Community Christian Church



Preparing the Way
Advent Devotional
2026

Saturday, November 28

This Sunday, we'll kick off a new Advent worship series, Preparing the Way. Over the next several weeks, we will explore the Biblical stories of new beginnings and tomorrow, we hear the story of this preparation for the next chapter of God's people. Rev. Shanna will preach on this story of "preparing the way." What initial thoughts or questions do you have about this story? How does it make you feel? What words or phrases jump out at you? Read it again. Make any notes you have below.

Here's the scripture from the Gospel of Mark:

The beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, God's Son,[2] happened just as it was written about in the prophecy of Isaiah:

Look, I am sending my messenger before you.
He will prepare your way, [3] *a voice shouting in the wilderness:*
"*Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight*."

[4] John the Baptist was in the wilderness calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. [5] Everyone in Judea and all the people of Jerusalem went out to the Jordan River and were being baptized by John as they confessed their sins. [6] John wore clothes made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey.[7] He announced, "One stronger than I am is coming after me. I'm not even worthy to bend over and loosen the strap of his sandals. [8] I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Prayer: Holy One, we are making so many preparations. We are preparing to put up trees and other holiday decorations. We are finalizing plans and presents. Give us pause to prepare our hearts for the new beginning you are inviting us to; encourage us and prepare us for the changes you bring with the re-birth of your Spirit this season. Amen.

Notes:

Sunday, November 29

Reflect on today's worship. After hearing the sermon, reread the scripture and make a few notes about the hopes you have for the next chapter of Community's life. How are you preparing your heart for this new beginning?

Prayer: God of new beginnings, help me to open my heart to you in new ways and prepare my heart for all you are bringing into my life. Keep me focused on You, Emmanuel - God with us, during these holy days of Advent. Amen

Notes:

Monday, November 30

Yesterday, we sang the Advent hymn, "Come, O Long-Expected Jesus." Read these words again: "*Come, O long expected Jesus, born to set your people free. From our fears and sins release us; Christ, in whom our rest shall be. You, our strength and consolation, come salvation to impart; dear desire of many a nation, joy of many a long heart."*

As you prepare for a new beginning, what fears do you need to release to know God's hope?

Prayer: O God, by your own eternal spirit, rule in our hearts this Advent season. You and you alone. Amen

Notes:

Tuesday, December 1

Perhaps you have already put up your Christmas tree or other holiday decorations. What items might be considered sacred icons that remind you of Emmanuel - God with us - to keep you centered on the hope of this season? Perhaps you might find 4 candles - maybe you even just start with one. Over the next several days, can you create an advent wreath for your family at home? Perhaps it could be the centerpiece on the dining table? There are lots of candles hiding in a closet at Community - maybe you "borrow" one (or four) to help guide your Advent preparations.

Prayer: O God, we light a candle for hope. Encourage us not just to light this one candle for a few moments here at home. May I light this candle to inspire me to be a light of hope in this holy season of preparing.

Notes:

Wednesday, December 2

Reread the Mark 1 scripture from Sunday. John the Baptist was telling people they needed to "change their hearts and lives" and the Gospel writer opens with this as being "Good News." Apparently, people must have thought so because the scripture notes that people responded with overwhelming positivity to this message. Yesterday, you were invited to be honest about the fear you needed to release. Advent is actually the start of the Christian year, so today, what intention can you set for yourself about the changes you want to make in your heart and life in this "new year?"

Prayer: Give me the bold courage to respond with hope to your Good News. Amen

Notes:

Thursday, December 3

Mark's Gospel references the prophet Isaiah chapter 40:

"A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. [4] Every valley shall be lifted up and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. [5] Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken. [6] A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass; their constancy is like the flower of the field. [7] The grass withers; the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. [8] The grass withers; the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

And later in that chapter it finishes with this:

Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"? [28] Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. [29] He gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless. [30] Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted, [31] but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary they shall walk and not faint.

How does this scripture make you feel? Where do you see hope?

Prayer: God of hope, so much of the world invites us into places of fear and despair. Renew us with this season of Advent so that we might not be weary but strengthened by your hope. Amen.

Notes:

Friday, December 4

It's the end of another week. For those of you who work full-time Monday to Friday this may be a welcome TGIF day. You are ready for a little rest of the weekend. Even if you do not work fulltime, the weekend is still the cultural signal to stop and rest - in theory! Use this little compline prayer to end your day and rest our spirit.

> **God of all mercy,**
> O God, it is night. The night is for stillness. Let me be still in your presence. It is night after a long day, a long week. What has been done has been done. What has not been done, help us let it be. The night is dark. Let my fears of the darkness of the world and of my own life rest in you. The night is quiet. Let the quietness of your hope enfold me, all dear to us and all who have no hope.
>
> **Keep watch, O God,** with those who work or watch or weep this night.
> Protect us as we stay awake. Watch over us as we sleep;
> That awake we may keep watch with Christ And asleep, rest in his hope.

