, pay for it, ask about their story, and just listen.
- **Send a note.** Pick a friend or family member and write them a handwritten letter or card.
- **Do someone a favor.** Do someone else's chore or task around the house this week. When asked, say, "*I just love you.*"
- **Doorstep drop.** Bring small gifts like cookies, a candle, or a bulb in a pot, and a note that says "*love is Christmas*"

Monday::

1 Samuel 1:1–18

What is this text saying?

What is interesting about this text?

How might God be speaking to you through this text?

Tuesday::

1 Samuel 1:19–28

What is this text saying?

What is interesting about this text?

How might God be speaking to you through this text?

Wednesday::

1 Samuel 2:1–10

What is this text saying?

What is interesting about this text?

How might God be speaking to you through this text?



ANTICIPATION

Christmas Eve

Matthew 1:18-25

Longing. Waiting. Anticipating.

The day of all days is just around the corner. On the other side of tonight is the day in which we celebrate God stepping into human history.

Christmas Day. The first Advent of Jesus, the Messiah.

But tonight, we wait. We sit in the uncomfortable tension of what hasn't happened yet, and what we know is coming but that is still just out of reach.

And in that waiting, let's enter into Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem: a town swollen with travelers from near and far, with no vacancy anywhere, until at last they find a humble stable and an audience of farm animals.

Here, they wait. And we, along with them.

Exhausted, they try to rest. The anticipation grows. Something unimaginable is about to happen. They wrestle with questions, with hope, and with fear.

This night truly is like no other.

Yet we have an advantage. We know how the story goes. Where they had questions, we see the answer – Jesus. Born in a manger. A baby boy. Immanuel, God with us, the Savior of the world.

It all unfolds on that first Christmas morning. And yet, we still wait. The One who came as a baby has promised to come again, and we still live on this side of that morning. So, we learn from Mary and Joseph how to wait: *tired, uncertain, hopeful.*

We linger in the dark, knowing that the light is coming, and that it will shine all the brighter because of a baby's cry.

Reflection Questions:

1. Where in your life are you waiting without knowing how things will turn out?
2. Hope and fear – which of those feels strongest for you tonight, and what would it look like to bring it honestly to God?
3. How does Christmas Eve shape the way you wait for what God hasn't done yet?

Silent Night

As performed by: ***Manchester Orchestra***

Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
'Round yon virgin mother and child
Holy infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
'Round yon virgin mother and child
Holy infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace

Prayer:

Faithful Father...

As we spend this day waiting for tomorrow, help us not to miss the gift of waiting... of **anticipating** what will be. Teach us patience and hope. Form us into a people who move through this world looking for what you'll do next. Tomorrow we celebrate your first Advent. But in that celebration, we also remain expectant for your second Advent!

Amen

Practices:

Ideas for embodying **anticipation:**

- **Fasting.** Give up something today that you can look forward to enjoying tomorrow.
- **Plan the day.** Write down the plan(s) for the day. Hang it on the refrigerator or somewhere in plain view. Every time you walk by it, get excited.
- **Light a candle.** Light a candle this evening/tonight. Spend some time writing or talking with others about what you're excited about for tomorrow.



CELEBRATE

Christmas Day

Luke 2:1-20

Merry Christmas!

Before the coffee and the gifts and the jubilation, take some time to read the Christmas story found in **Luke 2:1-20**. Read it out loud to yourself, with friends, and/or with family.

Sit with it.
Meditate on it.
Give thanks for it.

Let the wonder and joy of this first advent story wash over you this morning!

Enjoy this short Christmas reflection from the late 19th-century Scottish Poet and Minister, George MacDonald.

"Christmas Meditation"

_George MacDonald

"He who by a mother's love
Made the wandering world His own,
Every year comes from above,
Comes the parted to atone,
Binding Earth to the Father's throne.

Nay, thou comest every day!
No, thou never didst depart!
Never an hour hast been away!
Always with us, Lord, thou art,
Binding, binding heart to heart!"

Joy To The World

As performed by: ***Hollyn***

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.

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

Prayer:

Praise God!

The Lord Jesus has been born – entering our fleshly existence with frailty and power. He is the answer no one was looking for. He is the King no one was expecting. And yet, here He is; come to us in all our mess. To show us the way home, the way to the Father, the way to life – everlasting life! That is a reason to **celebrate!**

Amen.

Practices:

Ideas for embodying **celebration:**

- **Sing songs.** Put on a Christmas album or Spotify Playlist and sing along.
- **Enjoy a meal.** Make a meal “fit for a king” (whatever that looks like to you). Then enjoy it, preferably with friends and/or family.
- **Share gifts.** Not presents. Before opening presents, share about a gift you’ve received from God this year. Then, everyone celebrate that gift!

We hope this devotional has been a helpful guide to you through this Advent season. It is our prayer that the experience of Jesus' first advent will cause you to yearn all the more for His second advent!

So as you journey from one Advent to the next, may the Holy Spirit fill you full with hope, peace, joy, and love!

_Bay Cities Fellwoship

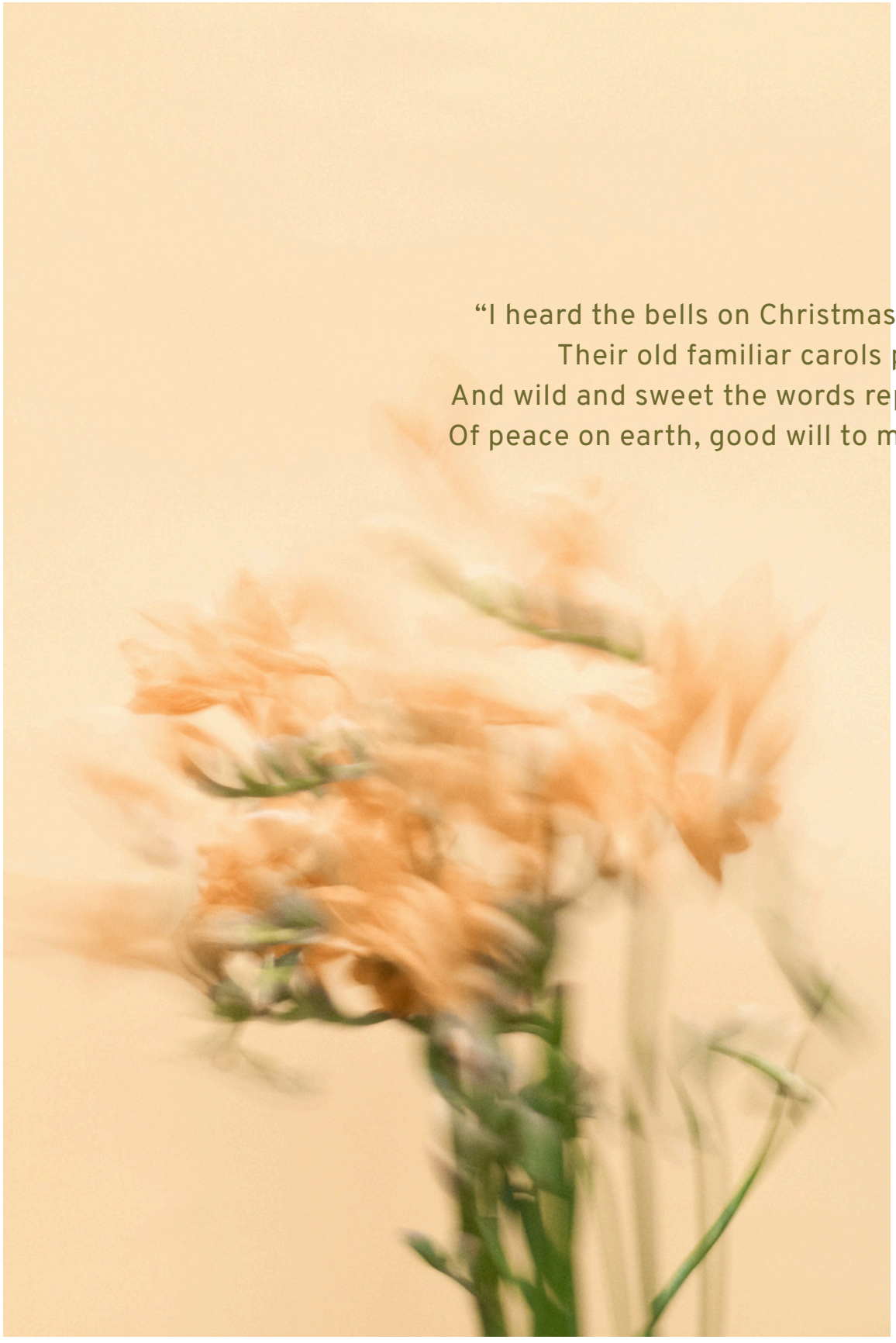
DEVOTIONAL CONTRIBUTERS:

week //001 – Sunday —— **Megan Thompson**

week //002 – Sunday —— **Tori Hale**

week //003 – Sunday —— **Ken Thompson**

week //004 – Sunday —— **Madi Chartrand**



“I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men”.

+ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow