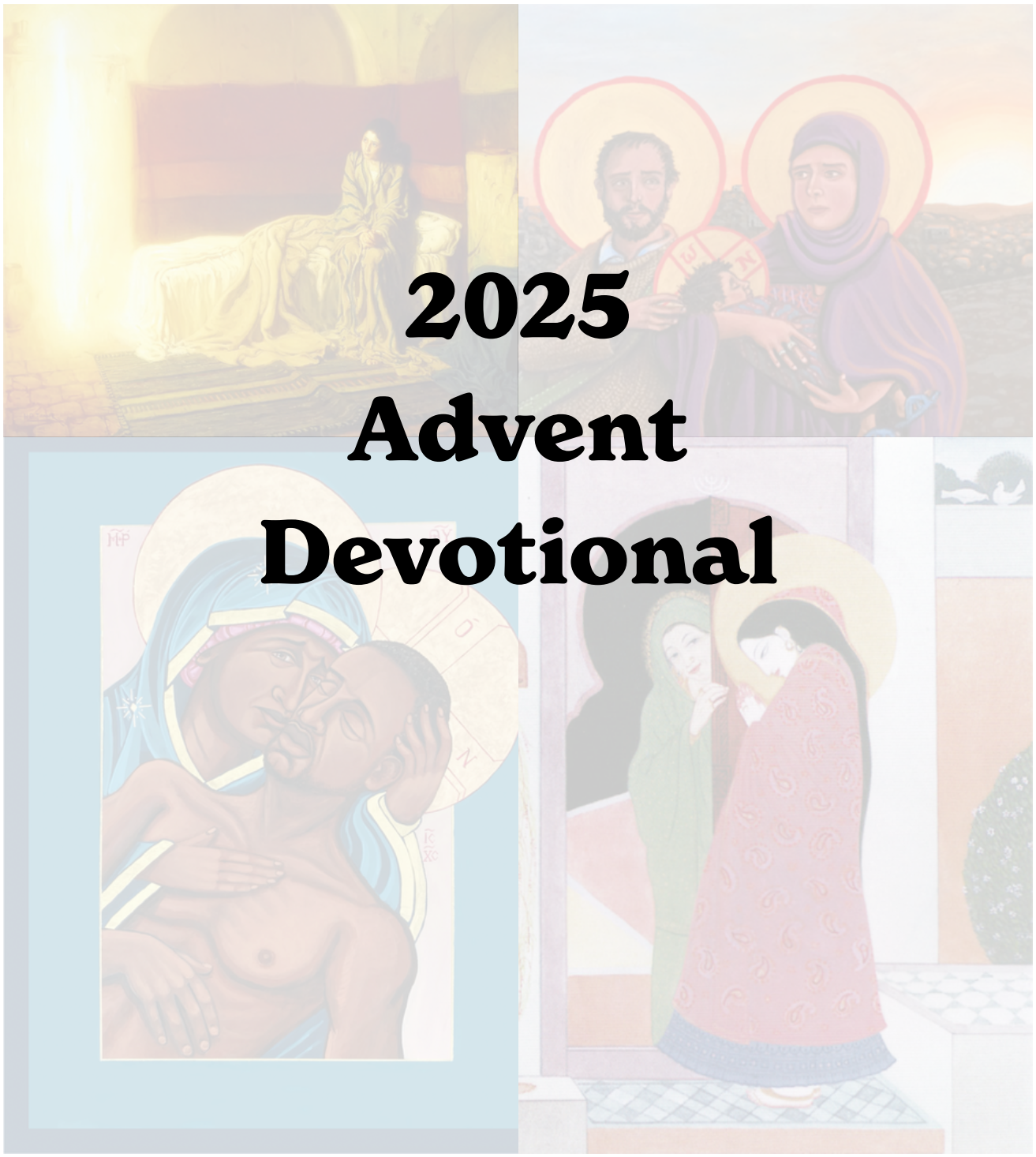
community.



2025 Advent Devotional

community4kc.org

Saturday, November 29th

Tomorrow marks the beginning of the holy season of Advent. In preparation for each Sunday of Advent, Saturday's devotional will offer you an opportunity to engage in the spiritual practice of *visio divina*. A cousin of the more well-known practice of *lectio divina* (divine reading), *visio divina* (divine seeing) is an invitation to set aside the rational, conscious, analytical side of ourselves and allow an image to speak directly to our hearts and spirits.

In preparation for the first Sunday of Advent, which is dedicated to the light of Hope, take a few minutes to read the scripture for tomorrow. Then, using the URL or QR code below, access this week's image and look at it, taking your time to notice its colors and composition. What emotions does the image invoke? How does the Hope of Advent show up in this image?

Throughout the coming week, return to the image as often as you like and see how it shapes your experience of this holy season.

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Isaiah 9:2-7

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.
On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.
You have made the nation great;
you have increased its joy.
They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest,
as those who divide plunder rejoice.
As on the day of Midian, you've shattered the yoke that burdened them,
the staff on their shoulders,
and the rod of their oppressor.
Because every boot of the thundering warriors,
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned, fuel for the fire.
A child is born to us, a son is given to us,
and authority will be on his shoulders.
He will be named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
There will be vast authority and endless peace
for David's throne and for his kingdom,
establishing and sustaining it
with justice and righteousness
now and forever.

Sunday, November 30th

After attending/watching the service today, take some time to write down one thing that stood out to you—something from the sermon or prayer, a hymn lyric or an interaction with another worshipper. As you look to the week ahead, how might you hold that moment in your heart, allowing the insights of the worship experience to shape how you move through the world, guided by the Hope of Advent. Throughout the week, return to what you have written to refresh your memory.

Monday, December 1st

For the people who first heard the words of Isaiah in chapter 9, hope was in short supply. The people of Judah lived under the rule of the corrupt king Ahaz, who thought he could find safety and security in allying himself with the oppressive Assyrian Empire. He abandoned the God of his ancestors, the God who had liberated them from another oppressive empire, Egypt. The prophet warned Ahaz that nothing good would come of capitulating to an expansionist, militant entity like Assyria, and offered instead a promise of hope that God would send a leader who was just and would bring peace to a people who had been menaced by war. And while Ahaz failed to listen, the promise was given life in the reign of his son, Hezekiah, who restored the temple and welcomed the refugees of the northern tribes who had been decimated by the Assyrians.

This promise of hope, the light shining in the darkness, spoke to a particular time and circumstance, to the longing of a people in deep despair. But the light of Hope was not tied to only one people in one place and time; it was something deeper, something outside of time, a light that would come to guide many who lived under the dread of violence and oppression, that crystallized into the anticipation of the Messiah that we now celebrate as Advent.

The message of Isaiah 9 is that God's action in the world, even though it is beyond our understanding or control, is a better source of hope than anything the kingdoms and empires of the world can offer, better than all their promises of security and prosperity achieved through domination and violence.

Tuesday, December 2nd

How can you put Hope into action this week? We often think about hope as an emotion, and yet in theological terms it has a deeper meaning. Light is a powerful metaphor for Hope in the Bible, because of how it puts otherwise dark circumstances into the right perspective to allow us to move forward. A light that shines on a difficult road doesn't remove obstacles or straighten unsteady ways; it simply reveals the path ahead.

What is something that causes you despair or feels hopeless in a way that makes any path forward seem impossible? Write a note to yourself as if you were a friend trying to offer comfort and perspective; keep it with you this week and read it when you need a little light.

Wednesday, December 3rd

Hope is a future-oriented word. It looks ahead, daring to imagine that there is goodness on the way. Take some time today to pray for Community—for individuals, ministries, staff, facilities, and all that makes the church what it is. What are your hopes for this body that you belong to? How can you ask God—boldly and without reservation—for what you hope to see in the life of Community in the coming year?

Thursday, December 4th

Despair is a powerful force in our world today. Growing inequality, deteriorating trust in public institutions, rising authoritarianism, climate crisis, and more all contribute to a vision of the future where hope can seem naive, if not delusional. But we are not the first generation to face despair, and the real Hope of Advent has guided Christians through history's darkest moments, enabling them to be the presence of God when God's absence feels undeniable. Take some time to pray that the Light of Hope will shine on your heart, revealing how you might embody Immanuel—God-with-us—in the midst of despair.