Notes:

Saturday, December 5

Tomorrow, we transition to the second Sunday of Advent - Peace. We hear the story of Mary and Elizabeth. Two women - representing two generations - each preparing for their own new beginning. What initial thoughts or questions do you have about this story? How does it make you feel? What words or phrases jump out at you? Read it again. Make any notes you have below.

From the Gospel of Luke:

When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, [27] to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David's house. The virgin's name was Mary. [28] When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!" [29] She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. [30] The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. [31] Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. [32] He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. [33] He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom." [34] Then Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I haven't had sexual relations with a man?" [35] The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God's Son. [36] Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was labeled 'unable to conceive' is now six months pregnant. [37] Nothing is impossible for God."[38] Then Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be with me just as you have said." Then the angel left her. [39] Mary got up and hurried to a city in the Judean highlands. [40] She entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. [41] When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. [42] With a loud voice she blurted out, "God has blessed you above all women, and he has blessed the child you carry.[43] Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? [44] As soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. [45] Happy is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill the promises he made to her."

Prayer: O God, open the ears of my heart that I might hear this scripture in new ways this year. Amen

Notes:

Sunday, December 6
Reflect on today's worship. After hearing the sermon, reread the scripture and make a few notes about the peace of these two ancient women. How do these ancient stories help us navigate our own new beginnings? And where/how did you encounter the Spirit in worship today?

Prayer: God of Mary & Elizabeth, help us notice where your Spirit stirred in worship today. Give us the peace these women found in each other's company and show us how to bless one another as we begin again. Amen.

Notes:

Monday, December 7
Yesterday, the choir sang the Advent hymn, *#92 Midwife Divine Now Calls Us.* Read these words again: "Midwife Divine now calls us forth from our safest place, beckoning always forward into unknown space."

Prayer: Divine Midwife, stay close as we leave the places we know by heart. When we get scared, help us find our breath. Give us the peace Elizabeth gave Mary, a door flung open and a blessing before we've even found the words. And when it's our turn to answer the door, may we open it wide enough for whatever new thing you're bringing to life. Amen.

Notes:

Tuesday, December 8
Last week, you were encouraged to create your own Advent wreath with candles. If you have not gathered your candles, it's not too late. Even if you only have one candle, light it with a prayer of peace.

Prayer: O God, make me an instrument of your peace. In this Advent season, may I be a gift to others with words that bring peace - in moments of doubt, and despair, in moments of sadness and conflict - I offer myself to be a channel of your peace in our world. Amen.

Notes:

Wednesday, December 9
On Sunday the sermon was told using two voices. How the story was told was part of the sermon before their voices spoke a word. Two voices shared the pulpit, just as the two women share the doorway in Luke. Think back to Sunday. What did you hear in the story because two people told it together? What did the Spirit nudge you to notice in this season?

Prayer: God who meets us in the doorway, tune our ears to what we can hear when we make room for each other's voices. In this season of transition, give us the peace to bless what is beginning and the tenderness to bless what is coming to a close. Amen.

Notes:

Thursday, December 10
Psalm 4 is traditionally used as a reading before bedtime. The CEB has the final verse like this, "I will lie down and fall asleep in peace because you alone, Lord, let me live in safety." Stephen Mitchell closes it with these words, "I pray for whatever you send me, and I ask to receive it as your gift. You have put a joy in my heart greater than all the world's riches. I lie down trusting the darkness, for I know even now you are here."

Where in your life do you need to trust that God will bring a spirit of peace?

Prayer: O God, fill me with your spirit of peace so that I can rest in you. Amen

Notes:

Friday, December 11
It's the end of another week. For those of you who work full-time Monday to Friday this may be a welcome TGIF day. You are ready for a little rest of the weekend. Even if you do not work fulltime, the weekend is still the cultural signal to stop and rest - in theory!

> **God of all mercy,** O God, it is night. The night is for stillness. Let me be still in your presence. It is night after a long day. What has been done has been done. What has not been done, help us let it be. The night is dark. Let my fears of the darkness of the world and of my own life rest in you. The night is quiet. Let the quietness of your peace enfold me, all dear to us and all who have no peace.
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> **Keep watch, O God,** with those who work or watch or weep this night.
> Protect us as we stay awake. Watch over us as we sleep;
> That awake we may keep watch with Christ And asleep, rest in his peace

Notes:

Saturday, December 12

Tomorrow, we hear the story of the third Sunday of Advent - JOY. It's Mary's song of the Magnificat. What initial thoughts or questions do you have about this song - especially in the context of the entire Advent story? How does it make you feel? What words or phrases jump out at you? Read it again. Make any notes you have below. From the Gospel of Luke:

Mary said, "With all my heart I glorify the Lord![47] In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.[48] He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant. Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored[49] because the mighty one has done great things for me. Holy is his name. [50] He shows mercy to everyone, from one generation to the next, who honors him as God.[51] He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.

