

ADVENT GUIDE

Fort Worth Presbyterian Church

Advent Dates & Services

Sun, Nov 29	First Day of Advent Geneva Benefits Fund Offering
Sat, Dec 5	Women's Christmas Brunch – 10:00 a.m.
Sun, Dec 6	Kids Advent Party – 11:30 a.m.
Fri, Dec 11	Youth Christmas Party – 6-9 p.m.
Sun, Dec 13	Benevolence Fund Offering Lessons & Carols – 5:00 p.m.
Wed, Dec 16	GAP Service Project – 5-6 p.m. GAP Christmas Party – 6-8 p.m.
Thurs, Dec 24	Christmas Eve Service – 5:00 p.m.

Find complete details, registration, and giving links at
fortworthpca.org/advent

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What is Advent?

Definition
The word Advent means "coming" or "arrival." It is the time of year when the Church anticipates two things: the coming holiday in celebration of our King's first arrival as a baby AND the still-to-come final arrival of that same King as the One Victorious over sin and death.

History & Significance
Advent has been observed by the Church since the 4th century. It marks the first day of the Christian New Year. Historically, it has been observed as a time of preparation and anticipation. Similar to the 6-week Lenten journey to Resurrection, Advent is a 4-week journey to Christmas that is spent reflecting on the reality of Christ's first coming in order to strengthen our hope in His return (Second Advent).

Practices & Observances
Because it is a time of waiting or anticipation of the arrival of The King, observing Advent historically involves practices that cultivate expectant or patient waiting. We look at particular aspects of Christ's character and his intent for his world and find ways to ponder how we have failed, to practice repentance, and intentionally implement practices that will prepare our hearts and bodies for His Second Advent as King in all glory!

Active Waiting

Devotional Thought for Nov. 29, Christian New Year

No one likes to wait. This is especially true for those surrounded by modern conveniences. Yet, God in his grace, has placed his people in a life of waiting – namely of waiting for him to fulfill the redemption he began with the sending of his Son. The season of Advent has traditionally been referred to as a time of cultivating the virtue of active waiting. But how do we do this?

> We remember in Advent, the time of waiting before the birth of Jesus. And we remember that time of waiting… as a time when people were waiting, indeed longing, for something that would change everything, and at the same time, not quite knowing what that something would be. During Advent, Christians go back to that time of waiting. – Rowan Williams

First, by *remembering*. During the season of Advent, we intentionally remember the past fulfillment of God's promises. Throughout the Old Testament, God promised to send a deliverer to rescue his people. For this promise, His people waited and waited and waited. With the humble advent of Jesus, His Son, God kept his promise. It is in Jesus that we have been delivered from our sin, the power of the devil, and the reign of darkness. It is this past advent upon which our lives are now built and out of which we currently live. So, during Advent, spend time looking back, studying the OT stories and promises for the purpose of remembering with thanksgiving.

But Advent isn't simply about remembering, it is also about *looking forward*. For the same Jesus who came in humility will come again (Second Advent) in glory to bring about the full realization of His redemption. It is this future upon which we set our hope. One day we will see Jesus face to face and all will be as it should be – new and right. So Advent is also a time to ponder the hope we have because of Christ's first Advent.

Remembering and Looking Forward: Only when the past and future are held together can we learn to live thankfully, hopefully, and confidently in the present with our lives set on and by Jesus. The Daily Prayers and Scripture Readings in this booklet are intended to help us cultivate the grace of waiting. The meditations on pages 5-6 can be used each week of Advent as a starting place to think through how this season can help us see our past history and future hope as tools to live faithfully in the present.

Advent Topics for Meditation

Below is a brief explanation of the theme of each week of Advent. Use these thoughts, along with the Scripture readings, to discuss with your family and/or friends how these themes of Scripture shape our lives as Christians.

Week 1: Prophecy/Rescue

The first week of Advent focuses on all of the Old Testament prophecies or promises God gave to His people. He told them over and over in many different ways that He was going to save them from sin and all the effects sin has had on the world including death. In all of God's promises and rescue operations (from Egypt, David from Saul, Daniel from lions, the nation from Goliath, Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego from the furnace, etc.) He was always showing His people that He loved them, that He would never abandon them and that He was going to save them fully from everything that held them captive and threatened to undo them.

Week 2: Bethlehem/Humility

During the second week of Advent we focus on the *way* God keeps his promises. Unlike the "power" of the world, God shows His power through serving. We read in Philippians that even though Jesus was equal with God, he wasn't focused on his rights and privileges. Rather, for love of His Father, He laid aside everything to which he had a right. And in Romans we hear that God is working ALL things together for our good and his glory. All things includes even the place and the way in which Jesus enters humanity – through a tiny town, in an animal trough, in a barn – in complete humility, holding on to NOTHING that he deserved. The servant is not greater than the master. In other words, the entry point into his family for us is humility – holding onto NOTHING to which we think we have a "right." And this is also the path on which we continue our whole lives. The life of the Christian is to be a life of humble service in our King's world because our King first served us holding nothing back. Like our King, we are to look at the things we have and ask how we might use them to serve others.

Week 3: Shepherds/Joy

After pondering God's promises of rescue and the way in which he came to enact that rescue, we should be led to sing praises with joy. God has done what he said. And He has done so in a way that brings hope for salvation from sin and misery to even the lowliest. With the shepherds who were found standing in a darkened countryside, we have heard the news proclaimed from heaven. We have seen him lying in the manger. We have believed Jesus is the fulfillment of all God's promises of salvation. And we have an even better vantage point than the shepherds because we have seen the rest of the story of Jesus' life. We know that death unleashes its greatest anger and power upon this servant King, and He does not fight back but rather receives the blows on behalf of all humanity. And then we see Him get up – even from death! Sin, where is your power? Death where is your victory? "Joy to the world; the Savior reigns; let men their songs employ while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy!"

Week 4: Angels/Peace

In the final week of Advent, it is good to focus on what all this means for us now. God, through the keeping of His promises has brought life to those who were dead, power over reigning sin, given us an inheritance in his world, his Kingdom without end. All of this could be summed up in this statement: God has made peace between heaven and earth. As we look around at the world in which we live, it may not seem like this is true. We not only see literal wars, but all kinds of ugliness, pain, and sorrow that belong to sin and death. This is where Christians have the joyful duty of being ambassadors for The Kingdom. We, who were formerly enemies of God, have peace with Him through Christ, The King. Now, we get to live in the sure hope of what that peace will mean when He comes again in glory. We live our lives in an effort to show forth the peace of Christ to everyone we encounter. Sing with joy, grieve with hope, live in every promise of His Word.

Prayers for the Morning

Opening Prayer
In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Psalm 145:1-3
I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.

Alternative – Psalm 5:1-3
Give ear to my words, O LORD: consider my groaning. Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray. O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch**.**

Confession of Sin – Psalm 51:1-2
Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

Daily Scripture Readings for the Season

Monday: Isaiah 9:1-7	Thursday: 2 Timothy 4:6-8
Tuesday: Isaiah 11:1-9	Friday: 2 Corinthians 5:1-10
Wednesday: Romans 13:8-14	Saturday: Revelation 22:20

A period of silence follows.

Intercessory Prayer – Prayers for Ourselves, Our Church, Our Neighbors, and Our World

The Lord's Prayer

Prayer for the Season
O Lord, our Heavenly Father, during this season of Advent, may our eyes be fixed on Christ who came for our salvation and who will come again to make all things right and new. Open our eyes to see the beauty of his incarnation that we might know more and more that he is our Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.

Prayers for Midday

Opening Prayer
Our help is in the name of the LORD, for he is the Maker of Heaven and earth.

Psalm 113:1-4
Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD! Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and forevermore! From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the LORD is to be praised! The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens!

Confession of Sin – Psalm 51:12-15
Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

A period of silence follows.

A Reading from Holy Scripture – 2 Corinthians 8:9
For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

The Lord's Prayer

Prayer for the Season
O Lord, our Heavenly Father, during this season of Advent, may our eyes be fixed on Christ who came for our salvation and who will come again to make all things right and new. Open our eyes to see the beauty of his incarnation that we might know more and more that he is our Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.

Prayers for Early Evening

Opening Prayer
Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.

Psalm 36:7-9
How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.

Confession of Sin – Psalm 6:1-3
O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath. Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled. My soul is also greatly troubled. But you, O LORD – how long?

Daily Scripture Readings for the Season

Monday: Isaiah 9:1-7	Thursday: 2 Timothy 4:6-8
Tuesday: Isaiah 11:1-9	Friday: 2 Corinthians 5:1-10
Wednesday: Romans 13:8-14	Saturday: Revelation 22:20

A period of silence follows.

Intercessory Prayer – Prayers for Ourselves, Our Church, Our Neighbors, and Our World

The Lord's Prayer

Song of the Season
The songs of the season are found on pages 13-14.

Prayer for the Season
O Lord, our Heavenly Father, during this season of Advent, may our eyes be fixed on Christ who came for our salvation and who will come again to make all things right and new. Open our eyes to see the beauty of his incarnation that we might know more and more that he is our Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.

Prayers for the Close of the Day

Opening Prayer
In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

Psalm 134
Come, bless the LORD, all you servants of the LORD, who stand by night in the house of the LORD! Lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the LORD! May the LORD bless you from Zion, he who made heaven and earth!

A Reading from Holy Scripture – Isaiah 26:3-4
You keep them in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because they trust in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.

A period of silence follows.

The Apostles' Creed
The Apostles' Creed is found on page 12.

Prayer for the Season
O Lord, our Heavenly Father, during this season of Advent, may our eyes be fixed on Christ who came for our salvation and who will come again to make all things right and new. Open our eyes to see the beauty of his incarnation that we might know more and more that he is our Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.

Christmas Eve Prayers

Leader: In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

All: Glory to You, O Lord, glory to You!

Leader: O Heavenly Spirit of Truth, our Comforter, Come and dwell in us and cleanse us from every stain, and save our lives, O Gracious Lord.

All Sing: The Gloria

All: Lord, have mercy. Christ have mercy! Lord have mercy!!

Morning Scripture Memory: Psalm 3:5
Evening Scripture Memory: Psalm 4:8

All: The Lord's Prayer

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-20

All: The Apostles' Creed

All Sing: O Come, O Come Emmanuel *and/or*
Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus *(found on page 13-14)*

All: Come quickly, Lord Jesus.
Come quickly, Lord Jesus!
Come quickly, Lord Jesus!!

Creeds & Refrains

The Gloria

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, it is now and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended into hell.†
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven,
and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From there he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic‡ church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

† By referring to Jesus's descent into hell, the Christian embraces two truths. First, Jesus suffered the anguish and pain of hell on behalf of his people while on the cross. Secondly, Jesus experienced the reign of death by remaining in the tomb after the crucifixion.

‡ The term "catholic" refers to the universal and true church, meaning that Christ's church has no temporal, racial, economic, geographic, or language barriers and that His church adheres to the doctrine confessed by the early church councils.

Songs of the Season

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny
From depths of hell Thy people save
And give them victory o'er the grave
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Day-Spring, 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 thee, O Israel.

O 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.

O come, O come, Thou Lord of Might,
Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times did'st give the Law
In cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

Come, thou long expected Jesus,
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us,
Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever,
Now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By thine all sufficient merit,
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

Come Light Our Hearts

For you O Lord, our souls in stillness wait.
For you O Lord, our souls in stillness wait.
Truly our hope is in You. Truly our hope is in You.

O Lord of life our only hope
Your radiance shines on all who look to you in the dark,
Emmanuel come, come light our hearts.

For you O Lord, our souls in stillness wait.
For you O Lord, our souls in stillness wait.
Truly our hope is in You. Truly our hope is in You.

O joy above all other loves
In You we find more than enough, we come as we are,
O heal and restore, come light our hearts.

Advent Music Resources

Hosanna, Loud Hosannas Student Hymnal
published by David and Barbara Leeman

A Seed, A Sunrise
an album by Caroline Cobb

A Star, A Star
an album by The Walla Recovery

Advent Songs
an album by The Porter's Gate

Behold the Lamb of God
an album presented by Andrew Peterson

Firstborn & Hymns II
albums by Poor Bishop Hooper

Jesus, Coming Light
an album by 1517 Music

Waiting Songs
an album by Rain for Roots

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