

Advent Journal

November 29th to December 24th, 2009



Church name, address and phone number

This Advent Journal Belongs to

Prepare the Way of The Lord

*Prepare the way of the Lord.
Prepare the way of the Lord,
and all people will see the salvation of the Lord.**

Advent is the season in which we are invited to prepare our hearts for the celebration of Jesus' birth. As the four weeks of this holy season pass by, "Prepare the way of the Lord" can become the song of your heart.

*When the Advent days of preparation
become more than a time
for shopping, gift wrapping, decorating and baking,
our relationship with God, and with family and friends, becomes richer,
deeper,
more joy-filled,
more peaceful.*

*The world believes that the days and nights
that lead to Christmas
are meant for Christmas parties and celebration.*

*The world is wrong.
Parties and celebration are not wrong.
But Christmas parties
must wait until Christmas has arrived.
Pre-Christmas parties are just that! Pre-Christmas!
Advent offers so much more!*

The session of your congregation invites you to come to these Advent days and nights intent upon exploring your relationship with God, open to preparing your heart for new ways to be in relationship with Jesus and with your neighbour.

- *Prepare the name of the Lord*: Words: public domain. For the music written by Jacques Berthier of the Taizé Community see hymn #112 in the 1997 **Book of Praise**

Advent Activities

1. You might set up a **Crèche** and add figures each week to tell the story of the nativity as it is told in Luke and Matthew.
2. You might choose to make an **Advent Wreath**. You can use a circular metal candle holder or make one yourself with a Styrofoam ring. You might decorate the ring with live or plastic greenery, or simply arrange four candlesticks in a circle on a tray or table. *If you use live greenery, change it every week to keep it from drying out and becoming a fire hazard.*

As you prepare the wreath, consider the symbols:

- The circle is a symbol of eternity
- The greenery symbolizes life
- The four candles – three deep blue or purple and one pink – represent the weeks of Advent.



Reflect upon what you most want to accomplish as you prepare for Christmas. What is important for you and your family this season?

Say a prayer when your wreath is complete:

May our Christmas plans bring joy to those we love and may the time we spend each week lighting the candles in this wreath bring special meaning to our preparations. Amen.

3. And, finally, you might choose to keep this **Advent Journal** as part of your daily devotions. The following is an overview of the journal:

First, you will find a page with brief comments about the Hebrew Bible Scriptures for Advent and the Gospel of Luke (the focus during Year C). This page is followed by four sections, one for each week.

The first two parts of each section focus on Sunday's Worship: All the lectionary readings are given for each Sunday. However, your congregation may not read all four. You may choose to consider one, or all, of the questions. There is room for notes on the Service and Sermon and for your responses to the questions.

The next part of each section has a prayer which you could use to begin or end each day of the week.

There are suggestions for biblical texts to read. You might choose to read the Old Testament text in the morning and the Gospel lesson at night. The Psalm could be read as a response to each text. As you read, listen to discover what God is saying. You might choose to make a journal entry or plan some action in response.

Throughout this journal, you will find prayers, poems, hymns and prose quotations.

A Note about the Advent Scriptures

The Hebrew Scripture/Jewish Bible/Old Testament texts in Year C are chosen from Jeremiah, Malachi, Zephaniah and Micah. On Christmas Eve/Day, we turn to Isaiah.

The prophecies of Micah, Zephaniah and Isaiah date back to the eighth century BCE; Jeremiah preached a little later and Malachi, likely closer to the time of Jesus' birth.

While Malachi prophesied mainly against the corruption and excesses of the priesthood, the other prophets focused on the injustices and abuses of the monarchy, the wealthy and the powerful and the oppression of the poor and needy. The prophets proclaimed God's judgment against those who abused privilege and position. They proclaimed God's vision for justice, mercy and compassion.

The gospel lessons in Year C focus mainly on texts from the Gospel of Luke. The author of this gospel likely wrote during the closing decades of the first century of the Christian Era.

Luke, like Matthew, drew on the writings of Mark as a primary source. There are also significant portions of Luke (and Matthew) that scholars believe originated from a source (named "Q") written even earlier than Mark.

Luke also records oral accounts that were apparently unknown to the authors of the other gospels. He was particularly concerned with the impoverished and the outcast; those who were abused by the political and religious systems of the times.

You might wish to have more specific or more detailed information on the lectionary texts for Advent, Year C or about Sunday's Psalm or the Epistle lesson. Please consult your minister, or check out the internet resources listed at the end of this journal.

*May each day of Advent 2009 be blessed
by God's active presence
in your congregation,
in your life
and in your home!*

A very old Advent Tradition

There is a tradition of singing the “O Antiphons” that dates back to the twelfth century. One verse of *Oh, Come, Oh, Come Emmanuel* is sung each evening beginning seven (or eight) days before Christmas Eve. These are sometimes referred to as the *O Days*.

Oh, Come, Oh, Come Emmanuel

Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lowly exile here
until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel!

Oh, come, oh, come, thou Lord of might,
who to thy tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times didst give the law,
in cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel!

Oh, come, thou Wisdom from on high,
and order all things far and nigh;
to us the path of knowledge show,
and cause us in her ways to go.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel!

Oh, come thou branch of Jesse free,
thine own from Satan's tyranny;
from depth of hell thy people save;
and give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel!

Oh, come, thou Key of David, come,
and open wide our heavenly home;
make safe the way that leads on high
and close the path to misery.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel!

Oh, come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel!

Oh, come, desire of nations, bind
all peoples in one heart, one mind;
bid envy, strife and discord cease,
and be thyself our source of Peace.
Rejoice, Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel!

Words: Latin 13th century

Translation: John Mason Neale (1818-1866)

Public Domain

For an interesting worship project, see

<http://www.ucc.org/worship -ways/pdfs/ 05come-come-emmanul.pdf>

November 29, 2009

The First Sunday in Advent

The Sunday of Hope

Designated as World AIDS Day

What do YOU hear when the day's lections are read?

Hebrew Scriptures: *Jeremiah 33:14-16*

Response: *Psalms 25:1-10*

New Testament: *Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 3: 9-13*

Gospel: *Luke 21:25-36*

Sermon title:

Focus text:

Sermon notes: Your Insights/Questions/ Reflections

- Is there a phrase or word that you heard in the scripture texts, sermon or music that you will hold in your heart all week?

- Which hymn was most meaningful to you today?

- Why?

**Choose one or more of the following questions
for reflection, conversation or action**

- What has been happening in Judah?

- Do you believe the great disaster wrought by the Chaldeans (Babylonians) was “brought” by the Lord as punishment? What are the reasons for your response?

- Jeremiah prophesies that the Lord will fulfill a promise made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. How do you understand that promise?

- Has World AIDS Day been mentioned in the service today? If so, how was it included in the liturgy?

- What image came into your mind during worship today?

Write a poem or a prayer; draw a picture, or, in some other way, express this image creatively.



- As Paul did, write a letter of thanksgiving to someone, giving thanks to God for the gifts you have seen developing in them through the action of Jesus Christ. Will you send the letter? Why or why not?

A Prayer For Lighting The First Advent Candle

*A candle burns,
marking the beginning of our Advent journey.
God of hope,
travel with us,
guide our footsteps as we journey. Amen.*

Daily Prayer for the First Week of Advent

*Holy God, in these days, give us grace
to live your justice and compassion,
to cast away the works of darkness
and put on the armour of light,
as we seek to follow your Son Jesus,
that on the last day
when he will come in glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to live for all eternity through him
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God now and forever. Amen.*

Readings for the First Week of Advent

Monday	Malachi 1:1-8	Luke 20:1-8	Psalm 24
Tuesday	Malachi 1:9-14	Luke 20:9-19	Psalm 122
Wednesday	Malachi 2:1-9	Luke 20:19-26	Psalm 50
Thursday	Malachi 2:10-18	Luke 20: 27-40	Psalm 53
Friday	Malachi 3: 1-12	Luke 20:41-21:11	Psalm 16
Saturday	Malachi 3:13-4:5	Luke 3:1-6	Psalm 80

December 6, 2009

The Second Sunday in Advent

The Sunday of Peace

What do YOU hear when the day's lections are read?

Hebrew Scriptures: *Malachi 3:1-4*

Response: *Luke 1:68-79*

New Testament: *Epistle: Philippians 1:3-11*

Gospel: *Luke 3:1-6*

Sermon title:

Focus text:

Sermon notes: Your Insights/Questions/ Reflections

- Is there a phrase or word that you heard in scripture texts, sermon or music that you will hold in your heart all week?

- Which hymn was most meaningful to you today?

- Why?

**Choose one or more of the following questions
for reflection, conversation or action**

- Why do you think those who prepared the lectionary chose to respond to Malachi's prophecy with the text from Luke containing Zechariah's prophecy?

- What do you think about their choice?

- Why do you think Luke is the only Gospel that contains the story of Elizabeth's pregnancy and John's birth?

- The account of John the Baptist's ministry appears in all four Gospels. (Matthew 3 :1-12; Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:1-6; John 1:19-34) Compare the accounts. What is the same? What is different?

- Are there valleys, mountains, or crooked or rough ways in your life right now? How can God help you to "prepare the way of the Lord"?

- What does “repentance” mean?

- What might it mean for you?

- What image came into your mind during worship today?

Write a poem or a prayer; draw a picture, or, in some other way, express this image creatively.

A Prayer for Lighting the Second Advent Candle

*A candle burns,
marking the second week of our Advent journey.
God of peace,
travel with us,
speak to us words of comfort as we journey. Amen.*

Hark! a thrilling voice is sounding

*Hark! a thrilling voice is sounding:
“Christ is nigh,” it seems to say;
“Cast away the dreams of darkness,
O ye children of the day!”*

*Wakened by the solemn warning,
let us all from sleep arise;
Christ, our sun, all ill dispelling,
shines upon the morning skies.*

*Lo! the Lamb so long expected,
comes with pardon down from heaven;
let us haste with tears of sorrow,
one and all to be forgiven,*

*When our Saviour comes in glory,
though the world be wrapped in fear,
with his mercy he will shield us,
and with words of love draw near.*

*Honor, glory, might and blessing to the Father and the Son,
with the everlasting Spirit while eternal ages run.*

Words: Latin, anonymous, 6th century translation, Edward Caswall (1814-1848)

Words: Public Domain

Daily Prayer for the 2nd week of Advent

*Holy God,
you sent your servant, John the Baptist,
to prepare your people to welcome the Messiah.
Inspire all people in Christ's Church,
to turn our hearts to you;
that we might be faithful stewards of your truth,
that we might bow before Jesus without shame,
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God now and forever. Amen.*

Readings for the Second Week of Advent

Monday	Zephaniah 1:1-13	Luke 21:1-19	Psalm 25
Tuesday	Zephaniah 1: 14-18	Luke 21: 20-28	Psalm 33
Wednesday	Zephaniah 2	Luke 21:29-38	Psalm 17
Thursday	Zephaniah 3:1-7	Luke 7:18-27	Psalm 18:1-19
Friday	Zephaniah 3:8-13	Luke 7:28-35	Psalm 130
Saturday	Zephaniah 3:14-20	Luke 3:7-18	Psalm 150

December 13, 2009

The Third Sunday in Advent

The Sunday of Joy

What do YOU hear when the day's lections are read?

Hebrew Scriptures: *Zephaniah 3:14-20*

Response: *Isaiah 12:2-6*

New Testament: *Epistle: Philippians 4:4-7*

New Testament: *Gospel: Luke 3:7-18*

Sermon title:

Focus text:

Sermon notes: Your Insights/Questions/ Reflections

- Is there a phrase or word that you heard in the scripture texts, sermon or music that you will hold in your heart all week?

- Which hymn was most meaningful to you today?

- Why?

**Choose one or more of the following questions
for reflection, conversation or action**

- In Isaiah we hear “Surely God is my salvation: I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the lord God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation.”

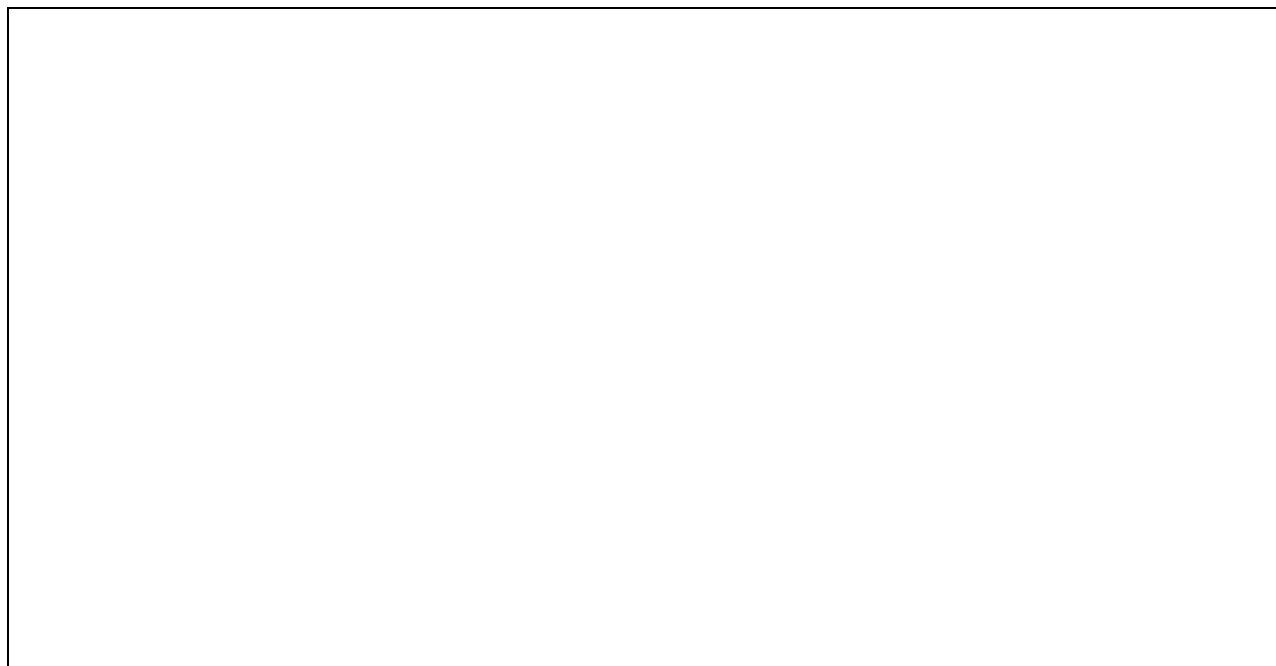
- What do you think the word “salvation” meant in this context?

- How is this different/the same from the way you think of the word, “salvation” ?

- In Zephaniah’ s prophecy why were Israel and Jerusalem told to shout, rejoice and exult?

- From the Gospel: What did John require of the people who came to him for baptism?

- *Can you imagine what John the Baptist looked like? Draw or paint a picture of John. What is he doing? Or if you prefer, write a poem or a prayer about John.*



- The Third Sunday of Advent is a very good time to share what we have with others. In many congregations, people bring non-perishable food to worship, sometimes wrapped as a “white gift.” These items are donated to the local Food Bank or shelter.

- As part of your Advent preparation this week, consider checking your closets for extra clothing, blankets, etc. that could be shared with people who might need them.

A Prayer for Lighting the Third Advent Candle

*A candle burns,
marking the third week of our Advent journey.
God of joy, travel with us,
help us to share with others as we journey. Amen.*

Daily Prayer for the Third Week of Advent

Holy God,
you call us to prepare with joy
for the coming of your Son.
Remove from my heart
anything which hinders my love of you,
that when Christ comes
he may find me waiting
in awe and wonder for him
who lives with you and the Holy Spirit,
One God, now and forever. Amen.

Readings for the Third Week of Advent

Monday	Micah 1	Luke 17:20-34	Psalm 112
Tuesday	Micah 2	Luke 18:1-8	Psalm 126
Wednesday	Micah 3:1-4:5	Luke 18: 9-14	Psalm 85
Thursday	Micah 4:6-5:6	Luke 18: 15-25	Psalm 148
Friday	Micah 5:7-6:17	Luke 7:36-50	Psalm 82
Saturday	Micah 7	Luke 1:39-45	Psalm 84

December 20, 2009

The Fourth Sunday in Advent

The Sunday of Love

What do YOU hear when the day's lections are read?

Hebrew Scriptures: *Micah 5:2-5a*

Response: *Psalm 80:1-7* **OR New Testament Response:** *Luke 1:46b -55*

New Testament: *Epistle: Hebrews 10:5-10*

Gospel: *Luke 1:39-45*

Sermon title:

Focus text:

Sermon notes: Your Insights/Questions/ Reflections

- Is there a phrase or word that you heard in the scripture texts, sermon or music that you will hold in your heart all week?

- Which hymn was most meaningful to you today?

- Why?

**Choose one or more of the following questions
for reflection, conversation or action**

- According to the lectionary, there are two possible responses to the text from Micah. Each text is very different. Which one would you choose? Why?

- The Luke text, *Mary's song of praise*, is sometimes referred to as the *Magnificat*. What is the main focus of Mary's praise?

- How do you understand "God's choice" of Mary?

- (Luke 1:26-38) Mary's acceptance of God's "call" upon her life may be understood as an example and a model for all God's children. Why do you think that is so?

- Has God’s call upon your life caused you to make any sacrifices? If so, have you responded with songs of joy, like Mary?

- What song would you like to sing to God today?

- How do you understand Hebrews 10:10? Has your understanding of this verse changed over the years?

- We draw close to the day we will celebrate Jesus’ birth. If you were to plan the “perfect Christmas Day,” what would it look like?

- Do you expect your Christmas to be like this? Will you spend the day with family and/or friends? Will people who are lonely or poor be included at the table? Will your celebration include worship?

- What will you do to make sure Christmas has meaning for you and perhaps also for others? How will you share God’s love during the Twelve Days of Christmas?

A Prayer for Lighting the Fourth Advent Candle

*A candle burns,
marking the fourth week of our Advent journey.
God of love,
travel with us,
that we might share your love with others. Amen.*

Daily Prayer for the Fourth Week of Advent

*Heavenly Father,
you chose Mary
full of grace,
to be Jesus' mother.
Fill us with your grace,
that in all things
we may embrace your will,
and with Mary rejoice in your love,
in the name of the child you sent among us
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.*

Readings for the Fourth Week of Advent

Monday	Isaiah 2:2-4	Luke 14:1-12	Psalm 110
Tuesday	Isaiah 11:1-9	Luke 14:15-24	Psalm 111
Wednesday	Isaiah 61	Luke 14:25-35	Psalm 113

On Jordan's Bank

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
announces that the Lord is nigh:
awake and hearken, for he brings
glad tidings of the King of kings.

Then cleansed be every breast from sin;
make straight the way for God within;
prepare we in our hearts a home
where such a mighty guest may come.

For thou art our salvation, Lord,
our refuge and our great reward;
without thy grace, we waste away,
like flowers that wither and decay.

To heal the sick, stretch out thine hand,
and bid the fallen sinner stand;
shine forth and let thy light restore
earth's own true loveliness once more.

All praise, eternal Son, to thee,
whose advent sets thy people free,
whom with the Father, we adore,
and Holy Spirit, evermore.

Words: Latin, Charles Coffin (1676-1749)

Translation: John Chandler (1806-1876)

Words: public domain

December 24, 2009

Christmas Eve!

Readings for Christmas Eve

Thursday

Isaiah 9:2-7

Luke 2:1-14

Psalm 96

Christmas Eve Prayer

*Eternal God,
this holy night is radiant
with the brilliance of your one true light.
Grant that we who have known
the revelation of that light on earth
may come to see the splendour
of your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.*



The Christ Candle has been lit.

You receive the light from your neighbour.

You pass it along

The singing begins,

“Silent night, holy night . . .”

Peace.

Gentle peace.

The peace of Christ.

The minister invites you

to take the light

and the peace with you

into the darkness.

How has the Christ Child changed your life?

December 25, 2009

Christmas Day!

Readings for Christmas Day

Friday Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:15-20 John 1:1-5, 10-14 Psalm 117

Christmas Day Prayer

*Eternal God,
your Word has come among us
in the Holy Child of Bethlehem.
Grant that the light of faith
may illumine my heart
and shine in my words and deeds;
through him who is Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.*

Merry Christmas!

*May the Twelve Days of Christmas bring you
much joy and peace in Christ's love,
that wherever you go,
you may draw others
towards the light and glory of God.*

Of Eternal Love Begotten

Of eternal love begotten
uncreated One-in-Three,
Christ, the Alpha and Omega,
Christ, the Source, the End will be
of the things that are, that have been,
and that future years shall see,
evermore and evermore.

This, the one whom heaven-taught singers
sang of old with one accord,
whom the scriptures of the prophets
promised in their faithful word;
shines among us, long-expected;
let creation praise its Lord,
evermore and evermore.

Oh that birth forever blessed
when the virgin, full of grace,
by the Spirit's power conceiving,
bore the Saviour of our race,
and the child, the world's Redeemer,
first revealed his sacred face,
evermore and evermore.

All the heights of heaven adore him;
angels endless praises sing,
all earth bow to Christ our Sovereign,
and our joyful tribute bring;
let no tongue on earth be silent,
every voice in concert ring,
evermore and evermore.

God Redeemer, God Creator,
God the Spirit, now to thee
hymn and chant and high thanksgiving
and unwearied praises be,
honor, glory and dominion
and eternal victory,
evermore and evermore.

Words: Public Domain

Internet Resources

Daily Lectionary

The Presbyterian Church (USA) <http://www.pcusa.org/devotions/lectionary/>
Daily lectionary readings, including a podcast version.

Christian Resource Institute CRI/Voice <http://www.crivoice.org/daily.html>
Site contains a number of resources, including a daily lectionary.

Revised Common Lectionary

The Presbyterian Church in Canada <http://www.presbyterian.ca/>
Has the current and upcoming lectionaries in colour and black & white formats.
Type “lectionary” in the search bar at the top of the page.

The Vanderbilt Divinity Library <http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-search.pl>
All the texts for each Sunday of every year. This site even has a selection of art appropriate to each Sunday’s texts.

Comments: Commentaries on the Revised Common Lectionary
<http://montreal.anglican.org/comments/>
Information on the RCL written by Chris Haslam.

The Bible on your computer

Bible Gateway <http://www.biblegateway.com/>
A great resource with several versions of the Scriptures

The Oremus Bible Browser <http://www.devotions.net/bible/00bible.htm>
Has a searchable New Revised Standard Version – the Bible in the pew in many Presbyterian congregations.

The Advent Journal was written by the Rev. Dr. Sylvia Cleland
Photographs of West Point Grey Presbyterian Church by John Patrick

