

This Advent Devotional Booklet was lovingly prepared by the members and friends of Windsor Presbyterian Church. May it be a blessing to you during this Advent season.

Table of Contents

Day	Prepared by	Page #
Sunday, November 27, 2022	<i>Richard Dow</i>	1
Monday, November 28, 2022	<i>Paula DuVander</i>	2
Tuesday, November 29, 2022	<i>Karen Russell</i>	3
Wednesday, November 30, 2022	<i>Chris Rhodes</i>	4
Thursday, December 1, 2022	<i>Lorraine Gray</i>	5
Friday, December 2, 2022	<i>Vicki White</i>	6
Saturday, December 3, 2022	<i>Kathilie Gruggett</i>	7
Sunday, December 4, 2022	<i>Eric Beene</i>	8
Monday, December 5, 2022	<i>Mary Beene</i>	9
Tuesday, December 6, 2022	<i>Linda Mansell</i>	10
Wednesday, December 7, 2022	<i>Susan Gonyo</i>	11
Thursday, December 8, 2022	<i>Tanya Gjerman</i>	12
Friday, December 9, 2022	<i>Pam Novelly</i>	13
Saturday, December 10, 2022	<i>Jeannie Clifton & Skylar</i>	14
Sunday, December 11, 2022	<i>Lonnie Hardage-Vergeer</i>	15
Monday, December 12, 2022	<i>Karen Russell</i>	16
Tuesday, December 13, 2022	<i>Mary Beene</i>	17
Wednesday, December 14, 2022	<i>Kathilie Gruggett</i>	18
Thursday, December 15, 2022	<i>Lou Jourdan</i>	19
Friday, December 16, 2022	<i>Kris Shear</i>	20
Saturday, December 17, 2022	<i>Gloria & Ken Hall</i>	21
Sunday, December 18, 2022	<i>Tanya Gjerman</i>	22
Monday, December 19, 2022	<i>Kathilie Gruggett</i>	23
Tuesday, December 20, 2022	<i>Karen Russell</i>	24
Wednesday, December 21, 2022	<i>Mary Beene</i>	25
Thursday, December 22, 2022	<i>Paul Slaikeu</i>	26
Friday, December 23, 2022	<i>CJ Vallerga</i>	27
Saturday, December 24, 2022	<i>Judy Slater</i>	28
Sunday, December 25, 2022	<i>Mary Beene</i>	29

1st Sunday of Advent

November 27 - Isaiah 2: 1-4

There's a day coming
when the mountain of God's House
Will be The Mountain—
solid, towering over all mountains.
All nations will river toward it,
people from all over set out for it.
They'll say, "Come,
let's climb God's Mountain,
go to the House of the God of Jacob.

Our family grew up in Denver, Colorado and we were a family who were avid tent campers, hiked mountain trails to hidden valleys with mountain rivers and lakes. Our father, Glenn, taught me and my brother, David, how to both Fly fish as well as tie our own flies to try and hook these Trout species found in Colorado; Brook, Rainbow, Brown and Cutthroat and Lake.

In our teenage years, we organized a trip with 4 other fathers and their sons, and selected a mountain lake for us to climb to, where we set up a base camp and stayed there for 5 days. We fished in the mountain lake and incoming streams.

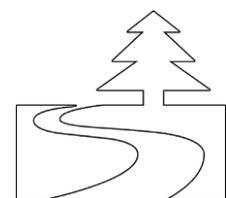
We also set out to climb the nearby mountain peak, which was nearly 14,000 high. We started off as a large group, but it wasn't long before the group broke up into smaller individual groups, mostly based on the pace of hiking by each group. Consequently, only 6 of us made it to the Mountain top that day.

Back at base camp that night, we spoke of the beauty of our surroundings, how the starry-filled nights took our breaths away, and we talked about how our hike ended up with an outcome that none of us desired.

We decided to try and climb that mountain again the following day. But this time, we would stay together as one group, and we would go as far as we could. If we made it to the top, that would be good, and if we did not, that would be good too. We planned ahead, took plenty of water and food and warm clothes, and alas, with a slow-n-steady pace we DID make it to the Mountain Top, and back down into base camp 9 hours after we had begun.

The Joy and sense of accomplishment that ALL of us had climbed that mountain Together, as One, is a sacred memory that I recall often in my life when faced with difficult and trying situations. I know with God, and Christ in my Soul, I can sustain myself and those with me to discover what God's Mountain Top has in store for each of us on our journey in this amazing Fabric that God knits into our lives.

God, we give thanks that you are with us always. And we are so grateful for our fellow traveling companions and those who we will meet along the way as we journey to discover what is in store for each of us this Advent season. Amen.



Monday, November 28 - Isaiah 9:2

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light.

For those who lived in a land of deep shadows—
light! sunbursts of light!



God, lead us, guide us. Help us to move from darkness into Your bright light.
Amen.

Tuesday, November 29 - Isaiah 9: 6-7

For a child has been born—for us!

the gift of a son—for us!

He'll take over

the running of the world.

His names will be: Amazing Counselor,

Strong God,

Eternal Father,

Prince of Wholeness.

His ruling authority will grow,

and there'll be no limits to the wholeness he brings.

For a child has been born—for us!

the gift of a son—for us!

It's a boy! Those three little words spoken in 1984 changed our whole lives from that moment forward. We had wanted a baby and the timing of getting pregnant was just as we had hoped. Then after 2 days in the hospital, the labor was over, my body relaxed, and this tiny baby boy was delivered and placed on my chest – WOW! Yes, a child is a gift – and we had the gift of a son. How could one so tiny and small fill our hearts with love overflowing, so much love that it brought us to tears. Our baby was a wonderful gift! Then 20+ years later, when our first grandchild came into the world, we learned that our hearts could be even more filled with love... Life is such a miracle. YES, a baby is God's opinion that the world should go on...

His names will be: Amazing Counselor,

Strong God,

Eternal Father,

Prince of Wholeness.

Naming a child with those names puts a lot weight on the kid – I mean, it's a lot of pressure to live up to being a prince of wholeness... We had the 'name' discussions before the birth and we had asked to not be told the baby's gender. Funny, but we could *never* agree on a girl's name. Every name we suggested to each other was nixed! We did agree that for a boy, we wanted something short, easy to spell, that sounded good with our last name, and that couldn't be turned into a nickname - for some reason, it was easy to agree on Scott for the first name, and then went with Clement for the middle name. That was my maiden name. Maybe it was divinely inspired since we did have a son!

Thank you, God, for the blessing of babies that come into our lives and teach our hearts about how easy it is to love. Thank you for sending your son Jesus to us and to the world. Help us to follow His way and example every day, especially today. Amen.



Wednesday, November 30 - Mark 1: 1-3

The good news of Jesus Christ—the Message!—begins here, following to the letter the scroll of the prophet Isaiah.

Watch closely: I'm sending my preacher ahead of you;

He'll make the road smooth for you.

Thunder in the desert!

Prepare for God's arrival! Make the road smooth and straight!

John the Baptist, the Messenger, was on his way. What an unlikely Messenger to herald the arrival of Jesus the son of God. John lived in the desert. He was poorly dressed and had a very odd diet. His hair was uncombed and he had a long scraggily beard. He probably had not bathed recently. Today John would probably be mistaken for a homeless person. And this human was the one God was using to announce the arrival of his Son! You have got to be kidding. Wow!

“Prepare for God's arrival! Make the road smooth and straight!”

In my carpentry work we always strive to construct buildings that are level, plumb, in-line, and straight. If you start with a level foundation, building the house is so much easier to construct. Getting everything level and straight from the start it helps everything to fall into place. But if that foundation is out of level you struggle during the entire building process to build it level, plumb, in-line, and straight.

John preceded Jesus and John's job was to make the road straight for Jesus's arrival. God asked a lot of John; he had a difficult task ahead of him. But that straight road John provided made Jesus's task so much easier. It was like he was building upon a level and plumb foundation. It was a solid base for Jesus, the carpenter, to build upon.

Advent is the season of hope, and we like John, have the opportunity to straighten those roads in our lives that need realignment. Are our values in line with our beliefs? Is the use of our time in alignment with our priorities? As we await the arrival of the birth of Jesus are there things in the Advent season that we need to make right in our lives... curves that need to be taken out of our roads, floors that need to be leveled, walls that need to be plumbed, in anticipation of the arrival of the son of God.

The season of hope is upon us, take advantage of it!



Our Lord and Our God, we come to you with so many questions, so many troubles, so many shortcomings. And yet we know that we are your children, and you love us just the way we are. In this Advent season, enable us to look at our lives and see where the road needs to be straightened. Help us to not lose the hope that the birth of your Son provides. Quell those fears that we have, so that we may bravely engage this world in which we live, to make it a better place for all your children. Amen.

Thursday, December 1 - Isaiah 61: 1-2

The Spirit of God, the Master, is on me
because God anointed me.
God sent me to preach good news to the poor,
heal the heartbroken,
Announce freedom to all captives,
pardon all prisoners.
God sent me to announce the year of his grace—
a celebration of God's destruction of our enemies—
and to comfort all who mourn.

These verses have always comforted me in grief from loss of any kind. I turned to them after my mother's passing in 2020 and my sister's in 2017, and in many others.

The spirit of God can always teach and guide us in times of need, as we let Him live in our hearts. We are His mouthpiece to spread His word and comfort the lost.

God's grace can pardon any and all sins freeing our captivity in this world and healing our hearts. God's glory is all that matters. Vengeance is the Lord's so He can handle our enemies and our every trouble. We are not alone. Comfort from mourning comes from God.

And in the verse from Isaiah 61:3, it says that He gives beauty for ashes, joy instead of mourning, and peace instead of despair.

When we reach out to others to comfort them, we in turn can also be blessed to heal our own hearts.

Loving God, help us to be a blessing to each other, providing comfort during times of grief and hurting. May it be so - Amen.



Friday, December 2 - Isaiah 40: 1-2

Comfort, oh comfort my people,"
says your God.
"Speak softly and tenderly to Jerusalem,
but also make it very clear
That she has served her sentence,
that her sin is taken care of—forgiven!
She's been punished enough and more than enough,
and now it's over and done with."

Isaiah wrote the book of Isaiah. His name means "the Lord is salvation," and he was a prophet. He predicted the coming of the Messiah who would redeem His people from their sins. He warns of judgement BUT promises hope and prosperity.

God is foremost the comforter. He has no disappointment or anger with our sin, because he came with salvation that forgives our sin. We can feel comforted knowing our sin is over and done with.

We are FORGIVEN. Let's not live with remorse or shame. In this Advent Season and always, let us look to the birth of the One who came to save us.

Jesus is HOPE. Hallelujah!



Messiah . . . I am looking for Your coming. You love me UNCONDITIONALLY. I am never without You. Help me to be comforted and rest in Your love. Amen.

Saturday, December 3 - Isaiah 40: 3-5

Thunder in the desert!

“Prepare for God’s arrival!

Make the road straight and smooth,
a highway fit for our God.

Fill in the valleys,

level off the hills,

Smooth out the ruts,

clear out the rocks.

Then God’s bright glory will shine

and everyone will see it.

Yes. Just as God has said.”



Loving God, sometimes we are frightened by the thunder. Often the road is not straight. The hills can seem like huge mountains with no way up. The valleys can be quite deep. Still You are with us and Your glory does still shine. May it be so – amen.



2nd Sunday of Advent December 4 - Isaiah 11: 1-4

A green Shoot will sprout from Jesse's stump,
from his roots a budding Branch.
The life-giving Spirit of GOD will hover over him,
the Spirit that brings wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit that gives direction and builds strength,
the Spirit that instills knowledge and Fear-of-GOD.
Fear-of-GOD will be all his joy and delight.
He won't judge by appearances,
won't decide on the basis of hearsay.
He'll judge the needy by what is right,
render decisions on earth's poor with justice.

I recently went shopping for plants with a friend of mine. We both enjoy gardening, and we both know that this is the best time of year to plant new things. This is not the easy time of year to plant. In the spring, the nurseries and big-box stores will be filled to overflowing with bushy, big-blossomed plants of every kind imaginable. But it is the best time of year. Sure, the leaves aren't as robust and the flowers have faded. However, if you plant this time of year, after the rainy season starts but before it gets too cold, the roots can have a field day. They have everything they need: cool nights, plenty of water straight from the sky (God willing), earthworms keeping things loose, and microbes living it up as they break down the leaves that have fallen from the trees. The roots go wide, and they go deep, so that by spring, they will have stored up energy that will feed the new leaves and branches, and then push out the beautiful blooms that keep their life cycle going and provide the beauty I covet for my yard.

This prophecy from Isaiah reminds me that Advent is a gardener's season. Advent pushes us to look to the future. The easy thing would be to look at the stumps that litter our world and despair because they don't have the bushy, big-blossomed glory that we covet. Advent tells us, though, that the best thing is to look at those stumps and know that they don't look like much now, but there is a whole lot going on under the surface that will go wide and deep to feed something wondrous. Soon, a new shoot will appear. At first, it will be vulnerable, like a little baby, tender and mild. But the life-giving Spirit of the Lord hovers over it, and from it will come the wisdom and understanding, the strength and knowledge, and the joy and delight that will change the world.



Holy God, when everything around us looks lifeless, remind us that wondrous things are going on underground. Instead of easy despair, give us the best hope of a gardener, so that we may know the glory you are growing in us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Monday, December 5 - Jeremiah 33: 14-15

“Watch for this: The time is coming’—God’s Decree—‘when I will keep the promise I made to the families of Israel and Judah. When that time comes, I will make a fresh and true shoot sprout from the David-Tree. He will run this country honestly and fairly. He will set things right. That’s when Judah will be secure and Jerusalem live in safety. The motto for the city will be, “God Has Set Things Right for Us.”

I want to be a person who trusts that God will set things right. But instead, I find myself always working hard to try to set things right all by myself. Because for me, the bigger problem comes earlier in the passage: “When that time comes....”

I don’t want to wait for that time to come. I want to make it happen right now. If God is not going to get a move on, then maybe I can push things in the right direction. I tell myself I’m just following the old maxim “God helps those who help themselves.” But that’s not even in the Bible. Instead, scripture says that God helps all of us when it is too much for us to be able to do ourselves.

This isn’t a way of saying, “Hey, let’s all be lazy. We can just wait around for God after all.” But it is a call for a little more discernment. What is mine to do? And for what do I need to wait for God?

Holy God of Time and Presence, wait with us when the time is not quite right. And give us hope for your promise in Jesus that you will set things right for us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



Tuesday, December 6 - Matthew 24: 42-45

You have no idea what day your Master will show up. But you do know this: You know that if the homeowner had known what time of night the burglar would arrive, he would have been there with his dogs to prevent the break-in. Be vigilant just like that. You have no idea when the Son of Man is going to show up.

I admit: I was drawn to this passage because of the dogs.

But they're just 'bit' actors here; a burglar-alarm before the invention of video doorbells and security cameras.

The passage says we must stay vigilant ALL the time since we don't know when the Son of Man will arrive. I suspect, however, that Matthew wasn't urging us to forego sleep and live anxiously.

Instead, I think our required vigilance is a spiritual one: to live faithfully, to stay engaged with God, and to hold the expectation that God is acting to bring about the redemption of the world.

In a world that can feel incredibly broken and divisive, staying 'awake' to God and paying attention allow us to see and respond to needs: through our actions or through our testimony. There's faith-work to do.



"He's more of a media watchdog."



"I'll only give you the paper if you promise not to let the news upset you."



Lord, help me live my faith, remembering that you are acting to bring about the redemption of the world. Help me to stay 'awake' and share my faith with others through my actions and my words. Amen.

Wednesday, December 7 - Isaiah 60: 1-2

Get out of bed, Jerusalem!

Wake up. Put your face in the sunlight.

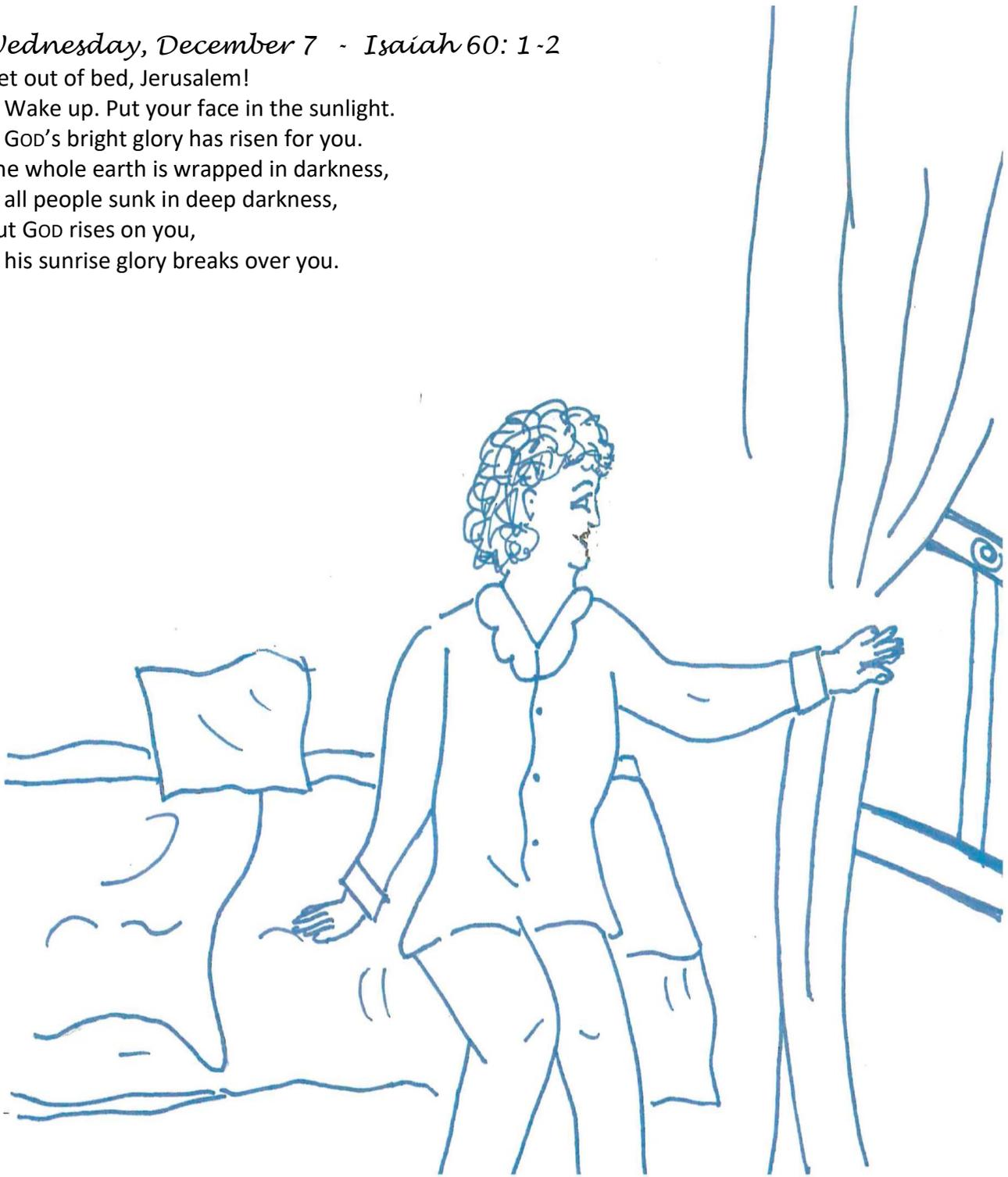
GOD's bright glory has risen for you.

The whole earth is wrapped in darkness,

all people sunk in deep darkness,

But GOD rises on you,

his sunrise glory breaks over you.



Look up! Look around! Watch as they gather, watch as they approach you.
When you see them coming, you'll smile – big smiles!



Thursday, December 8 - Isaiah 40: 11

Like a shepherd, he will care for his flock,
gathering the lambs in his arms,
Hugging them as he carries them,
leading the nursing ewes to good pasture.

Many things stood out while savoring this passage.

As one shepherds a flock, one protects the sheep from seen and unseen dangers. As the shepherded, we are being held no matter what happens. To be held by God's heart brings visions of warmth, safety, weightless, and floating support. The act of being carried stirs an innate sense of trust and allows us to know that all is well in this moment. We are held securely in the love and protection of God, our Shepherd, no matter the trials along the path. Do we hear the beating heart of Jesus? Do we feel the arms of God? We are held together as a flock, becoming one life, together. As we are held by Jesus, we are one life together.

Good pasture is made up of three elements; strong seeds, good soil, and flowing water. The Word of God is planted in the soil of our minds and hearts, then watered by the Holy Spirit to create gardens far greater than we could manage on our own. By leading the ewes to good pasture, not only are the ewes given the best God has to offer, but the lambs are then fed and nourished by those riches. We are provided the best nourishment as the Bible plants the seeds that will feed our souls, teaches us about the Holy Spirit and the protection from harm Spirit provides us. When the wolves do arrive, we are held out of reach of their snapping jaws, forever.

Safe and loved unconditionally, we sleep peacefully without worry. Jesus has arms big enough to hold all His sheep,



Savior, like a shepherd lead us; much we need thy tender care. In thy pleasant pastures feed us, for our use thy folds prepare. Blessed Jesus, Thou hast bought us, Thine we are. Amen.

Friday, December 9 - Ezekiel 34: 11-14

“God, the Master, says: From now on, *I myself* am the shepherd. I’m going looking for them. As shepherds go after their flocks when they get scattered, I’m going after my sheep. I’ll rescue them from all the places they’ve been scattered to in the storms. I’ll bring them back from foreign peoples, gather them from foreign countries, and bring them back to their home country. I’ll feed them on the mountains of Israel, along the streams, among their own people. I’ll lead them into lush pasture so they can roam the mountain pastures of Israel, graze at leisure, feed in the rich pastures on the mountains of Israel.

Advent is the season when we trust in the faithfulness of God. God is doing a new thing that will be born in us to bring more life, love, and light into our life and the life of the world. It is not of our own doing. So, we wait, watch, and respond as God gathers up the fragments of our lives and reshapes and transforms them into something new.

Our Gracious God, we are grateful that you never leave us alone. You are always working in us and through us to bring abundant life to all. Amen.



Saturday, December 10 - Ezekiel 34: 15-16

And I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep. I myself will make sure they get plenty of rest. I'll go after the lost, I'll collect the strays, I'll doctor the injured, I'll build up the weak ones and oversee the strong ones so they're not exploited.

And I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep. I myself will make sure they get plenty of rest. I'll go after the lost, I'll collect the strays, I'll doctor the injured, I'll build up the weak ones and oversee the strong ones, so they're not exploited.



Holy God, give us faith that the Shepherd seeks us when we are lost. May we trust that You care for ALL Your sheep. Amen.

3rd Sunday of Advent

December 11 - Isaiah 35: 3-4

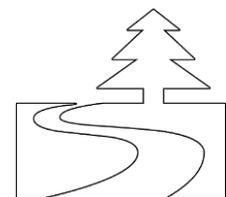
Energize the limp hands,
strengthen the rubbery knees.
Tell fearful souls,
“Courage! Take heart!
GOD is here, right here,
on his way to put things right
And redress all wrongs.
He’s on his way! He’ll save you!”

Hymns often say what I need, like this one by Edward Mote, written in 1834:

**When darkness veils his lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.**

**On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand!
All other ground is sinking sand;
All other ground is sinking sand.**

Dear God,
When the darkness gets between you and me, anchor me in Your love.
Amen.



Monday, December 12 - Isaiah 35: 5-7

Blind eyes will be opened,
deaf ears unstopped,
Lame men and women will leap like deer,
the voiceless break into song.
Springs of water will burst out in the wilderness,
streams flow in the desert.
Hot sands will become a cool oasis,
thirsty ground a splashing fountain.
Even lowly jackals will have water to drink,
and barren grasslands flourish richly.

All of these things seem unbelievable to me... changes and healings in people who have been afflicted in some way --- a person who is blind being able to see, one who is deaf hearing sounds, those who are lame and crippled and unable to walk and move are leaping like wild animals, the ones who have no voice are bursting out in song... I imagine them singing at the top of their lungs! And that is taking the words literally. But I also can imagine these changes happening on another level -- someone who cannot see another's viewpoint suddenly can; someone who is not able to hear what a dear friend is trying to say suddenly has understanding; someone who is stuck and unmoving can begin to take a tiny step forward; someone whose voice has been silenced is able to begin to speak the truth. While these don't seem quite as unbelievable to me, there is healing and change happening in these types of situations.

Isaiah goes on to describe the whole landscape of the earth being changed and healed... water springs in the wilderness, streams flow in the desert, the ground produces a fountain, barren lands flourish. Reminds me a little of the recent rains we've had and how excited we were to see the earth blessed with such much needed moisture. This summer, I've watched the plants in my yard and on my porch flourish when I was able to give them gallons of reclaimed water provided by the town. What a blessing of this life-giving and life-sustaining gift of water.

Dealing with, and accepting change is not in my nature -- I like to know what is going to happen when, and I don't like surprises. Yet this scripture reminds me that change can be incredible and unexpected and wonderful, all at the same time.



Oh God, help us remember that many things can change and will be changed, even those things which seem as if they are absolutely permanent. Let us be aware and watch for signs of Your Spirit making changes in the world around us. Amen.

Tuesday, December 13 - Jeremiah 23: 5-6

"Time's coming" —God's Decree—

*"when I'll establish a truly righteous David-Branch,
A ruler who knows how to rule justly.*

He'll make sure of justice and keep people united.

In his time Judah will be secure again

and Israel will live in safety.

This is the name they'll give him:

'God-Who-Puts-Everything-Right.'

Do you long for a ruler who knows how to rule justly? Sometimes all I'm asking for is a leader who knows how to run a meeting efficiently.

I studied leadership in my Master of Public Administration program, and I come away thinking it's less about learning the right tools, and more about leaning into a right way of living all the time. Then leadership just becomes another way to follow Jesus.

Jesus told stories and prayed – a lot. He thought about what people thought they needed, sure, but he didn't let that stand in the way of telling the truth about what they really needed. And although we tend to think of him as gentle, he wasn't a pushover. He knew when to be rigid and when to bend to accommodate new learning. And he made sure people were fed too – sometimes that is the most important function of good leadership.

I like the idea that leadership comes with following. We're not out there alone.

God, thank you for your Son, Jesus, who shows us what ruling justly really is. May we lead with his grace and follow with his humility. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Wednesday, December 14 - John 10: 14-17

“I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own sheep and my own sheep know me. In the same way, the Father knows me and I know the Father. I put the sheep before myself, sacrificing myself if necessary. You need to know that I have other sheep in addition to those in this pen. I need to gather and bring them, too. They’ll also recognize my voice. Then it will be one flock, one Shepherd. This is why the Father loves me: because I freely lay down my life.”



Thank you for the ways you shepherd us into your fold. Amen.

Thursday, December 15 - Luke 1: 46-50

I'm bursting with God-news;

I'm dancing the song of my Savior God.

God took one good look at me, and look what happened—

I'm the most fortunate woman on earth!

What God has done for me will never be forgotten,

the God whose very name is holy, set apart from all others.

His mercy flows in wave after wave

on those who are in awe before him.



Lord, your glory flows over us. Your love and compassion empowers us. We are eternally grateful for your abundant gifts. May we continue to share your peace in our words and actions. Amen.



Friday, December 16 - Revelation 21: 3-5

I heard a voice thunder from the Throne: "Look! Look! God has moved into the neighborhood, making his home with men and women! They're his people, he's their God. He'll wipe every tear from their eyes. Death is gone for good—tears gone, crying gone, pain gone—all the first order of things gone." The Enthroned continued, "Look! I'm making everything new. Write it all down—each word dependable and accurate."

No tears! No pain! No loss! We often have said, and have learned, that "the pain doesn't last forever." But we also know that it creeps back every once in a while....

Everything new! Nothing to "fix", nothing to replace, nothing to worry about. But we also know that new isn't always better; it's just new.

God said it will be so, so it will be so. Dependable and accurate. But when? How? And, what about NOW?? Can we even conceptualize it? Can we believe it?

Advent is a time to prepare, so how can I "prepare" for this ethereal, future time when I live with God, with no pain and with everything new?

Practice?

What if I set aside pain, if only for a few minutes, each day? If the pain is too deep...I can let it float up so that I can feel it, and then set it aside. Then I can feel the freedom from it, if only for a few minutes. I will notice and remember the feeling, if even for a few minutes, of the absence of pain.

What if I create and spread joy where there is pain? In my home; in my neighborhood; in my community. I will notice and remember the feeling, if even for a few minutes, of spreading joy where there is pain.

Then I can experience the belief. That this is how it can be, if even for a few minutes, each day. And, with practice, I will come to know that this is how it can be. How it will be.

And, how wonderful the feeling will be Christmas morning when I celebrate the birth of the baby Jesus and remember the hope and love that came with him, and remains!!!

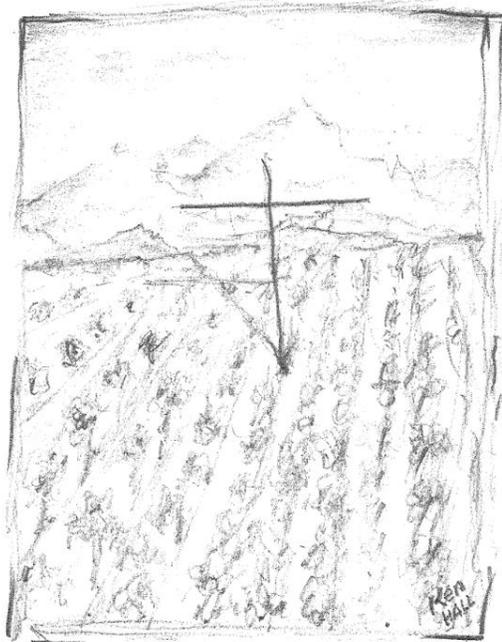


My gracious and loving God, thank you for the opportunity of a time and place without pain and suffering, and with joy and love. Help me to prepare for the awesomeness of it. Amen.

Saturday, December 17 - Revelation 22: 1-3

Then the Angel showed me Water-of-Life River, crystal bright. It flowed from the Throne of God and the Lamb, right down the middle of the street. The Tree of Life was planted on each side of the River, producing twelve kinds of fruit, a ripe fruit each month. The leaves of the Tree are for healing the nations. Never again will anything be cursed.

'In the Garden' is a hymn that has been a favorite family treasure for 'eons' and the words say so much. Music has always been in my life – from church choir to school choir and band and on the radio. I remember most of the words of the hymns in my Baptist upbringing. Daily, 'Peace on Earth' is on my mind and I am always humming these words. I hope to try to live by these words.

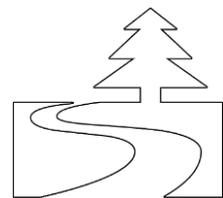


Without hesitancy, understanding the desire to create a booklet for ALL to read and study, Mrs. Brock, who live in Sugarland, Texas, left a note on the door of my house when I was 15. It simply said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." – Philippians 4:13

Since sports were entering my life, I clinged then, (and still do), to each word and meaning HE has suggested – and Gloria has been by my side all the way!



For you to know God, don't expect lightning to strike to get your attention. No! It may only be a tap on your shoulder, a smile from an old friend, or a Good Morning greeting. Don't worry, you will understand. Amen.



4th Sunday of Advent

December 18 - Isaiah 7: 14

Watch for this: A girl who is presently a virgin will get pregnant. She'll bear a son and name him Immanuel (God-With-Us).

M M
 T Y
 N D I S
 E H N N
 U E B X S I
 E Q R L B Y
 M E S S A G E E R X M H N H P I M K M S
 Y I H P F N I B L E R Y Z O H A H H M A
 W R F A I T H G X M H A P A T R N H
 C A P T I M M A N U E L B T K
 R C N I T C M G Y R I E G D
 B L D E L I G H T E H A
 I P N E A N G P N P S L L R
 E I E X P E C T A N C Y I D
 A N J W X I F N E P T M R S V Y
 G J P I U H Y E S I V T H Y
 W J J W Z W M X F O E J R V
 P G P J D E N K T K
 M V K M K N W S
 E Y W J

EXPECTANCY, DELIGHT, MESSAGE, PATIENCE, LISTEN, HOPE,
 ALMAH, IMMANUEL, FAITH, MIRACLE, ANTICIPATION



Loving God, we wait in anticipation, excited for the birth of new hope and the promise of a new life unfolding before us. Bless us in this season of possibilities and joy. Amen.

Monday, December 19 - Luke 1: 30-33

The angel assured her, "Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus.

He will be great,

be called 'Son of the Highest.'

The Lord God will give him

the throne of his father David;

He will rule Jacob's house forever—

no end, ever, to his kingdom."



Help us, God, to be ready for the surprises that you have in store for each of us and for your church and our ministries at Windsor Presbyterian Church in the coming days. Let us hear the angels words saying to us, "You have nothing to fear." Amen and amen.



Tuesday, December 20 - Matthew 1: 18-21

The birth of Jesus took place like this. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. Before they enjoyed their wedding night, Joseph discovered she was pregnant. (It was by the Holy Spirit, but he didn't know that.) Joseph, chagrined but noble, determined to take care of things quietly so Mary would not be disgraced.

While he was trying to figure a way out, he had a dream. God's angel spoke in the dream: "Joseph, son of David, don't hesitate to get married. Mary's pregnancy is Spirit-conceived. God's Holy Spirit has made her pregnant. She will bring a son to birth, and when she does, you, Joseph, will name him Jesus—'God saves'—because he will save his people from their sins."

Well, they sure make it sound so matter-of-fact; like it was no big deal - 'The birth of Jesus took place like this.' – which I guess babies being born really was a totally natural thing. But the next line – 'There was an engagement.' WHAT? That's usually how you begin to tell a wedding story, NOT a birth story. And then the plot twist – dun, dun, dun – the bride is pregnant! (oh yeah, that was all the Holy Spirit's doing – not anything to do with the fiancé.)

And here's where we learn a bit about Joseph - being the noble man, he was 'determined to take care of things quietly' - what does that even mean? I guess even Joseph wasn't sure, since the scripture says he went to sleep *trying* to figure it out.

Thankfully, God had a plan, as God most always does - sending an angel messenger right to Joseph while he was sleeping, and telling him what to do. "*Joseph, son of David, don't hesitate to get married. Mary's pregnancy is Spirit-conceived. God's Holy Spirit has made her pregnant. She will bring a son to birth, and when she does, you, Joseph, will name him Jesus—'God saves'—because he will save his people from their sins.*" Now that's quite a dream and quite a message.

Have you ever had a time where the story you were living didn't quite follow the path that you'd expected? What did you do? Were you being noble to try to figure it out on your own?

Have you ever had a super clear message given in a dream? What was it like to wake up from that?

I'll admit that often I'm trying to 'figure it out' and do it all on my own. It helps to remember that God has a plan, and it's way better than what I can do solo.

I just need to stop, rest, and take time to listen for the message that is being delivered... in a dream, in a still small voice, in a quiet nudge, from where ever it may come.



God of beginnings and endings, of our everyday life and of the magical stories, remind us that You have a plan for us and for the world, and that we don't have to figure it out on our own. You are there sending us messages – help us to listen and hear and act. Amen.

Wednesday, December 21 - Luke 1: 39-45

Mary didn't waste a minute. She got up and traveled to a town in Judah in the hill country, straight to Zachariah's house, and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby in her womb leaped. She was filled with the Holy Spirit, and sang out exuberantly,

You're so blessed among women,
and the babe in your womb, also blessed!
And why am I so blessed that
the mother of my Lord visits me?
The moment the sound of your
greeting entered my ears,
The babe in my womb
skipped like a lamb for sheer joy.
Blessed woman, who believed what God said,
believed every word would come true!

This may be my favorite Bible story – with so many blessings abounding. The news that Mary has – that she's going to have a baby who will be the Messiah – is truly a blessing, but it is also hard news. She may have been feeling pretty low, wondering how her cousin would react when she answered the door. Would Elizabeth slam it in her face or lecture her about her promiscuity? But no, instead Mary finds someone who will believe her crazy story about angels and God entering the world as a baby.

A friend of mine and I once had an agreement. We said that if we ever told one another that God came and said we were going to immaculately conceive the Messiah we would believe one another, no questions asked. Another part of our agreement was that we swore to never lie about it either. We knew that this particular hard-to-believe story was unlikely, but for me it helped me to know that whatever crazy story I did have, she would believe me in that too. That deep trust in one another became a part of our story.

I think we all have a deep need to know that someone out there will believe us when we're telling the truth. Thank God for the Elizabeths in our own lives.

Dear God, thank you for people I can trust in my life. People who will celebrate with me, even when it all seems unbelievable. And people who will cry with me when it all seems overwhelming. Help me not hold everything inside, but to look for people you place in my path who can share in my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Thursday, December 22 - Luke 2: 1-7

About that time Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. This was the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant.

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel.

Who does not love a birthday story? This story, these words of Jesus' birth are so familiar to us. Mary and Joseph travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem, because of a decree from Rome, and while in Bethlehem, the City of David, Mary gives birth. We often focus on the humble beginning to Jesus' life, or how being born in Bethlehem was a fulfillment of prophesy, but as I read and re-read this passage, I was struck with something new for me.

The journey.

A direct way from Nazareth to Bethlehem is a 4 day walk. But crossing into Samaria, along a direct route, was something most likely Joseph and Mary would want to avoid. Joseph's and Mary's people and Samaritan folks generally did not get along and tended to stay apart from one another. Taking a longer route that avoided Samaria would add days to the walk. And then consider that Mary was VERY pregnant probably meant that the journey would take considerably longer. It is easy to image this journey would have taken the couple a week at least, and quite possibly more. Quite a long journey.

Imagine having to strike out on such a long journey knowing the child you are bearing will be born soon. Imagine a husband worrying all the way if his wife and child would safely make the journey. Imagine all the other questions. It had to be physically hard, mentally taxing, and emotionally draining.

Yet in the end, a child is born safely. Not only a happy ending, but also a very great relief for all concerned.

All our lives are a journey, and sometimes that journey becomes challenging, difficult, uncertain, even scary and threatening at times. Yet as people of faith, we journey on, like Mary and Joseph, and pray for God to give us the strength and courage to see the journey through. And knowing that even when the journey is hard, when the end seems far off, God is not waiting at the end to greet us. Instead, God is with us on the journey.



God, help me in this current journey. Help me know where to pause to rest, when I need to turn a bit, and help me remember wherever I am in my journey, you are with me all along the way. Amen.

Friday, December 23 - Luke 2: 8-14

There were shepherds camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises:
Glory to God in the heavenly heights,
Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.

Shepherds, angels, bright lights blazing in the sky - not exactly a peaceful scene. Shepherds led a quiet life out in the hills with only the sounds of wild animals waiting for a chance to get a stray sheep to satisfy their hunger. There were certainly no street lights or flashlights to brighten the night, but maybe a fire to sit around and for warmth and safety. For most of us just being in the shepherding setting would be terrifying; but for the shepherds this was a normal night, until everything changed. That is the way life is, normal life moving in a normal way - until something changes. What has happened in your life that has stopped you in your tracks - maybe frightened you, terrified you and certainly changed your world; death of a loved one, or a tragic death of a child, the pandemic of Covid, an automobile accident, a random shooting a serious health diagnosis... Maybe it was just a book you read or a conversation that stopped you and shown a bright light into your world. The list of things that happen in life can be big or small but one thing we learn in life is that our world can change in a moment. Like the shepherds we might respond with fright or become terrified or maybe experience a calm sense of awe. I think the shepherds experienced all those emotions in a very short period of time and their reaction was to accept the change and chaos and to follow the instructions of God's angels.

Our job is to also listen and follow when God enters our world and challenges us to move beyond the fear, sadness and chaos. We are challenged to not run away from what is happenings but to discover what God is bringing into our life and into our world. Moments like these call us to not live in fear or denial but to stop, listen, reflect and then to move forward in what God is setting before us. May it be so in my life and yours.

Faithful God, in this Advent season prepare us for your interaction in our lives and in our world. Help us to move beyond disbelief and fear as we continue to learn to trust that you are always with us through the calm, peaceful times as well as in moments of jarring awakenings. May our reactions be pleasing unto you. Amen.



Saturday, December 24 - John 1: 1-5

The Word was first,

the Word present to God, God present to the Word.

The Word was God, in readiness for God from day one.

Everything was created through him;

nothing—not one thing!— came into being without him.

What came into existence was Life, and the Life was Light to live by.

The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn't put it out.

The first chapter of John has been characterized as 'one of the greatest adventures of religious thought ever achieved by the human mind.'

Whether you agree with this statement or not, these verses are so different from what you see in the other gospels. From the very first line, you instinctively sense you need to slow down and pay attention. It has none of the familiar Christmas characters, pageants, carols, or stories. John doesn't deal with shepherds and seems to know nothing of a young mother or magi from the east. Rather, John chooses to focus on the difference this birth makes for all of us. So, on this day before Christmas, you are invited to contemplate a non-sentimental Christmas that fills you with hope and joy the whole year through, once you grasp what is being said!

You hear of Jesus as the Word, not something written or printed but said and experienced, which is spoken from the beginning of creation and echoes back to the first lines of Genesis' creation story. Jesus is God's eternal speech which became flesh and lived among us, coming to be fully part of the world in which you live and serve.

You hear of Jesus as the Light, that shines in the darkness, but is never overcome by it. This God of Light knows you need a Savior that can bring you light that allows you to see through the dark days you might be facing, the despair, doubt, defeats, destruction, and death that is all around you in our

You hear of Jesus as God's love song, singing life into the world's chaos, singing power to bring hope, joy, grace, truth, light, and life to the world. Jesus as the Word speaks and sings God's power into your life – power to create, power over all creation, power to restore you to what God wants you to be as a beloved, perfectly imperfect child of God who has received the greatest gift – love and life everlasting right now.

This gift allows offers you the true power to be creative, authentic, life-giving, loving, joining with God's eternal work to redeem all of creation. You can choose to live each day dwelling in the Word, listening anew for your personal message from the Divine One, and sharing this gift with others you meet. You can choose to live bathed in the streams of light that shine and show you the way forward step by step through the darkness of each day. You can choose to embrace God's love song for you, and celebrate each day in wonder, awe, glee, and giddiness as you realize that you are a divine one as well, born anew this Christmas season!

More than an adventure of the mind, the life you are called to is one of following your heart to the gift only God through Christ's continual presence through Holy Spirit can bring, each and every day!



Loving God,
Help us to slow down and pay attention and embrace the love song that You
have for us this day. Amen.

Christmas Day *Sunday, December 25 - John 1: 14*

The Word became flesh and blood,
and moved into the neighborhood.
We saw the glory with our own eyes,
the one-of-a-kind glory,
like Father, like Son,
Generous inside and out,
true from start to finish.

“Like a good neighbor, State Farm is there....” Can you hear the little jingle in your head? But now instead of State Farm, we can say Je-sus. For the baby has arrived and God has moved into the neighborhood.

This is a neighbor that is here to take care of us. But coming as a baby reminds us that the care is mutual. God doesn't need us to cut the grass or pet sit when the Holy Family is away, but there is tending and caring for our souls that makes the neighborhood of our hearts a good place to dwell.

How will you care for your soul this Christmas season?

O Holy Child of Bethlehem, thank you for being our neighbor. Dwell in our hearts and help us care well for one another and for ourselves this day and always. In your name we pray, Amen.

May your Christmas Day be blessed.