



# 2022 ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

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WISE MEN STILL SEEK HIM

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A GIFT FROM YOUR WESLEY MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH FAMILY

# ADVENT

The season of Advent, which comes from the Latin word *adventus* meaning “coming” or “visit,” begins with the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day and ends on Christmas Eve. Advent has been celebrated as a season of the Christian Church for many centuries and spans the four Sundays leading up to Christmas, each Sunday receiving a special emphasis: Hope, Love, Joy, Peace, and finally, on Christmas Eve, Christ Himself!

In 2022, Christmas falls on a Sunday, and Christmas Eve on Saturday night. Thus, in 2022 Advent begins Sunday, November 27, and last four full weeks. During Advent, we prepare for and anticipate the coming of Christ. We remember the longing of Jews for a Messiah and our own longing for and need of forgiveness, salvation and a new beginning. Even as we look back and celebrate the birth of Jesus in a humble stable in Bethlehem, we also look forward anticipating the second coming of Christ as the fulfillment of all that was promised by his first coming.

Our liturgical color for Advent is blue, the color of hope. The Advent season marks the beginning of the Christian calendar— so Happy New Year!

Wise Men Still Seek Him. Through this devotional we invite you to seek His presence and feel His unconditional love during this Advent season. Let each of us examine ourselves and search our hearts for how much we have been yearning to be in God’s presence.



## OUR PRAYER FOR THIS ADVENT SEASON

We pray that during this Advent Season, as we await the coming of the Christ Child on Christmas Day, you will grow spiritually through use of this devotional booklet, that you will find unity in your family and throughout your connections at Wesley Memorial as you discuss what you've gleaned, and that you will experience the peace that comes from patiently waiting, hoping, for Jesus, our God wrapped in swaddling cloths— our God who stops at nothing to come to us, Emmanuel, God With Us!

## HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL

Devotionals are a great place to spark thoughts for journaling, prayer, and worship. Use this devotional on your own or with your family. Each day you will find a reflection, as well as accompanying Scripture. It can be helpful to begin with a prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to speak truth to your heart. Start with the Bible reading, read it slowly, really thinking about what is said. Once you read the day's devotion, allow yourself to reflect on what is read. If a phrase or portion speaks to you, respond to what God is saying in prayer.



# SUNDAYS IN ADVENT

## November 20 - Christ The King Sunday

This, the last Sunday of the Christian year, we stand and sing boldly: All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name!

## November 27 - Advent I

The new year begins with a wake-up call: Christ is coming soon! We light the first candle on our advent wreath. The anthem is Paul Manz's, E'en so, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come.

## December 4 - Advent II

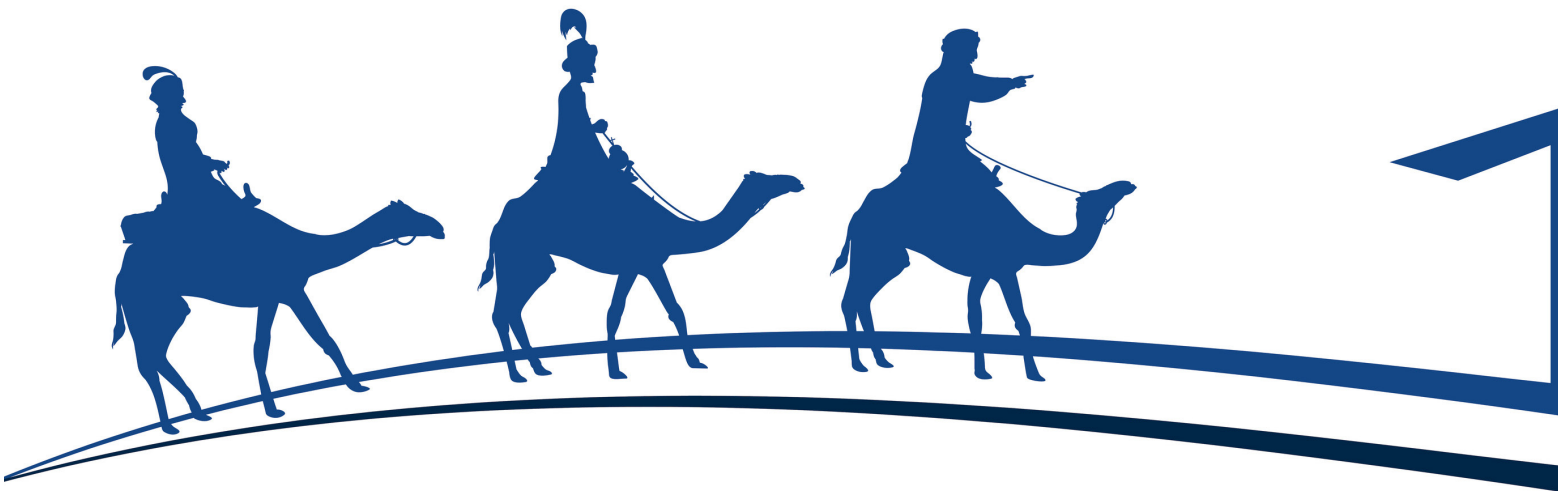
At the heart of our Advent preparation stands John the Baptist, who calls us to repent and make a new beginning. We enter the sanctuary, this day, seeing lighted Chrismon trees and wreaths. The anthem is a setting by George Guest, Zion, at Thy Shining Gates.

## December 11 - Advent III

O come, little children; come one and come all! Our annual children's nativity is held during the 11am worship service, with Mary, Joseph, little sheep, wise-men and shepherds. The chancel handbells will ring the opening voluntary and the chancel choir will sing Robert Wetzler's setting of the Magnificat entitled, Song of Mary.

## December 18 - Advent IV

A Festival Service of Lessons and Carols with readers, chancel choir, chamber orchestra and organ. Carols and anthems by Bach, Darke, Handel, Forrest, Stopford, and Willcocks.





## CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

### December 24 - Christmas Eve

4:00pm - Contemporary Service (Fellowship Hall)

Carols and candlelit worship/glow sticks for kids. This service will be livestreamed.

5:00pm - The 49th Annual LOVEFEAST (Sanctuary)

In the candlelit style of the Moravian Lovefeast. Special Music by the chancel choir and soloists accompanied by chamber orchestra and organ. Carols by Gruber, Rutter, Stopford and Willcocks. Lovefeast buns and cider will be served during the service.

8:00pm - Traditional Christmas Eve Service (Sanctuary)

Join us in singing your favorite Christmas Carols. A message by Dr. Jeff Patterson will be followed by Holy Communion and candlelit worship. This service will be livestreamed.

11:00pm - Traditional (Midnight) Christmas Eve Service (Sanctuary)

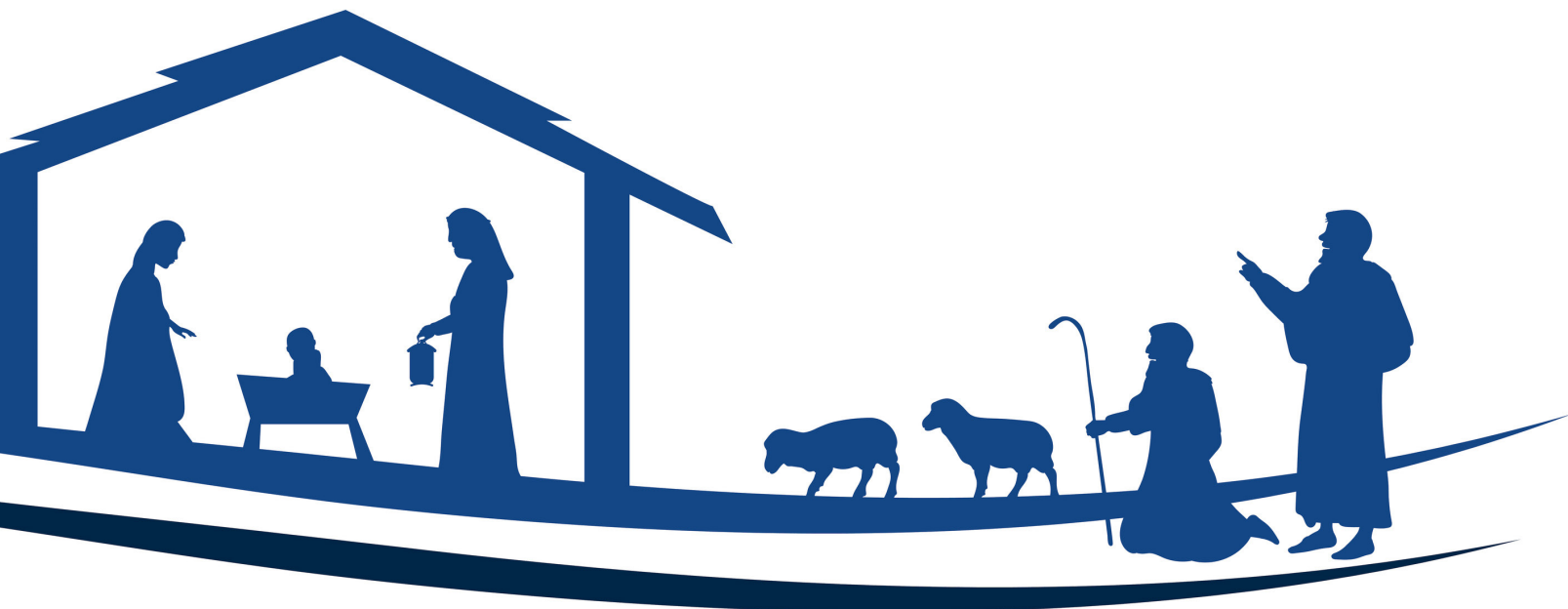
A Festival Service with sung carols accompanied by a chamber orchestra and organ. A Christmas message by Dr. Jeff Patterson will be followed by Holy Communion and the lighting of candles. Join us as we carry our light out into the world and sing, under the stars: Joy To The World!

## CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE

### December 25 - Christmas Day

10:00am - Blended Christmas Service (Sanctuary)

Christmas Morning Service with an inspirational message by Dr. Jeff Patterson and carols. One service only.



# NOVEMBER/DECEMBER ACTIVITIES

## DECEMBER 2

- 6:00 PM: Lighting of the Christmas Tree (Front Circle)

Join us as we gather around the Christmas tree with family and friends, singing Christmas carols, and celebrating the joy of the season. Snacks, music, and fun provided!

## DECEMBER 4

Angel Tree Gifts Due!

Angels for the children of incarcerated parents will be available for you to select and will be found in the Narthex, Bridge Cafe, and Adult Sunday School wing.

## DECEMBER 7

- 6:30 PM: WOW (Women of Wesley) Christmas Panel

This will be a time to ask questions and learn from some of our favorite women that have journeyed through life's ups and downs clinging to Jesus! Our panel will be made up of our beloved friends Susan Meisky, Barbara Coughlin, Jerry Cornwell, and Ginger Keziah.

## DECEMBER 10

- 10 AM: Children's Nativity Rehearsal

Children ages 4 through 5th grade can participate in this beautiful depiction of the birth of Christ. Registration is required at [wesleymemorial.org/nativity](http://wesleymemorial.org/nativity)

- 11:30 AM: Gingerbread Bash in the Dining Hall

This is a fun and interactive experience designed for the whole family! We'll build gingerbread nativities, play games, sing songs, hear the Christmas story from the Bible, eat lunch together, and discover that sometimes the best gift comes in the most ordinary box. Registration is required at [wesleymemorial.org/gingerbread](http://wesleymemorial.org/gingerbread)

## DECEMBER 11

- 11 AM: Children's Nativity (Sanctuary)
- 12 PM: Senior Adult Christmas Lunch (Dining Hall)
- 6:30 PM to 8 PM: Edge of Adventure for 12th Graders

Wear tacky Christmas sweaters and bring a white elephant gift (max \$10).

## DECEMBER 14

- 8 AM - 7 PM: Community Blood Drive

- 6 PM to 7:30 PM: A Very Merry Midweek Motivation Middle School Christmas Party

Wear your tacky Christmas sweater - prizes for top 3 winners.

## DECEMBER 18

- White Christmas Gifts Due (All Services)

Please bring a gift wrapped in white that will be given to the shelter at Open Door Ministries.

- 5 PM to 6:30PM: Christmas Drive-Thru

All are invited to drive-thru the Wesley Memorial campus and experience the Nativity story in a unique way. Each car will receive a special packet full of family-friendly Christmas activities that relate to the experience.

- 7 PM: YAM (Young Adult Ministry - ages 18 to 25) Worship Christmas Party

## DECEMBER 21

- 6PM: DivorceCare/GriefShare Surviving the Holidays

# WESLEY MEMORIAL SCHOOL EVENTS

## Wesley Memorial School Invites You to Two Very Special Christmas Celebrations

### DECEMBER 9

- 1:00 PM: Polar Express with Santa & Mrs. Claus (Dining Hall)

All Aboard the Polar Express! Delight in this Joyful experience as you pretend to travel on the Polar Express to the North Pole. Get a golden ticket as you climb aboard. But don't lose it. The Conductor will be along to punch it confirming your invitation.

Visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus while enjoying cocoa and cookies. Sit on their lap sharing what you would like for Christmas and smile for a treasured photo. Be ready as the waiters and Elves break into song and dance.

Who will get the first Gift of Christmas?  
Enter a drawing to find out.

Do you hear the reindeer harnesses bells jingle...  
or NOT?



