



SONGS & ADVENT

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL 2021

DEAR FPC FAMILY,

It's hard to believe another year has come and gone. We might feel the busyness of this holiday season more intensely after a quieter Christmas last year. As such, we invite you to join us in setting aside time to pause and prayerfully reflect on the significance of Advent. We pray that once a week, you would practice the lighting of candles, the reading of Scripture, the praying of liturgies, and meditating on classic hymns to be grounded in Christ in this season.

You might use this as a personal reflection guide, making sure to read the Scriptures and the prayers aloud. Perhaps you want to set a weekly Zoom date with friends or family to pray and discuss the questions together. If you live with others, you might gather round the table once a week to light the candles and enjoy the liturgy together.

If this sounds meaningful to you, please go ahead and prepare five candles. While any candles will suffice, three purple candles, one rose candle, and one white candle will embody the rich symbolism of this season. The purple is the color of royalty, and points us toward welcoming the King of Kings. Pink represents joy and celebration as we remember the birth of Jesus and anticipate His coming again. White represents the purity, light, and sinlessness of our Savior. The white candle, often referred to as the Christ candle, is positioned in the center of the evergreen wreath, which symbolizes the everlasting love of God.

Interestingly, Advent used to be a season of repentance and fasting. Much like Lent, Advent was a time of spiritual reflection. With the birth of Jesus inextricably linked to His crucifixion, both seasons were a time of spiritual preparation to receive our King. The shift toward celebration happened on the third Sunday in Advent, hence the pink candle of joy being lit on that day. While times certainly have changed, how might God be inviting you into a season of joyful expectancy and spiritual preparation as we journey toward Christmas this year?

We will be sending a Christmas gift to each of your homes in the coming days. We're excited about the new life and encouragement this gift can bring to you and your loved ones. Whether you are going on the road or staying at home this Christmas, you'll want to have this gift in time!

We pray that practicing these rhythms would bring the hope, peace, joy, and love of Christ our Savior into your homes this season.

With love in Christ,

Your FPC Pastors



Jim Birchfield



Jon Crantz



Matt Lee



Emmanuel Paulpeter



Caitlin Rhodes



Andrew Stepp



THE FIRST WEEK

HOPE

SCRIPTURE READING

Isaiah 12:2-6

A LITURGY OF HOPE

**Our Christ, we enter this Advent season,
walking the familiar path of waiting for You:**

the humble Hope of justice,
the grace-full Giver of sight to the blind,
the lowly Liberator who sets captives free.

(Light the first candle on the Advent Wreath)

We light this candle in hope remembered,

recalling ancient whispers of Your birth,
a first flicker of the burning flame to come.

We position our hearts in hope restored,

through the Incarnation we now know as Redemption.

We fix our eyes on hope fulfilled,

Your Kingdom at last complete.

Help us, O Spirit, be we somber or weary,

to persist in hopeful vision of that Promised Day:

the gentle Lamb in all His glory,

the manger-laid Messiah in all His might,

the Suffering Servant crowned Sovereign King.

Clothe our hearts in expectation 'til we see **Your victory won.**

Amen.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TABLE DISCUSSION

Where did you experience the hope of God in your life this week?

Where could you use more hope? Where could you give hope?

HYMN FOR MEDITATION

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE READINGS

Isaiah 11:1-10; Luke: 1:26-38; Isaiah 7:10-14; Matthew 1:18-24





THE SECOND WEEK

PEACE

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 1:68-79

(Light a purple candle, with these words:)

○ Christ, we herald the hope You bring into the world.

A LITURGY OF PEACE

○ Creator of *Shalom*,

In this season of waiting, we feel the world's groaning.

In our celebration of salvation, we long for what has been lost:
perfect wholeness, true peace, Your fullness of life.

And still we haste the Day when all will be made new,

Sin's stain washed clean,
The far-off brought near.

○ Spirit of Peace,

In this season of turmoil, You gift serenity.

Tune our tumultuous hearts to the hymns of Your heralds:

**Peace on earth and Mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.**

Now given this ministry, may we carry Your *Shalom*;
Send us out to harvest, calling neighbors and nations home.

(Light a second purple candle)

O Prince of Peace,

Too light a thing was it to bring
Peace only to Israel;
But, broader light in grander vision,
Your Word invites the world.

So, this season and always, let *Shalom* rule in us:

When division mars, would we witness with oneness.
Where strife scars, would we bestow Your healing balm.

Into the gloom of despair, would we be blazons of You:

the One to Whom all kings will bow,
born to raise the sons of earth.
The Way, the Truth, the Bread of Life,
born a babe in Bethlehem.

Amen.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TABLE DISCUSSION

Where did you experience the peace of God in your life this week?
How could this vision of *Shalom* and the peace of Christ transform one
of your relationships?

HYMN FOR MEDITATION

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE READINGS

Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11; Isaiah 2:1-5; Matthew 3:1-6



THE THIRD WEEK

JOY

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 1:46-55

(Light the first candle, with these words:)

○ Christ, we herald the hope You bring into the world.

(Light the second purple candle, with these words:)

○ Prince of Peace, we praise Your *Shalom*.

A LITURGY OF JOY

○ Spirit, our Comfort,

“Rejoice,” You say. “Rejoice!”

For unto us is born the Savior of the World.

Our Highest Hope, Provider of Peace,

We welcome this week Your aid to all grief,

A gift given in good tidings: great and eternal Joy.

(Light the rose candle)

Long have we lay in weariness, wandering,

dry bones and downcast faces devoid of Your radiance.

Where we stray in despair of our world or nation,

Restore unto us the joy of our salvation:

Our Savior sent, Love incarnate,
Joy itself, in Jesus the infant.

This heaven-sent Gift of Grandeur

is the Word who sustains the weary;
He who hid not from our mocking and spitting,
now our only hope of true rejoicing—
royalty wrapped in swaddling cloth.

Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Who ransomed captive Israel.

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus,

Come, in our lonely exile, meet us
with the joy of Your arrival, our promised deliverance—
the joy of earth's salvation, through love without condition.

Take heart, oh weary soul, take heart.

For help is on its way, and Holy is His Name.*
Anticipate this future coming, this communion,
forever feasting face-to-face
with the One we haste to bring our laud:
Son of Mary, Son of God. **Amen.**

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TABLE DISCUSSION

Where did you experience the joy of God in your life this week? When have you felt weary? How could you encourage someone else this week?

HYMNS FOR MEDITATION

Come, O Come, Emmanuel; O Holy Night

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE READINGS

Isaiah 9:6-7; John 1:19-34; Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; Philippians 2:1-10



THE FOURTH WEEK

LOVE

SCRIPTURE READING

Ephesians 1:3-10

(Light the first candle, with these words:)

○ Christ, we herald the hope You bring.

(Light the second purple candle, with these words:)

○ Prince of Peace, we praise Your *Shalom*.

(Light the rose candle, with these words:)

○ Giver of Joy, we call to mind Your coming.

A LITURGY OF LOVE

Oh, what Love:

Fullness of Father, in flesh and blood,
the invisible now incarnate: **Yeshua.**

Heaven-begotten Son, fulfilling the promised Story;
Grace and truth, held in mortal glory;
the Word who was from the beginning—
the eternal I AM—in time and space dwelling.

(Light the final purple candle)

Author of Love,

You showed us Love was this:

to lay down one's life for his friends.

The King of All descended to walk with us—

to weep, to live, to die for us.

The Source of Life, submitted, gasped breath with lungs;

The Defeater of Death for our curse was hung;

The Shepherd of Souls, sacrificed for His sheep,

You were pierced on a tree to call us redeemed.

O God, who So Loved the World,

We give praise for Your Son,

our stricken Savior of Sorrows,

leaving ninety-nine for the one.

Cosmic Laborer for Love,

Let us labor the same.

Oh, what Love:

Our Painter, enfleshed, redeeming our frame.

Amen.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TABLE DISCUSSION

Where did you experience the love of God this week? Where do you want to receive healing by His love? How could you share God's unconditional love through Christ with someone in your life?

HYMN FOR MEDITATION

O Come, Let Us Adore Him

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE READINGS

Malachi 3:1-5; Romans 8:18-25; Isaiah 52:7-10; Revelation 21:1-4





CHRISTMAS EVE

CHRIST

SCRIPTURE READING

Isaiah 60:1-3, 11, 14, 18-19 & Luke 2:29-32

(Light the first candle, with these words:)

○ Christ, we herald the hope You bring.

(Light the second purple candle, with these words:)

○ Prince of Peace, we praise Your *Shalom*.

(Light the rose candle, with these words:)

○ Giver of Joy, we call to mind Your coming.

(Light the final purple candle, with these words:)

○ Laborer for Love, we linger in adoration.

A LITURGY FOR THE DAWNING & RISING OF HOPE

God of Creation, as sun pierces night to call in the day,
So a baby's night-cry pierced history from the hay.
Glories streamed from heaven afar,
As the awaited One at last came near.

(Light the white, center candle: the Christ candle)

We hail Your arrival, God of Salvation,

“Hark!” cried Your emissaries of emancipation,
As Jesus, the Maker, made Himself known.
In the City of David, a Savior, Christ, enthroned
 in a manger, under star,
 born that man may die no more.

God of Redemption,

Today our weary hearts receive their King;
 taking joy with the earth over which You reign.
The rocks, the seas, the skies, the trees
all clap their hands in celebration—
 all the while in expectation.

We haste Your return, O eternal Risen Lord,

The feasting in Zion at Creation’s restoration,
The banquet of the Lamb and justice for the nations.

Until that Day, make us ceaseless givers of this Gift of Love,
Generously and joyously sharing this Mystery from above:

**Binding for broken hearts, good news to the poor,
Freedom for captives, comfort to those who mourn.**

God of Completion, we await that Day

of joy birthed by Christ’s return: all lies unmade,
 the ancient Garden heel-bruiser’s head
 crushed by Him who conquered death.
Eternally, Your Presence known all the New Earth ’round;
Your blessings at last displayed far as the curse was found. **Amen.**

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TABLE DISCUSSION

As we celebrate Christ’s first coming, what are you personally looking forward to when He returns?

HYMN FOR MEDITATION

Joy to the World



2021 ADVENT EVENTS

FAMILY ADVENT CELEBRATION

Sun | Dec 5 | 11:45 AM | Fellowship Hall

20TH ANNUAL ADVENT MISSIONS MARKET

Sundays | Dec 5, 12, 19 | 9 AM–1 PM | Palm Court

41ST ANNUAL MESSIAH SING-ALONG

Sun | Dec 5 | 7:30 PM | Sanctuary

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

3 PM | Children & Family | Grand Hall

5 PM | Contemporary | Grand Hall

7 & 9 PM | Traditional | Sanctuary

For a full list of 2021 Advent events visit

[FPCHOUSTON.ORG/ADVENT](https://fpchouston.org/advent)

HOPE
PEACE
JOY
LOVE
CHRIST