[52] He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones and lifted up the lowly. [53] He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty-handed. [54] He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, remembering his mercy, [55] just as he promised to our ancestors, to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants forever."

Prayer: Open my heart to your spirit of joy. In good times and in days of stres,s help me know a small piece of the joy of this season.

Notes:

Sunday, December 13
Reflect on today's worship. After hearing the sermon, reread the scripture and make a few notes about the places where you are finding joy? In some traditions, this passage is often read each evening as a part of Vespers. Perhaps you could add that to your routine this week?

Prayer: My soul magnifies you, O God and my spirit rejoices in your presence in my life. Help me to be grateful and then be more grateful for this day.

Notes:

Monday, December 14
Yesterday, we sang the Advent hymn, "When God is a Child." Each verse highlights an advent word - hope, peace, joy and love but the chorus brings us back to joy each time: "When God is a child there's joy in our song. The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong, and none shall be afraid."

Set an intention to do something this week that brings you sheer joy. It doesn't have to be productive or expensive but maybe it's something you haven't done because you think are you're too grown up. Make hot chocolate from scratch and use whipped cream from a can (heck, use cool whip). Watch a movie that makes you laugh and don't feel guilty about the laundry or the dishes. Have a dance party in the kitchen, yes, all by yourself if you want. Maybe it's opening the good wine or using the good dishes n a Tuesday just because. Whatever it is - this is for you. What puts "joy in your song today?"

Prayer: God of every age, sometimes we think we outgrow fun and play. Remind me that you came as a child with all that means. May I know an innocence of life today and find joy in a simple breath. Amen

Notes:

Tuesday, December 15

The third candle that we lit on Sunday was pink for joy. We are roughly halfway through Advent and Christmas creep is in full swing. How can lighting the pink candle today give you a moment of pause. The joy joy joy of Chiristas is all round. But we also know that sometimes this season can be hard for many people. Give yourself a little grace today - even if it's just to acknowledge the expectations that can often feel so heavy. Maybe you don't have all the presents sorted - there can still be joy. Maybe you are overwhelmed by…whatever - there can still be joy. Remember than Mary sang this song after just finding out she was expecting. The Advent/Christmas story is full of stress and anxiety, even fear. Take a breath and light a candle for joy.

Prayer: Thank you, God, for being present in every situation. Help me to know your joy even in times of uncertainty or grief. Amen

Notes:

Wednesday, December 16

When Elizabeth blesses Mary, Mary sings. She sings that God has lifted up the lowly and pulled the powerful down from their thrones. The powerful are still in power when Mary takes her next breath. She sings it anyway.

There's a stubborn joy in singing about what God is doing while so much of the world still gives you reason to doubt it. Maybe that's one way to prepare the way. Sing what you've glimpsed of God's mercy clearly enough that someone else can begin to imagine it, too. Where have you caught a glimpse of the world Mary sings about? Who might need to hear about it?

Prayer: God of Mary's stubborn joy, help us notice where You are already at work. Give us the courage to tell what we've seen. Amen.

Notes:

Thursday, December 17

On Sunday, it was noted that the Magnificat is often read as a part of evening vesper prayers. Similarly, in those traditions that prayer the liturgy of the hours, the Song of Zechariah is prayed int he morning. As we navigate these final days of Advent, you may need some extra encouragement to not be overwhelmed by the to-do lists and the calendar appointments. Note the last line of Zechariah's song: "*Because of our God's deep compassion, the dawn from heaven will break upon us, to give light to those who are sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death to guide us on the path of peace."*

John's father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied,
68 "Bless the Lord God of Israel because he has come to help and has delivered his people.
69 He has raised up a mighty savior for us in his servant David's house,
70 just as he said through the mouths of his holy prophets long ago.
71 He has brought salvation from our enemies
and from the power of all those who hate us.
72 He has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,
and remembered his holy covenant,
73 the solemn pledge he made to our ancestor Abraham.
He has granted 74 that we would be rescued
from the power of our enemies so that we could serve him without fear,
75 in holiness and righteousness in God's eyes, for as long as we live.
76 You, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way.
77 You will tell his people how to be saved
through the forgiveness of their sins.
78 Because of our God's deep compassion,
the dawn from heaven will break upon us,
79 to give light to those who are sitting in darkness
and in the shadow of death, to guide us on the path of peace."
80 The child grew up, becoming strong in character. He was in the wilderness until he began his public ministry to Israel."'