### DECEMBER 16

- 10:30 AM: Kindergarten Nativity Program (Sanctuary)

It has always been such a very special time to witness the birth of the Baby Jesus reenacted by children. Experience the joy of the season as the greatest story is retold through drama and song. The



Inn Keeper points to, "A Stable Warm and Dry", welcoming Joseph and Mary. The star, animals, angels, and shepherds shout out in a joyful noise delighting in the birth of the baby.

The kindergarten children will also share some fun Christmas secular songs and share a special surprise by playing the handbells. Join us afterwards for Christmas cookies and cider.

## **NOVEMBER 27**

### **1 THESSALONIANS 5: 1-11**

If there is a silver lining to the 17 months that I isolated during the pandemic, it was the absolute yearning I felt to return to worshiping in the fellowship of my family in Christ at Wesley Memorial. Sure, my husband and I made do with our sofa “pew.” But oh, how I ached to stand and lift my voice in unison with our congregation and sing hymns, pray, and affirm my faith. And communion... I grieved as I missed The Great Thanksgiving month after month.

When, in First Thessalonians 5: 1-11, Paul assures the people of Thessalonica of Christ’s return, he tells them to put on the armor of faith and love and to encourage one another, comfort one another, and build each other up. Those words of nearly 2,000 years ago speak specifically to us today just as if Paul knew we needed guidance in the aftermath of this era of unrest.

Isolation is not what we are about. In fact, there is no such thing as a solitary Christian. We simply cannot “go it alone” on our faith journey.

We need our family in Christ.

Perhaps, I didn’t need a pandemic to teach me this lesson, but I do know that this time of reflection has been a milestone in my spiritual journey. I felt a spiritual renewal when I returned to church a little over a year ago. Bible Study is more precious today. I now enter committee meetings with more ideas and a deeper commitment. And last fall I accepted the call to become a Stephen Minister. I feel an intense flame of excitement and enthusiasm. Maybe, just maybe, this feeling is that “armor of faith and love.”

Cathy Weaver

## **NOVEMBER 28**

### **MATTHEW 21:1-11**

The love of God often arrives in unexpected ways. It is most apparent during the Christmas season, when we celebrate the Savior of our world being born in a manger, and it was apparent to Jesus’s followers 2,000 years ago when they celebrated the arrival of their Messiah to the holy city of Jerusalem. Here was their king, the one the prophecies foretold would deliver them from their enemies and save their people, riding into town not with a military parade and on the back of a battle-ready horse, but plodding along on the back of a donkey.

“Hosanna!”, they shouted. “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” Many others in the city were perplexed at the sight of a man on a donkey receiving the praises of a king. And yet, this is our Lord, traveling humbly through the city down a path of love, on his journey for the redemption of our world and the salvation of our hearts.

Jesus continues that path of love today, slowly and humbly making inroads in our lives. We may

find him in unexpected ways, such as a kind gesture of a stranger, the thoughtfulness of a friend's note on a Christmas card, or the embrace of an estranged family member. His love makes inroads when we choose to speak to one another with kindness and respect, and refrain from saying the things that drive us apart or tear one another down.

While we may be prone to "get our own way" in the world by being the loudest, the most forceful, or the most proud, Jesus continues to move through our lives quietly, gently, and humbly. He conquers not through shouting louder, but by loving deeper. This is how our King comes to rule over our hearts and our world.

He still calls us to join him, beside the manger, or on the back of a donkey, to walk more gently, speak more kindly, and love more deeply each day.

McKennon Shea

## **NOVEMBER 29**

### **AMOS 3:1-10**

"Son, riding your bike with flip flops on is really not a good idea. You should put on shoes." Fast forward 20 minutes and some busted toes are the painful consequence of snubbing my advice.

In this passage, God speaks through Amos to warn His people of the consequences of their sin. The choices they were making to worship golden calves and false gods would surely lead to their destruction – the outcome was as obvious as asking, "Will a bird fly in a trap if there's no bait?" Amos further explains that there will be no excuse for ignorance. "Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets." (verse 7)

God's punishment for sin isn't random. He doesn't want us to suffer the natural consequences of disobedience, the busted toes, if you will. So He warns us over and over again.

Just as Amos gives a dire warning, Jesus gives a sweet promise in John 15:15 that echoes the passage in Amos, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

He will speak to us. If we are listening to Him, we will not walk about in ignorance of our sin or in confusion of God's plan. How amazing that our great God shouts words of warning through the prophets and whispers great hope through Jesus!

Judy Sweger

## **NOVEMBER 30**

### **2 PETER 3:1-9**

Christ's return is the next major event on God's redemptive calendar. That is the reason we often pray, "Come, Lord Jesus, come!" But we must remember several things in these last days:

1. There will be those who deliberately forget that God's Word brought all creation into being. As a result they mock our Christian beliefs and follow their own evil desires and live as though God does not matter.
2. While we long for Christ's return, we must be alert, sober and undistracted from the Word of God and Christ' promised coming.
3. God loves all of His creation and seeks ways to reveal Himself to all. He is patient and is holding back because he wants all to come to Him in repentance.
4. That is the reason He tarries. Yes, we are in the last days; and yes, He will come. "He's giving everyone space and time to change." Jesus came for you and me, so that we can say: 'I once was lost but now I am found, was blind, but now I see.' Aren't we glad He is tarrying?

Advent and Christmas is a wonderful opportunity to share that Christ came first as a babe in a manger but will return at the end of time as our triumphant King!

Quentin & Becky Scholtz

## **DECEMBER 1**

### **MATTHEW 21:33-46**

In our passage today we have one of the most explicit condemnations of the Pharisees by Jesus. Often Jesus' parables require some degree of interpretation, but here we have a rare example of the Bible interpreting itself.

A low hanging fruit for a devotional thought would be to ask, "Who are the Pharisees of today?" And I think that is a relevant question. However, rather than playing the blame game or pointing fingers, we could each acknowledge that "I am the Pharisee." These are hard words to sit with, and I'll be the first to admit they make me uncomfortable. And yet, it doesn't seem that Jesus has given up on the Pharisees. He may be imposing a kind of judgment, but we cannot grow without confronting our mistakes. The truth is a mercy, but it often hurts. A couple chapters later in Matthew 25:35-36, Jesus says that "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." The face of The Son is in the least of these and they are among us daily.

Advent is a season of waiting, it's not Christmas yet. But here we sit, anticipating Christ's arrival. How will we respond when we meet him?

Tom Barker

## **DECEMBER 2**

### **AMOS 5:1-17**

God chose Amos, a layperson shepherd to deliver a message of condemnation to the nation of Israel. Although not of the social elite, God knew Amos to be a steadfast, faithful follower of His Word. This message, a lamentation, foretold of Israel's utter destruction as punishment for its people turning away from the LORD, to secular idol worship manifested by widespread sinfulness and social injustice. Amos contrasts this with how God had instructed his chosen people to worship quietly, reverently and prayerfully. To survive, the people of Israel must turn back to God.

God's message through Amos told the people of Israel almost three thousand years ago (and tells us today) that faithful obedience to God and His Word will naturally result in good earthly works such as opposing social injustice, helping the poor and fighting corruption in the legal system.

As Martin Luther King frequently preached from the Book of Amos, "Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:24).

Throughout the Bible, God chooses ordinary people like Amos to carry His message to the world. As Image-bearers, are our hearts aligned with the character of God? Do we seek the Lord? Do we seek good and hate evil? Immersion in the Word, daily reading and prayer, helps us to more closely follow the will of God. If we remain faithful, the God of Hope will fill us with the Holy Spirit and enable us to do amazing things.

Lisa and Barry Cheek

## **DECEMBER 3**

### **JUDE 1:17-25**

As a faculty member of High Point University, I engage with young women and men every day in and out of my classroom. Sometimes, my students are full of energy and I can see their perseverance in striving to better themselves. Other days, that energy seems to wane and I can see the doubt, fear, and influence of the "scoffers" start to creep into their minds. Whether it is their peers trying to convince them to go to a party rather than study for their upcoming exam, or social media tempting them to learn the latest TikTok dance rather than learn to solve a complex equation, they are surrounded by a world that seeks to tear them down.

Today, I am reminded and encouraged by this passage to show mercy in those times of doubt, to save them from the "fire" that surrounds them by sharing a spirit-filled word of encouragement, and to keep the faith that a day where they fill me up with their contagious energy will come soon enough. As we walk through this Advent season, God reminds us to keep the faith. Dear friends, we all have those "scoffers" in our lives – the people or institutions that try to tear us down or divide us. Keep the faith. Read His Word. Pray in His name. Be merciful. And persevere.

Dr. Arden Anderson

## **DECEMBER 4**

### **ROMANS 12:6-8**

One of the most precious memories I have is of my grandmother, Granny Ruth, and my mom making the annual Christmas mints for Granny's friends and family. My grandmother took great care and pride in making her mints every year and believe me, they were the absolute best mints I have ever tasted! Ever! She was the mint maker extraordinaire! Well, if you ask me! You see, my Granny Ruth was a hard working, intelligent, loving, and giving person. She always gave as generously as she could and part of her generosity was always her Christmas mints. As the scripture tells us, she was using her gift to share with others her sweet creations.

Mint making is a very precise process as I recall as a young preteen. We would arrive at Granny's house to the sweet smell of peppermint wafting through the air. When the goopy mixture was allowed to cool to just the right temperature, the real fun began. We followed Granny to the bedroom because that was the best place to pull the dough. So Mom and Granny would pull and pull with all their might while Granny yelled "pull harder!" My job, basically, was to giggle and roll around on the bed while this was going on. Finally, it was time to cut the dough into mints and place them into the tins. My second job! Sweet memories of my sweet grandmother!

As Romans 12:6-8 tells us, we need to use our gifts given to us by God through Christ to help others and to share Christ's love. Advent is a wonderful time to share our gifts!!

Wendy Adams

## **DECEMBER 5**

### **AMOS 7:1-9**

As we move through the Advent season, what does God want us to do? What does He want us to remember? How does He want us, His people, to act?

Advent, for us, is the season on the Christian calendar that represents the coming of Christ in three ways. The physical birth or nativity in Bethlehem: the receiving of Christ anew in our hearts (as in a refreshing), and the promise of the eschatological second coming of Christ. In this season, God needs us, His kingdom people, to embody the nature of Jesus Christ to be a light in the world.

How do we do that? And what does Amos have to do with it all? The passage from Amos shows us that God bears long, but He does not bear always with a provoking people as He illustrated to the prophet. Without the promise of Christ, we would still be under the Old Testament laws, yet this birth season anniversary reminds us that we live with grace and mercy, and even though we do not deserve it, we are given so many chances every day to be more like Jesus.

Beginning with the judgment of famine, we see that even in the vision, God held back the fullness of his wrath by not sending the locusts until the latter season, after most of the promising

grass had been harvested. This shows us that the mercies He gives are much more valuable than those He takes away. As true believers, we should always look for the bright side of any situation and be thankful for the many mercies we have and try not to complain.

The next vision depicts the judgment of fire. This fire could be sent in many forms: a drought burning the earth up with the heat of the sun; a raging and unexplainable fever setting fire to our very bones; fire from heaven as in the lightning that set fire to Sodom and Gomorrah; or even fire from those among us who would pillage and burn our cities and homes to the ground to prove a point. Yet the prophet Amos' fervent prayers saved the people and the land once again, and this second vision did not come to pass. This should remind us of the importance of prayer, the power of even one single prayer warrior, and that it is our responsibility to pray for this nation, this world, as we see things continue to seemingly unravel daily.

Lastly, the depiction of a plumb line – meaning a wall (literally or figuratively) set exact, straight, and firm. Much like haughty, self-righteous Christians who mistakenly look down their proverbial noses at others instead of loving first and praying second. None of us, not one, can claim to be without wickedness of some sort, or to be without sin. Only Jesus Christ, God's only son will ever be able to set anything exactly straight, right, and complete. We need the blood of Jesus ever flowing over and through us to protect us from ourselves. Without Christ in our hearts, without the light of the Holy Spirit living within us we would be subjected to destruction and sure devastation in harrowing forms. Without the promise of the coming of Christ in this Advent season, the anniversary of our dear Lord and Saviors' birth - we would have no hope.

*But we do have hope, and love, and joy, and peace, and patience, and generosity, and faithfulness, and gentleness, and self-control because of the gift of Jesus Christ.* God's most amazing act of mercy was to send His son to save us, to be forever covered by the crimson blood that washes our sins away. Let us remember to spread light and love, to try and be more like Jesus every day.

Melissa Caudle

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Melissa Caudle

## **DECEMBER 6**

### **LUKE 2:28-14**

Eighty one years ago on December 6, Hawaii was a peaceful collection of beautiful islands of a South Pacific Paradise. On December 7, a Pacific Fleet of Navy Ships at Pearl Harbor along with the Military Facilities at Henderson Field were totally surprised by the horrific attacks by the Japanese. The destruction of the fleet and the loss of so many lives became the beginning of the Second World War in the Pacific Theater.

On December 8, President Roosevelt went to Congress to ask for a declaration of war. In preparation of his remarks, he deliberately edited the words "December 7th will be a day that will live in world history" to "a day that will live in infamy!" That statement became a call to arms for a national audience and is one of the most remembered historic speeches in American history. While it encouraged a military response to go to war, the end game was to bring about world peace.

We realize this world will never have perfect peace. However, on a starry night two thousand and twenty-two years ago Jesus was born and offers us perfect peace beyond understanding which every person who believes can embrace. Jesus's birth was not announced to Congress, broadcast over the radio or splashed on the TV screen. Instead, a host of angels sang hosannas and a star led wise men to find the humble birthplace of the baby Jesus who is the savior of souls. The year of his birth designates how our years are set for keeping track of our time. It has lasted for two thousand twenty-two years and indeed has lived in world history.

What a lasting effect Jesus's birth has had on this world. We celebrate to keep focused on the importance of the peace Jesus offers.

Mary & Jerry Hooper

## **DECEMBER 7**

### **MATTHEW 23: 1-12**

During the season of Advent, Christians around the world are meticulous with ensuring they spread goodwill to those less fortunate. We confirm our devotion spreading His word, and we are sure to establish a hospitable Christian environment in which all people feel welcome. It is during this time of year we become keenly aware that we are quick to sin and must work diligently to spread the word of God. Throughout the four Sundays that lead to Christmas Day, we ensure our benevolence is observed and is felt at an even greater measure than that which is conventionally displayed throughout the rest of the year. We wear our best clothes and are sure to “pay it forward.” However, what is it about Advent that causes Christians to be so much more loving than they may be in June? As Christians, aren’t we tasked with completing these Christian demonstrations throughout the entire year?

In Matthew 23: 1-12, Jesus speaks to His disciples as well as the crowds following him of hypocrisy in the church. These verses, in general, are a warning against hypocrisy and the abuse of power. As we know, Jesus, a devout Jew himself, knows of the church and how it should be run. He also knows of the Pharisees and what they claim to represent. Unfortunately for the Pharisees, they have once again made the mistake of knowing the word of God, but not following the word. Jesus says to his followers, the Pharisees know the law so listen to what they say, but they don’t follow the law so don’t do what they do.

The Pharisees engulf themselves in opulence for others to admire and to allow them to feel important... more important than they are. They love to be honored and respected by others. However, never call them, or each other, “rabbi,” or “teacher,” as there is only one “Teacher.” Neither are they to ever call anyone on earth “father,” as they only have one “Father,” and he resides in heaven. Jesus then goes on to say that none of them are to be “instructors,” as their one “Instructor” is the Messiah. Jesus clearly states, “those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

This Christmas season, may we all continue to spread goodwill and demonstrate our devotion to God, but let us be sure that it doesn’t end there. Our pews, our hymnals, our Bibles, our campus, and our church body are meant to be used daily. Let us be sure to honor God all year long in everything we do. How might you humble yourself before the Lord and become a stronger steward of his word? He is, after all, the reason for every season.

Bryant Thompson

## **DECEMBER 8**

### **AMOS 9:1-10**

The Season of Joy is upon us. Praise be to the Most High God! Yahweh, Lord of Hosts!

This is a most exciting time of year. The time when we, as Christians, celebrate the Advent of our

Savior. What is an advent? And who is our Savior? It is quite simple: Our King IS coming. But it wasn't as the believers of the day thought.

Advent, by definition, means the coming of a notable person, thing, or event. In the case of Jesus, God incarnated himself supernaturally into the Blessed Mother Mary and was delivered to us in a manger. This humble beginning is not in the slightest what was expected of the coming Messiah. In our reading we find a powerful ruler, executing righteous judgment upon the wickedness upon the Earth. Jesus, the mighty God whose wrath is swift and terrifying, thus eradicating evil from our world. The same Jesus we find in that lowly cave in Bethlehem is the same triumphant King at his return or second Advent.

God works in a fascinating way. By quietly entering the world without pomp and circumstance, the wicked forces of darkness were unable to track His movements into our realm. King Herod, despite his best efforts, was unable to prevent the coming of Jesus, the one TRUE KING. Jesus, who WILL return to bring eternal peace to the realm must first fulfill the bold prophecy of Amos. He confirms this later in His ministry as we find in Matthew 10: 34.

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.”

The King IS coming. We celebrate in this season His first advent, but joyfully in our hearts realize His second coming is imminent.

God bless you all. Merry Christmas.  
Chase Tobin

## **DECEMBER 9**

### **REVELATION 2:18-29**

I committed to myself to work with the passage assigned for this date in the Advent booklet (which is my birthdate) before knowing the passage. When I realized the passage assigned is from Revelation, I thought about punting on my commitment to this date and going with something safer, more comfortable.

I am convinced my commitment before knowing the passage was the Holy Spirit wanting me to get out of my comfort zone to grow. As you read the passage presented to us for this day of Advent, I want you to focus on the promise of “the morning star,” Jesus Christ in us and with us forever.

This passage from Revelation is one of the letters to seven churches in an area that now makes up modern-day Turkey. The book of Revelation is apocalyptic, revealing the second coming of Christ through a vision from God praising, warning, and promising the followers in these churches.

Our Savior has extremely high expectations for us individually and in our mission as a church to make and sustain spiritually healthy followers of Jesus Christ who live in ways that transform the

world. If Jesus were to make a wish list for Christmas, I am convinced His wish would be that we continue to grow in love, faith, service, and perseverance.

I pray that this holiday season is meaningful for you and your loved ones in many ways, but especially in your spiritual growth.

Warren Lackey

## **DECEMBER 10**

### **MATTHEW 24:1-14**

The season of Advent is one of great anticipation. We begin our church year looking forward to celebrating the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. During Advent we know that Christ is not yet in the world in physical form, but we know he is coming to fulfill his prophesied purpose. We look forward to our holiday gatherings of families, friends, co-workers, and teammates to share our common anticipation of his arrival among us at Christmas.

Yet, in today's scripture, taken from the Gospel of Matthew, we read that Jesus will also come a second time. Therefore, the Advent season is appropriate to anticipate that event as well. Jesus tells his disciples (including us) that before that happens, many things will test our faith, and we will be subject to things that will not be pleasant.

In today's news environment, we do not have to look far to find dire predictions of impending danger: war, pandemics, threats to our climate, and deadly drugs too readily available to some of our most vulnerable people.

But Jesus also assures us that if we are faithful, and endure to the end, He will save us. We remind ourselves of this when we affirm our faith using the words of the Nicene Creed: "He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end."

Lord, we anticipate your coming, and of your coming again in power and great glory.

Ernie Snider

## **DECEMBER 11**

### **JOHN 10:1-10**

It seems that in this time in the history of the world where there is so much chaos around us, many many Christians are calling out to God to give them His directions for their lives; which is precisely what God is delighted to do.

In John 10:3-4 we read phrases like, "And the sheep hear His voice", "He calls His own sheep", and "sheep follow Him for they know His voice."

We wonder how many days and months it took for those sheep to hear and learn their own shep-

herd's voice. How long will it take us to do the same.

One of the Bible studies in this church is reading a book called, "Hearing His Voice" by Chris Tiegreen who explains many truths that can help us understand how to hear the voice of God. Of course priority #1 is reading and studying the WORD of God - the Bible; which leads us to trust God as our source of life and we begin learning to depend on Him for guidance and to believe His deep heart of loving kindness toward us. Our hearts yearn for a relationship that bonds our hearts to His heart and for His will for our lives. God is overjoyed when we ask Him for His will. A.W. Tozer writes, "God is not silent. It is the nature of God to speak,"...Jesus is even called "The WORD. God has been vocal and He always will be."

He wants a personal relationship with His children.

The God who speaks is always seeking to take us deeper into His own heart, His will and draw us close to Himself.

Those who hunger and thirst for God, will be satisfied. They will receive a deep conception of God's peace and His Holiness; that very holiness that draws His heart out to help we poor sinners; who are so needy for His protection, comfort, warmth and love. As we surrender more and more of ourselves to him, we are able to release our pain and worry and fears into His keeping. And then perhaps, just perhaps, we may get a glimpse of our Magnificent Protection of Love in All His Glory.

Ginger Keziah

## **DECEMBER 12**

### **HEBREWS 10: 24-25**

It wasn't until I became a mother, that I started to really ponder the life of Mary. I think of Mary as a simple mother whose heart gave all for her beloved son. Because of her heart and willingness to believe, Mary found favor with God. Through her own body, The Creator chose this simple woman to bring Jesus into the world. I imagine her nurturing The Son of God in her home, and providing a place where He would always find comfort, beauty, and love for the years He would live on earth.

Looking to the example of Mary, we should seek to provide the same comfort, beauty, and joy for our children so that they may experience God himself in our homes. Doing so requires us to slow down and be present with those around us.

It can be easy to lose sight of the people in our lives during the busyness of the holidays. Not to mention the added distraction from cell phones and social media. However, I encourage you to remember the gift of "presence" you are giving your children as well as others around you when you take the time to LISTEN and simply share life with one another.

Now more than ever our children, friends, and families NEED to know that they are seen, known, and loved.

So during the holidays, I ask you, who needs you today?

Who can you offer the gift of dedicated, uninterrupted listening to this week? How can you celebrate life with your children or family members in this season?

Buying one more thing will never satisfy the human heart. Let us seek to restore, redeem, and bring life and hope through investing in love and heart time.

I pray that this Christmas you make time to talk, laugh, share hearts, love, and show compassion to those who need you the most.

Blessings to you friends.

Lisa Tobin

## **DECEMBER 13**

### **MATTHEW 24: 32-44**

In this season of Advent, meaning “to come,” we are preparing for the celebration of the birth of Christ, preparing to receive Christ anew into our hearts, and preparing for the final coming of Christ.

In today’s passage from Matthew 24, Jesus is emphasizing the importance of readiness for His return. He wants the disciples to be awake, alert, and watchful.

There is an ancient fable about three devils coming to earth to finish their apprenticeship. They are talking to Satan about their plans to tempt and lead people astray. The first says, “I will tell them there is no God.”

Satan replies, “That won’t fool many for they know there is a God.”

The second devil says, “I will tell them there is no hell.”

Satan answers, “You will deceive no one that way. People know there is a hell for sin.”

The third devil says, “I will tell people there is no hurry.”

“Go!” says Satan, “and you will ruin people by the thousands.”

The most dangerous of all delusions is that there is plenty of time.

As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 6:2, “See now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation.”

Prepare for Christ's return today!

In verse 36 Jesus says, "About that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

In verse 42, He says, "Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming."

And in verse 44: "Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."

Surrender your life to Jesus Christ today. Do not procrastinate. Open your heart and by faith invite Him in now.

Glen Myers

## **DECEMBER 14**

### **REVELATION 4:1-8**

What a marvelous scene that must have been to behold – the throne room of Heaven! To witness God's creatures in non-stop worship to THE ONE truly worthy of our praises.

Close your eyes and empty your mind of the racing thoughts of life, and just meditate on Revelation, chapter 4, verse 8 for a moment and consider the magnitude of the phrase: "Who was, and is, and is to come."

Pretend you're there. You see the almost blinding brilliance of the jasper and the ruby. You see the rainbow encircling the throne.... Wait, what? A RAINBOW! God's promise! All of a sudden the Bible comes full circle, back to Genesis. Perfection restored. The sea of glass before the throne, like crystal... a beautiful representation of calm, order, and perfect peace.

God is in control. He always has been, and always will be. He is worthy of our praises. Then, now, and forever. Please join me in praising him joyfully this advent season.

Much Love in Christ,  
Amanda Douglas-Martin

## **DECEMBER 15**

### **LUKE 11:11-13**

Christmas is such a wonderful time of giving and receiving. You may recall with clearer perspective now, as I often have in these latter years of life, that as a child the truly enjoyable time was sitting around the family Christmas tree in anticipation of not only receiving gifts from our parents and other family members but also in watching our parents opening a gift which we had made or bought especially for them. It may not have been the most beautiful hand-made window planter

box, but you made it, and Mom loved it. And Dad always seemed to enjoy the bottle of Old Spice after shave lotion, even if that was the same gift for five years running. The joy for them was centered around the fact that you had given it to them because you loved them.

It is difficult for me at times to understand the depth of love that God the Father has for me. He loves me so much that He actually sent His only and beloved Son Jesus to enter into this world as a human being, to live a perfect life, and then to literally give up that life at Calvary as the perfect, the only gift (sacrifice) so that I could be forgiven of all the sin I have or ever will commit. Why? Why would a father give such a gift? Only because He loves me!

His gift to each of us is the same Jesus, "... born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day he rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty..."

And what does the loving Father wish for all of his children? That we would receive the gift of his Son, and in turn love him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And in doing that, God rejoices...as any parent would.

Steve Young

## **DECEMBER 16**

### **MATTHEW 25:14-30**

When I read the "Parable of the Talents," my mind drifts back to my pre-teen years when my mom would hound me about practicing the piano. I had taken piano lessons on and off since age 7 and, while I had some musical ability, I preferred playing outside with my friends versus practicing scales. When I would stomp down onto the piano bench and complain about "hating piano," my mother would remind me that if I quit, I would one day regret it. At about age 15, high school activities and a part-time job stopped my music lessons and now, 40 years later, she was right. I do regret it. What a waste!

The "Parable of the Talents" is the familiar story of a master who left on a long journey and before leaving, entrusted his vast estate to his servants. He gave one of them five talents, one received two talents and the other received one talent. Keep in mind that in those days, a talent was a monetary unit worth about 20 year's wages for a laborer, so these were not insignificant sums of money.

As you'll remember, the one who was given five talents grew it to 10. The one who was given two talents grew it to four. When the Master returned, he was delighted that these two had put their talents to good use and produced a great return for him. However, the one who had been given only one talent had been worried about losing it, so he buried his in the ground. While he returned his one original talent, the master was furious at the waste. "You worthless servant, couldn't you have at least deposited it with the bankers so that I would have gained interest?" he retorted? As we later read in the passage, the outcome for this servant wasn't favorable.

Fortunately, my punishment for quitting piano lessons was less severe. But as my mother warned me, there have been many times that I've regretted quitting and "wasting" my talent. As we come to the close of the year and reflect on the gifts that our Master has entrusted with us, are there any that you could put to better use? Would the Master be pleased with the way you've used your talents to help further his estate?

Prayer: *Lord, thank you for the many gifts and talents you've shared with me. I have been given so much more than I deserve. In this season of Advent, please help me to remember that you've given me these gifts to share with others for the purpose of growing your kingdom. At the end of my days, may my goal be to hear you say: "Well done, good and faithful servant." Amen.*

Slade Lewis

## **DECEMBER 17**

### **MATTHEW 28:19-20**

There was a time when we served Mt. Pleasant UMC in Catawba County at Lake Norman. Being the "doer" that I was, I had taken on three part-time jobs in addition to being a wife and Mom. I was part of an exploratory team to determine the need in the community of starting a preschool at our church. So, I taught and directed the start up and first class of preschoolers, which I loved. Yet exhaustion of "doing" and not "being" was taking its toll.

After much prayer, I decided to give up directing the preschool. Leaving the preschool board meeting and announcing I would no longer direct next year, I felt rather dejected at my decision. Walking in front of the church, I looked up at the stained-glass window which depicted Jesus holding the little lamb in His arms. At that moment, I realized I was the little lamb and I just needed to climb up in my Father's arms and just let Jesus hold me. I felt God's peace, His presence and Jesus' promise, "I am with you always, Susan, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:20

Some days, we just need to climb up on our Father's lap, and just be held.

Susan Myers

## **DECEMBER 18**

### **GENESIS 3:8-13**

*"What is the chief end of man? To glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever."*  
-Shorter Westminster Catechism

When God created the Earth and all the creatures therein, He also made Man in His own image, and Woman to be his mate. God created mankind to be companions, He walked and talked with them in the Garden. He could have made us unfailing worshipers without choice. We could have been mere automatons to praise God without ceasing. But would that truly be praise? God gave mankind free will. We can choose to worship or not. We can choose to follow God's will or our own selfish desires. Some do and some don't.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating the fruit that God had forbidden, sin entered Creation. Paul tells us, “The wages of sin is death.” For centuries, mankind tried to atone for sin through animal sacrifice. But God had a plan for forgiveness. He sent his only begotten Son, the unblemished Lamb, to die for the sins of mankind - the ultimate sacrifice.

We are now celebrating the season of Advent, the time of awaiting the birth of Jesus, awaiting Christmas. Now is the time to ponder the awesome power and loving mercy of God as He offers His Son for our sins and our salvation. As Pastor Jeff tells us every Sunday, “Worship is the most important thing we ever do.”

Mike Flack

## **DECEMBER 19**

### **LUKE 1:1-25**

This scripture tells how Elizabeth, the childless wife of priest Zechariah, finds out she is giving birth to a prophet. He will be known as John the Baptist. Her husband learns this from the angel Gabriel. Because Zechariah is older, he doubts what the angel has told him. But, as predicted, they conceive and wait for the birth of their son. This all happens just months before Elizabeth’s relative Mary gets her own miraculous message from angel Gabriel!

Two miraculous births!

John the Baptist who prepared everyone for the coming of the Messiah.

Jesus the Messiah who fulfilled the scriptures and delivered our salvation.

What a great story to experience God’s grace and peace in this season of Advent.

Debra Jones

## **DECEMBER 20**

### **TITUS 2:1-10**

As I am remembering and celebrating the birth of Jesus, I am yearning for the return of Jesus.

“Come, Lord Jesus, come!” Natural disasters, famine and drought, pestilence, violence and murder, wars and rumors of wars, a pandemic, foolishness becoming wisdom and wisdom becoming foolishness, false teachers and teachings, cold churches and apostasy – need I list more? “Why haven’t you come already, Lord?”

After listening to my moaning and pleas, He tells me again that His ways are not mine and His thoughts are not mine. He urges me not to rely on my personal thoughts and opinions nor on the relativity-based “wisdom” from current culture. He reminds me that His Words of eternal life still need to be shared with those who have not heard, and He encourages me to join Him in this work.

In Titus 2:1-10, Paul reminds mature believers of what we are called to do. We are to share healthy, sound doctrine – God’s Truth – with others. We are to model reverence, faithfulness, and self-control, being grounded in faith, love, and steadfastness. We are to steer clear of gossip and addictions, encouraging our younger counterparts in virtuous living. Loving our families with kindness and pureness of heart while serving well and working diligently honors our spouses and our Lord. Paul continues urging us to be people of integrity and truthfulness, humility and faithfulness. He sums it all up by even telling us what to wear: “so that in everything (we) adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.”

As both mature and growing believers, we are to apply the lens of Scripture – His Biblical worldview – to what is going on in this world. When we do, we remember what our calling is: To stand firm in His Truth and reflect Him in our own speech, actions, and manner of living.

Come, Lord Jesus, come! Come indwell more hearts – and renew Your right Spirit within me.

Beth Saintsing

## **DECEMBER 21**

### **2 SAMUEL 7:18-29**

Few people in history serve as a stronger example of faith than Israel’s third king, David. This is not to say that David provides a perfect example of living on the whole. He made grievous moral mistakes and suffered dire consequences. Yet, God found him to be “a man after His own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14). Why? Because of his great faith. It was with this faith that a young David stepped forward to confront and defeat a giant Philistine warrior with a slingshot, escaped multiple attempts on his life, and repeatedly conquered armies greater in number than his own.

Today’s scripture passage affords us insight into David’s prayer life. He begins his petition in deep humility asking, “Who am I, Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?” (2 Samuel 7:18). God had brought David through multiple trials; each increasing his confidence in the character and promises of God. Yet rather than grow arrogant, in this passage, we recognize how David grew increasingly humbled by God’s mercy. David’s prayer begins with humility, awe, and praise and when he moves to petition, he asks that God bring forth only what He had already pledged. In effect, David was asking that God’s will be done. In these ways, David’s prayer foreshadows Jesus’ example in Luke 11:1-13, when He teaches us all how to pray.

David sought to build God a temple, but that was not God’s will. In 2 Samuel 7:12-13, the Lord says, “I will raise your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever.” We are that house and this Sunday, we celebrate the earthly birth of our builder. With humility, we wish you all a blessed Christmas.

Norm & Beth Cooling

## DECEMBER 22

### LUKE 1:14-15

I literally could not breathe as I opened the box and saw what was inside.

