

*Westminster Presbyterian Church
Advent 2011 Devotionals*



*Original Watercolor of Westminster Presbyterian Church
Joan Griffith*

The Advent Devotional Booklet

Enjoy this Westminster devotional and share it with your family and friends as you celebrate the season! It is a way for us to minister to one another and encourage each other in faith.

If regular personal devotions are not part of your life, Advent is a great time to begin. If you have a regular habit of daily devotionals, then perhaps this booklet can provide an additional source of meditations. We hope that you use this booklet in the morning upon rising, around the supper table, or in the evening before bed to reflect upon God's gifts to us. Each meditation is offered by a Westminster staff member or a member of our congregation and provides a little window into the soul of our church, a small opportunity to get to know some other people at Westminster through their writing.

Westminster's Email Advent Devotionals: You can receive an email each day that contains the advent devotional. Subscribing to the email devotionals is easy — just go to our website at www.westminsterpc.org, select Adult Ministries/devotionals. Within three days of entering your email address, you will begin to receive the devotionals.

We wish you all a very blessed Christmas,

Adult Spiritual Growth Ministry Team

The Meaning of Advent

Advent is what we call the season leading up to Christmas. It begins four Sundays before December 25, the birth of Christ. Advent means “approach” or “coming.” When we, as Christians, celebrate Advent, we remember the three great comings of our Lord and Savior. The first Advent is the remembrance of Christ’s introduction to the world as the infant king. Second, we celebrate Christ’s coming into our hearts and lives on a daily basis by the presence of His Spirit. Third, Advent encourages us to look forward in anticipation of Christ’s final coming.

During these four weeks, we can reflect on ancient times, where for thousands of years the people anticipated the coming of God’s salvation and for God to fulfill His promises to them. Unlike us, the people of ancient times did not know what form God’s salvation would take. They did not know it would be Jesus, whose very name means “the Lord Saves.” Christians on this side of Jesus’ birth are blessed people because we know God’s plan. We stand in the middle. We understand that Jesus brings peace on Earth, or more specifically the peace in our hearts, but we still long for peace in our world. Advent is a season of looking back to celebrate and give thanks that God sent His Son Jesus to save us. At the same time, Advent is a season of looking ahead, preparing ourselves to meet Jesus at His Second Coming. For us, it continues to be a time of expectation and hope.

As we draw near to our family and friends to celebrate Christmas, we will also find that we draw nearer to God. We can celebrate all the promises of God, both past and present. And the best news of all is that we get to do this together as God’s people. We have the opportunity to give ourselves to others and be full of the Holy Spirit as we act upon each of our Christmas traditions.

The Themes of Advent

ADVENT ... is a time for active waiting and preparing. A time for making our hearts, our homes and our world ready for the coming of Christ at Christmas.

It is a time for **Hope...** Thinking about how God can change our lives and this world.

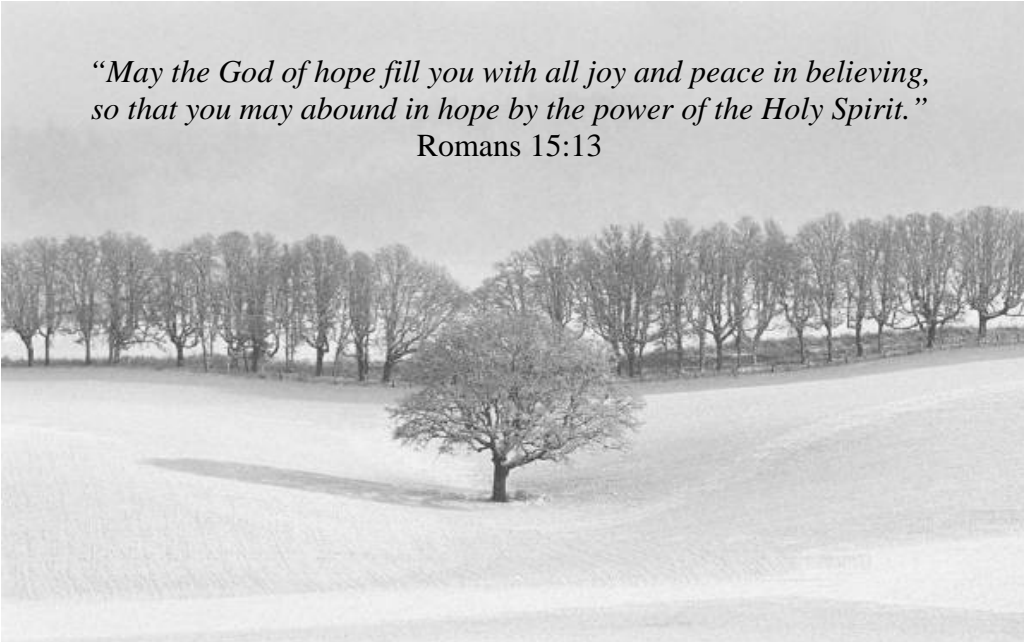
It is a time for **Peace...**In the midst of news of war and brokenness... comes the Prince of Peace. The One who can make all things right.

It is a time for **Joy...** For celebration and rejoicing, because God has done what no one else could do...

It is a time for **Love...** Receiving God's love, and living it out, for the sake of the world.

*"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."*

Romans 15:13





November 27, First Sunday in Advent

Theme of Hope

Why we light candles in Advent: In the season of waiting (Advent), we light candles as a reminder that Jesus brings light into the darkness of the world. As each Advent Sunday passes, the light grows stronger, looking forward to the day of Christ's birth. On this first Sunday of Advent, we light a candle of hope. God has planted within us a seed of hope, a confidence that God's presence is real and God's love is eternal. Even in the midst of darkness and imperfection, our hope is in God. May the light of God's hope shine on our lives and our world.

The Old Testament Promise of Hope: The Psalmist reminds us that Hope is found in God alone, "I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I **hope**; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, **hope** in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with Him is great power to redeem." Psalm 130:5-7

The New Testament fulfillment of Hope: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By His great mercy He has given us a new birth into a living **hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..." 1 Peter 1:3-4

The need for Hope this Christmas season: There are times in life when everyone feels hopeless, but the miracle of Christmas is that God is present with all of us... bringing us hope. Whether you are unemployed, worried about family members, unsure how to pay bills, facing an illness... whatever may discourage you... may you see this Advent Season, that you are not alone... God is aware and present with you.

Personal reflections for Your Journey: What are you hoping for this Advent? In what ways did Jesus bring hope into this world? In what ways does Jesus bring hope to you personally? In what ways do you think Jesus wants to work through you to bring hope to others?

Prayer: Come Lord Jesus, shine Your light into the darkness of our lives, and through us, bring the world Your hope.

Monday, November 28

Joyful Expectancy

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” Ephesians 2:8

All the figures were there. At the edge of the gathering, the three wise men, looking weary from their journey, were waiting patiently for an opportunity to lay their gifts before Jesus. Shepherds, wide-eyed with fear, were still bewildered by the invitation to come and see this miracle. Standing near and looking purposeful, Joseph actually was not one hundred percent sure of his role in this whole event. And of course, baby Jesus, the focal point of all this adoring attention, was fast asleep on the hay.

However, as I was invited, during a recent Advent, to select just one figure from the crèche display on the table before me, it was Mary whom I tentatively picked up. My eyes had rested on each of the figures multiple times, but the figure of Mary kept drawing my attention back to her.

The carving of Mary fit comfortably in the palm of my hand. The smooth, wooden piece had simple, clean lines that perfectly captured this young woman. The artist had chosen to forego the details of her facial features, hair, and clothing. Instead, I recognized and was drawn to select Mary because of her posture: focused, patient, and adoring. In the figure of Mary, I saw such hope, expectancy, and joy as she received the gift of a newborn son. There is an astounding willingness and readiness in Mary’s “Let it be with me according to your word” response.

God’s gift comes to each of us, and comes to us all, as gift. We cannot earn it and we do not deserve it. It does not come from anything I do or you do. Nor does anything we can accomplish together justify God’s immeasurable grace. And yet, Mary reminds me that I do have a role to play in God’s story, in the drama of Christmas. God calls me to attentive expectancy and hope-filled participation, as I receive the birthing of Christ into the world.

Prayer: God of amazing grace, thank You for the gift of Your Son. Continue to be at work in us, that we may be attentive to Your work in the world. Grant us the desire to be in a posture of readiness and expectancy. Bless us with the ability to recognize and receive the birthing of Christ into our midst, once again. Amen.

Writer: Ann Hatfield is Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care.

Tuesday, November 29

Hope

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29: 11

"Hope" is generally seen as a positive word, often used in our sports/entertainment-dominated culture to describe the fan whose favorite team is mired in last place, but who still "hopes for a miracle," or the American Idol contestant who's failed at a hundred previous auditions, but "never gives up hope."

In our modern world, to "hope" for something sounds so benign - almost like a child asking for a special toy for Christmas. We make our list, then wait - and hope our wish will be granted. But for the faithful Christian, hope means much more than passively waiting for our expectations to be met. In the next passage from Jeremiah, the Lord says, "you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will hear you. You will seek Me and find Me; when you seek Me with all your heart, I will be found by you."

The suggestion is that hope must be accompanied by effort. One's heart and soul must turn hope into action. It is not enough to "hope" that God will make things better. We must do our part to make them better wherever and whenever we can.

But what about those for whom lives of poverty and misery have caused them to lose all hope? God calls on us to take them under our wing - as their brothers and sisters - and show them the kindness that will rekindle their own faith and hope. We may not be able to solve all their problems. But God simply asks that we do our best to help those in need.

In this way, hope becomes prayer and prayer leads to action.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank You for teaching us the true meaning of Hope. Please show us how to turn our hopes for a better world into prayer and prayer into action. Never let us rest on our false belief that hope alone will feed the hungry or clothe the naked or shelter the homeless. Make us realize that we must do the hard work of turning hope into reality. And that we must use our hearts, minds and bodies to do that work. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Writer: Bruce Gordon introduces our new members at worship services several times throughout the year.

Wednesday, November 30

Letting Go

*“For nothing will be impossible with God. Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to Your word.’
Then the angel departed from her.” Luke 1: 37-38*

Making a list and checking it twice is a tempting way to manage our Advent days, but part of preparing for Christmas is letting go of what is “supposed” to happen and instead allowing space for possibility. God’s possibility. Too often we prepare for Christmas in a mad scramble to keep up with impossible expectations. Perfect is the overused adjective of the season: the perfect gift, the perfect meal, the perfect party. In our efforts to get the season “just so,” we may be creating demands on ourselves and stresses on others that detract from the Advent season.

If we make lists, we should also make room for God’s grace. Mary’s prayer is to “let it be with me according to Your word.” Hers is not an idle waiting, but a willful surrender to God’s possibility. We should be guided by Mary’s faith and wisdom. Advent is a time of giving up what we want in order to make room for what God wants for us. God’s love for us surpasses the dreams of sugarplums that dance in our heads.

Prayer: God of Grace and Possibility, remind me to live my Advent days according to Your word. Remind me that serving You is always first on my “to do” list. As I prepare my home for Advent, may I especially prepare my heart. May I never be so organized that I exclude Your possibility. May I never be so preoccupied with perfect gifts on Christmas Day that I miss experiencing the gift of Your love on all days. Today, God, I will let it be. Here am I, God, waiting and relying on Your possibility. Amen.

Writer: Judith Brackett is spending this academic year with us at Westminster as part of her preparation for ministry. She is in her second year of Master of Divinity studies at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Thursday, December 1
Helping Those In Need

“Now if I have found favor in your sight, show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.” He said, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” Exodus 33: 13-14

Community Volunteers in Medicine (CVIM) provides more than free medical and dental care to low-income, uninsured families in Chester County — it provides hope! Our more than 250 volunteer clinicians and core staff work to restore the badly decayed mouths of nearly 500 children annually so that they may thrive in school - free from pain and embarrassment. They also provide hope to adults who are working hard to make ends meet by helping them regain and maintain their health so that they may continue to be productive members of our community.

One such patient, Carol Lawrence, found comfort and relief from chronic rheumatoid arthritis after becoming a patient at CVIM. She could no longer perform her duties as a hairdresser because of the severe pain and stiffness. Today after treatment and one-on-one disease management education provided at CVIM, she is thriving in a new career as a home health aide. Carol is giving hope to others in honor of the care that she received at CVIM.

Carol’s success story and all of the free services performed at CVIM would not be possible without the caring and generous support of our community - including those in the Westminster congregation. Without your financial support and volunteer spirit and certainly without your prayers, CVIM would not exist to continue its mission to provide healthcare, hope and healing to deserving Chester County families.

Prayer: Dear God, make us strong in faith, capable in work and good citizens of this great country. Strengthen our nation and nourish us all to be honest, open and willing to help others because the need is so great. Amen.

Writer: Joan Snyder is a staff member at CVIM.

Friday, December 2

God is Always Working Behind the Scenes

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.” Galatians 4: 4-5

I have to admit that I am not ready for Christmas. Maybe you're not ready as well. There is enough to do right now, that thinking ahead is difficult. The October snow we experienced this year was a good reminder that even though I am sometimes stuck in the day, time is marching on. The seasons are changing; the snow will be coming, and before we know it Christmas will be here. I don't want to miss Advent; the time of waiting.

Advent is a reminder to us that God is always working behind the scenes of life. Often in ways we do not know or realize, but at the right moment God gives us a glimpse. The surprise check appears in the mail, the estranged son or daughter calls, the diagnosis comes back positive, or we find that we have a new kind of power to cope with or a trouble we face. All God's graces working behind the scenes to bring us life.

The people of God had been waiting a long time for God's Messiah (Anointed One) to come. This was the One who would bring the visible signs of God's new rule. The One that would redeem people and adopt them as God's children. That was a promise worth waiting for; and God was active, working behind the scenes, bringing about the plan of God for all people.

This Advent season may your waiting lead to a new sort of finding. Finding that God is active and present behind the scenes of your life. In waiting may you discover afresh God's love and grace, along with a deeper sense of being God's beloved child.

Prayer: God, it is into Your promises that we lean when it is hard to look ahead. Thank You that You are at work in us, and around us, in ways we have yet to understand. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Writer: Gary ArnTessoni is Associate Pastor of Spiritual Growth and Dean of the Academy.

Saturday, December 3

Whispers of God

“I waited patiently for the Lord; He inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.” Psalm 40: 1-3

We do not like to wait. Slow service at restaurants angers us. We scoff at our electronic devices when they take more than five seconds to load an email. We grow agitated in rooms dedicated to waiting outside doctors' offices as we look through woefully uninteresting reading material. Yet, here we are in the season of Advent, an entire season of the Christian year focused on waiting and preparation for the coming of Christ.

This Psalm seems like a good invitation into the season of Advent for many reasons. First, it encourages us to wait patiently for God. When we bring patience into our waiting, we acknowledge that we are not in control. The Advent sort of waiting stills us and turns fidgety fingers into open palms ready to receive from God, the One who inclines to us and hears us. How will you make space in your life this Advent to wait patiently for God?

Second, this Psalm recalls the past saving acts of God. This is something we regularly do in worship, particularly in the sacraments. God is in the business of delivering from bondage and setting free for lives fully lived to God. This is true in the individual sense (think of Joseph being thrown into a pit by his brothers) as well as the corporate sense (the Exodus event). What are the pits that God has delivered you from or that you need God to deliver you from?

Third, this Psalm as well as the season of Advent looks forward even as it looks back. God's past deliverance is the substance of new hope and joy born out of the expectation that God will do even greater things in the future. God puts new songs on our lips; just ask Mary and Zechariah (Luke 1:46-80). Then, as others hear the song, they too are invited to join the melody.

Prayer: God, slow us down. Sometimes we move too fast to even notice the whisperings of your Spirit. We thank You for delivering us from the pits of our lives. Continue to set our feet upon the rock of Your salvation. This Advent, help us catch the tune of the new song you are composing in the world, and may we sing our hearts out so others may join the song. Amen.

Writer: Jon Frost is Director of Alternative Worship.



December 4, Second Sunday in Advent Theme of Peace

The candle of Peace: In this season of waiting, we light candles as a reminder of the light of Christ that is coming. On this Second Sunday of Advent, the candle we light represents peace. We are preparing ourselves for days when nations shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. May the light of God's peace shine on our lives and our world.

The Old Testament Promise of Peace: "For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless **peace** for the throne of David and his kingdom." Isaiah 9:6-7

The New Testament's fulfillment of Peace: **read the words of Jesus Christ**, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." John 14:27

The need for Peace this Christmas season: The world in which we live is anything but peaceful. Look around, not only do we hear of war, but we see people who feel little peace in their lives. Although peace may be illusive, it is exactly why Jesus came. His reign will issue forth in peace. Not just the absence of strife, but a deep inner quality that points to a well being regardless of the circumstances that you find yourself in. Wherever it is that you would like peace, be sure to pray and ask for it, and as you do may you find this Advent Season, the power of the Prince of Peace at work in your life and world.

Personal reflections for the Journey: Where would you like peace this Advent season? In what ways did Jesus bring peace into this world? In what ways does Jesus bring peace to you personally? In what ways do you think Jesus wants to work through you to bring peace to others?

Prayer: Come, Prince of Peace, flood our lives and this world with Your peace, bring Your reign to its fullness, as Your light drives away the darkness.

Monday, December 5

True Peace

*“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you,
I do not give to you as the world gives.”* John 14: 27

There are times and places that are peaceful to me. Places such as the seashore, sitting on the porch in the evening, and reading. These are the times when I put aside my chores and responsibilities. I like my peaceful moments and need them. BUT if I want TRUE peace, the peace that will see me through the tough times in my life, I must trust and believe in the One whose birth we celebrate at this time of the year.

According to Webster “peace is a state of tranquility or quiet: freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions — harmony in personal relations.” These definitions describe how I feel during my time of “peace.” They do not, however, begin to describe the peace I have knowing Jesus. As a human, it is impossible to describe this peace because it is beyond our understanding. We can only have true peace by believing and trusting in Him. The more I study the scriptures, pray to the One who loves me and wants peace for me, praise and worship Him, I feel His presence with me and the peace that He brings.

At this time of the year, the word “peace” is everywhere - on cards, in songs, on wrapping paper, on bracelets, etc. It is so shallow. If we want true peace, turn to the babe in the manger. Only through Him can we have true peace. This is not a one-time deal - believing and trusting in Jesus. It is a daily walk.

So this Christmas look past the lights, cards, and presents to the One in the manger. Give yourself the gift of true peace.

Prayer: Dear Lord, come close to me as I celebrate Your birth. Open my heart and my mind so I can receive the peace that comes from knowing You. All the worldly celebrations won’t bring me closer to the peace You give to us. Help me to walk daily with You and receive true peace. Amen.

Writer: Ann Stathopoulos serves Westminster as an usher and makes greeting cards for the deacons to use.



Tuesday, December 6

The Family Tree

“A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers...Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David.”

Matthew 1: 1-6

The new testament begins with the book of Matthew and this book begins with a very long listing of the genealogy of Jesus. Are you tempted to skip quickly through this listing and get onto the good stuff... the birth of Jesus and His ministry?

How many of you can trace back your genealogy for more than a few generations? Can you recall how God helped your great grandparents through difficult times? Or how joyful moments were celebrated?

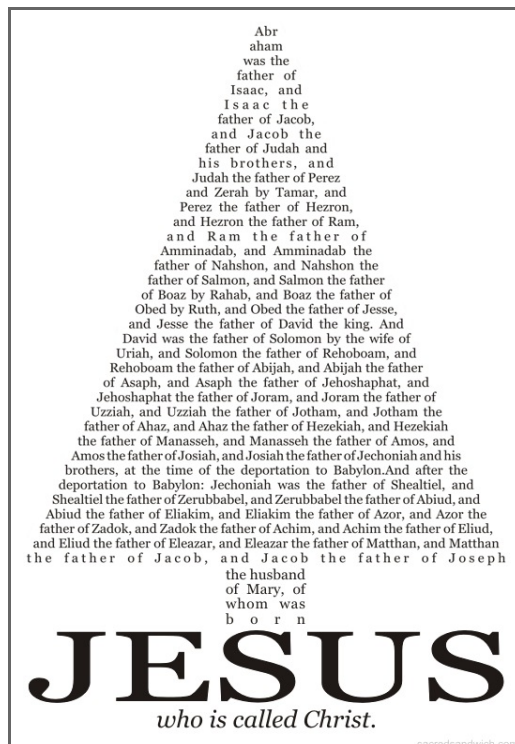
Pause for a moment and reflect on Jesus' genealogy. First – Isaiah predicted many centuries before Jesus was born (about 745-700 BC), that He would come from this lineage. Matthew is reminding his Jewish readers how Jewish Jesus was and he gives credibility to Jesus' authenticity as the One they have been waiting for – He is their Messiah! He is the One who fulfills the prophecies. Second – take a look at the list, these ancestors of Jesus are the same people we read about throughout the Old Testament. We know them, and we know how human they are. Mixed with their dedication to God, is also a mixture of human failure.

Ken Gire in his devotional book Moments with the Savior states: “The Savior would come from a royal line.” That much everyone knew. The line would originate with Abraham and branch through David. Yet despite how sturdy its trunk and how it spread its limbs, the Savior's family tree had its share of blight and barrenness. Abraham, for example. A man of faith. But a man who also lied, sending his wife

into the arms of Pharaoh. And there was David. He was, the scripture tell us, a man after God's own heart. But he was also a man after other things. Bathsheba, for one. With whom he committed adultery.

What are we to make of this tree through whose branches came the Savior of the world? What are we to make of all the sin, all the imperfections, all the failure? Simply this: That God's purposes are not thwarted by our humanity, however weak and wayward it may be. That He works in us and through us and more often than not, in spite of us. That He works with us, as a gardener works with his garden: lifting; pruning; watering; weeding. Whatever it takes to bring it to fruition. Or, however long it takes. This is our hope.

Prayer: Jesus, thank You for seeing the good in us. Thank You for seeing our weaknesses and failures and loving us anyway. Your steadfast and abiding love gives us hope. Continue to work in us and through us. Amen.





Wednesday, December 7

Gift of Peace

“Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ The angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be holy; He will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.’”

Luke 1: 34-37

I have the last part of verse 37 as the salutation for my email. I believe that the story of Mary shows us peace in ways that we cannot expect. For this young woman said yes to an angel who asked her to help bring the Son of God to life. She will face joy and sorrow. She will be able to live in the mystery of what it means for the son she bears to be the Creator who walks the earth. I believe her peace was a gift because she was willing to surrender to the work of God through this amazing experience. And it isn't one without hardship.

Mary is still a woman living at a certain time and in a certain place. Mary's story teaches us that peace comes from God within us. We learn over and over in the scriptures that God chooses us to do and be more than we can imagine. As we continue to prepare our hearts for the coming of the Prince of Peace my hope is that you get a chance to glimpse life changing peace in all the moments of life.

Prayer: One who holds peace, I ask today that You stir in my spirit so that I may be able to foster peace in all aspects of my life. Help me to bring Your gift of peace to my loved ones, to my community and to myself. If there are any places in my life or in the life of my community where there is no peace, I ask that You show me and give me courage to work towards it. Amen.

Writer: Erin Hayes is one of the directors of youth ministries at Westminster. She spends her time walking with middle school students.

Thursday, December 8

Mountains

“In the last days, the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, “Come, let us go up the mountain of the Lord,” to the house of the god of Jacob.” Micah 4: 1-2

In the days of vacations when I was rearing my family, now long ago, we would load the Pontiac station wagon and head for the high country in the Rocky Mountains. Tent camping gave us the excitement of newness, refreshment and many sightings of wildlife at 8,000-10,000 feet. Some vacationers enjoy the shore, some the big city life, but for us, the crisp air of high altitudes brought a special attachment of our spirit to the raw nature of God’s creation. My children, today, treasure those events, as much as I do.

Turning back 3,500 years, it seems God’s patience and leadership of the early Israelites often involved encounters with mountains, such as Zion, Ebal, Gerizim, Gilead, Horeb, Moraih, etc. For the Israelites, many critical events in their tutorial, pre-nation history were fixed in their minds through the backdrop of the majesty, power and grandeur of mountains, as if God is saying, “Now, remember this event!”

Today, I cannot see a mountain without thinking of my children and grandchildren, hoping the mountain experiences they have had will be remembered in their spiritual life as well.

“Come.” This simple word appears in scripture more often than you might have realized. It appears in the scripture above and in many places where we are being called. The most emphatic call appears at the end of Revelation, one final plea to believe and be saved.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, may we likewise look to the mountains and remember all that You have created for us, all that You have promised us and all that You have given us. May we accept the call to “come” in His name. And, may we be thankful for the promise of a great day when Your Kingdom is established on earth as given in this scripture lesson from Micah.

Writer: James Barr is Westminster’s proclaimer of small groups and study of scripture.

Friday, December 9

Christmas is Joy to the World

“And His name shall be called Emmanuel...God with us.”

Matthew 1: 23

In his book *“The Birth of God: Recovering the Mystery of Christmas”**, the Reverend John B. Rogers, Jr., says that “Christmas is something profoundly human. The gospel is precisely the proclamation of the good news that God exists and is eternally what we see in Jesus Christ. The center of Christian faith is a person. Christmas, Rogers reminds us, is the great good news that God has his heart set on humanity. In Jesus Christ, God marks our humanity as His own possession---our humanity in all its vitality and vulnerability, with all its joy and pain, its routine and unusual days, its loves and conflicts, its triumphs and tragedies, its noble and shabby conduct, its tenderness and cruelty. God has no illusion about the great ambiguity and countless flaws that mar our humanity. Still God engages each of us to be God’s own and to do God’s will. Christmas means God with us *“just as we are.”* Rogers adds that “Christmas means that God’s word to the world, and thus the church’s word to the world, is ultimately a positive, affirmative word of grace and love. Christmas is indeed joy to the world!”

And so we are called to share this joy to the world! We who are blessed to know and believe this Good News are given the charge and call to share as widely and as generously as we can imagine. We ask our friends and families for lists as we ponder what to buy each year as the perfect gifts. It is our greatest opportunity to give by the words we share and the lives we lead and the love we extend that the great good news of Jesus’ love and peace is God’s gift for all God’s children.

**The Birth of God: Recovering the Mystery of Christmas*” by the Reverend John B. Rogers, Jr., Abingdon Press, 1987

Prayer: In thankfulness and with great joy we offer our gratitude, O God, for the gift of your Son, Jesus. We seek new ways to do our part to share with our sisters and brothers the love and hope and peace given to the world in Jesus. We pray in the name of Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.

Writer: Leah Johnson is Clerk of Session.

Saturday, December 10

Glimpses of an Old Irish Blessing

“God has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you.’ So we can say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?’” **Hebrews 13: 5b-6**

May the road rise to meet you. May the wind always be at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face and rains fall soft upon your fields. And until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand. An Old Irish Blessing

This was the first benediction that I ever learned. It lodged in my brain long before my seminary friends and I formed a Thursday night group to drink wine and memorize pieces of worship we would need to know for the day we finally became full-fledged pastors. I learned the words to say when breaking the communion bread that way, and benedictions and baptism words. But this old blessing was the one that the pastor from my youth would say every Sunday as he sent us out into the baking Arkansas sun. And I would wait for it every week like a favorite song at bedtime.

If you’ve ever climbed into a sun warmed car on a cold day, that’s what this blessing felt like to me – carved out quiet in a blustery and chaotic world. We know that there are times when the road will certainly not rise to meet us, when the wind will practically knock us over, and after this fall, we know that sometimes the soft rains you pray for come much too abundantly. But there are glimpses of this blessing even in the midst of the steep climbs and the blizzard promises – small signs of God’s grace as easy to miss as the gift of a sun warmed car on a cold day.

This blessing to me is what peace feels like – a promise of easy paths, gentle breezes and sunshine – at least a little of this. And I find peace in those grace-filled wishes. But more than that, I find peace in the last two lines – promises that all God’s children will encounter one another again someday, and that no matter the route or the weather God will hold us close.

Peace is more than the absence of war. Peace is knowing that no matter what the world does out that we do not face it alone. God has placed us in community with one another. But, more than that, there is nowhere we can run or be carried that God is not already there, drawing us close, holding us near.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to feel Your presence in our busy times and our quiet times. Thank You for the joyous gift of Your Son. Amen.

Writer: Shelli Latham is Associate Pastor of Preaching and Outreach.



December 11, Third Sunday in Advent Theme of Joy

The Candle of Joy: Today we light the pink candle in the Advent wreath. In the traditional Advent celebration the third week was meant to be a break in the solemn tone of the first two Sundays, concentrating on hope and peace, to a more joyous feeling of anticipation and expectancy. We light this third candle of Advent as a sign of the joy that the prophet foretold long ago, and the joy that continues to come into our broken world. May God's joy take root in our lives and our world... rejoice, celebrate, give praise to God, for the Christ is coming.

The Old Testament Promise of Joy: “Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem!” “The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; He will **rejoice** over you with **gladness**, He will renew you in His love; He will **exult** over you with **loud singing** as on a day of **festival**.” Zephaniah 3: 14, 17, 18.

The New Testament's fulfillment of Joy: “But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of **great joy** for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.” Luke 2:10-14

The need for Joy this Christmas season: Do you ever find it hard to laugh. It is said that the average child laughs 150 times a day compared to an adult who laughs 17 times a day. Is it possible that as adults we run the risk of missing joy? Maybe it is because adults have more pressure and responsibility than children have, or maybe we (myself included) just need to take a lighter view of life. This Advent season stop to laugh, and take joy in the fact that God is for you.

Personal reflections for the Journey: Where would you like joy this Advent season? In what ways did Jesus bring joy into this world? In what ways does Jesus bring joy to you personally? In what ways do you think Jesus wants to work through you to bring joy to others?

Prayer: Come Lord Jesus, be our joy!

Monday, December 12
The Happy, Holy Joy of Christ

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15: 13

When I was in high school, my closest circle of friends was a group of seven guys from our marching band. Our instruments were the following: one trombone, one alto saxophone, two French horns, and three trumpets.

Each year, on the weekends prior to Christmas, we would, along with our instruments, all pile into Mark Hershey’s Ford Country Squire Station wagon (yes – it had “wood” on the side). We would drive around the neighborhoods in our area, looking for obvious “Christmas parties” going on – easily noted by the large number of cars, and brightly lit homes.

We would pull up in front of the house, pile out of the car, form up in a semi-circle in the front yard, and warm up our mouthpieces. One of us would sneak up to the front door and ring the bell, dash back to the group, and we would begin to play. We usually played three or four Christmas carols – our own improvised arrangements – and invariably, the party-goers would come out on the front porch or sidewalk and listen to us. Often, folks would come out from neighboring houses as well. We always closed by singing our own arrangement of Silent Night in harmony.

People would ask who we were, invite us in, offer us cookies and the like – we never stayed, just simply said, “We wanted to bring you a little Christmas joy!” Those are some of my fondest memories of the season – and I cherish the Spirit that compelled a bunch of high school guys to figure out a way to stay out late at night, while expanding the joy of the season in our community. What simple, no-cost or low-cost ways might each of us bring a little more joy to our neighbors and our community this year?

Prayer: Holy God, who visited us with the deepest, widest, and most widely sung joy on that Christmas long ago, may each of us remember to bring a little more music to Your beloved world with our words, our songs, and our deeds in these days. In the name of Jesus, our Savior and our Joy. AMEN.

Writer: Don Lincoln is Lead Pastor and Head of Staff.

Tuesday, December 13

Joy

*“Because God came down in Jesus Christ, His strength gives me joy.
The joy of the Lord is my strength.” Nehemiah 8: 10*

I really need strength to keep going day after day. Some days I wonder if I'll ever make it. But then I remember “the joy of the Lord is my strength.” I can't manufacture joy. It is not something that depends on whether or not things are going right. I have His presence living within me. It is Jesus' joy in me that gives me strength for the day. Jesus tells me that “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” I may be weak, but Christ is my strength. I can keep on “keeping on” because I know Jesus is with me, and it is His joy that is giving me the strength I need.

Say this over and over today: “I keep on ‘keeping on’ because Jesus is my strength.”

Prayer: Thank You dear heavenly Father for providing us with needed strength through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Writer: Jean Weller serves Westminster through Presbyterian Women.



Wednesday, December 14

Christmas Cards

“We have the word of the prophets, and you do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” 2 Peter 1: 19

Christmas Cards:

- ~ some so secular one wonders "why bother?"
- ~ some only signed and one wonders "why bother?"
- ~ some include a long single-spaced epistle and one thinks "I'll read that later."
- ~ and then, THEN there is the beautiful card that declares "Christ is Born!" A tender message from family or a friend.

This warms your heart! Your thoughts turn to Scripture and well remembered verses.

This tiny Baby....the Hope of the World
Peace....that passes all understanding
Joy in your heartthat only Christ can provide
Love received...lived...shared

Prayer: Gracious God, stand close by us this season lest we neglect to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Keep us ever mindful of the priceless gift of family and friends. Help us create in our hearts the JOY of serving You each and every day. Amen.

Writer: Mary Anna Reimann currently sings with the Chancel Choir, is a Stephen Ministry Leader, serves as one of the Endowment Fund Managers and volunteers with the West Chester Food Cupboard each month.

Thursday, December 15
Hallelujah from the Hilltops

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!’” **Luke 2: 13-14**

About 18 years ago, when Nancy, Matt and I still lived in New Jersey, we spent Christmas Eve at a friend’s house. Leaving their home in very wintry weather, at about 11 PM, we soon found ourselves sitting in the middle of the highway, on top of a long hill, unable to go any further because the entire road below us had iced over. There was nothing to do but sit there and wait for the salt trucks that would eventually come by and free us from our predicament.

There were at least a dozen cars or so that were stuck on top of the hill with us and several of those folk were concerned that their families would soon become worried about where they were. Cell phones were still a bit of a novelty in 1993 and I was one of the few people I knew that had one. So we began to let anyone who wanted to, to use my 3 lb. bag phone to call their loved ones and let them know they would be late to their final destination. It was shaping up to be a long night for us all; but all in all, everyone’s mood was light and resigned to the fact that we could go no further without help.

Suddenly there were bells ringing loud and clear alongside the road we had parked on. There was a church on the far side of the highway and it was now midnight, time for the church bells to peel out the Good News that it was finally Christmas Day, the day all humankind had been waiting for! Nancy had the radio on in the car and as the bells began to ring out, peeling over and over again, wonderful music swelled from within our car –

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.
The kingdom of this world
Is become the kingdom of our Lord,
And of His Christ
And He shall reign for ever and ever,
King of kings, and Lord of lords,
And He shall reign forever and ever,
King of kings, forever and ever,
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Before you knew it, everyone who was stuck there with us lowered their own car windows and turned up their radios, all playing the Hallelujah Chorus! Strangers walked out of their stranded cars and began wishing each other a blessed Christmas. Church bells in the air and Handel's glorious music filling our ears from over a dozen car radios, it was a truly joyous and blessed time for us all!

Well, eventually the salt trucks arrived and melted the ice on the road but not before we as a family got to experience one of most unique and joyful Christmas Eves we've ever been a part of. In a small way, we felt like we had the opportunity to experience what the shepherds must have felt, all those years ago. Joyous music filling the night air with the Good News of Jesus Christ! How wonderful it was!

Prayer: Dear Lord, grant us today the Joy of the Season. Show us the simple things in our lives that point to Your Glory and help us to live our own lives in unbridled joy and in Your service. Amen.

Writer: Robert Steinginga has been a member of the Chancel Choir for 14 years.

Friday, December 16
Prepare Ye the Way

*“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem...magi from the east arrived...
And when they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy...
and they fell down and worshiped Him.” Matthew 2*

Do you remember the joy you felt on Christmas morning as a child? Perhaps you still feel that joy now either for yourself, or through your children and grandchildren. Advent is a time of preparation. We prepare our homes with decorations and lights, our social calendars with parties and dinners, our families with Christmas cards and baking, and hopefully our hearts – through scripture, music and reflections on the very themes of Advent – love, joy, peace and hope. Too much preparation can become a burden, and the pressure drains us of the love, joy, peace and hope that God would like us to experience as we anticipate His coming.

The magi or wise men or kings – whoever they were – travelled some distance, searching for the Promised One who would seek to bring love, joy, peace and hope to all people. They “rejoiced exceedingly with great joy” when they found Him. May that we might rejoice exceedingly with that same great joy as we find Jesus this Advent season – in the light of a candle, or the encouraging words of a friend’s card, the inspiration of scripture, the sound of beautiful music – or the simple joy of a child’s laugh.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, in all the busyness with which we surround ourselves, help us prepare our hearts to be your Bethlehem. Amen.

Writer: Ed McFalls sings in the Chancel Choir and serves on the Planning Team.

Sign up to receive daily email Advent devotionals by going to the website at www.v

Saturday, December 17

Here to Stay

“I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in Your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” Ephesians 3: 16-17a

Two things that grab my attention: politics and protests. They interest me because sometimes they can make a major difference in the world. Yet many times they come and go and in a month are forgotten. I'm always sad when this happens. At first everyone is so fired up about whatever they are protesting and it catches everyone's attention. But soon the idea dies and something everyone was so excited about has no effect on the people or the world.

When Jesus was born, it wasn't exactly like a protest, but people were excited about His birth. Angels sang about His birth, it caught the attention of shepherds, and kings came and brought Him gifts. It was a BIG DEAL! The good thing is that the excitement about Him being on earth didn't just fizzle out after a few years. Instead, the excitement stayed and Jesus continues to draw the attention of people *He's still a big deal!* We can be happy because Jesus and His teachings aren't just ideas that people are interested in one minute and then forget the next. We can still be excited about Jesus because He dwells within us today!

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for sending your Son to dwell with us on earth, and that through faith He is still among us. Let us remember that He isn't just an idea, but truth that we can accept into our hearts so that He can constantly dwell among us. Amen.

Writer: Yun Simpson is a part of Imago Dei youth ministry.

www.westminsterpc.org Or Print another copy of the booklet to share with a friend.



December 18, Fourth Sunday in Advent

Theme of Love

The Candle of Love: Today, the candle we light represents the Love of God; it is the reminder that God's nature is love, that everything God has done has been an act of love. From the creation of human beings, to the formation of a people called Israel, to the incarnation, and the death of Jesus on the cross... God has acted in love. May the light of God's Love shine on our lives and our world.

The Old Testament Promise of Love: "I will recount the gracious deeds of the LORD, the praiseworthy acts of the LORD, because of all that the LORD has done for us, and the great favor to the house of Israel that He has shown them according to His mercy, according to the abundance of His **steadfast love.**" Isaiah 63:7

The New Testament's fulfillment of Love: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life." (John 3:16) and "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us — and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?" 1 John 3:16-17

The need for Love this Christmas Season: There lives deep inside of us a longing for love and acceptance. Much of the pain and hurt we feel in life comes from our attempts to find and experience love. Love is counterintuitive in that we find love when we give it away. When we share love it grows rather than diminishes. When we keep it to ourselves it dies. This Advent may you realize that God loves you completely, and calls you to join in God's plan to love and bless the world.

Personal reflections for the Journey: Where would you like to experience love this advent season? In what ways did Jesus bring love into this world? In what ways does Jesus bring love to you personally? In what ways do you think Jesus wants to work through you to bring love to others?

Prayer: May Christ's power and love fill us so that we might love and bless the world as He did. Come Lord Jesus! Amen.

Monday, December 19

Don't Over Think It

*“For nothing will be impossible with God. Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to Your word.’
Then the angel departed from her.” Luke 1: 37-38*

Have you ever found yourself wondering if you're on the right track? Then you run it by a friend and they tell you... come on, you're over-thinking it, lighten up! The genesis for much of our faith direction originates from our experiences within the church. We attend worship, study scripture, listen and learn about God as we ponder how it relates to us; or better yet how we should incorporate it into our lives. Sometimes the simplicity of a story or favorite verse is often overshadowed by the intricacies of context. Asking questions like 'who was the writer speaking to' and 'when was this written?'

For me, the holidays tend to amplify these feelings. I worry about misdirection and ask myself if I'm on the right track. This fear of being focused on the wrong thing stems from too much **“I”** and not enough **“Thee”** in the process. The psalmist David truly delights in the Lord, and boy does he stumble... but God is faithful. He places David in the palm of His hand as David repents, inviting the Father back into his heart.

The joy we feel when we sense God in the simplest of things really is delightful. It heightens our senses, shining light on all that we experience giving us renewed purpose. After all, faith isn't about figuring things out. We can't make it happen; we have to allow God to take over. It starts with trust, leading to action which fulfills God's promise for our lives.

Joy and love are divine... they come from God and flow into our hearts so we can reflect Christ in all that we do. **Can you feel it?**

Prayer: Loving God, infuse me with Your spirit, so that I may offer a glimpse of You to all that I come in contact with this day. And if I stumble, lift me up and help me to laugh at myself knowing the joy that comes from keeping You in my heart. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Writer: Gary Huddell serves on the Stewardship Committee, the Legacy Society, helps with the sound in Spellman, coordinates communion servers and volunteers with Good Works.

Tuesday, December 20
God's Power and Love

“For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”
Timothy 1: 7

When I saw that this verse was on a list of suggested verses of encouragement, strength and hope that might be used for this year's Advent devotional booklet, I was taken back in time. Several years ago when I was working as a School Psychologist in a local school district I was asked to assess one of our district's children who was a student at The Timothy School in Berwyn, Pa. This was my first visit to this school that is devoted exclusively to the educational needs of children with autism, a developmental disability affecting a child's communication, behavior and language skills.

“Why is it called The Timothy School?” was one of the first questions I asked the Principal. I had thought that perhaps it was named for the founder or a former pupil, but I was told that the name came from this verse of Scripture, the one I have chosen to share this Advent.

Timothy, the beloved and loyal friend of Paul, was encouraged not to be afraid, but always to remember that God loved him, and through God's holy spirit he had been given power and self-control. Such an apt name for a school where love abounds; where families and children alike learn to face the future bravely. Such an apt verse of Scripture for all of us to remember this Advent time, when there is so much uncertainty in our world. For God certainly has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and self-control.

Prayer: Gracious God, continue to surround the people who have autism, and their families, with Your abiding and strengthening love. Thank You for coming to earth and for teaching us that we need not be afraid of anything because You are with us, whatever our circumstances, even to the ends of the earth. Amen.

Writer: Fiona Allison is an Elder and Chair of the Outreach Ministry Team.

Wednesday, December 21

A Home for the Holidays

“We are laborers together with God; you are God’s field, God’s building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it.” 1 Corinthians 3: 9-10

Over the past nine years or so I have had the pleasure of seeing the joy on a family’s face when they are sitting at the settlement table holding the keys in their hands to their new home for the first time. We again see that same joy when we come to the house for the dedication of that building into a home and pray that their new home will be under God’s watchful gaze. To see the faces of the little ones as they carry their possessions into the house that is now their own and they no longer have to sleep 3 or 4 to a room any more. What an amazing gift they have received – the opportunity to move up in life, to make things better for themselves and their family.

This year has been especially poignant since our dedications were held later in the year than normal in the months leading up to the holidays. One family’s journey of moving 12 times in 14 years has ended and their now teenage daughter is finally getting a chance to settle down before she graduates high school. Another family is getting their life in order after spending years moving from one family member to another accepting their hospitality in the form of a couch for a bed.

In this season, remember the meaning of real gift giving. Honest and true and coming from the heart. Those involved in any way with showing the love of God to these families, being His hands and feet on earth means so much more than you can imagine. Blessed are those who help the least of God’s children because Jesus tells us we are then also serving Him.

Prayer: Lord God, You have given us a place to live, people to live with, and a world to build in. Open our eyes to the needs of others so that Your love may be seen in this world through Jesus Christ.

Writer: Chip Huston is the Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity of Chester County.



Thursday, December 22

A New Tradition

“We love because He first loved us.”

1 John 4: 19

In our house, we love Christmas traditions! With our six kids, and a large extended family, we begin enjoying these Christmas traditions on Thanksgiving night. We get together with my side of the family and our children take part as all twenty-nine cousins (yes, twenty nine!) exchange names and wishes for the Pollyanna that will take place on Christmas night.

A few days later, we join my husband’s extended family for the yearly “cookie baking day.” Endless batches of cookies are made and exchanged, a lunch is served, and then it is time for the kids to get involved. The children and teens enjoy decorating their own personal plates of Christmas cookies... and the littlest ones always seem to enjoy sneaking a few licks of icing right off the paint brushes!

Many of these traditions have been going on for years, but we have noticed that in the minds of our children, if something meaningful is added to the Christmas season in a given year, it can become an expected norm. It seems this happened for our eleven year old son, Caleb, this past Christmas.

Last year, as part of a ministry I was then leading, I took a group of teens and pre-teens to Camden on Christmas Eve. We joined with a ministry that comes to this severely impoverished area each year and brings Christmas to hundreds of children who would not likely experience it otherwise. For our part, we told the Christmas story through a puppet show as the kids waited to enter the “Christmas Carnival” where they would receive presents, a stocking, hat and gloves, and a hot meal.

Caleb recently asked me about going back to Camden this Christmas Eve. It seems that a tradition has been created for him. I hadn't planned on the preparation and investment that this will require of me, but how could I say 'no,' when my son is asking us to make a tradition of something that truly embodies the spirit of the Christmas season?

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank You for this special time of the year. Thank You that you have given us so much to enjoy! As we celebrate the Christmas season, we celebrate the reality that You left the glories of heaven and entered our world with a purpose to bring us light and hope, goodness and joy. Lord, help us to celebrate Christmas as those called to bring that light and hope, goodness and joy to a world still in darkness. Amen.

Writer: Lisa Winkleblech is spending this academic year with us at Westminster as part of her preparation for ministry. She is in her senior year at Palmer Seminary.



Friday, December 23

We Love Being Parents and We Love Being Christians

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1: 9

Sue and I love being parents! There is joy and happiness from such things as making a team, getting an “A” on a test, receiving an acceptance letter for college, sharing with us their day and getting that Jeopardy question right when we had no clue what the answer was. These are the easy times to love being a parent!

We also love being parents in the tough times. The times when we need to have a sit down at the dinner table about a struggle in a class, heartbreak of a lost friendship or not performing on the athletic field. We love being parents and sharing in the pain, disappointments, and hurt of our children as well. Without the tough times there is little room to grow as parents.

Many times you will hear people say how blessed they are when things are great. This time of the year, in the waiting celebration of our God, who becomes flesh through the birth of Jesus, it is easy to love being a Christian and know that you are loved by God.

Here comes the big question, do you love being a Christian in the tough times or when it is not Christmas? Can you feel his presence during the time when you lose your job; there is a death of a loved one? Do you know He is there loving being a parent? As a Christian, I know God is with us always as a loving parent who wants to share not only in the great times but also in our pain, disappointments, and hurt. It is in the tough times that we will grow as parents and in our Christian journey.

Let’s celebrate the birth of our Savior and the steadfast love of God and welcome the tough times knowing that He is with us wherever we go!

Prayer: On this day during Advent it seems only right to give You thanks, dear Lord, for You have made Your steadfast love known to us in so many ways this year. Give us the eyes to see and the ears to hear when it is not so obvious that You are around when times are tough. Please help us to grow as a servant of Yours in a world that needs love so desperately throughout the entire year. May we glorify You in all that we do! We ask this in Christ’s name. Amen.

Writer: Bill (Millsy) Mills is involved with youth ministry as a volunteer and will be a new Elder in January.



Saturday, December 24

Christmas Eve

*“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
full of grace and truth; we have beheld His glory,
glory as of the only Son from the Father.”*

John 1: 14

LIGHT THE FOUR CANDLES

“O holy child of Bethlehem! Descend to us, we pray; cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell. O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!” We light the first candle to remind us of the prophecy of Christ’s coming; the second candle in remembrance of Bethlehem; the third candle in honor of the shepherds; the fourth candle in celebration of the love that came down at Christmas. Today, we light the Christ candle to declare to the world that the Prince of Peace has come and is coming again.

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

We light the Christ candle as a sign of the Light of the World who pierces the darkness, and brings to our lives the Light of God.

Prayer: Lord God, let the Christ child find a welcome in our hearts and stay with us forever. Amen.

REJOICE... *for our Saviour is born!*



Sunday, December 25
The Christmas Story

A waiting world,
A silent night,
A star over Bethlehem shining bright.
An inn with no room,
A stable provides,
A place for a king to be born safe inside.

A baby lies sleeping,
A star shines above,
A mother is smiling at her newborn's sweet love.
A bed made of hay,
A cloth swaddled tight,
Comforts the babe on his very first night.

A shepherd surprised,
By angels on high,
Heavenly hosts light up the sky.
A song that is heralded,
A great proclamation
For peace and goodwill among every nation.

A story,
A sweet tale is what this would be,
But it doesn't end here, there is much more you see,

A Savior arrives,
A miraculous new life
Breaking into this world full of chaos and strife.
A baby with a destiny.....
A most divine plan
God incarnate becomes a man.

A carpenter by trade,
A servant to all
Shows us how to live into God's call.
A cross on a hillside,
A rock rolls away.....
Dawning a hope for a radiant new day.

So what does it matter..... this story of old,
It matters not, unless we take hold,
Of the child in the manger who waits innocently.
For us to open our eyes – for us to see.....


A lonely soul,
An orphaned child,
Who wait to see a stranger's smile.
A broken heart,
A war-ravaged land,
Who wait to hold a helping hand.

A son,
A daughter who is far from home,
Need not to feel so all alone.
A recent diagnosis,
A fear-stricken heart,
Have need for a friend to help them walk through the dark.

It is for this that Love has come down,
In a stable long ago in Bethlehem town.
But the babe, needs our smile,
The babe needs our hand,
To spread His sweet peace throughout every land,

Now you can decide how you can take part,
Of bringing this news - to every hurting heart.
And perhaps then the world will begin to see
What the Christmas "story" was really meant to be.

Barb Sivek



*Wishing you a very
Blessed Christmas*