Friday, December 5th

Take some time to check in with yourself. How are you feeling? Revisit the image from Saturday or your notes from Sunday, and see how the idea of Hope sits in your heart today. Does it feel comforting? Unrealistic? Empowering? Futile?

Saturday, December 6th

In preparation for the second Sunday of Advent, which is dedicated to the consolation of Peace, take a few minutes to read the scripture for tomorrow. Then, using the URL or QR code below, access this week's image and look at it, taking your time to notice its colors and composition. What emotions does the image invoke? How does the Peace of Advent show up in this image?

Throughout the coming week, return to the image as often as you like and see how it shapes your experience of this holy season.

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Luke 2:25-35

A man named Simeon was in Jerusalem. He was righteous and devout. He eagerly anticipated the restoration of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. The Holy Spirit revealed to him that he wouldn't die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Led by the Spirit, he went into the temple area. Meanwhile, Jesus' parents brought the child to the temple so that they could do what was customary under the Law. Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God. He said,

"Now, master, let your servant go in peace according to your word,
because my eyes have seen your salvation.
You prepared this salvation in the presence of all peoples.
It's a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and a glory for your people Israel."

His father and mother were amazed by what was said about him. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "This boy is assigned to be the cause of the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that generates opposition so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your innermost being too."

Sunday, December 7th

After attending/watching the service today, take some time to write down one thing that stood out to you—something from the sermon or prayer, a hymn lyric or an interaction with another worshipper. As you look to the week ahead, how might you hold that moment in your heart, allowing the insights of the worship experience to shape how you move through the world, embraced by the Peace of Advent. Throughout the week, return to what you have written to refresh your memory.

Monday, December 8th

This week's text from the gospel of Luke introduces us to Simeon, a just and devout man who had been anticipating the arrival of the Messiah, an event that he had been promised by the Holy Spirit that he would witness before his death. Luke tells us that Simeon had been waiting for the restoration—literally, "consolation"—of Israel through the advent of the Messiah. Simeon, like everyone living under Roman occupation in ancient Palestine, was well acquainted with the status quo that passed for "peace," the Pax Romana of peace-through-domination.

The longing for Messiah was a longing for liberation and true peace, but Simeon knew that the pathway to that end would be full of grief and strife, and Jesus' mother in particular would feel the deepest pangs as she watched her baby boy grow into someone who would offer his life in pursuit of true peace.

Tuesday, December 9th

Peace, in theological terms, is more than stillness, quiet, or the absence of conflict. It is instead rooted in the Hebrew concept of shalom, which encompasses the meaning of English words like "welfare" and "wholeness." True peace is often imitated but rarely realized, because true peace only comes from recognizing, acknowledging, and confronting the things that impede wholeness and thriving. This is why grief—lament, as it is often called in Scripture—is essential to the pursuit of peace.

Take a moment to write down what keeps peace from being realized in your life; what stands between you and wholeness? In a culture that often tells us to reframe, think positively, and power through, what does it look like to pause, sit with your feelings, and name them authentically?

Wednesday, December 10th

Scripture tells Christians to bear one another's burdens, but many of us still prefer privacy, pride, and independence in facing our trials. Praying for one another is a healing balm that can show us an alternative to the individualism of our culture.

Take some time to pray for your siblings at Community, in whatever griefs and worries they are facing. You can consult the prayer list in the weekly emails, reach out to your elder or one of the ministers, or simply reach out to another member of the congregation and ask how you might pray for them.

Thursday, December 11th

War and genocide, assassinations and state brutality are nothing new in the history of the world, but the past few years have seen the proliferation of violence on a scale not seen in decades. In times like these, peace on earth can feel like a distant dream. But the life of faith and the promise of Advent are not about what seems realistic or achievable. They are about living as though God still cares for this world and is still calling faithful people to midwife peace into the world.

Take some time to pray for those who are in the midst of violence across the globe, and invite the Spirit to show you your part in being a messenger for peace.

