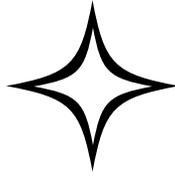


Reclaim the  
*Wonder*



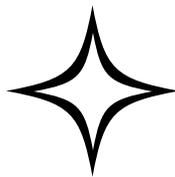
**CANTON**  
FIRST METHODIST CHURCH

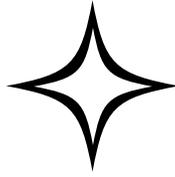
*2025 Advent Devotional*



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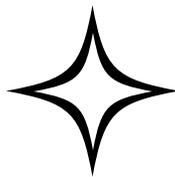


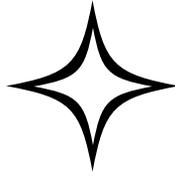
## About this Devotional

This is our second year of printing an Advent Devotional written by the congregation of Canton First Methodist Church. In doing so we are able to hear thoughts on Scripture and this holy season from voices all across our church family. This celebrates the diversity of voices and perspectives that God has blessed us with while also highlighting the unity we find in our shared faith in Jesus Christ.

Our theme for the 2025 Advent season is “Reclaim the Wonder.” The season of Advent, culminating in Christmas, has been celebrated by Christians for centuries. As we encounter this season yet again, our goal is to experience the wonder of Advent in a fresh way. How can something so ancient also be fresh? Part of the wonder of Advent is no matter how many times we experience it, there are ways in which it speaks relevant and timely truth into our lives each and every year.

Our world is often characterized by noise and distractions, features that often come to a head this time of year, but our prayer is that this devotional would help you to pause and wonder at the awe-inspiring truth that God is not far off. Indeed, he is with us in every moment and circumstance.





**Week 1, Day 1**

## **God's Promise Brings Hope**

By Kenny Ott

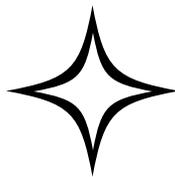
Luke 1:37 For nothing will be impossible with God. (ESV)

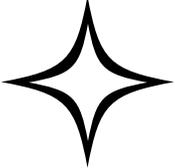
When the angel Gabriel spoke these words to Mary, he was speaking truth that every disciple of Jesus needs to hear: God's promises never fail, even when they seem impossible. Think about it – Mary was a young woman from a nowhere town, with no status, no power, no influence. Yet God chose her to carry the Savior of the world. What seemed unthinkable became reality because the word of God is always faithful and true.

Advent is a season of anticipation and expectation. We look toward the coming of Christ, and in that waiting we are often faced with discouragement, brokenness, and uncertainty about the future. But Luke 1:37 reminds us that our hope is not dependent on what we see around us. Our hope rests on the promises of God. The same God who brought life from Sarah's barren womb, who rescued His people from slavery in Egypt, who placed His Son in Mary's arms – He is still at work today.

God's promise brings hope to weary hearts, peace to troubled minds, and courage to fearful souls. In Christ, the impossible becomes possible. Forgiveness is real. Life is renewed. Eternity is secure. This Advent, whatever you may be facing, hold fast to God's word and trust that His promises will not fail.

Prayer: Lord, thank You that Your promises never fail. In this season of waiting, fill us with hope that comes only from You. Help us trust Your word and live with the confidence that nothing is impossible with You. Amen.





Week 1, Day 2

**Come, Lord Jesus, By Bill Reiner**

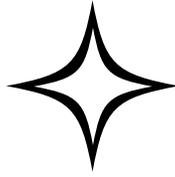
Isaiah 25:6-9 On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. 7 And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. 9 It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation." (ESV)

Come Lord Jesus, come. Our hearts are longing for our savior.

The Lord is calling us home. To live in His law and His love. Advent is the Church's gift to God's people. We prepare our hearts as the days grow shorter, nights come earlier and darkness offers time for reflection. In the quiet stillness of dark, reflect, pray, and prepare for the Lord to return. Jesus came to save, he will return. Jesus is the fulfillment of generations of promises to the Israelites, but His salvation is for all people. His salvation is for you. There is a fest coming. Many of us will fest at Christmas, gathering with family and friends. Making merry and celebrating the birth of Christ. God promises us an eternal feast and life with Him. He sent His son, Jesus. Jesus has defeated death, opening the gate to allow us to feast in Heaven.

Since God is for all people, reflect on who you have invited to His feast. Who have you shared His love with? Advent reminds us Jesus is coming. Prepare. We do not know the hour, but he is coming.

So we pray: Jesus, come into our hearts and dwell. Teach us to walk like you. Wipe away our tears and restore our brokenness. Our hearts long for our savior. Jesus, you opened up heaven to offer us eternal life. Let our hearts be open to your word and changed by your redeeming love. With hearts renewed may we live on Earth as it is in Heaven. Until you return to take your throne may we prepare the way. Jesus, give us hearts like yours; loving the unloved, the forgotten, the separated, outcasted, and lonely. Give the courage to protect the weak and stand against what is wrong. May we use this and every Advent season to rekindle the fire in each of us. A fire that longs to serve our heavenly King. Lord lead me, guide me, shape me, and send me in your most holy ways.



**Week 1, Day 3**  
**Wonder in the Ordinary**

By Carlynn Puckett

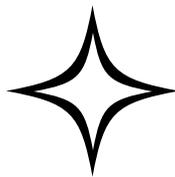
During the Christmas season, it's so easy to get caught up in everything going on: decorating, shopping, school, sports, and all the fun events. I love all of it, but sometimes I realize how quickly the month goes by before I really stop to remember what it's all about. Advent is supposed to be a time to prepare our hearts for Jesus, but often, my heart is racing instead of resting in his presence.

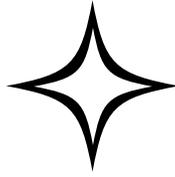
Matthew 1:23 says, "They shall call his name Immanuel," which means "God with us." That's the heart of Advent: God actually came to be with us. Not far away, not watching from a distance, but right here, in our world and in our lives.

When I slow down enough to think about that, it fills me with awe. The same God who made everything came to live among us. He came to love us, save us, and remind us that we're never alone.

This Advent, I want to reclaim that wonder. To see Jesus not just in the Christmas story, but in my everyday moments – in laughter with friends, in worship, or even in the quiet when I finally take a deep breath.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to rush through this season. Open my eyes to see Your presence in my everyday life, and fill my heart with the wonder of knowing You are truly with us. Amen.





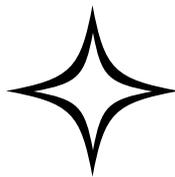
**Week 1, Day 4**  
**A Lesson for Life**  
By Sara Jo Cauble

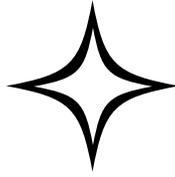
Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. (NIV)

As a 12 year old girl, I learned about making a choice that would give me hope in everything I faced in my life from my Sunday School teacher, Eugene Price. He shared with me that giving my life to Jesus Christ would guide me through life, no matter what situation I faced.

In June, 1952, in a revival service, I went to the altar and professed my faith & hope in Jesus Christ and joined North Canton Baptist Church. My father was not a believer, but that night God touched his heart and he gave his life to Jesus in our home. My mother was a believer, but had not been baptized. On Sunday, my father, mother and I were baptized together. My life has had some challenges, but Jesus has been faithful to me in every situation. My previous husband was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Not an easy time with a son and daughter in high school. As Hebrews 10:23 states, no matter what I have faced in 85 years, my professed hope in Jesus has given me a life I can thank God for everyday.

For all those who profess faith in Jesus, we can rest in the promise that no matter what today may bring, Jesus gives hope for our circumstances.





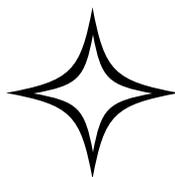
**Week 1, Day 5**  
**Dare to Hope**  
By Corey Shores

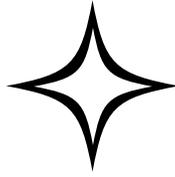
Lamentations 3:21-23 Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (NIV)

I remember watching an episode of "Little House On the Prairie" when I was in 3rd grade. Charles Ingles was talking to a friend about how crazy the world had become over his life. This show was set in the 1800's and I was watching it on TBS in the mid 1990's. I couldn't believe that back in those days people thought that they were living in the hardest times imaginable. The conversation turned to Jesus and Charles said "Surely, Jesus will return soon", at least that's how I remember hearing it.

We've waited and waited on Jesus to return. Through 2000 years and countless generations, each one with its own set of problems. Each one being certain that things couldn't get any worse. One thing has remained, the "faithful love of the Lord". Take a second to think about how many mornings you've experienced in your own life. The mercies have begun fresh for every one of them. This year has had its ups and downs just like every year. I've experienced joys and heartaches that I could have never seen coming. I've fallen short while still being transformed into the likeness of Jesus, and through it all, I've been in awe of how faithful he has been and always will be.

I'm now realizing more and more, that while we wait on Jesus' return, we don't have to wait on his presence. Even though our eyes can't see the Glory of Jesus, we can see his faithfulness on display throughout our life. His goodness and mercy are literally running after us every day of our life, every morning we are presented with a cup full of mercy to partake of, and we can be transformed to a deeper faith through God's faithfulness.

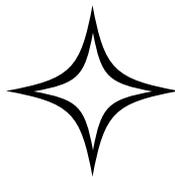


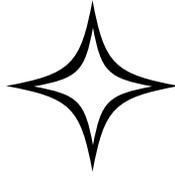


**Week 1, Day 6**

**Reflect**

1. Where in your life, have you seen God's light shine in an unexpected place?
2. Where in your life do you feel most surrounded by darkness or uncertainty? How can you look for God's light in the midst of this darkness?
3. What promise might God be inviting you to receive and live into during this Advent season?
4. How might God be calling you to more fully surrender your life and desires to him?
5. How can the breath prayer "Let it be to me... according to your will" shape your approach to the upcoming week?



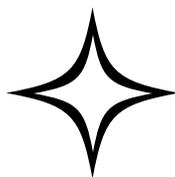


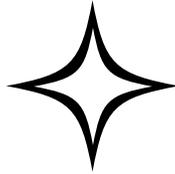
**Week 2, Day 1**  
**From Fear to Joy**  
By Luke Bryant

Luke 2:8-9 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. (NRSV)

When we think about Christmas, we don't normally think of fear. After all, don't we leave fright behind in October when we exchange our Halloween costumes and trick or treat candy for Christmas trees and nativity sets? However, at the sight of angels, the shepherds were frightened. I imagine they had questions about why they had been chosen to receive this news and what it would mean that the Son of God was coming into the world. The shepherds had every reason to be fearful. The Messiah who had been prophesied about for generations was now here, surely bringing about great change from what the shepherds knew. Yet, their fear turned to joy as they began to contemplate the reality of their situation, and their joy turned to action as they began the journey to see the Son of God.

The question for us today is, what is it that frightens us or makes us anxious, and how does this thing compare to the reality of what we are preparing to celebrate? For the shepherds, even though they were fearful and facing great uncertainty, they considered what it meant that the Son of God was coming into the world and rejoiced. How can we rejoice at the news that the Son of God has come and will come again? How can we be moved to action by this joy to glorify God and experience the wonder of his love for us?



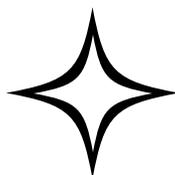


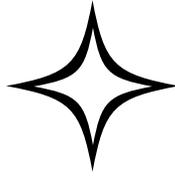
**Week 2, Day 2**  
**I Give You Peace**  
By Alec Crilly

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (NIV)

Peace is what we are given through the Holy Spirit. He gives us peace whenever we seek Him. He gives us peace by going to church. He gives us peace as we reflect on all Jesus has done for us. Prayer is a way we receive peace. In prayer, we can get answers about what is bothering us. Listening to worship music and reading Scripture can also give us peace. It takes away all the negativity in the world and gives us peace in our hearts and in our minds.

Do not be afraid. As Christians we are not perfect. We make mistakes. God tells us to believe in Him, and He will take all our worries and anxiety away from us if we trust in Him. We all have crosses to carry but we can carry them humbly and ask for forgiveness and we shall receive because God forgives.





**Week 2, Day 3**

## **A Message in the Sky**

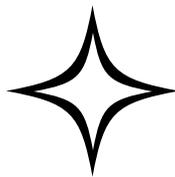
By Dana Hall

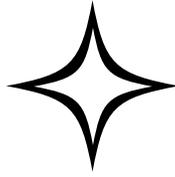
I have always loved looking at the sky, whether it's day or night. I love the clouds and often take pictures of them, marveling at their beauty. I love the stars at night and still seek out the Big Dipper. I remember when the Jerusalem Star was visible, and of course I took a photo. Photos can never really capture the beauty of the moment, though. It is in these moments that I am filled with wonder of the majesty of God, and how the heavens speak to me. I often imagine that the late afternoon sun, broken into tiny beams shining through the trees, are my loved ones who've gone to Heaven, and I greet them by name.

Psalms 19:1 captures my thoughts, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (NIV). During this advent season, I think of all the messages in the sky, sent by God, proclaiming the birth of Jesus Christ. The angel Gabriel came to Mary with the message, "Greetings, you are highly favored! The Lord is with you," which greatly troubled her. The angel's words offered comfort, "You will be with child and give birth to a son...He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High."

On the night of Jesus' birth, an angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds, who were sore afraid. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." With that, the heavens were filled with a great company of heavenly host, praising God and singing, "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace on whom his favor rests."

A star appearing in the heavens, the Christmas Star, was the beacon and guide for the three wise men, who came to worship Him. Certainly, Psalms 19:1 foretold the coming of Christ.





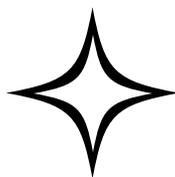
**Week 2, Day 4**  
**The Wonder in Humility**  
By Mattie Bryant

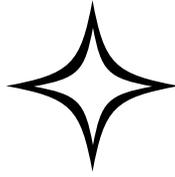
Philippians 2:6-7 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. (NIV)

Can you imagine how the angels in heaven reacted when they heard that Jesus, the Son of God, would be taking on human nature and entering into our world? Can you imagine what they might have said, knowing that Jesus would be going to stand face to face with the same people who had so often rejected God and his commands? I imagine they would have reacted with a mixture of shock and surprise. Maybe they asked Jesus why he would even think about doing such a thing.

For some of us, the story of Jesus becoming human has become almost routine. Yet, there is nothing ordinary about the One who reigns above all of creation, choosing to enter creation for our sake. The humility of Jesus is what led Him to empty Himself of His divine privilege and come to earth to save us. During this Advent season, my prayer is that we would hear of Jesus coming to dwell among us with fresh ears and that we would be transformed into people who embody this same self-giving humility in our relationships with others.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, it humbles us to think that You, the King of Heaven, chose to step down into our world to take on flesh, to walk among us, and to bear our burdens. Forgive us when the wonder of Your coming feels too familiar, when our hearts grow dull to the miracle of the incarnation. This Advent, open our eyes again to the mystery of Your love. Let the story of Your birth awaken awe within us and shape us into people who reflect Your humility and grace. Teach us to serve others as You have served us and to love as You have loved us. Amen.





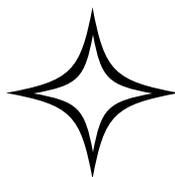
**Week 2, Day 5**  
**The Author of the Puzzle**

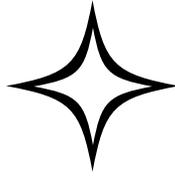
By Reagan Booth

Psalms 46:10 He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” (NIV)

Have you ever been so overwhelmed by life and all the plans, work, family, your responsibilities, and more and more just not knowing where to even start? I know I have. Many times, all the things that are great for us when they are piled up can just turn into chaos. But there's a good part to this, you don't have to have the entire thing planned out perfectly or know exactly what will happen. God knows exactly how it will all play out and has had the plan since before the Earth was even created. He has the agenda for every moment of every day, for everyone. Psalms 46:10 tells us to “Be still, and know that I am God.” It's a message that shows us we don't need to understand it all because God has it under control, and he knows what you need. He has the power and will use the ordinary to show you peace and His glory.

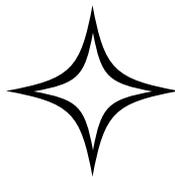
Think about this, imagine that you start a big puzzle with many pieces. You dump the pieces out of the box, and everything is scattered. You barely know where to start, but slowly you start to match some colors together, and the border is coming along. You can't see the full picture yet, but you have to trust that there is a plan that will be amazing at the end, and as you place more pieces, it starts to show. Our lives are like that puzzle. We have many goals and needs, and God knows exactly what fits and when it should come into play. He will show you what you need as it comes, and in the end, His glory will be that big picture where you will find peace. Our goal in life is not to understand every step, but to trust God and use all of life's pieces to bring Him glory.

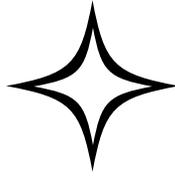




**Week 2, Day 6**  
**Reflect**

1. Reflect back on this past week, where did you experience God's presence in the ordinary or everydayness of life?
2. What part of your life feels too ordinary or messy for God to work within it?
3. How might the ways God has worked in the ordinary throughout history give you confidence that God can meet you in the ordinariness of your life?
4. Who might God be calling you to share a story with of how you have experienced God's presence in the everydayness of life?
5. Looking forward to the upcoming week, how can you be more intentional in experiencing God's presence as you go about your daily rhythms and routines?





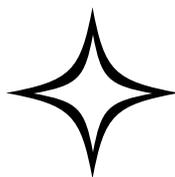
**Week 3, Day 1**  
**Bearing His Name**  
By Nan Peters

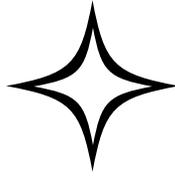
John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (NIV)

A little more than forty years ago, I was pregnant with our first child. It was December, and members of our Sunday School class were the characters in the live Nativity. As I stood dressed as a shepherd looking at Mary and Baby Jesus, I was filled with wonder. Wonder of the love of God to send His only Son to a broken world. A Son that would be the living, breathing face of God—one who looked just like his Daddy. One who would be filled to shine His glory, His truth, His grace. The One who embodied all Scripture, all of His Father. When we meet someone's child, we get a glimpse into his or her parents. Often we see the physical DNA resemblance. Sometimes we see the mom or dad's mannerisms, spirit, values—the ones imitated growing up.

Through Jesus, we see God—His mannerisms, His spirit, what He values. When we accept Jesus as our Savior, Christ lives IN us. Are we a reflection of Him, His spirit, His values? We are now the flesh in this world that represents Him, who was the Word made flesh. Do others see His glory shine in us? Are we filled with His grace and truth? In this season and beyond, may we be the flesh that shares our Father's love with the world around us.

Father, thank you for sending Your one and only Son to be the Word made flesh. Help us to allow Your Spirit to shine through us each day where others may see your grace and truth. Amen.





**Week 3, Day 2**  
**Reconciled to Christ**

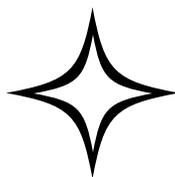
By Carolyn Abel

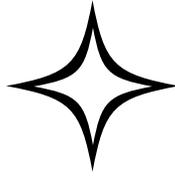
Corinthians 5:17-18 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. (NLT)

Have you ever had a broken relationship with someone you love? My prayer is that you were eventually able to repair that relationship but if you haven't, my prayers are with you still. Broken relationships can really reflect how Christ feels about us. Imagine the pain you felt when you were reminded of the rift between you and your loved one, wishing you could smooth it over and be close again. God felt that so strongly for us he sent his son into the world so He could bring us close to him. To reconcile us to him.

I have hurt and have been hurt by the people closest to me. Some relationships were able to be repaired, some I had to walk away from. I find great comfort and also awe from the fact that God didn't walk away from me when I hurt him, but sent his own son to bring me back. I could have stayed hidden in my shame and pain but God made me alive again. Free from the pain I had caused and felt.

And the most beautiful thing we get to do with our pain is to watch what God does with it when we share it with others and be Jesus to them, leading them back to God.





**Week 3, Day 3**  
**God with Us**  
By Jane Scott

Matthew 1:23 “BEHOLD. THE VIRGIN SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,” which translated means, “GOD WITH US.” (NAS)

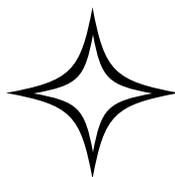
Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.” (NAS)

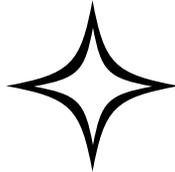
The connection of the Old and New Testaments points to the fulfillment of God’s promise to send a Savior to His people. When I was a young believer, I thought how wonderful it was of God to create this precious baby and send him to us. When I came to know God in greater depth, I realized that Jesus was not something God created 2025 years ago, but He was with God from the beginning because He is God. Often times the mysterious richness of the Trinity confuses us, but now I realize God came to us in human form through Jesus. He chose to walk among us experiencing joy and pain and ultimately redeeming us from sin by giving His life for us.

I wake up each morning knowing I am never alone. He is involved in every aspect of my life and yours too! God chose to come be near to me. He understands my happiness. He understands my struggles; He understands my sorrows and my joy because He experienced life just as we do.

In the midst of our busy Advent season, we need to focus on Immanuel-God with us. He will never leave us alone. Each of us needs to engage in a personal relationship with him daily. Let’s take the time to strengthen our relationship with Immanuel through prayer, reading our Bible, and sharing this Advent verse with others.

Prayer: Father, we thank you for the incredible gift of Jesus-God with us. Open our eyes to see Your presence in our daily lives, both our struggles and our joys. Help us trust Your unfailing presence, knowing we are never alone. Amen.





**Week 3, Day 4**  
**Children of God**

By Matt Abel

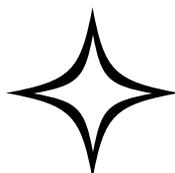
John 1:12-13 But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God. (NLT)

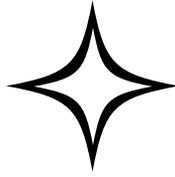
The circumstances of our birth vary from person to person. Our economic, cultural, and geographic realities are part of what makes us each unique. What I find fascinating about the circumstances of our birth is that it's something we have absolutely no control over and yet it impacts the rest of our lives.

I was born to a mother who loved me and a father who did not. My life began with a hole where my father was supposed to be. That is, until my mom met the man who would come to love me and adopt me as his own, the man who I have known as my dad as far back as I can remember. Despite the circumstances of my physical birth, which left me fatherless, I am blessed with a father who knows me and loves me not because of biology but because he chose me.

John tells us about a similar situation in the beginning of his gospel. In verse 10 we read that Jesus came into the world he created but was rejected by it. Verse 11 tells us that Jesus was born to his own people, the people of Israel, but they too rejected him. But there were some who believed him and accepted him, not because of their family or heritage, and to those Jesus gave the right to become children of God. To be reborn not as the result of human passion or plan but a new birth that comes from God. This gift of adoption isn't limited by our race, gender, social status, or anything else that separates us from one another.

In this season of Advent may we remember that Jesus has given us the greatest gift: the opportunity to become children of God.





Week 3, Day 5

## Courage in the Storm

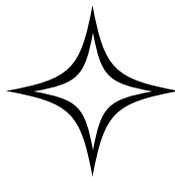
By Elaine Daniel

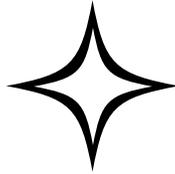
Isaiah 41:10 Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (NIV)

How many times have you read this passage and not really considered what it means? For me, I can't remember when I first read these words, but I do remember when they became personal! It was the day that my husband, Bob, and I heard the doctor tell us that Bob had mantle cell lymphoma. This is a very rare type of cancer, and Bob's prognosis was not good. After many rounds of chemo and the side effects that are associated with it, the doctor told us that the cancer was gone but would come back. A stem cell transplant was the next step. Again, Bob knew that God was there giving him strength and comfort in the difficult times. His cancer was cured once again, but because of a weakened immune system, Bob developed pneumonia and lung fibrosis. When the doctors told us that there was nothing more that could be done, he continued to focus on God and not on his circumstances. He faced his upcoming death in such a joyful manner- that he was telling us his heavenly plans.

As I watched Bob during this time, I was acutely aware of his total belief in this scripture, and this helped me become stronger. I was reminded that as believers we are never alone. God is always with us. This scripture encourages us to confront our fears knowing that God is our source of courage. These past 3 years have not been easy but knowing that God is with me calms my fears.

As we look forward to the birth of Jesus during this Advent season, let us remember that God walks beside us daily. When we release our fear to God, He, in turn, gives us courage and peace for every situation. He turns the impossible into possible and the ordinary into extraordinary. God wants to show up in big ways in our lives. As we pray in faith for courage and strength, we can then watch expectantly for Him to do miraculous things.

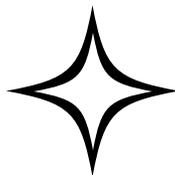


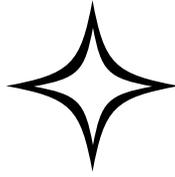


**Week 3, Day 6**

**Reflect**

1. What does the name Emmanuel, meaning God with us, reveal to us about who God is?
2. How would you currently describe your relationship with God?
3. How might God be calling you to a more personal and intimate relationship with him?
4. How does your identity as a child of God affect the way you make decisions and interact with others?
5. How can the breath prayer "Jesus I receive you... be born again in me" shape your approach to the upcoming week?





**Week 4, Day 1**

## **Preparing Our Hearts for Peace**

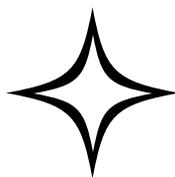
By Autumn Little

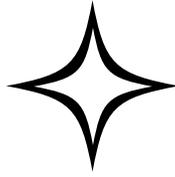
As we enter the Advent season, our minds often feel swarmed with feelings of stress and anxiety. We worry about finding the perfect presents for everyone, being the best host, and having the prettiest decorations. It's tempting to measure this season by our own productivity, rather than what God is doing. But as we head into this season, let's slow down and remember the true purpose of this sacred time. This is a season of anticipation-- not for the presents or events we have planned, but for the birth and return of Jesus. In times where we feel overwhelmed, let us pause and welcome the peace that only God can give.

Colossians 3:15 says, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful" (NIV). Peace is not something that we manufacture. It doesn't depend on flawless circumstances or perfectly executed plans. True peace is a gift from God; one we must continuously choose to receive. Scripture reminds us that peace does not mean that everything is going our way, but it means that God has a plan even if life feels uncertain. Philippians 4:7 promises us, "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (NIV).

During this advent season, we can welcome the peace of God into our hearts through slowing down to seek Jesus through scripture, prayer, and small acts of worship. As we prepare our hearts for His coming, let us make room for His peace to dwell within us.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank you for sending your son Jesus as a gracious gift and sacrifice for us. As we enter this advent season, quiet our hearts and minds so that we may welcome the gift of peace that only you offer. Calm our anxious thoughts and help us to trust your plan. Remind us to be thankful and open our eyes to see your presence in every moment. Come, Lord Jesus. Fill our hearts with your peace. Amen.





Week 4, Day 2

## The Wonderment in the WAIT

By Millie Lace

John 1:5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (NIV)

When asked to write this devotional, I was reluctant but I didn't have peace to refuse. In prayer I asked the Lord to give me a word if He wanted me to write something. Immediately I heard in my spirit the word, "**WAIT**". So, as impatient as I am, I waited for about 2 minutes which seemed like an eternity of silence and nothingness. But pure nothingness can never exist when there is something. Hallelujah! During the silence, I saw an acrostic for the word **WAIT**.

**W**onderment

**A**doration

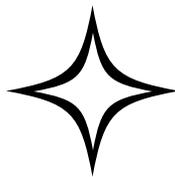
**I**ntimate Invitation

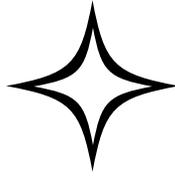
**T**ransformation

During my prayer time the theme of this advent season and the scripture for today became clearer.

Between the Old and New Testament, referred to as the 400 years of Silence, so far as we know, God did not speak—no Scripture was written. Everything was dark and the wait was hard. Could those living in that darkness have ever imagined the Wonderment of Immanuel fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah, or the joy they would find in the Adoration of a King? Could they have imagined the peace from the Intimate Invitation of relationship that He would offer, or the Transformation of their lives if they accepted?

God sent His Son to be with us in all of our chaos to bring peace and joy to the world. So how do we reclaim the wonder of this advent season? The song "O come, O come, Immanuel" verse 6 says it best. "O come O come Bright and Morning Star, and bring us comfort from afar! Dispel the shadows of the night and turn our darkness into light." Receive Jesus; for He is our something in our nothingness, the light that the darkness has not overcome! He is the Wonderment in the WAIT.





**Week 4, Day 3**

## **The Suffering of the Servant King**

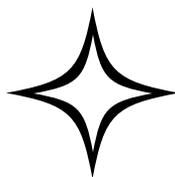
By Austin Booth

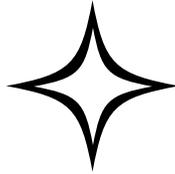
Isaiah 60:1-3 Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. (ESV)

In earlier chapters, Isaiah refers to the coming of a Servant King. This King would come to not only restore God's people but would be the light for the entire world. A light to all nations. But, this King will not be welcomed. He would be rejected and killed by his own people. This is the wonder of God the Father, and Jesus Christ His Son, and the reason for celebration during the Advent season.

Jesus was born of a human woman and lived through the trials and tribulations that are the definitive measure of the human condition. Jesus lived His life knowing that His path was already chosen for Him and that those trials and tribulations were not the end of Jesus' suffering, but the beginning. Jesus still had to prepare Himself as our sacrificial lamb. As our sacrifice, Jesus had to endure more than we can imagine. Scripture talks of beatings, torture, being crucified on a cross, and death. All of this, because Jesus willingly accepted His fate as the Lamb that was born and raised for the atonement of our sins. Jesus loved us enough to endure the worst of that humanity had to offer and after His resurrection, He still chooses to be the light to our world.

Isaiah tells us that we have only two ways to respond to the suffering of the Servant King. We can either become the seed of Jesus and live humble lives full of repentance. Sharing the light of the gospel with all peoples. Or we can reject the King and live in the shadow of darkness, living our lives in ignorance.





Week 4, Day 4

## What's In a Name? By Denny Milholland

Isaiah 9:6 For a Child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. (NIV)

The prophet Isaiah prophesied to a kingdom of people living in fear and oppression from powerful enemies. They were waiting in anticipation for a new king who would free them from their distress. Little did they know that the king God promised would be a child, who would be much more than a military or political savior. He would be the very light of love breaking into the darkness to provide hope for all.

During advent, we wait with a similar sense of anticipation. For many of us, it is a season of joyous time with our families. However, for many of us, it can be a season of stress, grief and confusion. Isaiah 9:6 brings us great comfort in reminding us of all the ways Jesus loves and cares for us. Each title mentioned in the Scripture helps us to see Jesus and all he offers us.

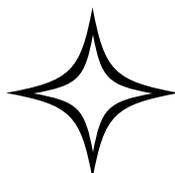
As our Wonderful Counselor, he understands our grief, our financial burdens and other stresses that try to steal our joy during the holidays. As our creator, he knows exactly how to “counsel” each of us individually and to minister to all our needs.

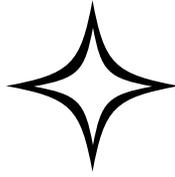
As our Mighty God, he is our source of strength. He is the ultimate authority over all things, our strong warrior and defender. As you and I look around and see chaos in our world, God sees new opportunities for rebirth and renewal.

When we think of him as Everlasting Father, we feel a profound intimacy with a father who provides and protects us. We are not just subjects serving a king, but we are beloved children in the eternal family of God.

The peace Jesus provides us as Prince of Peace is not just a temporary absence of conflict. It is a deep, eternal peace that surpasses all understanding and provides rest for our souls, and hope during circumstances we cannot control.

This Advent, as we see the image of a newborn baby in a manger, remember the power and identity within that child. He is our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace, fulfilling an ancient promise and bringing hope to a broken world.





**Week 4, Day 5**

## **The Promise**

By Bill & Brenda Price

Luke 2:10-11 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord." (NIV)

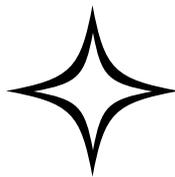
This message delivered by an angel of the Lord to the Shepards in a nearby field was the fulfillment of a promise given in Isaiah 7:14.

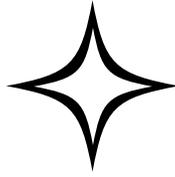
"Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel."

It's only fitting that God would announce the birth of Jesus to the Shepards as He is our good Shepard (John 10: 11).

"I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep."

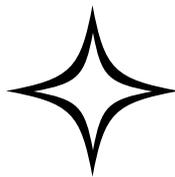
We believe since this promise was predicted and fulfilled along with many other promises in the Old Testament, then the promise of eternal life and the second coming of the Messiah will also be fulfilled.





**Week 4, Day 6**  
**Reflect**

1. How does it make you feel when you consider that Jesus, who is fully God, stepped into the world and entered into our time and space?
2. How does it lead you to worship?
3. What does it mean for you to trust in the power of God's light, even though there is still darkness and fear in the world?
4. How is God calling you to reflect His light in the world?
5. How can you take what you have learned and experienced about Christ this Advent and continue to live in light of these things as we look towards 2026?





# Christmas

AT CANTON FIRST METHODIST

## Walk-through Bethlehem

**Saturday, December 13 | 2:00-4:00pm**

Step back in time and walk the streets of Bethlehem! Meet friendly shopkeepers, create festive crafts, enjoy s'mores, visit the petting zoo, and finish the evening with a hayride to the manger, featuring a live nativity scene.

## Jingle Jam

**Sunday, December 21 | 9:30 & 11:00am**

A Christmas celebration for kids- filled with fun songs, activities, and the story of Jesus' birth!

## Christmas Cantata

**Sunday, December 21 | 11:00am**

Experience the beautiful sounds of the Chancel Choir and Orchestra, under the direction of Dr. Don Stafford, as we lift our hearts in praise and celebration of the season.

## Christmas Eve Candlelight Services

**Wednesday, December 24**

11:30am | Family    6:00pm | Modern

8:00pm | Traditional    11:00pm | Traditional

