
hopechurch
advent
daily devotional
2026

welcome to advent.
welcome home.

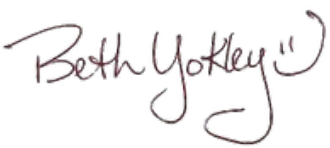
As we have dreamed and envisioned Christmas at Hope this year, we've been thinking about Home.

How our Savior left his home with the Father to come here for us. How He and his family were travelers- first to Bethlehem for a census, and then to Egypt, refugees running from a mad king. Leaving home, coming back home.

Throughout his life, Jesus made a 'home' everywhere he went, welcoming everyone and drawing them back to the truth of Creator God. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, his defeat of death and the grave, He made our return to the home of the Father possible. It's because of him that we now seek to welcome everyone home-all the prodigals, all the lost, all those who still seek him.

We pray you will find your home in Him this Christmas.

Beth Yokley
Community Pastor



Make plans to join us this Christmas at Hope.

Dec 23rd
5pm & 7pm

Dec 24th
12pm, 2pm & 4pm

Hope Kids (Birth-5th): All services except 7pm on Dec 23rd

ASL provided: 12pm & 4pm

Christmas Eve Online: 2pm

day 1 **hope**

November 29, 2026

SCRIPTURE
Hebrews 6:19-20 and Romans 5:1-5

DEVOTIONAL
Advent is a wonderful time to reflect. We can reflect on the year that is nearly over; we can reflect on the year to come. We can reflect and remember those in our families who have gone on before us or family traditions of the past. We can plan for the future. Traditionally, Advent is a time when the Church (Global and historic) remembers the Incarnation of God-with-us through the birth of Jesus (his first coming) and looks forward in anticipation to his coming again as he promised. This backward-and-forward gaze will help us this week as we meditate on the biblical idea of Hope. Hope is not some far-off ethereal wish or a feel-good aspiration. Scripture tells us that Hope rooted in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is an anchor to our souls. When we can look back on the faithfulness of God throughout our lives, through the lives of others, or through scripture, we can then look forward anchored and grounded in faith and trust and hope. This Hope roots us in the eternal safety of God no matter our location or circumstances. No matter where we are, we can be at home in Christ.

As we walk through Advent together, we will look at prophecies from the Old Testament and their fulfillment in Jesus, all while contemplating our locations and what it means to make our home in Christ.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS
As you reflect on this past year, in what ways do you hope this next year will be the same? In what ways do you hope things will be different?

day 2 **hope**

November 30, 2026

SCRIPTURE
Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:13-15

DEVOTIONAL
After the Magi visited Jesus' family in Bethlehem, Joseph was warned in a dream to take Jesus and Mary and flee to Egypt. Herod was plotting to get rid of this new baby King. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus escaped to safety in Egypt until the eventual death of Herod, when they then returned to Nazareth. Verse 15 says, "And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'" Jesus' life begins with peril, danger, and displacement. The people of God spent 70 years in exile in Babylon and 400 years in slavery in Egypt before that. As a people, they were well acquainted with peril, danger, and displacement. God says to his people, "I brought you out of Egypt, I will bring you out of Babylon." Matthew takes that even further into the life of Jesus.

When we can remember God's acts of faithfulness and grace towards us in the past, we can look forward in anticipation and Hope for God's continuing faithfulness and grace in our present and future circumstances.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS
Do you have a time in the past when you experienced God's hand of protection? Does reflecting on that time give you hope for God's protection right now?

day 3 **hope**

December 1, 2026

SCRIPTURE
Matthew 8:20 and Luke 9:58

DEVOTIONAL
Jesus' earthly life was marked with peril, danger, and displacement (see day 2). Jesus' public ministry involved teaching, healing, feeding, eating, celebrating, and lots of traveling! He had a small band of disciples who traveled with him and a larger group of followers who supported his ministry, hosted gatherings, and provided for his needs. In the midst of all this, someone in the crowd came up to Jesus as he was about to travel on to another place and said, "I will follow you wherever you go!" Jesus' response is telling: "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." It's almost as if he's saying: "Really?! You'll follow me wherever I go? Do you understand what that means? Do you know the cost?"

Following Jesus costs us something. In fact, it costs us everything. It may not cost us our homes or our lives, but it will demand our full allegiance and trust - meaning that our homes and our very lives are not our own. When the worries of this world swirl all around us and we feel uprooted in our souls, we have the assurance of our rootedness in Christ.

We can be anchored in this Hope: Jesus came, and he will come again. Our temporary perils, dangers, and displacement in this life will be redeemed when we are finally at home with God, both now and not yet.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS
Are you feeling displaced or uprooted in this current season? In what ways is God meeting you in that place right now?

day 4 **hope**

December 2, 2026

REFLECT & JOURNAL

As we're halfway through the week, let's take a pause and reflect...

What does home mean to you?

What gives you hope?

What do you think it means to be "at home in Christ?"

day 5 **hope**

December 3, 2026

TESTIMONY

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. -Hebrews 11:8 (NIV).

As an immigrant to the United States, in 1984, I left Guyana, South America, seeking greener pastures. For me, home means more than a personal sense of safety, belonging, and emotional connection. It means leaving the familiar foods, smells, sights and sounds of my homeland. Like Abraham, I was not aware of the subtle differences in the way life was going to change for me. I had to establish new connections and become familiar with where things are and feeling comfortable in a daily routine and with people who did not look like me or shared lived experiences.

Fortunately for me and my family, we were able to find acceptance and unconditional love through the Body of Christ in the cities and communities where God placed us, often as the only people of color, to do life in a shared inheritance.

Home, where people can remove their social masks and live lives that are surrendered to the great commission, to go ye therefore into all the world, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for new life! -June Agamah

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Name a time in your life when you experienced a big transition, whether it be your location or a change in your season of life. How did God care for you in that? Do you sense his care right now?

day 6 **hope**

December 4, 2026

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 28:20b and 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

DEVOTIONAL

The life of Jesus was marked by dislocation. Many Christians throughout history have experienced the same. Jesus could look back on his own life and see God's protection and provision. He could also look even further back, beyond his own life, to the whole story of God's people and the ways God always provides for them. Jesus looked back on the faithfulness of his Father and looked forward with assurance that God's faithfulness would endure. He had Hope, ultimate and eternal, that anchored him throughout the many dangers and trials of his earthly life. Jesus came, and he will come again. We have this assurance that "I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Jesus came to be God-with-us, and He is with us still.

We can look back and forward to the faithful presence of Christ and be anchored, rooted and at home.

When we can experience in our souls the welcome and hospitality of God's presence, we can begin to look towards others in their dislocation or displacement. Extending welcome, hospitality, grace, and hope.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Think of a specific time when you have experienced the comfort and hope only found in Jesus. Share that experience with someone who needs to hear it today.

week 1 activity **hope**

WEEK OF HOPE: HOSPITALITY PRACTICE

As we make our home in Christ, God softens and opens our hearts and our homes to those around us. Each week we will give you a few ideas for ways you can begin to "practice hospitality" in your own life.

1. Think of an item that you own that reminds you of the Hope you have in Christ. Gift a copy of that item to someone you know who needs a little hope in their life.
2. Write a note of encouragement to someone who is struggling in this season.
3. Take a friend out for coffee and ask each other, "Where are you experiencing God in this season?"

day 7 **peace**

December 5, 2026

SCRIPTURE

John 14:27; Phillipians 4:4-7

DEVOTIONAL

What is peace? This time of year we celebrate Peace on Earth, but it may not feel peace-filled. We often empty ourselves of peace instead of filling ourselves up. There are conflicting emotions, enough events to fill up every day of the month, so much noise that even our sound-proofing headphones don't work, and more. We might even go looking for peace or tell ourselves to have peace; we must get our checklists done. Then the season is over! During this season, let's not miss out on what peace brings us. Jesus gifted us peace before He left. Even now, through the Holy Spirit, we still have His gift of peace. Peace is the freedom from something or someone holding you back. It's common ground between two parties. It's the stillness you find in a quiet place. It is trust you have in a relationship. Peace is a greeting, and peace is also a gift. Jesus didn't gift you with just any kind of peace. He gifted you with "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7 CSB).

REFLECTION

At some point this week, without making it seem like another thing to do, name what is taking peace from you. If you can't see it now, ask God to reveal it. Write it somewhere on this page or in your own journal. Sit with Jesus and hand it over to him. Ask him to restore his gift of peace in you.

day 8 **peace**

December 6, 2026

SCRIPTURE

Jeremiah 23:1-8, Luke 1:32-33, John 10:11-14

DEVOTIONAL

Hearing your name can bring a sense of safety or alarm. There is a peace in knowing a familiar, safe voice. In our reading today we read about a woe God sends to the shepherds that led the Israelites astray. He warns of punishment because the shepherds did not care for the sheep God gave them. Rather, they caused harm and were scattered among the nations. Today we are both like the sheep and the shepherds. God has surrounded us with people to care for and to lead. He gives clear warnings that if we are not leading with care there are consequences to our actions. We must always be leading towards Jesus and not ourselves. We must tear down any altar we are building for anyone or anything other than God. We won't get it right all the time. But in everything we do, we must be looking to the Good Shepherd. There is a woe to the shepherds, but there is also a promise-He promises to bring the scattered back home. He will save Judah, and Israel will live in safety. In our New Testament reading, the angel Gabriel tells Mary she will give birth to the one Jeremiah and the other prophets have prophesied about. Jesus. The LORD Our Righteousness is the one who came to save us and bring us back.

As we walk with Jesus, we can relate to and learn from the Israelites. We can relate to being wanderers, aliens in a foreign place, exiled, outcasts, lost, far from God, and finally saved by His grace.

REFLECTION

Take a moment today and reflect on where you have been and where you are now. Rest in the knowledge that God is bringing his people back. If you are wrestling with where you find yourself and have questions, reach out to a trusted shepherd to help guide you to the LORD, Our Righteous Savior.

day 9 **peace**

December 7, 2026

SCRIPTURE

Romans 3:21-26; Phillippians 3:9

DEVOTIONAL

“It takes a village.” It may take a village to help you out-but it takes God to help you through. That is something I learned during a 6-month season when my husband was on deployment. I had more anxiety about him leaving than I did when he was gone! Don’t get me wrong, there was still plenty of anxiety to share with my village. I felt every emotion you can imagine tied to his deployment. The real struggle was looking around and realizing my village felt empty. It wasn’t because of isolation, but because of a fallout that happened a few months before he left. I remember thinking, “How am I going to get through this by myself?" In fact, sitting in the airport waiting for him to board his flight, I found myself asking the same question. I was filled with so much anxiety as my 2-year-old, 6-year-old, and I walked away. However, the second my foot crossed over the threshold of the airport doors I had nothing but peace and the sense of strength that, to the world, didn’t make sense. That was a very challenging time in my life, but God showed up in many ways I didn’t expect. The village I once had was filled with other people God provided. Some of them I had expected, but some were a surprise. Though my experience is nothing compared to the birth of Christ, I wonder how much peace Mary felt during her time on earth. She was highly favored by God, so she must have been doing something right. Right? I’m sure she had worries from the time Gabriel gave her the news and Jesus' resurrection. But did she have God's peace with her the whole time? I’m sure there was a moment where it felt like the peace had left her, but did she leave God? I think her faith in Him saved her.

Jesus was born. Jesus lived. Jesus died. Jesus lives again. He fulfilled every prophecy. He fulfilled the Law that was passed down from Moses, making him completely righteous with God. We celebrate His life, but it’s because of His death and resurrection that they were completely fulfilled. We are left with the peace of knowing that by faith in Jesus Christ we are saved. The New Testament readings today remind us that because of our faith in Jesus Christ, we have been made right with God.

REFLECTION

Where have you struggled in your relationship with Jesus? Ask Jesus to meet you where you are in your relationship with Him. Ask Him to open your heart to what He wants you to know.

day 10 **peace**

December 8, 2026

REFLECT & JOURNAL

As we're halfway through the week, let's take a pause and reflect...

Where are you finding peace?

Is there something taking away your peace this season? Name it.

How can you sit with God's peace today and receive His gift?

day 11 **peace**

December 9, 2026

TESTIMONY

As we journey through Advent, we remember that Christ did not come merely to visit us for a season. He came to dwell with us and to invite us into a life of abiding in Him. The theme of "making Christ our home" begins with understanding a beautiful truth: before we seek to dwell in Him, He has already chosen to dwell with us. Jesus says in John 14:23: “Loving me empowers you to obey my word. And my Father will love you so deeply that we will come to you and make you our dwelling place.”

For many years, I unconsciously reversed this promise. I read it as though Jesus had said, “If you obey Me, then God will love you and dwell in you.” But that is not what He said. Christ's words reveal the opposite order. Love comes first. Our relationship with Him is not built on earning His approval through obedience. Rather, loving Him becomes the source of our power to obey Him. This can be one of the hardest truths to embrace. What does it mean to love a God we cannot see? As I prayed for grace to love Him more deeply, the Lord gently pointed me to His Word. There, through the lives of ordinary and imperfect people, He revealed how He sees me.

He showed me Aaron, whom He knew would one day lead Israel into idolatry by making the golden calf (Exodus 32). Yet long before that failure, God instructed that sacred garments be made for Aaron "for glory and for beauty" (Exodus 28:2). God's knowledge of Aaron's future weakness did not diminish His love or His purpose for him.

He also reminded me of the moment He passed before Moses and proclaimed His own nature: “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.” (Exodus 34:6) The more we see God's heart, the more we love Him. And the more we love Him, the more naturally obedience flows from that love. While navigating the uncertainties and unpredictable changes in our immediate society and country, we as a family have often found ourselves overwhelmed by needs, questions, and concerns about the future. Yet again and again, the Lord has reminded us at every instance that He has already given us Himself, and that counts more than anything else.

Through His Spirit living within us (1 Corinthians 2:12), Christ has made His home in us. His presence has become our comfort, our security, and our peace. When we remember that we are His dwelling place, fear begins to lose its grip. We discover that home is not ultimately a location, a circumstance, or a level of stability. Home is Christ Himself.

This Advent, may we rest in the wonder that Jesus has come to dwell in us, and with us. And as we behold His love, may our hearts learn to make their home in Him. -Jane Willie, Immigrated from Nigeria in 2024

day 12 **peace**

December 10, 2026

SCRIPTURE

Mark 4:35-41; Psalm 46

DEVOTIONAL

Many things leave us unsettled this time of year.

This week we've reflected on where we find peace, and what's stealing our peace, in hopes of having it restored in Christ Jesus. Reflecting on this, a thought came to mind: Where Jesus is, there is peace. We see that play out in our story today. We often read this story of Jesus as Him being with us in the storm. It's the one where Jesus falls asleep on the boat. A storm pops up, and the boat starts to fill up with water. The disciples wake Him in a panic: "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?" Jesus wakes and simply says, "Silence! Be still!" As I read this, I noticed something else. Jesus isn't just with us in the storm; He also brings peace to the storm.

There are many translations for the word "silence," but the English Standard Version and the King James Version translate it as "peace." "Peace! Be Still!" These words are simple but hold so much power. When the storms pop up around us, we often wonder where Jesus is. He is always with us, but sometimes it feels like He's resting on the boat. I think He's doing more than resting. I think He's inviting us into his presence to simply be still. When He's telling the storm to be still, I think He's also reminding the disciples to do the same.

This reminds me of Psalm 46. God is our refuge and Strength.... Be Still and know that [He] is God. When we make a home in Jesus, we live in His presence. To live in His presence is to live in peace.

Take a moment today to be in the presence of Jesus. Thank Him and praise Him for the gift of peace. Make a home there.

week 2 activity **peace**

WEEK OF PEACE: HOSPITALITY PRACTICE

As we make our home in Christ, God softens and opens our hearts and our homes to those around us. Each week we will give you a few ideas for ways you can begin to "practice hospitality" in your own life.

1. Cook or have a meal for someone who needs some peace. Invite them in or meet them where they are.

2. Connect after church: Invite a visitor, a newcomer, or someone sitting alone to grab a quick and inexpensive lunch nearby.

3. Use names intentionally: Slow down during your daily routine to learn and use the names of cashiers, service workers, or new acquaintances to make them feel seen.

4. Take a walk together: Invite a friend, new neighbor, or someone who is lonely to take a walk outdoors to talk and catch up.

5. Is there someone in your own home you need to extend peace to? The Christmas season can be Intense. Make a point of slowing down and loving on your Immediate family in ways that feel like 'peace' to them.

day 13 **joy**

December 11, 2026

SCRIPTURE

Romans 5:6–11

DEVOTIONAL

True joy comes from relief. Think about receiving good news after a long, frightening wait. You can finally breathe. Something you couldn't fix, something you could hardly bear to think about, has been taken care of. The joy comes from knowing you're no longer facing what you feared.

To understand the joy of Christmas, we have to understand how desperately we needed help. We couldn't meet God's standards. We couldn't undo our sin or make ourselves righteous. No amount of trying harder could close the distance between God and us. If saving ourselves was our only way home, we were lost.

But God had promised a Savior, and he kept that promise in a way humanity could never have imagined. He came to us himself. Jesus entered our world as a baby. He lived among us, died for us, and rose again, accomplishing the rescue we could never accomplish ourselves. When we were most powerless, He came to save us. God saw the full depth of our need and met us there with love.

What relief there is in knowing that our salvation doesn't depend on our ability to become good enough. Jesus has made the way for us to be forgiven, reconciled, and welcomed home to God. We can trust Him with what we could never put right ourselves. That's the source of our joy this Advent. The promise has been kept. The Savior we needed has come.

REFLECTION QUESTION

What does it mean to you that Christ came when we were most powerless? Where do you need to rest in what He has already done?

day 14 **joy**

December 12, 2026

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 9:1-7

DEVOTIONAL

2017 was a long year. Too many funerals. About midway through, because of course it wouldn't be the end, I remember gathering my funeral clothes into a pile and throwing them away. I needed them out of my closet, out of my house, out of possibility.

I needed relief so desperately that some little-kid part of me thought, "I'll trash these, and then no one else can die."

That relief didn't come. For the next funeral, I had to buy a new black dress just the same. It felt like fingernails against a chalkboard, being forced to make room for what I'd just tried to shove out. Death does that. So does war. So does grief.

I think about those clothes when I read Isaiah's description of boots worn into battle and garments covered in blood being burned. I threw my funeral clothes away because I needed the grief to end. But I wasn't able to end anything at all on my own.

In Isaiah's picture, the clothes can be burned because the fighting really will be over. God promises a child whose reign will bring a peace that never ends. He has the power to accomplish what His people could never secure for themselves. He brought the relief we all look for when smothered in the death and darkness and grief of this present world.

True joy comes from relief. Imagine the joy of watching that fire burn, knowing you'll never have to replace what you've cast into it.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Have you ever needed something painful to be over, but you had no power to end it? What does God's promise of unending peace mean to you in that place?

day 15 **joy**

December 13, 2026

SCRIPTURE

Read: Matthew 4:12–16

DEVOTIONAL

Sometimes you don't want to get your hopes up. You want something so badly that even the possibility feels dangerous. What if you let yourself believe it's happening, and then it doesn't? You've been disappointed before. It feels safer to wait.

I think about that as I read Matthew pointing out the promises fulfilled in Jesus' life. Born in Bethlehem, as Micah foretold. A king coming to Jerusalem on a donkey, as Zechariah described. And here, in today's reading, Jesus makes his home in Capernaum and begins his ministry in the very region Isaiah named. The promised light dawning where God said it would.

Just when you don't want to get your hopes up, He does it again. Reading these accounts now, we can see connections that people living through them may not have recognized yet. But imagine beginning to understand. Another detail falling into place. Another reason to believe that this really is the Savior. God hasn't forgotten. The waiting hasn't been for nothing.

There's relief in each promise kept. You can begin to loosen your grip on the fear that you've hoped for too much. God knows what he promised, and he's carrying it out, down to places and details you might have overlooked.

We're still waiting for some of what Isaiah describes. We still have funeral clothes in our closets. But we can look at Jesus and see how faithfully God has already kept His word. That gives us reason to trust Him with what's still to come.

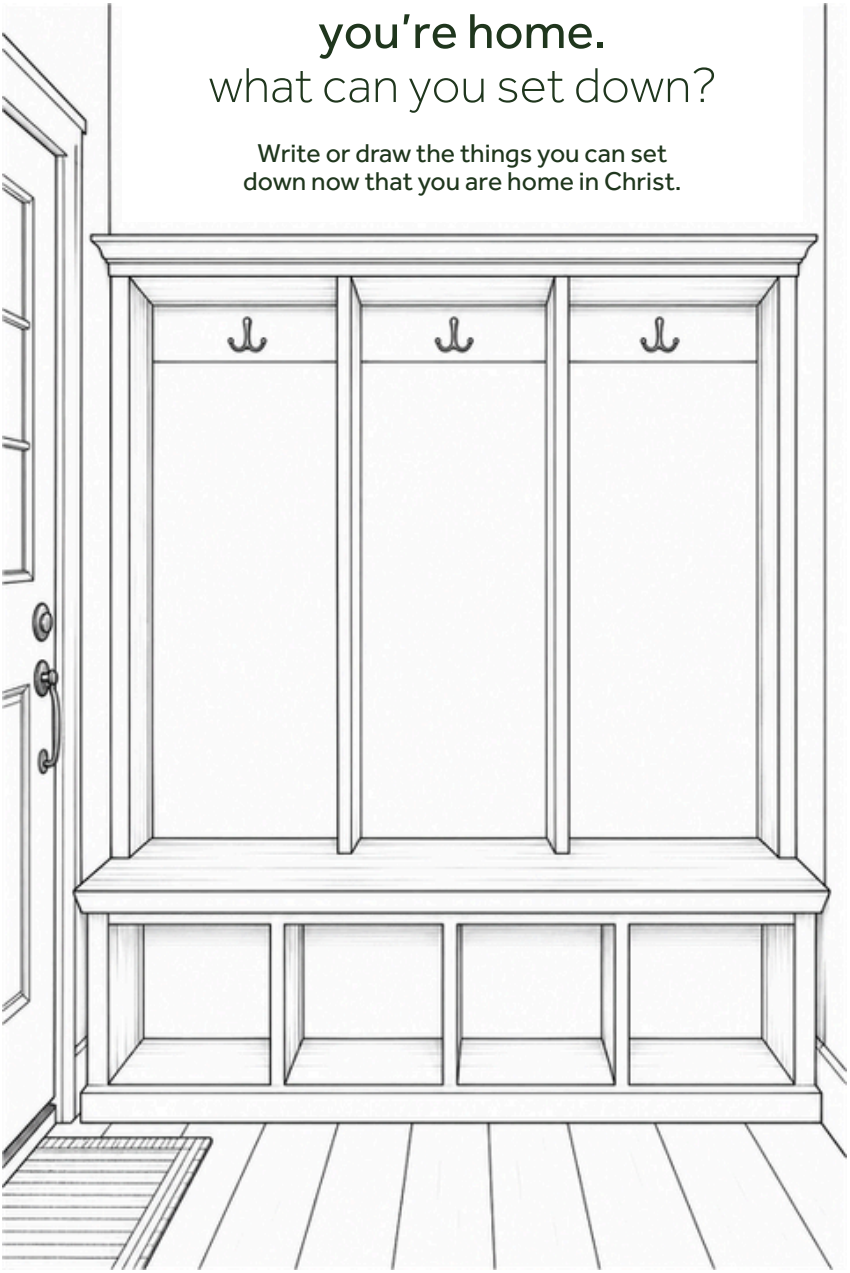
And each promise kept gives our joy deeper roots.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Is there a promise of God you're almost afraid to trust? How does seeing his faithfulness in Jesus help you wait?

you're home.
what can you set down?

Write or draw the things you can set down now that you are home in Christ.



TESTIMONY

I left my home country with my six-year-old to study for my master's degree (without a scholarship) in the USA in a state where I knew no one (Gen 12:1). About one hour before we landed in Chicago O'Hare, I whipped out my prayer book and started saying prayers of protection, provision, and guidance with people who would be influential in my journey.

"I knew no one, so I sought God's face (Psalm 105:4)." The life of an immigrant is a brave one; you leave the comfort and familiarity of your home country to survive in uncharted territories (just like the Hunger Games). You're figuring out which systems are for you and which are against you. I quickly realized that for me to succeed in this country, I needed the right information from the right people at the right time. I grew up as a Christian, and when I was younger, my mom made me memorize Psalm 27:10, and my story has never been truer. Though my parents did not forsake me literally, there were times when the loneliness was loud. God really did pull my child and me up through the fear, confusion, and uncertainty.

For me, the hardest part was leaving my child with strangers to go to work or class. Home, for me, meant I didn't have to worry about this because my family was there.

I also remember a particular year that I was scared we would spend Christmas alone, but a family we just met invited us over, and it turned out to be a great time.

God gave me the right ideas I needed for every stage in this journey. He gave me the right people to elevate me at the crucial time. I have had numerous national and international professional opportunities, got a very good job, and have since become a permanent resident of this country. -Dami Oluwemimo

"God is not far away from you even if you are far from home."

day 18 **joy**

December 16, 2026

SCRIPTURE

Ezekiel 34:11-16, Luke 15, and Matthew 6:19-21

DEVOTIONAL

Have you ever found something you thought was lost forever? You'd looked everywhere. You'd started trying to accept that it was gone. Then it was there, and the relief was enough to make you cry. Tears of joy, right?

Jesus tells three stories together about finding what was lost. A sheep. A coin. A son. Each ends with rejoicing, with someone calling others to celebrate. Think about the father seeing his son coming down the road. Before the meal or the music, there's that moment of recognition. He's alive. He's coming home. Even after all this time. Even though I thought he was lost forever. He's come home.

But what happens when home itself is what you've lost?

Family conflict can make a familiar doorway feel impossible to walk through. An eviction or a disaster can leave you with nowhere to go. A changing world can make you feel like you no longer belong anywhere. A broken marriage can mean losing the home you thought you'd grow old in. And after the death of a spouse, a child, or a parent, you might still live at the same address but now with an unrelenting homesickness.

We can't always recover home. Some doors stay closed. Some people won't be there when we open them.

In Ezekiel, God promises to search for his scattered sheep and bring them home. In Luke, Jesus tells us how much finding the lost matters to God. This Christmas, you may have lost the place where you belonged, but He has not lost you.

Jesus speaks of our home with Him in heaven where moth and rust cannot destroy, and thieves cannot break in and steal. He has always understood how easily home can be taken from us. Let there be relief in this promise from Him: Even when we can't find our way back, we're known, wanted, and welcomed by Christ. We can bring Jesus all the grief of what home used to mean and find our home in Him.

REFLECTION QUESTION

What or who is missing from your home this year? Can you allow the relief and joy of Jesus's birth to ease that hollow space this Christmas?

day 19 & week 3 activity **joy**

December 17, 2026

SCRIPTURE
Acts 12:12-17

WEEK OF JOY: HOSPITALITY PRACTICE

Rhoda hears Peter's voice at the gate and gets so excited that she runs to tell everyone without letting him in. They've been praying for him, and here he is. Alive. At the door. And still knocking. Laugh with Peter and Rhoda for a moment. The relief of joy can make us silly. That, too, is precious to our Father. We're free to revel in the joy. But let's not leave Peter on the doorstep.

The outcast and the lost are the ones who most need the relief of joy this Christmas. Before you look to a faceless donation or an international organization, go check your front yard. Who can you help from where you stand in your own driveway?

Who is desperate for relief? And who might be desperate for the relief of joy in ways you know nothing about?

Be obedient there as well.

PRACTICE HOSPITALITY THIS WEEK:

1. Stand in your driveway and look around. Think about the people who live nearby. Ask God to help you notice who needs an invitation, a meal, some practical help, or someone willing to listen. Then take a specific step toward them.
2. Make room for someone whose circumstances you don't know. You don't need their whole story to invite them in. Offer a place at your table and the chance to be welcomed as they are.

Enjoy the celebration. Just remember to open the door.

day 20 **love**

December 18, 2026

SCRIPTURE

1John 4:7-21

DEVOTIONAL

Do you remember your first holiday back home after moving away? Coming home for the holidays has so many expectations wrapped into your experience. There are expectations of holiday decor, holiday baking, sharing movies, the time and order of opening presents, and, of course, the food. Is the main course ham or turkey? What sides are always on the table? And it's not just how the food is served but also the way it is made. What is the "right" kind of potato to serve? Is macaroni and cheese "supposed" to be baked with crumbs on top? Do the sweet potatoes include marshmallows, or do you expect the brown sugar version? None of these traditions were really about the food or the presents; they were about being known and belonging. We looked forward to our homecoming in expectation for everything to be just right because when it was, we felt loved. But when it wasn't, we felt the void.

Love is a funny thing. We have so much wrapped up in love. Our expectations, the disappointments we've experienced, and the cultural understandings and misunderstandings. This makes it hard for us to strip down what love is to its core meaning. But there is at least one constant in love. We all want it. We want to feel it and know it and be wrapped in it. We never want to lose it or have it taken from us. Even though each of us may have different understandings of love, we can all sense love and definitely know when it's missing or is taken away. So how do we know what love really is?

1 John 4:16 says, "God is love." Any understanding, expectation, or measurement of love must include God. In addition, 1 John 4:19 says we can only love because God loved us first. A world without God is a world without love. Whether or not we know Him or even want Him, God is at the root of all of our encounters with love. It's one of His gifts to all of us.

This week, as we explore LOVE, read His Word looking for ways God is revealing the love He has for you, for your home, and for your neighbor. Ask Him to reveal His love to you, especially in places you may not be anticipating, and expect Him to meet you there.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What were some of the family expectations you had of the holidays as you were growing up? What, if any, have you continued as you have gotten older?

From our reading, what does abiding have to do with love? In what ways might God be calling you and/or your home to abide with Him this Christmas?

day 21 **love**

December 19, 2026

SCRIPTURE
Isaiah 7:10-16

DEVOTIONAL
Recently I read a book where I made a prediction about the ending, and the story turned on me. I thought I had it figured out but the writer withheld some information about a character which changed the trajectory of the story. Had I understood the character better, I would have expected a different outcome. More often than I'd like to admit, I do the same thing with God.

This is what was happening with King Ahaz. After learning Israel and Syria had joined forces to attack Jerusalem, Isaiah 7:2 NLT says, "the king and his people trembled with fear, like trees shaking in a storm." He was predicting the ending based on the circumstances he could see rather than on the character and promises of God. So God sent Isaiah to tell Ahaz they would not be attacked, and to prove it to him, God provided a sign beyond what Ahaz could see. A child would be born during his lifetime to show him there is so much more to this story than Ahaz knows to be true through his own senses. The son's name will be Immanuel, which means God is with us. God was asking Ahaz to change his expectation from impending doom to safety, saturated in the belief of God's presence in and around him.

God's promise to Ahaz proved trustworthy, but the story of Immanuel was much bigger than Ahaz could have imagined. Jump forward 700 years, and Matthew brings us back to Isaiah's words. Matthew 1:23 refers his readers to Isaiah 7:14, revealing how this prophecy, initially meant to ease the fears of Ahaz and his people, has been magnified to ease the fears and fulfill the deepest needs of all people. This sign has served as testimony for the last 2000 years of God's presence with us.

Ahaz couldn't see the whole story, and neither can we. But unlike my experience reading that book, God has given us the details we need to know so we too can live without fear. God has revealed who He is: Immanuel, God with us.

REFLECTION QUESTION
Think of the last time you were worried and afraid about something but don't feel that way anymore. What was it that you couldn't see ahead of you that made you feel that way? Were you able at any point to trust God through it, and if so, what helped you trust Him?

Notice in verse 11 that God tells Ahaz to request a sign to prove God's faithfulness in taking care of the threat of attack. What qualities of God's nature and character was God pointing out to Ahaz in giving him an open-ended sign to alleviate his fears? Do you believe God provides us with signs of His faithfulness even today? If so, how can we sharpen our vision to recognize them? How should we respond?

SCRIPTURE

John 1:6-34

DEVOTIONAL

Isaiah's prophecy was translated from Hebrew to Greek around 140 years before Jesus' birth. Scholars at the time translated the name Immanuel (God with us) using the Greek word meta for "with." Meta means among or in the company of - God among us or God in the company of us. It's like God moving into our space so His presence can be discovered and who He is, including His goodness and love, can be experienced by anyone.

Our reading today, however, helps us see that God did not come to a welcoming and inviting space. Verses 10 and 11 tell us His people did not recognize Him and rejected Him. I think idealistically that if I were there when Jesus came, I wouldn't have rejected him. I would have seen and felt His grace and believed. But I fail to consider the grips of the culture and the needs people had when Jesus came, which shaped their expectations and tainted their ability to recognize God in their presence.

The same is true for our world today. As I grew up, the culture's ideas and expectations of the good life shaped my values, formed my daily habits and practices, constructed my worldview, and defined my identity. It has been decades since I started following Jesus, and God is still chipping away at the false narratives residing in my heart. And though I have chosen to live in God's kingdom, I'm not fully there yet. This world can still drive my fears and influence my expectations, making it difficult to sense the Spirit and follow Jesus. The power our culture holds is so pervasive that it really doesn't matter if a person aligns themselves with the good life or chooses to fight against the culture's messages; both end up using the good life as their standard. Neither side can see anything greater that exists beyond the limits our culture offers.

I think that is partly why John the Baptist was sent before Jesus. To wake people up and shake them loose from the constraints of their culture to something far better than the world can offer. A greater kingdom is coming, and it is moving into your neighborhood. Its King comes to give light to everyone. He is filled with unfailing love and faithfulness. Open your eyes to see it. Let your heart and soul sense it. God is among you. His greater kingdom is here.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

From our reading, how does John characterize the greater Kingdom and its King? How do these characteristics differ from what the world offers to us?

John 1:14 says Jesus came and made His home among us. How is this an expression of God's love for us? John 1:16 says through Christ we have received grace upon grace. What does grace upon grace convey? How does it apply to your faith?

REFLECT & JOURNAL

Yesterday we talked about the power of culture and how it can shape your values and beliefs and define your identity. Ask God to show you some ways He has or wants to continue to reshape your values, beliefs and identity to orient your heart to His kingdom. If God reveals an area you have been holding back and not fully surrendering, ask for forgiveness and the courage you need every day to follow Him and not the world.

TESTIMONY

"For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come." Hebrews 13:14

There is something about Christmas that makes us long for home. But what happens when home isn't a place you can go back to? As a military family, every three years or so, we pack up our lives and start again. A new house. New schools. New jobs. A new church. A new community. And just when we've found our people, built friendships, and finally started feeling at home, it's often time to leave again. If I'm being honest, it's exhausting. There's a particular kind of grief that comes with leaving the people who became family and the community you worked so hard to build.

We've all experienced seasons of feeling like outsiders. Sometimes, even inside the Church, where we hope to find belonging, we can feel alone. Community can make an unfamiliar place feel like home, while its absence can make even the most beautiful place feel lonely. But Advent reminds us that even Jesus entered a world that wasn't His eternal home. John 1:14 tells us that the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. Jesus entered our broken world in humility. He knew what it meant to be misunderstood and unwelcome and He came anyway. He came to love, welcome the overlooked, and show us the way to our eternal home. As Christians, we're all living somewhere temporary. Philippians 3:20 reminds us that our citizenship is in heaven.

Perhaps that explains our longing for a place where everything finally feels right. Our home isn't ultimately found in a house or hometown. Our home is found in Jesus. But until we're home, we have a calling. In Matthew 6:10, Jesus teaches us to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

What if we lived those words? What if our churches didn't simply greet new families at the door, but invited them to the table? What if we made room in our established circles for someone still searching for theirs? What if our love gave someone who doesn't yet know Jesus a glimpse of the home their heart has been longing for? This Advent, I challenge you to consider the home you're helping create for others. We cannot give people heaven on earth, but we can give them a glimpse of what it means to belong to the family of God. One day, there will be no more moving boxes, goodbyes, or searching for where we belong. One day, we will be home. Until then, may we make room for others along the way. -Ashley Melancon

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for the promise of our eternal home with You. While we're here, open our eyes to those longing for belonging. Help us welcome the stranger, love the lonely, and build communities that reflect Your heart. May we bring a little more of heaven to earth through the way we love others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

day 25 **love**

December 23, 2026

SCRIPTURE

John 1:1-5, 12-13

DEVOTIONAL

Earlier this week we talked about the translation of the name Immanuel from Hebrew to Greek and how the word for "with," "meta," means "among." God's presence is here, living among us. In John 1:1 and 2, John uses the Greek word "pros," which was translated into our English word "with." "Pros" means toward or facing. So in John 1:1 the Word was facing toward God. John repeats it in the next verse: the Word was there at the start, face-to-face with God.

John is giving us a picture of an active relationship, an intimacy only achieved through an ongoing interaction. It cannot be one-sided, or it would not last. Throughout the Bible, we get further glimpses of this relationship when Jesus is baptized, and God speaks of His love for him. Jesus also talks about how much the Father loves Him, and He loves the Father.

In John 1:12-13, John helps us see that we can also have a deeper intimacy with God instead of just being in His company. We are not just at the same party or the same address. We are face to face. The word "with" now takes on a whole new meaning. It implies a reciprocal relationship, communion, safety, provision, and love, to name a few. It means both seeing and being seen.

To be God's child does ask something of you. Verse 12 says those who receive and believe in Jesus are given the right to become His children. This moves us from seeing and hearing about God's goodness because He is among us, to knowing the God who loves us and experiencing that love as His adopted child. If you have not yet experienced this love, start by talking with Him and expecting Him to hear and respond to you. Be open to see how He meets you where you are. If you have been living as His adopted child, there still may be pieces of the world's story that make it difficult to fully trust God. You can ask God to release their influence and widen your heart to His greater kingdom. Wherever you are in your faith journey, God already made the first move. He's in our midst. Now is your opportunity to move toward God and make your home with Him.

REFLECTION QUESTION

How does John's description of Jesus help us understand the depths of who Christ is? What does it tell you about who Christ is, His nature and character? What does moving towards Christ look like for you? What steps can you take to move closer to Him?

week 4 activity **love**

WEEK OF LOVE: HOSPITALITY PRACTICE

The holidays invite time to spend with your family. There can often be differing beliefs and values among family members. Look for opportunities to express God's love and grace to your family. Be a source of God dwelling among your family this holiday season.

As you go through your final preparations for this season, make time and space for Christ to fill you up so you aren't muscling your way through your interactions with others. Instead, let the people God places around you receive the overflow of your time and space with Him. God's overflow is so much greater than any of your own best efforts.

day 26 **Christmas Eve**

December 24, 2026

SCRIPTURE
Luke 2:1-12

DEVOTIONAL
This momentous occasion-the literal Savior of the world is entering our universe, God made flesh! And yet- it's just another day. Mary and Joseph are traveling to their hometown for a census. Mandatory things citizens did. I think of them carrying out this obligation in much the same way I get my taxes done, or go vote. Go downtown. Find a parking space. Walk down to the polling place, get my ballot. These ordinary everyday occurrences.

And here, in the midst of this run-of-the-mill obligation, God is ensuring that the prophecies will be fulfilled. His Son, born in Bethlehem- the lineage of David. The location humble because all the hotels were full. So many people in town! Making do in the equivalent of a barn, with all the exquisite farm smells, I'm sure. And here He comes-the Savior of the world.

You've done a whole bunch of ordinary things today. You are preparing for family to arrive perhaps, or making beds. Or cooking a turkey. Wrapping a present. Maybe you worked all day, then raced home to gather everyone for the trip to church for Christmas Eve service. Humble, hurried, ordinary.

Just like our Savior came in the midst of that ordinariness, He seeks to come into ours. Where was He today, as you went about your tasks? Was He in the greeting of the Walgreens cashier? Did He fill your heart with compassion for her, because she looked exhausted? Was He there in the joy of your grandson, when his eyes lit up as he saw you come up the drive? Did you see a glimpse of Him when He came to comfort you in your pre-holiday overwhelm, when you couldn't imagine how you'd get the mountain of clothes put away before the in-laws arrived? Did He remind you of his presence when you felt alone, though surrounded by 250 people at service, because your family is gone?

We have a Savior that came close, and continues to come close. But He's a gentleman-and He won't force. Give Him a few moments of silence today-thank Him for showing up 2000 years ago-and for still showing up for you today.

day 1 **Christmastide**

December 25, 2026

SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:1-21 and Philippians 2:1-11

DEVOTIONAL

Merry Christmas to you! As we shift from Advent into Christmastide (The 12 Days of Christmas), we will be shifting our focus just slightly to the historical and liturgical meaning behind this season of Christmas. Yes, Christmas is not technically just one day, but rather a 12-day-long celebration with multilayered meaning. Throughout Advent, we have walked with hopeful anticipation through the Old Testament prophecies and their fulfillment in Jesus toward this day, Christmas Day! The day we celebrate the birth of Christ, our Savior, God incarnate, God with us, Jesus, our rescuer and redeemer. This is truly a day of celebration and joy. It's estimated that over 2 billion people will participate in a gift exchange today. We, as followers of Jesus, exchange gifts on Christmas in honor of The Greatest Gift of all, Jesus himself. He exchanged the glories of divinity for unity with humankind. (Philippians 2:5-8) This powerful theological truth is referred to as "The great exchange." Saint Augustine wrote: "The Maker of man became Man that He, Ruler of the stars, might be nourished at the breast; that He, the Bread, might be hungry; that He, the Fountain, might thirst; that He, the Light, might sleep." Through Christ we also exchange death for life, sin for righteousness, mortality for immortality, darkness for light. Praise be to God! "With our festivities properly framed in the worship of the Word made flesh, our gift exchanges will speak more clearly of the great exchange God has undertaken on our behalf." - Emily Hunter McGowin

"Because of the great exchange of the incarnation, there's a sense in which every gift given and every box opened, contains an echo, however muddled, of the gift given by our Creator." - Emily Hunter McGowin, Christmas

REFLECTION QUESTION

What "echoes" of the Great Exchange are you seeing or hearing today in your celebrations?

day 2 **Christmastide**

December 26, 2026

SCRIPTURE
1 John 5:20

DEVOTIONAL
As a child, I was confused every year as "Boxing Day" came up on our calendar. Why was the day after Christmas a celebration throughout the British Commonwealth for the sport of boxing?! It's only recently that I have come to understand the true meaning behind the strange day and its Christian significance. "Boxing Day" speaks to a tradition going back at least to the Middle Ages, to the Church's practice of opening up their offering "boxes" on December 26th and distributing alms to the poor. It also continued to be a traditional day of giving when the wealthy or people in a higher station would put together boxes of food and other necessities to give to their servants or the poor. But why? Why would they choose December 26th? In the church, historically, December 26th is the Feast of Saint Stephen, the first Christian martyr whose story is found in Acts 6 and 7. Stephen was chosen to oversee the early Church's daily food distribution and to ensure no one was neglected or overlooked or in need. Stephen was killed because of his powerful witness to Christ in word and in deed. We remember his example of Spirit-filled giving that ultimately cost him his life. Just as Christ gave his life for us, we too are called to lay down our lives for others in service and in love.
"Bound up in December 26, right after having celebrated the birth of Christ, there is a reminder that we are to take up our crosses and follow Him, that our glory is in humble obedience and servant-hearted love toward others." - Chris Marchand, Celebrating the 12 Days of Christmas

REFLECTION QUESTION
Listen to and read the lyrics of the hymn "Good King Wenceslas." Who are the poor, neglected, overlooked, or needy in your immediate area? How can you and your family bless them in Christian love today?

"Therefore, Christian men, be sure, while God's gifts possessing,
you who now will bless the poor shall yourselves find blessing."
- Good King Wenceslas, 1853

day 3 **Christmastide**

December 27, 2026

SCRIPTURE

John 13:34-35, 1 John 5:1-3 and Revelation 1:9

DEVOTIONAL

Throughout Advent, we reflected on the concept of Home, what home means to you and to others, and what it means to make our home in Christ. In the Church calendar, the third day of Christmastide is the Feast of John the Apostle. The one who referred to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. By the time John is writing his gospel and his letters, he is an old man. When Jesus gives him the vision of Revelation, he is in exile on the island of Patmos. The only disciple of Jesus not to be martyred, John did not escape persecution. His exile on Patmos was a banishment and punishment for his faith, words, and deeds. Even after all of this, everything he had been through, he calls himself the disciple whom Jesus loved. In the midst of his exile - Beloved. Through the deaths of his friends - Beloved. Through trials, hardships, storms - Beloved, Beloved, Beloved. This is what it looks like to make your home in Christ. No matter your location or circumstances, you are loved by God. We are loved by God not because of anything we have done but because of who God is. I am beloved because I am God's, and God is love. The agape love of God that comes from God to us, from God to the world, and through us to others is the defining characteristic of God's people. The family resemblance of the people of God is love. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now make your home in my love." John 15:9

REFLECTION QUESTION

John 13:35 says that we as Christians should be known by our love for one another. Do you think this is true today? Think of a fellow believer you know that you have many disagreements with and find it hard to get along with. How could you show love to them today?

day 4 **Christmastide**

December 28, 2026

SCRIPTURE
Matthew 2:16-18

DEVOTIONAL
Traditionally, December 28th is observed in the church calendar as the Feast of the Holy Innocents. The Feast commemorates and remembers the deaths of the two-year-old boys in Bethlehem at the hands of Herod. It is jarring and disorienting to dedicate a whole day of remembrance to such a gruesome story so close to the celebration of the birth of Christ. But for those of us who have lost a child to miscarriage, infant or child loss, the placement makes more sense. We join in the lament of Rachel, in the visceral and intimate cries of that which makes no sense. We know that grief is no respecter of persons or days on a calendar. We bring our grief with us to holiday parties, church services, to work, and the grocery store. Biblical scholars estimate that between six and twenty baby boys were killed by Herod in Bethlehem in his attempt to kill the baby Jesus. It's estimated that 24,000 children under the age of two die in the USA each year. No matter how many scientific or biological explanations we have, there is no answer that is satisfactory to a problem as big as death. The fact that Matthew records this story in his gospel and the fact that the Church has remembered and commemorated this day over the centuries is a balm and a reminder that those who grieve and those we grieve are not forgotten.

"As a small child, God's Messiah fled Judea with his family. But it is only so that the next time around he can face death squarely and triumph over it. When the Christ child grows up, He will gather the girls and boys of Israel in his arms and proclaim God's blessing over them. As the holy innocents died involuntarily in the place of the infant Jesus, so the end of Matthew's Gospel reveals the Innocent One dying voluntarily in the place of all. It is only in his victorious resurrection from the dead three days later that Rachel, and all those who weep, find hope. Death - even this kind of unthinkable death - does not get the last word." - Emily Hunter McGowin

REFLECTION QUESTION
Do you know someone who is grieving in this season? Someone who regularly struggles with this time of year? Send them a text or a note telling them you are thinking of them and praying for them today.

day 5 **Christmastide**

December 29, 2026

SCRIPTURE

John 17:20-23; Ephesians 2:13-18

DEVOTIONAL

Established in 567 AD at the Council of Tours, the 12 Days of Christmas were originally designed to bridge a gap. The Eastern church celebrates the birth of Christ on January 6th, and the Western church on December 25th. Unfortunately, many other disagreements persisted and eventually culminated in the splitting of the Church into East and West in 1054 (The Great Schism). The Church continues to be divided today, with over 200 unique Christian denominations in the United States alone, not including the thousands of independent (non-denominational) churches, nor the tens of thousands of churches around the globe. Is this the "complete unity" that Jesus prayed for his followers in John 17? This disunity in the global and historic Body of Christ should grieve us and challenge us. Christmas can be a time of coming together, coming together around the only thing - the only One - who can unify us. We celebrate the birth of Jesus and we remember his death on the cross. The death that birthed the diverse yet unified family of believers that has always been God's desire. Let us remember this desire and work towards greater unity in Christ in our homes, families, churches, cities, and nations.

"After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." Revelation 7:9-10

REFLECTION QUESTION

In what ways do you feel the disunity in the Church today? What small acts of reconciliation can you participate in this next week?

day 6 **Christmastide**

December 30, 2026

SCRIPTURE

2 Peter 1:5-7; Romans 12:2

DEVOTIONAL

For many of us, the song "The 12 Days of Christmas," sung each year at Christmas time, is our only knowledge of this season of the Church calendar. There are many stories surrounding the song and its origins, speculating that it might have some secret Christian message or significance. Unfortunately, those stories are not historically accurate or verifiable. Rather than an absurd amount of gifted birds, or a secret theological message, the actual 12 days of Christmas of Christian tradition, offer us an annual reorientation around Christ and his Church. The Church calendar, starting in Advent and moving into Christmastide, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and Ordinary Time, is a global and historic tradition of living out the grand story of God in our months and days and years. This tradition grounds us in the whole story of God and God's people as we move through each season as a church - disciplining our bodies and souls in the process as we orient our ordinary days around THE sacred story.

"To give ourselves to the observance of the church year is to give ourselves to an education...Each season reveals something more of God's truth, goodness, and beauty." -Emily Hunter McGowin, Christmas

REFLECTION QUESTION

What have you learned about God so far through this study? What have you learned about yourself?

day 7 **Christmastide**

December 31, 2026

SCRIPTURE
Luke 1:46-55; Luke 4:16-21

DEVOTIONAL
In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln issued an executive order that would take effect on January 1st, 1863. The Emancipation Proclamation declared freedom for those enslaved in Confederate states and paved the way for the 13th Amendment to later take effect. Though the proclamation wasn't yet a full solution, those in bondage, as well as free, waited in anticipation for January 1st and the freedom they were promised. African American churches across the country held special "Watch Night" services on New Year's Eve to await the coming day, to gather in solidarity, and to pray. The Watch Night tradition has continued over the decades and into the present day as Christians gather to spend New Year's Eve together to reflect, celebrate, give thanks for the year behind, and to pray for the year ahead. The African American Christian tradition is a powerful witness to all believers of faithfulness to the Lord in spite of circumstances. When Mary sings her song in Luke 1 (the Magnificat), she sings praises to the God who keeps his promises. The God of justice, power, freedom, mercy, and help. Jesus is our rescuer, redeemer, savior, and liberator! Praise be to God!

"Hungering and thirsting for justice is nothing less than the continued longing for God to come and set things right…Jesus, then, calls for a reconfiguration of the imagination in which we realize that the options presented to us by the world are not all that there is. There remains a better way, and that better way is the kingdom of God…To hunger for justice is to hope that the things that cause us to mourn will not get the last word." -Esau McCaulley, Reading While Black

REFLECTION QUESTION
Make a list of blessings from 2026. Thank God for all He has done! Spend time praying with your family or friends tonight before the big countdown. Pray for a closer walk with Jesus, our rescuer, in 2027.

day 8 **Christmastide**

January 1, 2027

SCRIPTURE
Matthew1:18-24; Luke 1:26-33; Luke 2:21

DEVOTIONAL
Happy New Year! Today is the 8th day of Christmastide and traditionally the Church has remembered this day as the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus. According to Jewish custom, baby boys were both circumcised and named on the 8th day after their birth. In the new First Nations Version, an Indigenous Translation New Testament, they translate Jesus as "Creator Sets Free." In Luke, the angel tells Mary to name him Jesus because: "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." In Matthew, the angel tells Joseph: "...you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Jesus' name literally means: The Lord saves. In Hebrew tradition, someone's name was not chosen at random but conveyed deep meaning and epitomized who someone was, who they truly were on the inside, their nature, character, or purpose. Jesus' name, as chosen and bestowed by God himself through the angel, should reveal to us God's very heart. Salvation, redemption, and restoration for God's people.

"...Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." - Philippians 2:9-11

REFLECTION QUESTION
Take some time to journal what thoughts or emotions you experience when you think of the Name of Jesus. Write a prayer of thanksgiving and worship to Jesus based on your journaling.

day 9 **Christmastide**

January 2, 2027

SCRIPTURE
Matthew 6:19-21

DEVOTIONAL
The celebration of Christmas, as well as the 12 days of Christmas (Christmastide), has a storied history. In the Middle Ages in Europe, the communal revelry regularly got out of hand, and the centrality of Christ and the Incarnation took a back seat. It wasn't until the mid-19th century that Christmas as a quiet, familial, and ecclesial celebration came back into view. But even today, many of our holiday traditions have lost much of their connection to Jesus and His birth and have instead become overly consumeristic, performative, competitive, and superficial. The Christian must be mindful of our hearts and motivations behind everything we do, not just at Christmas, but always. Followers of Jesus are called to be holy, set apart, called out, different. When we walk in the way of Jesus, we will see things differently; we will engage with the world differently; we will value things differently.

"In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes the contrast between the myth of scarcity and the reality of abundance in God's kingdom. If we live in constant fear of not having enough, it will lead us to greed and injustice in the name of self-preservation. If, however, we believe Jesus and trust that with God there is always an abundance, then we can be set free from a self-centered posture and be empowered to truly love others." -Skye Jethani, What if Jesus Was Serious

REFLECTION QUESTION
Knowing that you have enough in Christ, what is something you can give away today to show love to someone else?

day 10 **Christmastide**

January 3, 2027

SCRIPTURE

Leviticus 23:3 and Exodus 20:8-11

DEVOTIONAL

Being at home is being at rest. But so often at this time of year, rest can be elusive. Those hazy days between Christmas and New Year's, multiple holiday gatherings, and lack of normal routine can be disorienting and exhausting. Remember that these special days and weeks in the Church calendar are not only about remembering, learning, growing, and celebrating, but also about setting aside time for sabbath and rest. After God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt, he established the Sabbath. A day of remembering our Creator God. Sabbath is an ever-recurring reminder that our God is the creator and sustainer of all things, including us. When we rest from our work each week, we are practicing our trust in our provider, God. When we rest during Christmastide, we remember Christ's birth and the new life he brings us. This new life orients us towards the Kingdom of God, our true home.

“Remember the sabbath” means “Remember that everything you have received is a blessing. Remember to delight in your life, in the fruits of your labor. Remember to stop and offer thanks for the wonder of it.” -Wayne Muller, Sabbath

REFLECTION QUESTION

Stop and thank God today. Maybe even take a nap!

day 11 **Christmastide**

January 4, 2027

SCRIPTURE
Luke 2:8-20

DEVOTIONAL
Traditionally, the 12 days of Christmas last until the 5th of January, as January 6th begins the season of Epiphany in the Church calendar. As we begin to wrap up our journey through Advent and Christmastide, we will briefly explore this next season together. If at Christmas we celebrate the birth of the Light of the World, in Epiphany that Light grows in ever-widening radiance, spreading from Mary and Joseph to the shepherds and Magi, and eventually filling the whole earth with His Glory. Filled with Gospel stories from the life of Christ, the season of Epiphany is a time to discover more of who Jesus is. Revealing Jesus as God incarnate, the Word made flesh, fully God and fully man. The Word that transcends language, rank, or social location. The Word that illuminates our hearts with his love.

"Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord... veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th'incarnate Deity, pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel. Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness! Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings. Mild he lays his glory by, born that man no more may die, born to raise the sons of earth, born to give us second birth." -Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, Charles Wesley, 1739

REFLECTION QUESTION
What do you need Jesus to illuminate today? Is there an area of your life that feels dark or heavy? Invite Emmanuel to be with you today.

day 12 **Christmastide**

January 5, 2027

SCRIPTURE
Matthew 2:1-12 and Isaiah 60:1-6

DEVOTIONAL
The visit of the Magi, or "three wise men," is celebrated well after the celebration of Jesus' birth, as Matthew's gospel places their visit months or even years after his actual birth. Many countries and cultures around the world celebrate the visit of the Magi during Epiphany with "King Cake" and feasting! But what is the significance of the Magi and their visit to the child Jesus? The Magi were foreigners from a far-off land, non-Jews, outsiders. And yet they came to worship and to give gifts to the young Jesus in acknowledgment of his royalty, his lordship, and his divinity. The visit of the Magi heralds the expansion of God's family to include all those who trust in Jesus regardless of background or ethnicity. Matthew begins the celebration of the Gentiles' inclusion in God's redemption plan at the very beginning. Today we praise God for sending Jesus, who has been crowned King of ALL creation.

"Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all."
- 1 Chronicles 29:11

REFLECTION QUESTION
What do you think it means for Jesus to be King over all creation? Have you acknowledged Jesus as King of your life?

advent **notes**

advent **notes**

advent **notes**

Come, thou long expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.
-Charles Wesley

Thank you for joining us for this journey through Advent and Christmastide.
We pray that your heart finds peace in Him during this beautiful season.

a special thank you
to our 2026 advent devotional writers:

Bethany Payne

Emily LeVault

TC Morsch

Nichole Butts

Beth Yokley

UPCOMING WINTER HAPPENINGS @ HOPE!

TRIVIA NIGHT
Friday, January 15th
6:30-8:30pm

NEW MESSAGE SERIES
Begins Sunday, January 17th

WINTER GROUPS
Start the week of January 17th

INSPIRE CONFERENCE
Thursday, January 21st
6:30-8:00pm

WINTER ROOTED GROUPS
Sunday Mornings - Starting Jan 24th
Wednesday Nights - Starting Jan 27th

MEN'S BREAKFAST
Saturday, January 30th
8-9:30am

MEAL PACK 2027
February 4-7, 2027

WOMEN'S CONNECT CONFERENCE
February 26-27, 2027

www.myhope.church

Grab all the Christmas Resources on our Hope App & Website