



# Advent 2016

## Resources for Discussion and Reflection



Prepared by the Lutheran-Catholic Covenant Commission of the  
Northeastern Ohio Lutheran Synod of the ELCA &  
Roman Catholic Diocese of Youngstown

With joy and the spirit of Advent expectation, we hope this resource  
Helps you in waiting and longing for Christ. Whether you use it  
For personal devotion or with a combined group of Lutherans and Catholics,  
We wish you a blessed Advent.

### Advent I: Longing for Peace

Isaiah 2:1-5

Psalm 122

Romans 13:11-14

Matthew 24:37-44

Take a moment to read Isaiah 2:1-5 and Psalm 122. Taken together, these readings are rich in the symbolism of peace. These are images of God's kingdom that we do not see this Advent on the evening news. The first days of Advent find children waiting and longing for the baby Jesus, festive celebrations, and gifts. Yet this season, as in every day of faith-filled living, we wait and long for God's kingdom to fully break into our world with its promise of peace.

- \* What do you think inhibits peace today?
- \* Where do you experience God's gift of peace?
- \* In the Isaiah and Psalm passages, what symbols stand out to you?
- \* How can you be an instrument of peace?

### Advent II: Longing for Justice

Isaiah 11:1-10

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

Romans 15:4-13

Matthew 3:1-12

John the Baptist calls out of the wilderness for the people to prepare the way of the Lord, to make straight his paths, and to bear fruit in their lives. God's way of making "a straight path" is often different from our usual concepts of justice. This week's readings speak in terms of liberating the oppressed, hearing the cries of the poor, and reconciling opponents. The prophets proclaim that God's kingdom will need justice, not just charity.

- \* Where do you hear the cry of the poor and oppressed?
- \* Who are the opponents in your life or in the life of your congregation/parish that need to be reconciled?
- \* In what justice-focused ministries does your congregation/parish participate?

### Advent III: Longing for Joy

Isaiah 35:1-10

Psalm 146:4-9

James 5:7-11

Matthew 11:2-11

Buried within every newscast is a human-interest story grounded in hope and joy. The negative always seems to get more attention. We can lose heart if we only look in the direction of what is wrong and what is missing. When we look at our church at large or our congregation/parish through dark glasses, we miss the virtues James suggests of patience, strength of heart, and endurance. With these gifts, we can renew a sense of joy. Joy yesterday: Jesus came into our world and forever changed it. Joy tomorrow: Jesus will come again and usher in the fullness of the kingdom. Joy today: Jesus comes in brief and holy moments.

- \* Where do you experience joy in your congregation/parish?
- \* In what ways are you a joy to others?
- \* How can the gifts of patience, strength of heart, and endurance help you focus on the joy of Jesus?

### Advent IV: Longing for Jesus

Isaiah 7:10-16

Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18

Romans 1:1-7

Matthew 1:18-25

As children, the longing of Advent ends on Christmas day with manger, carols, celebrations, and gifts. We experience great joy until a few days pass and we sense a long wait ahead of us once again. This is the way of Advent, the joy of Jesus among us, yet not fully. Joy gives way to more longing. But we remember God *is* Emmanuel - God with us. The greater celebrations help us see God breaking into our lives and our joy is deep. But so is our longing. We wait for peace. We wait for justice. We wait for joy. We wait for Jesus.

- \* When do you have the most difficulty waiting? When is waiting a joy?
- \* What names for God are most helpful to you in times of struggle? In times of joy?
- \* What does the name Emmanuel (God with us) mean for you today?

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