Friday, December 12th

Take some time to check in with yourself. How are you feeling? Revisit the image from Saturday or your notes from Sunday. Return to your list of laments from Tuesday's devotion. Do these things hold the same weight for you? How can you continue to give grief the space it deserves? What would it look like for you to find a sense of peace in the midst of worries and wounds, in a way that honors them rather than trying to suppress them?

Saturday, December 13th

In preparation for the third Sunday of Advent, which is dedicated to the embrace of Joy, take a few minutes to read the scripture for tomorrow. Then, using the URL or QR code below, access this week's image and look at it, taking your time to notice its colors and composition. What emotions does the image invoke? How does the Joy of Advent show up in this image?

Throughout the coming week, return to the image as often as you like and see how it shapes your experience of this holy season.

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Luke 1:39-45

Mary got up and hurried to a city in the Judean highlands. She entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. With a loud voice she blurted out, "God has blessed you above all women, and he has blessed the child you carry. Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. Happy is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill the promises he made to her."

Sunday, December 14th

After attending/watching the service today, take some time to write down one thing that stood out to you—something from the sermon or prayer, a hymn lyric or an interaction with another worshipper. As you look to the week ahead, how might you hold that moment in your heart, allowing the insights of the worship experience to shape how you move through the world, animated by the Joy of Advent. Throughout the week, return to what you have written to refresh your memory.

Monday, December 15th

Mary's encounter with her cousin Elizabeth in this week's text is one of many vignettes in Luke that highlight the dignity, perspective, and experience of women in a patriarchal society. Mary, having learned from the angel Gabriel that she is to bring into the world the long-awaited savior of her people, travels to visit Elizabeth. Upon their meeting, Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesies to Mary about the identity of the child she is carrying. Only a few moments later, Mary herself will prophesy, singing a song about how God's intervention on behalf of the lowly is so certain it is as if it had already happened.

Here, the two women—one young, one old; one pregnant despite her age and the other without the permission or participation of any man—are sheltered in a sacred moment. They conspire—literally, "breathing together" the breath of the Spirit—and are made joyful in the shared confidence that the God who has done wondrous things will work still greater miracles through Mary's child.

Tuesday, December 16th

In this week's text we saw how Joy is often found in connection—something that blossoms in the space between hearts, a burden too big to be held by one alone. Joy cannot be hoarded, and when it is shared, it only increases. What is joyful in your life that needs to be shared?

Find a way to share joy with someone you know this week: tell a friend what they mean to you, celebrate a small victory with a family member, ask a loved one about what is bringing them joy in this moment. Embrace the potential awkwardness, the vulnerability that joy asks of us, and get acquainted with what it feels like to find joy in community.

Wednesday, December 17th

Joy is at the heart of this sacred season, but our culture often conflates true joy with festiveness, cheer, and indulgence. While each of these have their place, true joy is something deeper, something that endures. Joy is a reservoir for sustaining our spirits through difficult times.

Take some time to pray for our congregation, for God to reveal ways that we might continue to cultivate sustaining joy and notice those moments when joy shows up unexpectedly.

Thursday, December 18th

As the song says, Christ's Advent among humanity represents the arrival of Joy not just for a privileged few, but for the world itself. Even in the midst of fear and grief, there are still places where Joy can be found, and noticing these can be great positive reinforcement for us as we try to embody Christ's Joy in the world.

Take some time to offer prayers of gratitude for the things that are good in your life and in the world. Maybe visit a "good news" site like the Good News Network, Upworthy, or Optimist Daily if you need some helping getting the gratitude going.

Friday, December 19th

Joy is a fraught theological concept sometimes; it somehow straddles the line between an emotion—which is something that happens to us—and a virtue, which is something we seek to cultivate and practice. So when we don't feel joyful, it can be easy to fall into believing that we are doing something wrong in our life of faith. So as you reflect on your week, don't be too self-critical if joy is not the first word that comes to mind when you consider how you are feeling.

Take some time to reflect on the message from Sunday and on the moments of shared joy that you invited in. How does the practice of intentional joy shape the way you live and move in the world?

Saturday, December 20th

In preparation for the fourth Sunday of Advent, which is dedicated to the presence of Love, take a few minutes to read the scripture for tomorrow. Then, using the URL or QR code below, access this week's image and look at it, taking your time to notice its colors and composition. What emotions does the image invoke? How does the Love of Advent show up in this image?

Throughout the coming week, return to the image as often as you like and see how it shapes your experience of this holy season.

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John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word
and the Word was with God
and the Word was God.
The Word was with God in the beginning.
Everything came into being through the Word,
and without the Word nothing came into being.
What came into being through the Word was life,
and the life was the light for all people.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light.

A man named John was sent from God. He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, so that through him everyone would believe in the light. He himself wasn't the light, but his mission was to testify concerning the light.

The true light that shines on all people
was coming into the world.
The light was in the world,
and the world came into being through the light,
but the world didn't recognize the light.
The light came to his own people,
and his own people didn't welcome him.
But those who did welcome him,
those who believed in his name,
he authorized to become God's children,
born not from blood nor from human desire or passion,
but born from God.
The Word became flesh
and made his home among us.
We have seen his glory,
glory like that of a father's only son,
full of grace and truth.

Sunday, December 21st

After attending/watching the service today, take some time to write down one thing that stood out to you—something from the sermon or prayer, a hymn lyric or an interaction with another worshipper. As you look to the week ahead, how might you hold that moment in your heart, allowing the insights of the worship experience to shape how you move through the world, grounded in the Love of Advent. Throughout the week, return to what you have written to refresh your memory.

Monday, December 22nd

This week's text from the prologue of John is the closest the fourth gospel gets to a Christmas narrative. The other three gospels offered a much more grounded picture of the life of Jesus, how he embodied the faith of his ancestors, the unexpected ways he fulfilled the longings and hopes of his people who lived under a brutal regime.

But John's perspective is more lofty. John sees Jesus not just as the Messiah promised to rescue God's people from the systems that oppressed them, but as God's own divine wisdom given a human shape. For John, the driving force behind the mission of Jesus on earth is the same cosmic energy that birthed the universe itself, a Love that desires to create, to bring life, and to repair what is broken.

Tuesday, December 23rd

As Advent nears its end and Christmastide approaches, we celebrate and remember that God's perfect Love is being born into the world, not just in the animal pen of a humble house in Bethlehem, but all over the world, in endless ways, great and small.

As you prepare your heart this week to welcome Christ once more, take a moment to ponder all the ways that God has revealed her Love to you, in the faces of loved ones, the beauty of creation, and the kinship that unites the whole human family. Thank God for these things and consider how you might make the Love of Advent manifest in your own simple, wondrous humanity.

Wednesday, December 24th

Whether you are attending tonight's Christmas Eve service or spending the evening with family and friends somewhere else, allow yourself a moment's pause to reflect on the Love you experience through your church family. We do not ever know God more fully than in loving and receiving love, and the church at its best is a place to practice that love with intention, grace, and the presence of God's Loving Spirit.

Let someone in your church family know how much they mean to you in this season, whether you see them this evening or just want to drop them a text, and let them know you are holding them in prayer.

Thursday, December 25th

Today is Christmas Day, a busy, stressful day for many, a day of grief or a day of happiness—usually at least some of both. A holy day. Whether you take time on this day to sit with this devotional or you are working ahead or catching up, spend a few moments checking in with your heart. What does this day mean to you, outside of the rituals and traditions, the houseguests, cooking, and cleaning, the last-minute shopping.

How does that ancient message, that God's Love is made real in the midst of humanity—amidst our fears as much as our hopes, our weakness as much as our triumph—make a difference to you, today? How does the message that God's Love shows up in the world as something that must be held, nurtured, and cared for offer an invitation for how you will live in the coming year?

Friday, December 26th

Reflect on all you have pondered and prayed for in the holy season of Advent, and as you enter this time of Christmastide and beyond, let the words of poet and prophet Howard Thurman be a benediction to send you forward to do the work of Christmas all year long.

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart.