

The Word Made Flesh: Awaiting God's Incarnation

Advent at Home

Written and compiled by the Rev. Sarah Reynolds

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us...” John 1:14

This devotional is meant to provide a way to focus and reflect on the meaning of Advent – the incarnate God born among us and for whom we now wait. I invite you, in the midst of this busy season, to create an intentional practice of refocusing on the meaning of Christ at the center of our anticipation and celebration, and indeed, our very lives. Pick a time and day that works for your household and create an intentional space to recenter, to connect mind and body, to take delight in your God-given embodiment, and to give thanks for the enfleshed God for whom we wait. At least once a week, spend time around your Advent wreath, lighting the candles and saying the prayers. Try to find a few minutes each day for journaling, using the prompts provided for that week. Center yourself, this Advent season, in the awareness of God who dwells among us as close as your very breath.

Week One – HOPE

Reader: Today we light the first candle of the Advent wreath, which stands for hope. Jesus Christ, God's Word made flesh, represents our hope for our embodied lives together.

The candle is lit.

Scripture: Psalm 16: 9 – “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope.”

Prayer: Eternal God, as we await your coming among us, fill our hearts with hope and give us the courage to use our bodies and lives in its service. You are the embodiment of our dearest hope: that we may grow ever closer to you, leading lives of care for and connection to all of your creation. We pray in the name of the One for whom we wait. Amen.

Journal prompt: This week, reflect each day on the relationship between hope and your physical experience. How does hope feel in your body? What does it mean for hope to become embodied? What effect – good or ill – does your daily experience as a body among other bodies have on your sense of hope? What difference does it make for the object of our greatest hope to enter a vulnerable human body as the Christ child?

Week Two – PEACE

Reader: Today we light the first and second candles of the Advent wreath; the first for hope, and the second for peace. Emanuel, bring your peace to our lives.

The candle is lit.

Scripture: Matthew 5: 9 – “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

Prayer: Almighty God, you offer us a peace far surpassing our understanding in your steadfast presence within and among us. Make us agents of your peace so that the world might know your mercy, love, and justice for all creatures. Help us to put our whole selves into your service in the way your beloved son Jesus has taught us. Amen.

Journal prompt: This week, reflect each day on what peace means in our physical, embodied world. What does peacefulness feel like, physically? How does centering yourself in God affect that feeling? What physical difference might peace make for those who live in unpeaceful places? How do we make it real and tangible?



ST. JOHN'S NORWOOD
Bethesda - Chevy Chase

Week Three – JOY

Reader: Today we light the first, second, and third candles of the Advent wreath; the first for hope, the second for peace, and the third for joy. God, delight us with your joy.

The pink candle is lit.

Scripture: Luke 2: 10 – “Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for behold – I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.’”

Prayer: God of all, you delight in us and made us for that same delight. You set us down in a creation exuberant with your many gifts. Give us joyful hearts, attentive to the delights of our embodied lives and fill our senses with an awareness of your steadfast presence. You are as close as our very breath. Rejoicing in the inspiration of your Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Journal prompt: This week, reflect each day on the joy that is available only as embodied creatures: delight in the sights, smells, and sounds in your day. Take a walk, practice yoga, cook your favorite meal. Reflect on the gift of your embodiment in an embodied world, and blessed by an embodied God. How does joy feel in your body?

Week Four – LOVE

Reader: Today we light the first, second, third, and fourth candles of the Advent wreath; the first for hope, the second for peace, the third for joy, and the fourth for love. Makes us disciples to the love that Jesus lived.

The candle is lit.

Scripture: John 15: 12 – “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Prayer: Loving God, your care for us is so great that you sent your Son to embody your love among us, and call us to love one another. Our hands and feet belong to you; direct them. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear your loving presence in the world around us. We pray in the name of Love incarnate, our aspiration and our guide. Amen.

Journal prompt: Reflect this week on the effect of love on our experience of our bodies. Does love ever exist without a physical subject? How does the divine embodiment of love in Jesus deepen your understanding of love? What does it mean to love your neighbor in an embodied world? Where did you encounter love in the flesh today?

Christmas Eve and the Christmas season

Reader: Today we light all the candles of the Advent wreath. the first for hope, the second for peace, the third for joy, and the fourth for love. The center candle is the Christ candle, and we welcome his presence among us. Help us to embody Christ's hope, peace, joy, and love to the world.

The candle is lit.

Scripture: Isaiah 9: 6 – “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.

Prayer: Ever-present God, you loved us so much that you became one of us; desired our friendship such that you walked among us; wanted our flourishing so much that you sent your Son to teach us how to be ever more human: hopeful peacemakers and joyful spreaders of your love. Give us the courage to dwell deeply in these bodies you've so lovingly and tenderly made, that we may extend that same tenderness to the world we greet around us. For the gift of our embodiment in your miraculous world, and of your incarnate presence with us, we give joyful praise. In the name of Emmanuel we pray. Amen.

Journal prompt: Reflect on the significance of God's embodiment among us in the person of Jesus. What difference does this make for your understanding of your own body's holiness? For your understanding of how to inhabit your own body and humanity? What difference does it make to understanding and navigating embodied life together in the world?