Prayer:

O God of Mary and Elizabeth, Zechariah and David - As the days of Advent come to an end, fill us with your spirit of compassion that it might guide us as it has guided generations of your servants. Shine your light of love on us that it might illuminate our path as we seek to follow you toward the promise of Emmanuel. Amen

Notes:

Friday, December 18

It's the end of another week. For those of you who work full-time Monday to Friday this may be a welcome TGIF day. You are ready for a little rest of the weekend. Even if you do not work fulltime, the weekend is still the cultural signal to stop and rest - in theory!

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> **Keep watch, O God,** with those who work or watch or weep this night.
> Protect us as we stay awake. Watch over us as we sleep;
> That awake we may keep watch with Christ And asleep, rest in his peace

Notes:

Saturday, December 19

Tomorrow, we hear the story of the fourth Sunday of Advent - love. What initial thoughts or questions do you have about this text- especially in the context of the entire Advent story? How does it make you feel? What words or phrases jump out at you? Read it again. Make any notes you have below. From the Gospel of Matthew:

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be
married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy
Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to
public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said,
"Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived
in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,
because he will save his people from their sins."

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will
conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary
home as his wife. 25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he
gave him the name Jesus.

Prayer: God whose very name is Love, you spoke to Joseph after he thought he knew what to do. As we read this story again, help us hear a word we might have passed over. And when we wake tomorrow, give us Joseph's courage to let what we've heard change what we do. Amen.

Notes:

Sunday, December 20
Reflect on today's worship. After hearing the sermon, reread the scripture (Matthew 1:18-25) and make a few notes. What must it have been like for Joseph to change his mind about a decision that would change his life. Joseph had already decided to end the engagement quietly. Then, in a dream, the angel tells him, "Don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife." By the time Joseph wakes, he has a decision to make all over again.

Think about a time you changed your mind about something that mattered. What helped you reconsider? As Christmas draws near, is there a decision you'd like to look at again with a little less fear and a little more love?

Prayer: God of new beginnings, help us stay open to what we hadn't considered. When love asks us to change our minds, give us the courage to let love change what we do next. Amen.

Notes:

Monday, December 21
Yesterday, we sang the Advent hymn, "like a child." Our scripture was one that reminds us to allow surprise into our Advent/Christmas season and this song invites us to do the same. How might we prepare our hearts for the surprises these coming days might bring? Will we allow them to spark frustration or awe. Not every surprise is a welcome addition to our holiday plans but how we react/respond is within our control.

Prayer: O God of the unexpected, when you came into the world as a tiny human with vulnerability and humility it was a surprise. We'd like to think we would have met you with hopeful possibility and joy but that's probably not the most realistic scenario. Inspire us to open our heart to all the ways you come to us this Christmastide.

Notes:

Tuesday, December 22
The fourth candle of Advent is for love. It can be easy to romanticize love but real love takes hard work, and forgiveness, and patience, and….a lot of other things. We talk about how God loves us and how we love God. How are we investing in the hard work of that love?

Prayer: God whose very name is love, each us to love in the ordinary, difficult moments of this day. Give us the patience to stay curious about each other, the humility to ask forgiveness, and the courage to make a repair we've been putting off. Let our love for you take shape in how we care for one another. Amen.

Notes

Wednesday, December 23
Look at the center of the Advent wreath. Four candles have had their turn, and there in the middle is a wick that hasn't caught flame yet. Tomorrow night, we'll light the Christ candle and tell the story of a baby whose first light may have been a lamp someone kept burning through the night.

Someone had to tend that lamp. Someone had to stay awake while Mary slept. It's easy to pass over those ordinary acts of love on the way to the angels. But what a thing it is to keep a little light going so someone else can close their eyes.

As we prepare to light the Christ candle, who could use that kind of love from you tonight?

Prayer: God who comes to us small enough to hold, make us attentive to the people who need a little tending tonight. As we prepare to light your candle, show us whose night we might make gentler. Amen.

Notes:

Thursday, December 24

When the shepherds find Mary, Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger, they tell what they've heard about this child. Luke's writer says everyone who hears them is amazed. Then he gives us this one quiet sentence about Mary. She "committed these things to memory and considered their meaning" (Luke 2:19, CEB).

There's wisdom in giving an experience time to teach us what it means. Mary has lived through the birth herself, and she still makes room for what the shepherds have to tell her. Their words are worth remembering even as their meaning is still unfolding.

Take a moment today to remember something from the year that you're still coming to understand. What detail would you like to keep? What are you still wondering about?

Prayer: God with us, teach us to listen as Mary did. Help us remember what is worth keeping and give us patience for what we're still learning to understand. Amen.

Notes: