

KATY FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



WILD HOPE

An Advent guide with
John the Baptist's Prophetic Voice





PRACTICING ADVENT

Advent is a season of waiting and anticipation, but that does not mean it's a season of doing nothing. Instead, in our waiting we are invited to seek out God's presence and to engage into God's world. And so, this guide is meant to help us **practice** Advent together.

Our sermon series this year is focusing on the life of **John the Baptist**. He is the forerunner of Jesus' life and ministry - the one who prepared the way for the Lord. Through his life and message we are seeking that same preparation to receive Christ fresh and new this Advent and Christmas season.

This guide is structured around silent prayer, scripture, thoughtful quotes, and repetition.

A word about the rhythm and pattern of this guide. It is meant to make us pause. In our frantic schedules (especially this time of year), it can become easy for us to look for quick tidbits, life hacks, and fast information. Even some of our devotional materials simply want us to look for a small nugget of inspiration for the day instead of practicing the slow way of formation.

So, to the best of your ability, receive the invitation to slow down this Advent. If you have never spent time in silent prayer – be patient. It is through this unhurried and consistent pattern that God speaks to us.



PRACTICING ADVENT

Though it's hard for many of us, try not to rush too quickly to reading and thinking. The silence in this guide is important to the practice of waiting. Even if you only have 5 minutes to give, make sure some of it is spent in stillness.

You likely won't hear anything. It will likely be hard to focus. You might even get a bit bored in the silence. Author and Pastor Rich Villodas offers these four tips for silent prayer:

- Focus on relationship with the Spirit not proper technique to be mastered.
- Normalize boredom as resistance to the overstimulation of our world.
- Reframe distractions as opportunities to return back to the center of God's heart.
- Remember that God is always waiting with open arms.

The quotes are meant to provoke and stimulate thinking. Sometimes they may feel like a complete thought to consider, and sometimes they may leave you wanting more. Hopefully they provide some spark for consideration or contemplation.

May this guide provide you space to center your heart and mind on the Word Made Flesh. And over the course of this season, through these short guides, may we together hear the voice of the Divine in our lives so that we may come to truly know this good news: God is with us!



WEEK 1

A WHISPER IN THE WOMB

Before there was John, there was Elizabeth and Zechariah. Their story is his beginning. They were old in age, childless, and praying for a miracle. Until one day they get the good news - they were pregnant.

John's story begins in the faithful waiting of his parents.

Soon another relative of Elizabeth's will be pregnant. This time it's a young girl named Mary, and the child she carries will change the world.

When Mary seeks comfort by visiting Elizabeth, the two pregnant women have a meeting of the ages - Elizabeth carrying John in her womb and Mary carrying Jesus.

John's first act of preparation is his leaping for joy in the Elizabeth womb as Mary and Jesus arrive.

As we begin this journey, we too begin in the longing anticipation of Elizabeth and John. Where in the darkness of the womb, something new wants to jump for joy and we are invited to trust in a Savior we haven't yet seen.

As you work through each of these days may you take your time. Pause. Read Slowly. Don't look for answers too quickly. Let the Spirit speak and be patient in your waiting.

A Whisper in the Womb

DECEMBER 1

2 min - Silence, stillness, and centering before God

Prayer for Presence

Holy God, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture | Malachi 3:1

Devotional

"Advent, in particular, is a season that teaches us to do something that is very hard for us to do: wait. It teaches us how to wait for the Advent or arrival of Christ into our world, not just way back then in Biblical times, but now - those places where we long for his presence and need his intervention. Waiting for Christ's coming into the place of our lives where we need him most right now ushers us into a special kind of waiting that is alert and watchful, full of anticipation and yet patient. The prophetic witness of John the Baptist calls us to become intentional about creating the conditions that ease Christ's coming into our lives - alone and together. To remove whatever hindrances and obstacles there might be to Christ's presence. To make straight whatever is crooked in us. To smooth out the rough places so that the salvation of God can become evident in our own lives."

Joan Chittister

Space for Reflection

In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.

2 min - Conclude with silence

A Whisper in the Womb

DECEMBER 2

2 min - Silence, stillness, and centering before God

Prayer for Presence

Holy God, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture | Luke 1:5-13

Devotional

"..there was one blessing Zechariah and Elizabeth longed for, one that had never materialized during the many years of their marriage. In a tradition that taught that the righteous would be blessed, these exceedingly righteous ones had no children. The dissonance is deafening: righteous and barren. The advent narrative of Luke begins here, with a paradox. But the story of a couple, of two elders, gave way to a new season, to God birthing transformation in their midst."

Kelly Nikondeha

Space for Reflection

In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer

2 min - Conclude with silence

A Whisper in the Womb

DECEMBER 3

2 min - Silence, stillness, and centering before God

Prayer for Presence

Holy God, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture | Luke 1:14-17

Devotional

"Among the instructions given to Zechariah was that John was to drink no wine. John the Baptist drinks no wine because he's not the one who brings the party, he only prepares the way. The party begins when Jesus turns the water to wine at the wedding feast in Cana. John is Advent; Jesus is Christmas"

Brian Zahnd

Space for Reflection

In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer

2 min - Conclude with silence

A Whisper in the Womb

DECEMBER 4

2 min - Silence, stillness, and centering before God

Prayer for Presence

Holy God, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture | Luke 1:26-38

Devotional

"I know that Christians are Easter people. We are supposed to favor the story of the resurrection, which reminds us that death is never the end of God's story. Yet I have never found that story even half as compelling as the story of the Incarnation.

It is nearly impossible to believe: God shrinking down to the size of a zygote, implanted in the soft lining of a woman's womb. God growing fingers and toes. God kicking and hiccupping in utero. God inching down the birth canal and entering this world covered in blood, perhaps into the steady, waiting arms of a midwife. God crying out in hunger. God reaching for his mother's breasts. God totally relaxed, eyes closed, his chubby little arms raised over his head in a posture of complete trust. God resting in his mother's lap. . .

God trusted God's very self, totally and completely and in full bodily form, to the care of a woman. God needed women for survival. Before Jesus fed us with the bread and the wine, the body and the blood, Jesus himself needed to be fed, by a woman. He needed a woman to say: "This is my body, given for you. . ."

Rachel Held Evans

Space for Reflection

In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer

2 min - Conclude with silence

A Whisper in the Womb

DECEMBER 5

2 min - Silence, stillness, and centering before God

Prayer for Presence

Holy God, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture | Luke 1:39-45

Devotional

"Across a landscape awash in war, occupation, and trauma, Elizabeth proclaimed Mary's blessedness. She spoke of solidarity in the face of an empire determined to bend women like them. Into this stream, Mary and her Magnificat of striking reversals in her own life and in the structure of society. Together, they would mother peacemakers and revolutionaries for millennia to come. They were two women with seemingly little influence in their world. But what they did, according to Luke, was as significant as joining in the start of a new world order, organized by God's justice and lived in God's peace."

Kelly Nikondeha

Space for Reflection

In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer

2 min - Conclude with silence



WEEK 2

A SHOUT IN THE WILDERNESS

Many things about John the Baptist were wild. His residence in the Judean wilderness. His choice of clothing and diet. And especially, his prophetic voice to the people.

John's ministry was to prepare the people for the arrival of Christ. That preparation involved repentance. But this repentance wasn't about becoming "good" so that God would show up. It was more about the necessity of clearing the path and opening eyes.

As we consider John's message of preparation, may we find both challenge and comfort. A challenge to examine what might be prohibiting us from seeing and experiencing God among us. But also a comfort that God is near as we prepare. And so we do so with hopeful, joyful anticipation.

As you work through each of these days may you take your time. Pause. Read Slowly. Don't look for answers too quickly. Let the Spirit speak and be patient in your waiting.

A Shout in the Wilderness

DECEMBER 8

2 min - Silence, stillness, and centering before God

Prayer for Presence

Holy God, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture | Matthew 3:1-12

Devotional

"A transformation was required for the townspeople to hear the proclamation of divine birth coming from the mouths of failed religion school shepherds. A transformation was required for the shepherds to believe they had been invited to be preachers of divine birth to their families neighbors. It was all very... unexpected. So it is with you as well, that divine proclamation will come through very unexpected ways. The Giver of life hides revelation in the things we ignore because it is the work of humbling ourselves and asking to have eyes to see and ears to hear that truly transforms our hearts."

Scott Erickson

Space for Reflection

In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.

