

Worship Engagement and Devotion for week of December 25, 2021

READ : [Luke 2:1-20](#) and [Matthew 2:1-17](#)



Close to Home Christmas Invited Home



When something hits close to home, it affects us deeply. During the Advent and Christmas season, we journey through scriptures and rituals that are tender, heavy with emotion, and vulnerable. We carry the memories and truths of this season close to our hearts. Close to Home acknowledges the “already but not yet” tension of our faith: Emmanuel is with us, and yet, God’s promised day—our everlasting home—is not fully realized. It names our deep

longing for God to come close to us.

There is no room for Mary and Joseph in the inn. They are displaced from their home, journeying to fulfill their civic requirements to be counted in the census. And yet, the time comes to give birth where they are, and so a humble home is found. A place is made, among the feeding trough, in a cramped room abounding with chaos. In many ways, Jesus is born without an invitation, and yet, he devotes his life to inviting people who are cast out. In the same way, we might imagine the story of Christmas as God’s invitation to be welcomed home despite all barriers. How will we respond?

Questions for Reflection:

- The night Jesus is born, his parents do not receive an invitation. In fact, many theologians believe they may have been shunned by family and friends because of the circumstances of their relationship. Instead, in a frantic rush, a place is found. When in your life have you not received an invitation, or waited for an invitation that never came? The story of Christmas reminds us of the ways God welcomes us home, even if that welcome is not extended to us by others. The angel’s message is clear: this is good news of great joy for everyone. What signs help point you to this promise?
- Despite the exclusion the holy family experiences, the Christmas story is full of invitations: Mary is invited to carry Christ into the world, Joseph is invited to father him, Elizabeth is invited to foster safety and joy for Mary, Zechariah is invited to prophesy and sing, John the Baptist invites the crowds to repent and change their lives, the shepherds are invited to behold, the Magi are invited to make the journey. Chronicle the many holy invitations within this sacred season. What do these invitations have in common? How does each person respond? What are the unexpected but holy invitations you have received throughout your life? How did you respond?

Adapted from Close to Home Sanctified Art | [Sanctifiedart.org](#)

Spiritual Practice: Advent Candle Lighting, Christmas Eve/Day

The tradition of lighting the candles on the Advent Wreath is a favorite element of worship that symbolizes the passage of the four weeks of Advent and the celebration of the Christ Child on Christmas Eve. Advent wreaths are usually circular representing God’s never-ending love. At Faith United we use 3 purple candles and 1 pink for the four weeks of Advent. The pink candle is lit on the third week as a symbol of joy. The white candle is the Christ Candle and will be lit on Christmas Eve. Some traditions use 4 blue candles and 1 white.



The Advent Wreath is a tradition you can also use at home by making your own wreath! You can use garland, branches from your yard, clay or other art materials to form your wreath. Reading a scripture and reflection question can add to your personal or family devotion experience. **Learn more about the Advent Wreath** in Faith United’s Spiritual Practice 101 video series. [Click here](#) to view the Advent Wreath video.

Candle Lighting Liturgy | The Christ Candle *Written for two voices, this liturgy could be adapted for one, three or more.*

A: In God’s house, there is hope—For God loves us too much to leave us just as we are. Light the candle of hope.

B: In God’s house, there is peace— For all that separates us from God falls away. Light the candle of peace.

A: In God’s house, there is joy— Because God created music, and coffee, and dance floors, and laughter that is contagious, and endless rounds of peek-a-boos with babies; and if those things have God’s fingerprints, then God’s house surely exudes joy. Light the candle of joy.

B: In God’s house, there is love— Because God is love, from start to finish, and that love exists for us all. Light the candle of love.

A: And in the center of our hope, B: In the center of our peace,

A: In the center of our joy, B: In the center of our love, is God—who came to this earth to dwell among us.

A: So tonight we light the Christ candle, for God’s love just could not stay away. B: Welcome home. Amen.

Wonder Together: What do you find in God’s house? Create a picture of God’s house.