

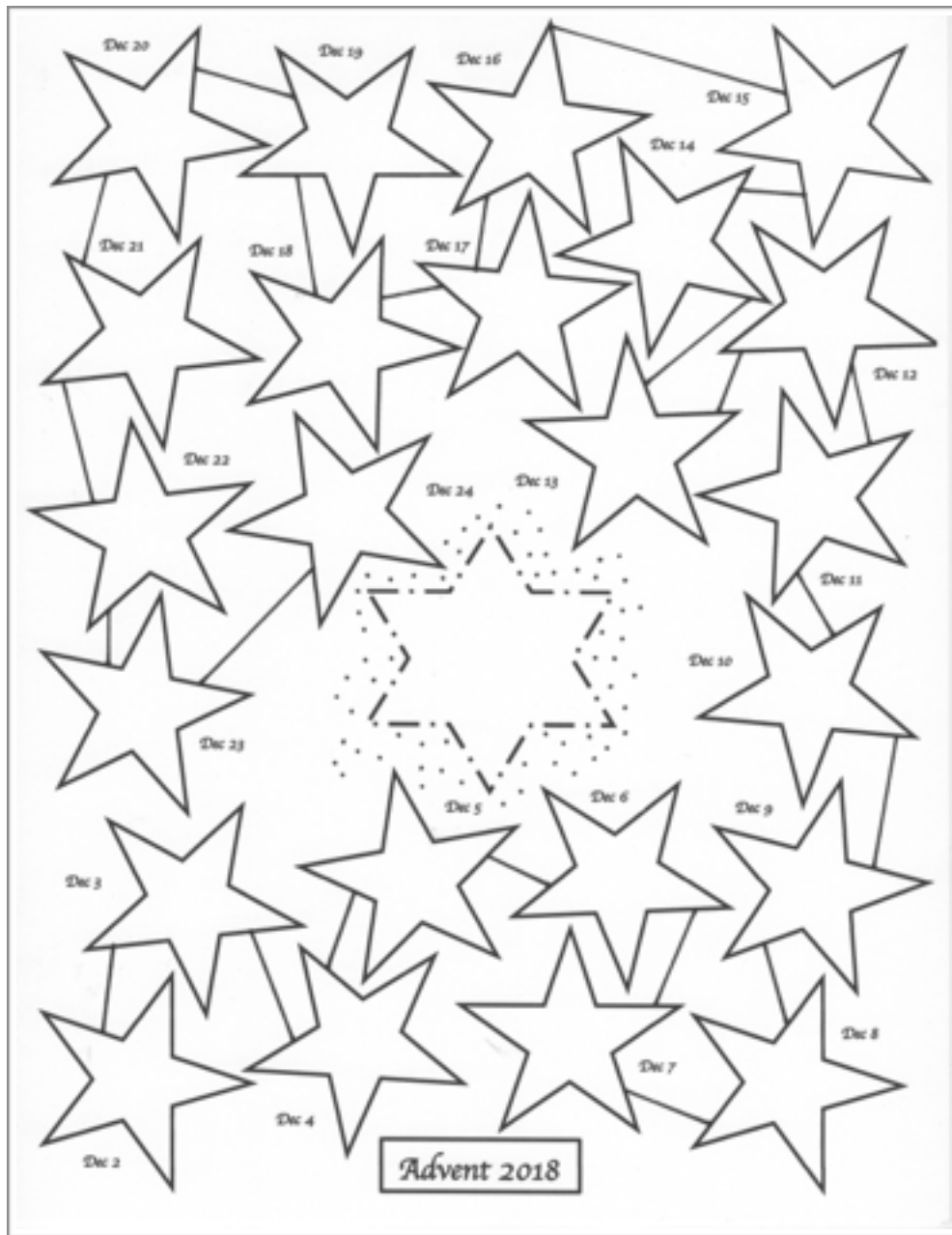
Light, Glorious Light



Advent Devotions

based on the Narrative Lectionary

Year 1, 2018



As you pray each day, colour or write in each daily star a picture or words reminding you of your praise, thanksgiving, and concerns.

December 24 - Christmas Eve

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-7 - Jesus is born

Closing Prayer: Jesus our Saviour, in the stillness of this night you were born. Mary and Joseph, finding no place to stay, placed you in a manger, in a stable. In humility and poverty, you, the Saviour of the world were born.

As we celebrate in warmth and safety and in the company of family and friends, may we remember those who are cold and hungry today. May the memory that you came for all remind us to share your love with all, today and always. Amen.

December 25 - Christmas Day

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:8-20 -The shepherds and the angels

Closing Prayer: Even as the shepherds set out to see this thing which had come to pass, may we too kneel before you on this day of celebration and praise!

Joy to the world, the Lord has come! Let earth receive her king. Let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing. Let our hearts prepare him room, and with heaven and nature, let us sing Joy to the World!

This is your day. This is the world's day. This is our day. We bless you and praise you, we lay our gifts before you. Accept our gifts and accept our lives in joyful and loving devotion and service to you. Amen.

Advent 4 - Love

Opening prayer: Lord of hope and peace, joy and love, you loved the world so much that you gave your one and only son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. You did not send your son to condemn the world but that the world might have life through him. As you have loved the world, may we love the world also. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 1:18-25 - Emmanuel, God with us

Closing Prayer: Lord of love, you entrusted the care of your son to two fragile people in a very troubled time. You placed eternity into human hands. In Bethlehem, to Mary and to Joseph you gave Emmanuel; God with us. You entrust us in exactly the same way. In a troubled and uncertain time, you place eternity in our hands and in our hearts and on our lips; Emmanuel, God with us, and in us, and through us. On this day of love and in this season of promise may we too be worthy of our calling so that all that we do shows your love. Amen.

Introduction

Advent is the first season of the church year. It is a season of anticipation and expectation. As we prepare for the birth of Jesus at Christmas we read and reflect on those scripture passages that foretell of the coming of God's servant and reveal a plan of compassion, justice and peace in the world.

Just as "in the beginning" the world was created out of darkness into God's marvellous light, the season of Advent moves us from darkness into ever-brighter light as we progress through themes of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love that lead us to Christ. As we light our Advent candles week by week we are reminded that Jesus comes into our lives as the light of the world.

With this Advent devotional booklet you will be reading a number of stories from the narrative lectionary. You will begin with the prophet Habakkuk, hearing of his experience of dark times filled with violence, sin and despair. Habakkuk cries out for justice while he also lives into the hope he has in the promises of God. The second week of Advent reveals Esther's story of intervention on behalf of the Jewish people and the resulting peace in her kingdom. The third week of Advent we will look to Zachariah and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph and their joy as they await the birth of John and Jesus.

Finally, the light becomes bright as the last days of Advent reveal the story of Jesus' birth and the first visitors to the manger. Jesus, born as the light of the world, God with us, now and forever.

Advent 1 - Hope

Opening Prayer: Our Lord and God, as the people of old waited in hope for the one who would redeem Israel, may our hope for your justice and redemption be living and active in our hearts and in our lives. Amen.

Daily Scripture Reading: See facing page

Closing Prayer: Gracious and loving Lord, the prophets cried for justice. They declared that in spite of chaos and violence, that you were Lord of all and that your will and order would prevail. We pray that in our world of violence and justice that your order and will would prevail. "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven."

We pray for those who are the victims of violence and for those whose lives are turned upside down. May we speak prophetic words of justice and hope. May we act prophetically to give life to our words. Come Lord Jesus. Amen.

Advent 3 - Scripture Readings

Joy is the thread running through all of this week's scripture readings. Joy in the promises of God revealed through the prophet Isaiah, and joy in the experience of prophesy fulfilled in Jesus; joy in the anticipation of a son for an elderly couple who have desperately wanted a baby to call their own, and joy revealed in the praises of a young woman named Mary that were sung out to her Lord honouring God's favour in her life.

As we read the texts that lead us toward the manger, reflect on the joy that God brings to each of these people of faith and also to you.

December 16 - Isaiah 42:1-9 - God's servant, a light to the nations

December 17 - Matthew 12:15-21 - Jesus, God's chosen servant

December 18 - Luke 1:5-20 - The birth of John the Baptist foretold

December 19 - Luke 1:21-25 - Zechariah and Elizabeth wait

December 20 - Luke 1:26-38 - The birth of Jesus foretold

December 21 - Luke 1:39-45, 56 - Mary visits Elizabeth

December 22 - Luke 1:46-55 - Mary's song of praise

Advent 1 - Scripture Readings

This week we will read key passages from the Book of Habakkuk.

As the prophet writes from the southern kingdom of Judah around 609 - 600 BCE, Habakkuk cries for a world filled with human suffering and helplessness and gives witness to an abandoned law and prevailing injustice. Our prophet summarizes his experience as "Violence!" Out of his grief Habakkuk pleads with the Lord for justice for all.

Knowing the promises of God regarding security, joyful living, and righteousness, Habakkuk also waits and watches for the activity of the Lord in the world. He is resolved that it is not yet the time for God's promises to be fulfilled, but remains confident that they will surely come. Living in a 'not yet' time, Habakkuk commits to living by faith regardless.

The Book of Habakkuk is a book about faith for faithful people who are living "in the meantime," - in the times between the revelations of God and the fulfillment God's promises. In this Habakkuk demonstrates for us a life of confident hope.

December 2 - Matthew 26:36-38 - Stay awake with me

December 3 - Habakkuk 1:1-4 - The prophet laments

December 4 - Habakkuk 1:5-11 - God answer is both comforting and confounding

December 5 - Habakkuk 1:12-13 - The prophet responds

December 6 - Habakkuk 2:1-4 - The prophet does not abandon his faith; he watches and waits for God's time

December 7 - Habakkuk 2:6-20 - The prophet calls us to a wide-awake faith

December 8 - Habakkuk 3:2,18-19 - Trust and joy in the Lord

Advent 3 - Joy

Opening Prayer: Lord of hope and peace and joy, in you is life, and that life is the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it. May we turn from the darkness into your marvellous and wonderful light that we might see what you have called us to be. Amen.

Daily Scripture Reading: See facing page

Closing Prayer: Lord of joy, you spoke and in love the world was created. By your love the word became flesh and dwelt among us. Mary knew this love first and sang out in joy. In the midst of fear and uncertainty, she sang out in joy. In our world too we know fear and uncertainty; we see turmoil and trouble. May we too sing out in joy; may our souls magnify the Lord and our spirit rejoice in God our Saviour. Amen.

Advent 2 - Scripture Readings

The story of Esther is an intriguing one, filled with drama, excess, vengeance and trickery. You can imagine it as a dramatic production played out with extravagant costumes, groaning banquet tables, and actors running wildly on and off the stage as they plot to influence an all-powerful, yet naive king who has sealed the fate of an entire nation with the press of his signet ring.

Esther, a young bride among many wives to King Ahasuerus, is challenged by her cousin Mordecai to act on behalf of her kin and thwart Haman's plot to exterminate all Jews from the kingdom. She must act, says Mordecai, for perhaps, he says she is in her royal position for just such a time as this. And act she does.

Holocaust survivor, Elie Wesel, challenges us to always take sides when witnessing injustice. Neutrality, he states, only ever helps the oppressor, never the victim. In our prayers for peace we are reminded that indifference is never an option.

December 9 - Matthew 5:13-16 - You are the light of the world

December 10 - Esther 3:1-11 - Haman plots to eliminate the Jewish people

December 11 - Esther 4:1-17 - Mordecai appeals to his cousin Esther to intervene with the king - at such a time as this

December 12 - Esther 5:1-13 - Esther hosts a banquet for the king and Haman, and Haman plots Mordecai's death

December 13 - Esther 6:1-7:6 - Mordecai is honoured, and Esther hosts a second banquet for the king and Haman

December 14 - Esther 8:1-8. 15-17 - Esther saves the Jews

December 15 - Esther 9:18-23, 29-31 - The Feast of Purim celebrates peace and security

Advent 2 - Peace

Opening Prayer: Lord of hope and peace. You have called the peacemakers blessed. May we be your peacemakers. May your peace reign in our hearts and may your peace guide our thoughts and our actions. Amen.

Daily Scripture Reading: See facing page

Closing Prayer: Lord of peace. We are reminded that you have declared us to be salt and light to the world. You have not asked us or even encouraged us, you have declared us to be! May we be the peacemakers you know us to be. May we, even as we declare your reign of peace, work to make our world a world of peace.

We pray for those who know no peace, in their hearts, in their families, in their homes and in their nations. We understand that we have been called for such a time as this and ask that you would guide our steps in the way of peace. Amen.