2 min - Conclude with silence

A Shout in the Wilderness

DECEMBER 9

2 min - Silence, stillness, and centering before God

Prayer for Presence

Holy God, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture | Isaiah 40:1-5

Devotional

"And so John the Baptist appeared in the Judean wilderness, preaching a message of repentance in preparation for the coming of Messiah. John also baptized people in the Jordan river, not only as a public act of repentance, but also as a symbolic re-entry into the promised land. John's baptism said this: We are returning from our exile in sin; we are rethinking our ways of idolatry and injustice; we are preparing our hearts for the arrival of our true king. This is exactly what we are doing during Advent - we are preparing our hearts for the arrival of Christ in our lives. We are lifting up the valleys of our low view of others; we are bringing down the mountains of pride; we are smoothing out our rough and uncharitable attitudes, all in preparation to receive the Word of God into our lives in a new way."

Brian Zahnd

Space for Reflection

In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer

2 min - Conclude with silence

A Shout in the Wilderness

DECEMBER 10

2 min - Silence, stillness, and centering before God

Prayer for Presence

Holy God, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture | Psalm 85:8-15

Devotional

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. Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art; dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.	Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King, born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring. By thine own eternal spirit rule in all our hearts alone; by thine all sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.
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Charles Wesley, UMH 196
"Come Thou Long Expected Jesus"

Space for Reflection

In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer

2 min - Conclude with silence

A Shout in the Wilderness

DECEMBER 11

2 min - Silence, stillness, and centering before God

Prayer for Presence

Holy God, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture | John 1:19-34

Devotional

"Behold. Behold the God who is infinitely more humble than those who pray to him, more stripped, emptied, more self-outpouring - and we need to remember that humility and humiliation are mutually exclusive. Humility know only love, and God is love. The scandal of the incarnation is not that we are naked before Emmanuel, God with us, but God is naked before us, and, in utter silence, given over into our hands and hearts. And it is in the depths of this beholding, in the silence of the loving heart of God, that the divine exchange takes place most fully, where each of us in our uniqueness and strangeness is transfigured into the divine life. And it is for this that God comes to us, the Word made flesh, stable-born and crucified."

Maggie Ross

Space for Reflection

In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer

2 min - Conclude with silence

A Shout in the Wilderness

DECEMBER 12

2 min - Silence, stillness, and centering before God

Prayer for Presence

Holy God, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture | John 3:22-30

Devotional

"All transformative religions are, each in their own way, trying to defeat the imperial ego and reveal the always camouflaged shadow self. Yet we need to be bathed in the assurance of infinite love before we can risk such ego deflation. The prophets gradually move us toward and through such divine assurance."

Richard Rohr

Space for Reflection

In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer

2 min - Conclude with silence



WEEK 3

A QUESTION IN THE DARK

Even John, the great prophet, wondered if Jesus was really the One. Doubt and questioning are part of faithful waiting. From the prison cell, John asks the question everyone asks in some form:

Is this really the Messiah?

Jesus answers not with words but with actions. Advent is not about perfect certainty; it's about hope sustained by what Jesus is already doing.

The waiting of Advent does not exclude questions and doubts. In fact, it's part of the surprise of Christmas that God shows up in our world in unexpected ways.

May this week provide you space to seek God in honesty, questions, doubt, and faith.

As you work through each of these days may you take your time. Pause. Read Slowly. Don't look for answers too quickly. Let the Spirit speak and be patient in your waiting.

A Question in the Dark

DECEMBER 15

2 min - Silence, stillness, and centering before God

Prayer for Presence

Holy God, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture | Matthew 11:2-11

Devotional

"The Advent season doesn't promise that if you come to Christ, all your problems will go away. Not at all. Instead, the promise is that even when life seemingly spirals out of control, there is hope. To wait in the dark can be disorienting and vulnerable. Waiting certainly reminds us that we are not in control. Maybe that has become painfully true for you. You might be waiting through a period of illness. Or a season of unemployment. Or deep loneliness. In all that, take heart, dear friend. The darkness need not be a sign that the end is near. In fact, Advent tells us that a new beginning is right around the corner."

Rich Villodas

Space for Reflection

In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.

2 min - Conclude with silence

A Question in the Dark

DECEMBER 16

2 min - Silence, stillness, and centering before God

Prayer for Presence

Holy God, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture | Isaiah 35:1-10

Devotional

"Jesus was not a man for others. He was one with others. There is a world of difference in that. Jesus didn't seek the rights of lepers. He touched the leper even before he got around to curing him. He didn't champion the cause of the outcast. He was the outcast. He didn't fight for improved conditions for the prisoner. He simply said, 'I was in prison.'"

The strategy of Jesus is not centered in taking the right stand on issues, but rather in standing in the right place—with the outcast and those relegated to the margins."

Gregory Boyle

Space for Reflection

In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer

2 min - Conclude with silence

A Question in the Dark

DECEMBER 17

2 min - Silence, stillness, and centering before God

Prayer for Presence

Holy God, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture | Psalm 146:5-10

Devotional

"Help us to live as those who are prepared to die.
And when our days here are accomplished,
enable us to die as those who go forth to live,
so that living or dying, our life may be in you,
and that nothing in life or in death will be
able to separate us from your great love in
Christ Jesus our Lord."

The United Methodist Hymnal, 871

Space for Reflection

In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer

2 min - Conclude with silence

A Question in the Dark

DECEMBER 18

2 min - Silence, stillness, and centering before God

Prayer for Presence

Holy God, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture | James 5:7-10

Devotional

I cannot tell you
how the light comes.
What I know
is that it is more ancient
than imagining.
That it travels
across an
astounding expanse
to reach us.
That it loves
searching out
what is hidden,
what is lost,
what is forgotten
or in peril
or in pain.
That it has a fondness

for the body,
for finding its way
toward flesh,
for tracing the edges
of form,
for shining forth
through the eye,
the hand,
the heart.
I cannot tell you
how the light comes,
but that it does.
That it will.
That it works its way
into the deepest dark,
that enfolds you,

though it may seem
long ages in coming
or arrive in a shape
you did not foresee.
And so
may we this day
turn ourselves toward it.
May we lift our faces
to let it find us.
May we bend our bodies
to follow the arc it makes.
May we open
and open more
and open still
to the blessed light
that comes.

Jan Richardson, How The Light Comes

Space for Reflection

In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer

2 min - Conclude with silence

A Question in the Dark

DECEMBER 19

2 min - Silence, stillness, and centering before God

Prayer for Presence

Holy God, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture | Luke 1:67-80

Devotional

"I love what Luke writes in verse 78 'Because of our God's deep compassion, *the dawn from heaven will break upon us*' (emphasis added). God's deep compassion. Deep in Greek refers to one's most inward parts - one's heart, the seat of one's affections. It is God's visceral compassion, his heartfelt compassion, his tender mercy that is at play in this unfolding plan.

Malachi says it this way referring to the coming of the Lord: 'the sun of righteousness will rise on those revering my name; healing will be in its wings' (4:2). This Advent, when the dawn from heaven breaks upon us, regardless of the darkness we've been living in. It is the sun of righteousness rising with healing in its wings."

Adam Hamilton

Space for Reflection

In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer

2 min - Conclude with silence



d e c 2 1

LONGEST NIGHT

r e f l e c t i o n

Tonight is the Winter Solstice - the longest night of the year. In the darkness, we recognize our shared weariness. Yours may be tied to grief and loss - hardship and stress - languishing and fear.

But in all the weariness, this longest night provides us a space to tell a different story.

Hardship. Grief. Weariness. These are hard realities in our life, but they are also realities in which we proclaim God is still near. They are not indicators of God's absence. In fact if our scriptures are trusted, it seems this is where God prefers to dwell with his people. To meet us in our long nights, our weariness, and our griefs.

Advent is tied to the reality of the longer nights of winter. As we move closer to the Winter Solstice, these longest nights grow until we've reached the point when the light begins to grow again, and our days grow longer, as the nights grow shorter.

Our scriptures tell us this same story in Jesus' birth. Most famously, it's similar to how John speaks of the birth of Jesus in poetic form when he says:

John 1:3b-5

What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

I used to read John's line about darkness as an enemy of the light sort of thing. As if darkness is the antithesis of our life. We try to get rid of it. And if we can't do that, we try to ignore it... pushing it away and covering it with a veneer of positivity.

But, what if the darkness and light don't have to be in opposition to each other?



d e c 2 1

LONGEST NIGHT

r e f l e c t i o n

There's a story about Jesus on the Sea of Galilee with his disciples when a storm rolls up and causes great chaos (Mark 4:37-40). Jesus was asleep on the boat and the disciples cry out to him. Mark tells it like this:

"Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was **a dead calm.** (emphasis added)

Like John's light and darkness language, I used to read this story differently. I used to see the storm as the problem here. It was strange that Jesus was asleep, but nonetheless, it was a good thing that he turned the storm away.

But then I began to rethink that because of the "dead calm"

Jesus chides them for a lack of faith - but clearly the lack of faith wasn't that Jesus could do something. Perhaps it was their lack of faith to be carried through the storm.

Maybe the point wasn't to stop the storm, but to trust God through it.

This dead calm reminds me of what Dr. King calls negative peace - an absence of conflict. He contrasts that with positive peace - the presence of justice.

Perhaps sometimes we have to go through the storm, not cut it short, in order to find God's true positive peace.

That's why I believe when John says... The darkness has not overcome the light... maybe this isn't antagonistic. Maybe it's telling us that God's grace is not afraid of the dark. And through it, God does good.



WEEK 4

A WORD MADE FLESH

John's ministry led to Jesus. His voice prepared the people for God's Word Made Flesh. Part of the reason we needed preparation was because when Jesus shows up it wasn't quite what was expected.

In becoming human, God enters into our story in profound and mysterious ways. Through this incarnation, we find that God is with us in ways that amaze us, astound us, shock us, and heal us.

Christmas is only a few days away. Over these next few days we move from the voice of John to the Word Made Flesh. Let us consider the power of this incarnation.

If how God entered into our world through Jesus was any indication, then perhaps it will mean we have to look for God not in the loud, but in meekness. Not at the top, but down at the bottom. It will require of us to be watchful. Attentive.

And like the first Christmas, our expectation may turn into surprise, as we find where God is with us today.

May you take your time. Pause. Read Slowly. Don't look for answers too quickly. Let the Spirit speak and be patient in your waiting.

A Word Made Flesh

DECEMBER 22

2 min - Silence, stillness, and centering before God

Prayer for Presence

Holy God, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture | John 1:1-14

Devotional

"God entered into our world not with the crushing impact of unbearable glory, but in the way of weakness, vulnerability, and need. The world does not understand vulnerability. Neediness is rejected as incompetence, and compassion is dismissed as unprofitable. But in this weakness and poverty the shipwrecked at the stable would come to know the love of God."

Brennan Manning

Space for Reflection

In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.

2 min - Conclude with silence

A Word Made Flesh

DECEMBER 23

2 min - Silence, stillness, and centering before God

Prayer for Presence

Holy God, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture | Isaiah 9:2-7

Devotional

"God's accompanying of creatures in their suffering is sheer grace, unexpected companionship in the depths of affliction. the presence of another in the experience of suffering is a gift; the presence of the compassionate God in the experience of suffering is a gift precious beyond words.

Jesus prayed, spoke, acted, and suffered as a real human being. In the memorable phrase of Gregory of Nazianzus, 'that which he has not assumed, he has not healed.' If God in Christ does not enter into solidarity with the hell of our human condition, we remain without deliverance and without hope... the full humanity of Jesus is the precondition of the inclusiveness of his salvation."

Daniel Migliore

Space for Reflection

In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer

2 min - Conclude with silence

A Word Made Flesh

DECEMBER 24

2 min - silence, stillness, and centering before God

Prayer for Presence

Holy God, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture | Luke 2:1-20

Devotional

"Lord God,
in the deepest night
there rises the star of morning,
of birth,
the herald of a new day
you are making,
a day of great joy dawning
in yet faint shafts
of light and love.

I hear whispers of peace
in the stillness,
fresh breezes of promise
stirring,
winter sparrows
chirping of life,
a baby's cry
of need
and hope —
Christmas!

In the darkness I see the light
and find in it comfort,
confidence,
cause for celebration,
for the darkness cannot overcome it;
and I rejoice to nourish it
in myself,
in other people,
in the world
for the sake of him
in whom it was born
and shines forever,
even Jesus the Christ.

Ted Loder

Space for Reflection

In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer

2 min - Conclude with silence

A Word Made Flesh

DECEMBER 25

2 min - Silence, stillness, and centering before God

Prayer for Presence

Holy God, in this moment of prayer, free me from the distractions of the day so that I may be deeply present to you and myself, for the sake of the world around me.

Scripture | Isaiah 43:19

Devotional

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

Howard Thurman

Space for Reflection

In response to the scripture reading and/or devotional, spend a few quiet minutes praying, reflecting, or writing.

The Lord's Prayer

2 min - Conclude with silence

RESOURCES

Practicing Advent

1. Rich Villodas, *The Deeply Formed Life*, Waterbrook, 2020, pgs 21-28

Week 1 - A Whisper in the Womb

1. Joan Chittister, *The Liturgical Year*. Thomas Nelson, 2010, p. 60
2. Kelly Nikondeha, *The First Advent In Palestine: Reversals, Resistance, and the Ongoing Complexity of Hope*, Broad Leaf Books, 2022, pg 28, 38
3. Brian Zahnd, *The Anticipated Christ: A Journey through Advent and Christmas*, Spello Press, 2022, pg 147.
4. Rachel Held Evans with Jeff Chu, *Wholehearted Faith*, HarperOne, 2021, pgs. 3–5, 6.
5. Kelly Nikondeha, *The First Advent In Palestine: Reversals, Resistance, and the Ongoing Complexity of Hope*, Broad Leaf Books, 2022, pg 75-76

Week 2 - A Shout in the Wilderness

1. Scott Erickson, *Honest Advent: Awakening to the Wonder of God-with-us Then, Here, and Now*. Zondervan, 2020, pgs. 167-168
2. Brian Zahnd, *The Anticipated Christ: A Journey through Advent and Christmas*, Spello Press, 2022, pg 42-43.
3. Charles Wesley, *The United Methodist Hymnal : Book of United Methodist Worship*. Nashville, Tenn. :United Methodist Pub. House, 1989.
4. Maggie Ross, *Writing the Icon of the Heart: In Silence Beholding*, Wipf and Stock, 2013, pg. 11.
5. Richard Rohr, *The Tears of Things: Prophetic Wisdom for an Age of Outrage*, Convergent, 2025, pg. xxiv

RESOURCES

Week 3 - A Question in the Dark

1. Rich Villodas, *Waiting for Jesus: An Advent Invitation to Prayer and Renewal*, Waterbrook, 2025, pgs 18-19.
2. Gregory Boyle, *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion*, Free Press, 2010, pg. 72.
3. The United Methodist Hymnal, pg. 871.
4. Jan Richardson, *Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons*, Wanton Gospeller Press, 2015. pgs. 59-60.
5. Adam Hamilton, *Prepare the Way for the Lord: Advent and the Message of John the Baptist*, Abingdon Press, 2022, pgs. 62-63.

Week 4 - A Word Made Flesh

1. Brennan Manning, *A Glimpse of Jesus: The Stranger to Self-Hatred*. HarperCollins e-Books, 2010, p. 1384
2. Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 3rd Edition, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishings Company, 2014, pgs. 138, 180.
3. Ted Loder, *Guerrillas of Grace*, "Let the Start of morning Rise", Augsburg Books, 1981, pg 139.
4. Howard Thurman, *The Mood of Christmas & Other Celebrations*, Friends United Press, 1985. pg. 23.

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advent through John's prophetic voice

ADVENT AT KATY FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

WORSHIP

NOV. 30	11 AM	A WHISPER IN THE WOMB <i>LUKE 1:39-45</i>
DEC. 7	11 AM	A SHOUT IN THE WILDERNESS <i>MATTHEW 3:1-12</i>
DEC. 14	11 AM	"MY SOUL CRIES OUT" CANTATA
DEC. 21	11 AM	A QUESTION IN THE DARK <i>MATTHEW 11:2-11</i>
DEC. 21	6 PM	LONGEST NIGHT A SERVICE OF HOPE

EVENTS

NOV. 30	5 PM	CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING
DEC. 7	5 PM	MMF CHRISTMAS MUSICAL
DEC. 11	6 PM	LPS CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

CHRISTMAS EVE

DEC. 24	3 PM	FAMILY & CHILDREN WORSHIP SERVICE
DEC. 24	5 PM	CANDLELIGHT & COMMUNION WORSHIP SERVICE
DEC. 24	7 PM	CANDLELIGHT & COMMUNION WORSHIP SERVICE