

# A Journey of Wonder Advent 2020

In Advent, we begin a new year in the church calendar. We begin with hope, with promise, with longing. We begin in faith knowing that God is true to His Word and His Promises. And yet, we look and recognize all that is not right in the world around us. We hold in one hand the hope and glory of the eternal Kingdom of God and in the other the temporal brokenness of our human experience.

Over the next several weeks of Advent, I invite you to walk with us in a journey of reflection and expectation as we follow the lights of the Advent wreath as they guide us to *Look Back to the Story with the Patriarchs*, *Look into the Vision with the Prophets*, *Look Around for the Kingdom with John the Baptist*, and *Look Ahead to the King with Mary*.

As we light the Advent candle each Sunday, we welcome and anticipate the journey ahead. We introduce the weekly Candle Prayer, look ahead to our walk, and prepare ourselves with one of the songs from Scripture called Canticles from the Daily Office.

Our weekday liturgy begins with **Invitation and Preparation** as we say together, “*O God, make speed to save us; O Lord, make haste to help us.*” We follow the invitation with the Candle Prayer for the week. Next, we **Listen and Receive** the Word of God. Then we **Reflect and Respond** to God’s Word at work in and among us. We close our weekday liturgy as we are **Blessed and Sent** to carry the light of Advent into the world.

Our week concludes on Saturday with the sabbath invitation to rest and delight in the Lord. We bid farewell to our week resting in the same Canticle which began our week, delighting in the recollection of our journey, and praying the Candle Prayer one last time for the week.

Grace and Peace,  
Rob+

# A Road Map for Our Journey

## Look Back to the Story - The First Week of Advent

- Sunday - Walking with the Patriarchs
- Monday - Answering the Call
- Tuesday - Holding Fast to the Promises
- Wednesday - Hoping Beyond the Impossible
- Thursday - Walking the Way of Reconciliation
- Friday - Responding in Worship
- Saturday - Bidding Fond Farewell to the Patriarchs

## Look into the Vision - The Second Week in Advent

- Sunday - Walking with the Prophets
- Monday - A Vision of God With Us
- Tuesday - A Vision of Light in the Darkness
- Wednesday - A Vision of the Coming Kingdom
- Thursday - A Vision of Humility
- Friday - A Vision of the Church
- Saturday - Bidding Fond Farewell to the Prophets

## Look Around for the Kingdom - The Third Week of Advent

- Sunday - Walking with John the Baptist
- Monday - Accepting a Divine Mission
- Tuesday - Possessing and Uncomfortable Truth
- Wednesday - Sharing the Good News
- Thursday - Seeking the Kingdom in Community
- Friday - Building a Kingdom Legacy
- Saturday - Bidding Fond Farewell to John the Baptist

## Look Ahead to the Coming King - The Fourth Week of Advent

- Sunday - Walking with Mary
- Monday - Something Worth Treasuring
- Tuesday - Someone Worth Loving
- Wednesday - An Image Worth Bearing
- Christmas Eve - Welcoming Jesus as the Coming King

**Look Back to the Story - The First Week of Advent**  
**Walking with the Patriarchs**  
**The First Sunday in Advent**

Today we light the first candle of Advent.

**Let us Pray**

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors: to you be praise and glory for ever. You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfillment. May we be obedient to your call and be ready and watchful to receive your Christ, a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; for you are our light and our salvation. Amen.

**Let us Walk**

We walk this week with the patriarchs, the fathers of the nation of Israel. The story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob guided and shaped the people of Israel as they were formed into a nation. As we journey through this week, I wonder what stories bring your family together? Who in your life has inspired your faith? What connections do you see between your story and the Great Story of God and His Creation?

**Let us Prepare**

Let us prepare for the week with this Canticle from Morning Prayer

TE DEUM LAUDAMUS

We praise you, O God; we acclaim you as Lord; \*  
all creation worships you, the Father everlasting.  
To you all angels, all the powers of heaven, \*  
the cherubim and seraphim, sing in endless praise:  
Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of power and might, \*  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
The glorious company of apostles praise you. \*  
The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.  
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you. \*  
Throughout the world the holy Church acclaim you:  
Father, of majesty unbounded,  
your true and only Son, worthy of all praise, \*  
and the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide.  
You, Christ, are the king of glory, \*  
the eternal Son of the Father.  
When you took our flesh to set us free \*  
you humbly chose the Virgin's womb.  
You overcame the sting of death \*  
and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.  
You are seated at God's right hand in glory. \*  
We believe that you will come to be our judge.  
Come then, Lord, and help your people, \*  
bought with the price of your own blood,  
and bring us with your saints \*  
to glory everlasting.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

## **Answering the Call**

### **Monday - First Week of Advent**

#### **Invitation and Preparation**

O God, make speed to save us  
O Lord, make haste to help us

(Silence)

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors: to you be praise and glory for ever. You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfillment. May we be obedient to your call and be ready and watchful to receive your Christ, a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; for you are our light and our salvation. Amen.

#### **Listen and Receive**

*Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

Genesis 12:1-3

May the Word of God rest gently on our hearts, that when our hearts break the Word of God may flow in.

(Silence)

#### **Reflect and Respond**

God speaks to Abram and disrupts his comfort with a call to step out in faith. God invites Abram to participate in the Great Story. Abram must choose between the comfortable life that he is enjoying in Haran and the difficult journey to a distant land, a land unknown and unspoken, a journey of faith into the promised blessing of God.

God may not be calling us to found nations, but He does still call us to walk in faith, stepping out of our comfort and into the Great Story.

I wonder, how might God be calling you in this season to live by the light of faith and journey in hope? In what ways are you resisting? In what ways are you following?

#### **Blessed and Sent**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

In this season of light, may your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

## Holding Fast to the Promises Tuesday - First Week of Advent

### **Invitation and Preparation**

O God, make speed to save us  
O Lord, make haste to help us

(Silence)

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors: to you be praise and glory for ever. You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfillment. May we be obedient to your call and be ready and watchful to receive your Christ, a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; for you are our light and our salvation. Amen.

### **Listen and Receive**

*Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."*

Genesis 17:3-8

May the Word of God rest gently on our hearts, that when our hearts break the Word of God may flow in.

(Silence)

### **Reflect and Respond**

Abram has followed God and found the outward trappings of success in the new land. He has wealth and strength, but his wife Sarai has borne no children. He is ninety-nine years old when once more God appears to him and promises that he will be exceedingly fruitful, the father of kings and nations.

It is often difficult to hold onto the promises of God when it seems that hope is lost, when reason tells us that that it is impossible, and doubt and fear conspire against us telling us to just give up.

I wonder, as you consider whatever may be "missing" in your life, the hope or dream as yet unfulfilled, what promise of God can you cling to? How might you be watchful and waiting to receive God's improbable or even impossible answer to your prayers?

### **Blessed and Sent**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

In this season of light, may your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

## Hoping Beyond the Impossible Wednesday - First Week of Advent

### **Invitation and Preparation**

O God, make speed to save us  
O Lord, make haste to help us

(Silence)

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors: to you be praise and glory for ever. You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfillment. May we be obedient to your call and be ready and watchful to receive your Christ, a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; for you are our light and our salvation. Amen.

### **Listen and Receive**

*And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."*

Genesis 22:15-18

May the Word of God rest gently on our hearts, that when our hearts break the Word of God may flow in.

(Silence)

### **Reflect and Respond**

God has given Abraham a miraculous son, the answer to all of Abraham's prayers and the fulfillment of all of God's promises, and now God calls Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. With faith in God's promise, Abraham obediently brings Isaac to the mountain where he prepares to make this unfathomable sacrifice, but the angel of the Lord stays his hand at the last moment and shows Abraham the ram for the sacrifice that God provided. Abraham walk in faith and so enters into the blessing that God has prepared.

While there are many aspects of this story that are foreign to our culture and in fact beyond our imagination, God still invites us to walk in faith even when it seems impossible, God still provides even when it seems hopeless, and we still walk in the blessing that God has prepared when we let Him guide our feet.

I wonder, in what way might God be inviting you to be obedient to His call, to step out in faith, to offer up something that you hold precious? In what way might God be inviting you to walk into the blessing that He has already prepared for you?

### **Blessed and Sent**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

In this season of light, may your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

## Walking the Way of Reconciliation Thursday - First Week of Advent

### **Invitation and Preparation**

O God, make speed to save us  
O Lord, make haste to help us

(Silence)

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors: to you be praise and glory for ever. You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfillment. May we be obedient to your call and be ready and watchful to receive your Christ, a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; for you are our light and our salvation. Amen.

### **Listen and Receive**

*And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,' I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps. Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children. But you said, 'I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'"*

Genesis 32:9-12

May the Word of God rest gently on our hearts, that when our hearts break the Word of God may flow in.

(Silence)

### **Reflect and Respond**

Jacob, Isaac's son, Abraham's grandson, has spent 14 years estranged from his brother, Esau. Jacob took Esau's birthright and blessing by trickery. He has made a name and a family for himself in a distant land, but now he wishes to return. He can not fathom forgiveness or reconciliation with his brother, and yet he trusts God to guide his feet.

Broken relationships, particularly among family, can seem irreparable. We can get stuck in our own guilt or in our own anger. We can let fear immobilize us. Yet the God of our salvation calls us to pray and walk in the way of reconciliation.

I wonder, are there relationships within your family or close friends that seem irreparable? How might God be inviting you to pray and walk in the way of reconciliation?

### **Blessed and Sent**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

In this season of light, may your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

## Responding in Worship Friday - First Week of Advent

### **Invitation and Preparation**

O God, make speed to save us  
O Lord, make haste to help us

(Silence)

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors: to you be praise and glory for ever. You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfillment. May we be obedient to your call and be ready and watchful to receive your Christ, a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; for you are our light and our salvation. Amen.

### **Listen and Receive**

*God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." So he called his name Israel. And God said to him, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you." Then God went up from him in the place where he had spoken with him. And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone. He poured out a drink offering on it and poured oil on it. So Jacob called the name of the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.*

Genesis 35:9-15

May the Word of God rest gently on our hearts, that when our hearts break the Word of God may flow in.

(Silence)

### **Reflect and Respond**

There is once again trouble and Jacob is fearful of the people around him. God again calls to Jacob, and Jacob and his household put away their idols and foreign gods and travel once again to the place where Jacob prayed before meeting Esau. God meets Jacob once more. He gives Jacob a new name and reassures Jacob of both the power of God and the promise of God. Jacob responds in worship.

In this time of disruption and uncertainty, it is easy for us to be afraid. However, even in our fear, God calls us to come and meet him, to cast away the idols and foreign gods that we carry around with us, the idols of money, status, power, lust, and greed, to come to him and receive our name, to hear God call us "Beloved," to be reminded of the mighty power and steadfast promise of God, and to respond in worship.

I wonder, how might God be calling you?

### **Blessed and Sent**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

In this season of light, may your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

## **Bidding Fond Farewell to the Patriarchs** **Saturday - First Week of Advent**

On this last day of the week as we rest and delight in the Lord, let us recall our journey this week.

### **Let Us Rest**

Let us rest once more in this Canticle from Morning Prayer

TE DEUM LAUDAMUS

We praise you, O God; we acclaim you as Lord; \*  
all creation worships you, the Father everlasting.  
To you all angels, all the powers of heaven, \*  
the cherubim and seraphim, sing in endless praise:  
Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of power and might, \*  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
The glorious company of apostles praise you. \*  
The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.  
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you. \*  
Throughout the world the holy Church acclaim you:  
Father, of majesty unbounded,  
your true and only Son, worthy of all praise, \*  
and the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide.  
You, Christ, are the king of glory, \*  
the eternal Son of the Father.  
When you took our flesh to set us free \*  
you humbly chose the Virgin's womb.  
You overcame the sting of death \*  
and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.  
You are seated at God's right hand in glory. \*  
We believe that you will come to be our judge.  
Come then, Lord, and help your people, \*  
bought with the price of your own blood,  
and bring us with your saints \*  
to glory everlasting.

### **Let us Delight**

Let us delight in our walk this week with the patriarchs, the fathers of the nation of Israel. Let us recall with wonder the stories that bring our family together, the people who inspire our faith, and the ways in which our own story is connected to the Great Story of God and His Creation.

### **Let us Pray**

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors: to you be praise and glory for ever. You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfillment. May we be obedient to your call and be ready and watchful to receive your Christ, a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; for you are our light and our salvation. Amen.

**Look into the Vision - The Second Week in Advent**  
**Walking with the Prophets**  
**The Second Sunday in Advent**

Today we light our second Advent candle.

**Let us Pray**

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Of old you spoke by the mouth of your prophets, but in our days you speak through your Son, whom you have appointed the heir of all things. Grant us, your people, to walk in his light, that we may be found ready and watching when he comes again in glory and judgement; for you are our light and our salvation. Amen.

**Let us Walk**

We walk this week with the prophets, those called by God to speak the Truth of God to the People of God. We walk with Isaiah who spoke to a rebellious people facing exile. Isaiah upholds a vision of salvation in the coming of the Messiah. As we journey through this week, I wonder what prophets you may know? Who speaks the Truth of God, His promises as well as His righteousness, to you? How do you respond?

**Let us Prepare**

Let us prepare for the week with this Canticle from The Daily Office

ECCE, DEUS

Surely, it is God who saves me; \*  
I will trust in him and not be afraid.  
For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, \*  
and he will be my Savior.  
Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing \*  
from the springs of salvation.  
And on that day you shall say, \*  
Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name;  
Make his deeds known among the peoples; \*  
see that they remember that his Name is exalted.  
Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great things, \*  
and this is known in all the world.  
Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy, \*  
for the great one in the midst of you is the Holy One of Israel.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

## **A Vision of God With Us**

### **Monday - Second Week of Advent**

#### **Invitation and Preparation**

O God, make speed to save us  
O Lord, make haste to help us

(Silence)

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Of old you spoke by the mouth of your prophets, but in our days you speak through your Son, whom you have appointed the heir of all things. Grant us, your people, to walk in his light, that we may be found ready and watching when he comes again in glory and judgement; for you are our light and our salvation. Amen.

#### **Listen and Receive**

*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
because the Lord has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor;  
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
to grant to those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;  
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.*  
Isaiah 61:1-3

May the Word of God rest gently on our hearts, that when our hearts break the Word of God may flow in.

(Silence)

#### **Reflect and Respond**

It is with this passage from Isaiah's prophecy that Jesus initiates His ministry in his own hometown. This message of healing and restoration, of wholeness and salvation, becomes the theme of Luke's account of the ministry of Christ and the ministry of the Apostles.

We live in a time in between, the time between the initiation of the Kingdom of God in Jesus and the fullness of our life in the Kingdom when Christ returns. We can easily forget that Jesus boldly proclaimed that this prophecy had been fulfilled in Him. We can easily forget that Jesus is Emmanuel, God with Us.

I wonder, in this in between time, in what ways do you experience the presence of God? In what ways might God be inviting you to experience healing and restoration?

#### **Blessed and Sent**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

In this season of light, may your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

## A Vision of Light in the Darkness Tuesday - Second Week of Advent

### **Invitation and Preparation**

O God, make speed to save us  
O Lord, make haste to help us

(Silence)

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Of old you spoke by the mouth of your prophets, but in our days you speak through your Son, whom you have appointed the heir of all things. Grant us, your people, to walk in his light, that we may be found ready and watching when he comes again in glory and judgement; for you are our light and our salvation. Amen.

### **Listen and Receive**

*But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.*

*The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,  
on them has light shone.  
You have multiplied the nation;  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.  
For the yoke of his burden,  
and the staff for his shoulder,  
the rod of his oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.  
Isaiah 9:1-4*

May the Word of God rest gently on our hearts, that when our hearts break the Word of God may flow in.

(Silence)

### **Reflect and Respond**

Again, Isaiah draws us into the hope of the Messiah, a hope that shines as light in the darkness and freedom for the oppressed. This is a hope that changes contempt into glory and suffering into joy.

In this season, the darkness that holds the world captive is evident every time we turn on the news. The fear, deception, and hatred that bring contempt and oppression surround us. If we look, we can see them in our neighborhoods, on social media, and even in ourselves.

I wonder, what darkness, fear, or oppression threatens you? How might the Light of Christ bring freedom, glory, and rejoicing even in our present struggle?

### **Blessed and Sent**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

In this season of light, may your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

## A Vision of the Coming Kingdom Wednesday - Second Week of Advent

### **Invitation and Preparation**

O God, make speed to save us  
O Lord, make haste to help us

(Silence)

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Of old you spoke by the mouth of your prophets, but in our days you speak through your Son, whom you have appointed the heir of all things. Grant us, your people, to walk in his light, that we may be found ready and watching when he comes again in glory and judgement; for you are our light and our salvation. Amen.

### **Listen and Receive**

*For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
Of the increase of his government and of peace  
there will be no end,  
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,  
to establish it and to uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time forth and forevermore.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*  
Isaiah 9:6-7

May the Word of God rest gently on our hearts, that when our hearts break the Word of God may flow in.

(Silence)

### **Reflect and Respond**

Isaiah gives us a vision of the sovereign reign of the Lord, the time when the Kingdom of God is established forever. We find here names for the Messiah - Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. We also find the promise of true peace, *shalom*, under the gracious rule of God.

It is difficult for me to read this passage without hearing the glorious music of Handel's *Messiah*. The Biblical prophecy and musical vision stir my heart and bring tears to my eyes. Deep within me, I recognize the truth and the promise of God's sovereignty, His justice and righteousness, His love and His zeal.

I wonder, as you consider the great majesty of God, in what way might He be inviting you to participate in the *shalom* of the Kingdom of God?

### **Blessed and Sent**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

In this season of light, may your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

## **A Vision of Humility**

### **Thursday - Second Week of Advent**

#### **Invitation and Preparation**

O God, make speed to save us  
O Lord, make haste to help us

(Silence)

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Of old you spoke by the mouth of your prophets, but in our days you speak through your Son, whom you have appointed the heir of all things. Grant us, your people, to walk in his light, that we may be found ready and watching when he comes again in glory and judgement; for you are our light and our salvation. Amen.

#### **Listen and Receive**

*Behold my servant, whom I uphold,  
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;  
I have put my Spirit upon him;  
he will bring forth justice to the nations.  
He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice,  
or make it heard in the street;  
a bruised reed he will not break,  
and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;  
he will faithfully bring forth justice.  
He will not grow faint or be discouraged  
till he has established justice in the earth;  
and the coastlands wait for his law.*

Isaiah 42:1-4

May the Word of God rest gently on our hearts, that when our hearts break the Word of God may flow in.

(Silence)

#### **Reflect and Respond**

In this first of four servant songs, Isaiah gives us a different picture of the coming Messiah. The glory and power remain. The mission of justice, faithfulness, and righteousness are unchanged. A new element of gentle humility is introduced to the Messianic character.

Humility and gentleness seem to be lost virtues in our society. Quiet presence and deep listening are crowded out by the noise and commotion of our culture of instant gratification, incessant competition, and sound bite laden discourse.

I wonder, in what ways might God be inviting you to humility and gentleness? To whom might God be inviting you to be fully present and listen?

#### **Blessed and Sent**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

In this season of light, may your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

## A Vision of the Church Friday - Second Week of Advent

### **Invitation and Preparation**

O God, make speed to save us  
O Lord, make haste to help us

(Silence)

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Of old you spoke by the mouth of your prophets, but in our days you speak through your Son, whom you have appointed the heir of all things. Grant us, your people, to walk in his light, that we may be found ready and watching when he comes again in glory and judgement; for you are our light and our salvation. Amen.

### **Listen and Receive**

*There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.  
And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,  
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and might,  
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.  
And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.  
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,  
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.  
Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,  
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.*

Isaiah 11:1-5

May the Word of God rest gently on our hearts, that when our hearts break the Word of God may flow in.

(Silence)

### **Reflect and Respond**

Isaiah gives us a prophetic vision of the coming Messiah, a vision of power and justice. This is the righteous power to redeem and restore, but this is not wanton power. This is the power that knows and delights in the sovereign majesty of the Living God.

Jesus fulfilled this prophecy in the Incarnation. This prophecy continues to be manifest in the Body of Christ, the Church. Finally, this prophecy will be fulfilled when Christ comes again in the fullness of His Glory.

I wonder, as the Spirit of the Lord rests now upon the Church, how are you being joined together in one Body and empowered to bring redemption and restoration, truth and equity, justice and righteousness? In what ways are you resisting? In what ways are you following?

### **Blessed and Sent**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

In this season of light, may your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

## **Bidding Fond Farewell to the Prophets** **Saturday - Second Week of Advent**

On this last day of the week as we rest and delight in the Lord, let us recall our journey this week.

### **Let us Rest**

Let us rest once more in this Canticle from The Daily Office

ECCE, DEUS

Surely, it is God who saves me; \*  
I will trust in him and not be afraid.  
For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, \*  
and he will be my Savior.  
Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing \*  
from the springs of salvation.  
And on that day you shall say, \*  
Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name;  
Make his deeds known among the peoples; \*  
see that they remember that his Name is exalted.  
Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great things, \*  
and this is known in all the world.  
Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy, \*  
for the great one in the midst of you is the Holy One of Israel.

### **Let us Delight**

Let us delight once more in our walk with with Isaiah and the vision of salvation in the coming of the Messiah. Let us recall with wonder the prophets we may know, the way in which they speak the Truth of God to us, and may we respond in hope as we look into the glorious vision of the Kingdom.

### **Let us pray**

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Of old you spoke by the mouth of your prophets, but in our days you speak through your Son, whom you have appointed the heir of all things. Grant us, your people, to walk in his light, that we may be found ready and watching when he comes again in glory and judgement; for you are our light and our salvation. Amen.

**Look Around for the Kingdom - The Third Week of Advent**  
**Walking with John the Baptist**  
**The Third Sunday in Advent**

Today we light our third Advent candle.

**Let us Pray**

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your prophet John the Baptist was witness to the truth as a burning and shining light. May we your servants rejoice in his light, and so be led to witness to him who is the Lord of our coming kingdom, Jesus our Savior and King of the ages. Amen.

**Let us Walk**

We walk this week with John the Baptist, the one sent to prepare the way for the promised Messiah. As we look expectantly around us this week, I wonder, who prepared you to know the way of Jesus? In what ways are you preparing yourself, your family, and your community in this season? How might you be encountering the unexpected presence of Christ? In what ways are you being challenged? In what ways are you finding hope?

**Let us Prepare**

Let us prepare for the week with this Canticle from Morning Prayer

BENEDICTUS - The Song of Zechariah

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; \*  
he has come to his people and set them free.  
He has raised up for us a mighty savior, \*  
born of the house of his servant David.  
Through his holy prophets he promised of old that he would save us from our enemies, \*  
from the hands of all who hate us.  
He promised to show mercy to our fathers \*  
and to remember his holy covenant.  
This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham, \*  
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,  
Free to worship him without fear, \*  
holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.  
You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, \*  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,  
To give his people knowledge of salvation \*  
by the forgiveness of their sins.  
In the tender compassion of our God \*  
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,  
To shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death, \*  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

## Accepting a Divine Mission Monday - Third Week of Advent

### **Invitation and Preparation**

O God, make speed to save us  
O Lord, make haste to help us

(Silence)

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your prophet John the Baptist was witness to the truth as a burning and shining light. May we your servants rejoice in his light, and so be led to witness to him who is the Lord of our coming kingdom, Jesus our Savior and King of the ages. Amen.

### **Listen and Receive**

*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.*

John 1:6-8

May the Word of God rest gently on our hearts, that when our hearts break the Word of God may flow in.

(Silence)

### **Reflect and Respond**

John is sent on a divine mission. He comes to bear witness to the Light that is coming to the world in Jesus, the Light of Truth and Life, the Light which shines brightly even in the darkest of dark. This is the Light which overcomes and defeats darkness. John also knows that he is not the Light and in himself can not provide this light.

This same Light still shines. It is by this Light that we see that we are indeed children of Light. This Light brings hope and grace into even our darkest troubles. Even twenty centuries later with all of our knowledge and technology, we are not the Light and we remain dependent on Christ for this Light.

I wonder, in what ways are you encountering the true Light?

### **Blessed and Sent**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

In this season of light, may your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

## Possessing an Uncomfortable Truth Tuesday - Third Week of Advent

### **Invitation and Preparation**

O God, make speed to save us  
O Lord, make haste to help us

(Silence)

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your prophet John the Baptist was witness to the truth as a burning and shining light. May we your servants rejoice in his light, and so be led to witness to him who is the Lord of our coming kingdom, Jesus our Savior and King of the ages. Amen.

### **Listen and Receive**

*John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

Mark 1:4-8

May the Word of God rest gently on our hearts, that when our hearts break the Word of God may flow in.

(Silence)

### **Reflect and Respond**

John comes with an uncomfortable message, "Repent!" He lives an uncomfortable life in the wilderness, the lonely life of a prophet. He has come to the uncomfortable truth that he is not enough but is dependent on someone mightier than he. Yet, this is also a message of comfort, "Come and receive forgiveness." It is a life of some comfort, trusting and dependent on the provision and company of God. It is a truth of some comfort, that everything is not on his shoulders.

We have much in common with John as we rejoice in the uncomfortable yet comfortable way as citizens of the Kingdom, alien yet present to the world around us. We bear witness to a reality that the world around us does not see, and we hope for a future in the coming of our Lord that stands contrary to much of what those around us would consider comfortable.

I wonder, in what ways God is inviting you to find comfort in the uncomfortable?

### **Blessed and Sent**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

In this season of light, may your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

## **Sharing the Good News** **Wednesday - Third Week of Advent**

### **Invitation and Preparation**

O God, make speed to save us  
O Lord, make haste to help us

(Silence)

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your prophet John the Baptist was witness to the truth as a burning and shining light. May we your servants rejoice in his light, and so be led to witness to him who is the Lord of our coming kingdom, Jesus our Savior and King of the ages. Amen.

### **Listen and Receive**

*The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."*

John 1:29-34

May the Word of God rest gently on our hearts, that when our hearts break the Word of God may flow in.

(Silence)

### **Reflect and Respond**

John the Baptist, the one sent to prepare the way for the Lord, sees Jesus and recognizes Him. In a moment of clarity, John knows his purpose and sees it fulfilled, and John has a story to tell, "I have seen it with my own eyes and now I want you to know as well. This Jesus who stands among you is the Son of God. He is the one who comes to baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

What pure joy we have when Jesus is revealed to us. What clarity we find in His light. What comfort when we hear Him call us his beloved. What peace we have in the Holy Spirit. What a story we have to tell.

I wonder, what story are you telling? What have you seen? Who do you want to tell about the Son of God?

### **Blessed and Sent**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

In this season of light, may your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

## Seeking the Kingdom in Community Thursday - Third Week of Advent

### **Invitation and Preparation**

O God, make speed to save us  
O Lord, make haste to help us

(Silence)

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your prophet John the Baptist was witness to the truth as a burning and shining light. May we your servants rejoice in his light, and so be led to witness to him who is the Lord of our coming kingdom, Jesus our Savior and King of the ages. Amen.

### **Listen and Receive**

*Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."*

Matthew 11:2-6

May the Word of God rest gently on our hearts, that when our hearts break the Word of God may flow in.

(Silence)

### **Reflect and Respond**

As John sits in prison, he begins to have doubts about his own ministry. Did he proclaim the right person as the Lamb of God? Did he really see the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus? He sends his trusted friends to ask Jesus if he truly is who John thought he was. Jesus responds by giving the evidence of the Kingdom of God made manifest. Jesus reveals the healing, redemption, restoration, life and love that spring forth as the Good News is enfleshed.

Like John, we can become discouraged and disappointed. We can be overcome by doubt and despair as we look at the world around us. Also like John, we can rely on our community and our prayer life to show us the way of the Kingdom still made manifest by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ. The way of healing, redemption, restoration, life, and love still spring forth as the Gospel is enfleshed.

I wonder, how might God be inviting you to participate in the Kingdom? In what ways do you need to experience healing, life, and love? In what ways are you being invited to bring restoration, hope, and love to others?

### **Blessed and Sent**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

In this season of light, may your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

## Building a Kingdom Legacy Friday - Third Week of Advent

### **Invitation and Preparation**

O God, make speed to save us  
O Lord, make haste to help us

(Silence)

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your prophet John the Baptist was witness to the truth as a burning and shining light. May we your servants rejoice in his light, and so be led to witness to him who is the Lord of our coming kingdom, Jesus our Savior and King of the ages. Amen.

### **Listen and Receive**

*Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*

Matthew 11:11-15

May the Word of God rest gently on our hearts, that when our hearts break the Word of God may flow in.

(Silence)

### **Reflect and Respond**

Jesus proclaims that even though John sits in a prison cell, he is a prophet and more than a prophet. He is the one sent to prepare the way for the Messiah. No mortal ever born of flesh is greater than John. John is greater even than those who imprison him. He is greater than Herod, greater than Pilate, greater even than Caesar. Even in all of this greatness, the very least of those born of Spirit into the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John.

We look around us and see what we think is greatness. We see the talented, the rich, the famous, the powerful, the successful, the people we could never be like. We look according to the flesh and forget that we are born of Spirit. Even in our smallness and suffering, we are greater because we are children of the Kingdom of Heaven. We are greater because we are loved by the One who is truly great.

I wonder, in what ways might God be inviting you to experience hope in His love and greatness? In what ways might others be seeing the greatness of the Kingdom in you?

### **Blessed and Sent**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

In this season of light, may your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

## **Bidding Fond Farewell to John the Baptist** **Saturday - Third Week of Advent**

On this last day of the week as we rest and delight in the Lord, let us recall our journey this week.

### **Let us Rest**

Let us rest once more in this Canticle from Morning Prayer

BENEDICTUS - The Song of Zechariah

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; \*  
he has come to his people and set them free.  
He has raised up for us a mighty savior, \*  
born of the house of his servant David.  
Through his holy prophets he promised of old that he would save us from our enemies, \*  
from the hands of all who hate us.  
He promised to show mercy to our fathers \*  
and to remember his holy covenant.  
This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham, \*  
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,  
Free to worship him without fear, \*  
holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.  
You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, \*  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,  
To give his people knowledge of salvation \*  
by the forgiveness of their sins.  
In the tender compassion of our God \*  
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,  
To shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death, \*  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace

### **Let us Delight**

Let us delight once more in our walk with John the Baptist. Let us recall with wonder our hope and expectation as we looked for the presence of Christ around us, the hope, the challenge, and the preparing for the Kingdom of God. Let us give thanks for those who prepared us to know the Way.

### **Let us Pray**

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your prophet John the Baptist was witness to the truth as a burning and shining light. May we your servants rejoice in his light, and so be led to witness to him who is the Lord of our coming kingdom, Jesus our Savior and King of the ages.

**Look Ahead to the Coming King - The Fourth Week of Advent**  
**Walking with Mary**  
**Fourth Sunday in Advent**

Today we light our fourth Advent candle.

**Let us Pray**

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, merciful and gentle: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your light has shone in our darkened world through the child-bearing of blessed Mary; grant that we who have seen your glory may daily be renewed in your image and prepared like her for the coming of your Son, who is the Lord and Savior of all. Amen.

**Let us Walk**

We walk this week with Mary, the mother of Jesus, chosen to bear the Christ in her womb. As we look ahead this week to the coming King, I wonder, what stories and memories do you treasure and ponder in your heart? In what ways might God be inviting you to love and be loved? In what ways are you chosen to bear the image of Christ in the world? What fear, what hope, and what strength do you encounter as you consider this calling?

**Let us Prepare**

Let us prepare for the week with this Canticle from Evening Prayer

MAGNIFICAT - The Song of Mary

My soul magnifies the Lord, \*  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior;  
For he has regarded \*  
the lowliness of his handmaiden.  
For behold, from now on, \*  
all generations will call me blessed;  
For he that is mighty has magnified me, \*  
and holy is his Name.  
And his mercy is on those who fear him, \*  
throughout all generations.  
He has shown the strength of his arm; \*  
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.  
He has brought down the mighty from their thrones, \*  
and has exalted the humble and meek.  
He has filled the hungry with good things, \*  
and the rich he has sent empty away.  
He, remembering his mercy, has helped his servant Israel, \*  
as he promised to our fathers, Abraham and his seed for ever.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

## Something Worth Treasuring Monday - Fourth Week of Advent

### **Invitation and Preparation**

O God, make speed to save us  
O Lord, make haste to help us

(Silence)

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, merciful and gentle: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your light has shone in our darkened world through the child-bearing of blessed Mary; grant that we who have seen your glory may daily be renewed in your image and prepared like her for the coming of your Son, who is the Lord and Savior of all. Amen.

### **Listen and Receive**

*And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.*

Luke 2:18-20

May the Word of God rest gently on our hearts, that when our hearts break the Word of God may flow in.

(Silence)

### **Reflect and Respond**

The heavenly host has glorified God across the skies and proclaimed the birth of Jesus to the shepherds. These same shepherds have come and worshipped the Christ child. Wonder and awe have filled the town. Yet, in all of the joy and noise, Mary finds quiet to ponder all of these things and treasure them in her heart.

We find ourselves in this Advent journey only a few days before Christmas. We can easily lose ourselves in the joyful celebrations or in the stress of the preparations. We can become overwhelmed by worry or grief in this time of memories and expectations.

I wonder, how might you find moments of quiet in the busy-ness and chaos of this season? What might you find to treasure and ponder in your heart?

### **Blessed and Sent**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

In this season of light, may your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

## Someone Worth Loving Tuesday - Fourth Week of Advent

### **Invitation and Preparation**

O God, make speed to save us  
O Lord, make haste to help us

(Silence)

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, merciful and gentle: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your light has shone in our darkened world through the child-bearing of blessed Mary; grant that we who have seen your glory may daily be renewed in your image and prepared like her for the coming of your Son, who is the Lord and Savior of all. Amen.

### **Listen and Receive**

*Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:*

*"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall call his name Immanuel"*

Matt 1:18-23

May the Word of God rest gently on our hearts, that when our hearts break the Word of God may flow in.

(Silence)

### **Reflect and Respond**

Joseph has received distressing news. The woman he is expecting to marry is expecting a child that is not his. He makes the obvious assumptions and determines a seemingly righteous and gentle response. Then an angel appears and asks him to believe the impossible and do the improbable, even if it means facing shame and ridicule.

Everyday we encounter people about whom we know little except the assumptions we make. Often these assumptions may be correct, but like Joseph, we are called to believe the impossible - that the person in front of us is loved by God and we are called to do the improbable - to love them according to God's love even when it means facing shame and ridicule.

I wonder, who might God be calling you to see differently and love fully?

### **Blessed and Sent**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

In this season of light, may your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

## **An Image Worth Bearing** **Wednesday - Fourth Week of Advent**

### **Invitation and Preparation**

O God, make speed to save us  
O Lord, make haste to help us

(Silence)

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, merciful and gentle: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your light has shone in our darkened world through the child-bearing of blessed Mary; grant that we who have seen your glory may daily be renewed in your image and prepared like her for the coming of your Son, who is the Lord and Savior of all. Amen.

### **Listen and Receive**

*And the angel answered 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 called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.*

Luke 1:35-38

May the Word of God rest gently on our hearts, that when our hearts break the Word of God may flow in.

(Silence)

### **Reflect and Respond**

Mary has heard from Gabriel the astounding news that she will conceive a child by the power of the Holy Spirit and this child will be the long expected Messiah. She hears that even Elizabeth, considered too old to bear a child, is pregnant. In her wonder, she hears Gabriel say that nothing is impossible with God. Mary responds in holy surrender, "Let it be to me according to your word."

In the darkness, doubt, and fear of the world around us, many things seem impossible. In our waiting and longing for the fullness of the Kingdom, we can become dull and resigned to the limits of possibility. Yet, we have the hope of glory and the promise of Christ. We have the power and presence of the Holy Spirit to renew and transform us into the image of Christ as the Body of Christ. Even this is not impossible for God. May it be done to us according to His Word!

I wonder, as we prepare to celebrate the impossible made possible, how might God be calling you to bear the image of Christ as witness to the darkened world?

### **Blessed and Sent**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

In this season of light, may your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

## **Welcoming Jesus as the Coming King Christmas Eve**

Today marks the culmination of our Advent journey. We look with joy and anticipation toward our celebration of the birth of Jesus, Immanuel, God with Us in the mystery of the Incarnation.

### **Let us Remember**

Let us remember our journey as we looked back to the story in the patriarchs, looked into the vision with the prophet Isaiah, looked around for the presence of Christ among us with John the Baptist, and looked ahead to the coming King with Mary.

### **Let us Encounter**

Let us encounter once more the wonder and mystery of the Incarnation found in Mary's song.

MAGNIFICAT - The Song of Mary

My soul magnifies the Lord, \*  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior;  
For he has regarded \*  
the lowliness of his handmaiden.  
For behold, from now on, \*  
all generations will call me blessed;  
For he that is mighty has magnified me, \*  
and holy is his Name.  
And his mercy is on those who fear him, \*  
throughout all generations.  
He has shown the strength of his arm; \*  
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.  
He has brought down the mighty from their thrones, \*  
and has exalted the humble and meek.  
He has filled the hungry with good things, \*  
and the rich he has sent empty away.  
He, remembering his mercy, has helped his servant Israel, \*  
as he promised to our fathers, Abraham and his seed for ever.

### **Let us Hope**

Let us hope as we follow the shepherds and "go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

### **Let us Pray**

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, merciful and gentle: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your light has shone in our darkened world through the child-bearing of blessed Mary; grant that we who have seen your glory may daily be renewed in your image and prepared like her for the coming of your Son, who is the Lord and Savior of all. Amen.