A present, I thought. Wow, our birthday and our anniversary had just passed but, oh well what could it be? As our daughter Maeson and son-in-law Trey stood beside us while our other daughters Moregan and Meah looked on with eagerness, Rick and I unwrapped the paper and lifted the lid. A tiny white baby onesie with words we will never forget, read, “Baby Childress due April 2022.” Oh, my goodness... a baby, our first grandbaby! An overwhelming JOY surged through my body and the urge to go shopping, wash baby clothes I had saved from our girls, and to go through treasured baby toys and books to bring out for little hands to enjoy immediately filled me. I love our baby already so much I can’t even literally breathe. BEST GIFT EVER! We are going to be grandparents!

Experiencing the birth of my granddaughter Lainey was a true miracle. She is simply Joy in little human form. Healthy, happy, safe, and LOVED! We are taking this grandparent thing very seriously as we prepare to share and care all we possibly can with her. This year’s Kelley Christmas will be a little extra special for sure.

Grandparents are one of the family’s greatest treasures, a lighthouse of a loving legacy, the greatest storytellers, the keepers of traditions that linger on in cherished memory. Grandparents are a cornerstone of the family’s strongest foundation. For grandchildren this extra layer of support can have lasting positive effects on the child’s emotional well-being. This is a representation of God’s design for families. Their very special love sets them apart. Through happiness and sorrow, through their special love and caring, families are a work of heart. A close relationship benefits the health and well-being of each member of the family. In healthy relationships, families can find in their grandparents a safe harbor—people they trust and know are always on their side, just like God.

During this season of celebrating the birth of Jesus, may we all remember him as a tiny baby, with adoring parents and grandparents. Although we don’t know that much about Jesus’ grandparents, we have discovered they were faithful and loving. We are sure that they adored Jesus, kissed him, snuggled him, and prayed for him just as we do with our little Lainey, our daughters, and all our family.

Wishing you all the blessings of this Christmas Season,

Susan & Rick Kelley

## DECEMBER 23

### GALATIANS 3:15-22

Freedom is a word we seldom associate with Christmas but in this passage Paul speaks of our freedom in Christ. At the time Paul wrote this there was much discussion in the church about what the Gentiles needed to do to become a part of the fellowship. Were they first to follow all the Jewish laws that regulated the Jews of that day? They were particularly concerned about circumcision. Paul preaches that the law is necessary to define sin but it has no cure for sin. The law was given to Moses by God but it is Christ who is the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham.

Because of God's grace, you and I can enter into a personal relationship with Christ, the Son of God. We fool ourselves if we think we achieve this by following certain rules. It is a gift to us that we have to accept and give our lives to Christ. Christmas is more than a babe in a manger or shepherds in the field watching their flocks. It is God saying "I want to be in fellowship with you."

It is amazing to me that God wants to be in fellowship with me. I have the great privilege of saying "I am a friend of God." What wonder and awe that adds to my Christmas experience. The lights on my tree are brighter and the ornaments give such color to my life because of the great gift that I received on that first Christmas morning. May all of us this Christmas know the freedom of that personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Pat Colonna

## DECEMBER 24

### MATTHEW 1:19-25

*You've stood where Joseph stood. Caught between what God says and what makes sense. You've done what He told you to do only to wonder if it was Him speaking in the first place. You stared into a sky blackened with doubt. And you've asked what Joseph asked. You've asked if you're still on the right road. You've asked if you were supposed to turn left when you turned right. And you've asked if there is a plan behind the scheme. Things haven't turned out like you thought they would. Each of us knows what it's like to search the night for light. Not outside a stable, but perhaps outside an emergency room. On the gravel of a roadside. On the manicured grass of the cemetery. We've asked our questions. We've questioned God's plan. And we've wondered why God does what He does. The Bethlehem sky is not the first to hear the pleading of a confused pilgrim. If you are asking what Joseph asked, let me urge you to do what Joseph did. Obey.*

— Max Lucado

Last year I read these words on Christmas Day and over the last 364 days "you've stood where Joseph stood," has popped in my head numerous times. Of course, I have never been told by an Angel that I was going to be a parent to the Son of God, but in some of the trials that life brings I have thought of Joseph and who he was called to be. It's through these moments I have realized that I have never given Joseph enough credit. Even worse, I had never really stopped and thought about the incredible faith of this man.

We don't know if the quote above represents Joseph's thoughts, we never learn much of his internal struggles. What we do know is that Joseph was a good man, a just man, and, more importantly, we know that he was human. He was broken just like the rest of us. Even though we all have different stories and our circumstances may not look anything alike, our emotions can be very much the same. We connect in that sameness: confusion is confusion. Disappointment is disappointment. Hurt is hurt. Pain is pain. The epic fall of humanity is the birthplace for all of these emotions. Our circumstances are supposed to be better than they are, people are supposed to be better, but we go through many trials in life and the people we love will fail us and we will fail them. We will fail ourselves. We will fail God. That's humanity. That's why Joseph's faith and trust should never be overlooked.

What if all we have to do is trust God's plan and the Savior would come redeem us of our brokenness, our humanness? That's what Joseph did. He did not try to make sense of all the details. I truly admire him for that and inspire to be more like him.

What if he turned around? What if he turned left instead of right? What if he gave up? What if Joseph thought it was too unclear and didn't make enough sense?

Trust. What a beautiful gift from God. An unfailing gift. In the moments where I want to question and when I want to write my own script, I want to continue to think of Joseph and be inspired to ask myself if I am trying to put God's hand in something that I desire. I want to attempt to be more conscious of where God's hand has already left clear instruction. That's where another one of His beautiful gifts comes in: His word. His guidance is not always simple, but it's always there. No matter the circumstance; for every thought, every word, every deed there is an answer. In the hardest moments, I know I will have doubt, I will question what the plan is, I may get fixated on trying to figure things out; but I pray that I remember that none of us have the power to overcome our humanity, we are sinful and we are so very broken, and that is why we need grace. That's why we need faith like Joseph. That's why we need Jesus.

*Prayer: Gentle Jesus, thank you for the many gifts you have given us. As I continue my journey, remind me of your adoptive father Joseph and remind me to use his faith as a map for what trust looks like. Remind me in every moment of doubt to remember You. Remind me that You will never fail me and I can trust in You. Help me to see the times when I am trying to put Your hand in something that I desire. Help me to be more conscious of where You have already left clear instructions. Help me to continue to strive to be a person of both truth and grace, as well as conviction and love. Insert Yourself, redirect me away from my own pride and continue to teach me humility when choosing my ways over Yours. Keep my heart tender and humble. Thank you for showing us the faith of a good, good father like Joseph and thank you for being the good, good father that You are. In your joyous name. Amen.*

Melody Emerson

DECEMBER 25

JOHN 1:1-18

Humans have always been fascinated by the heavenly bodies that surround the earth. Twinkling, shining stars especially draw our attention to the heavenlies. It is hard not to look up in wonder on a starry night. There is something very comforting to see the light scattered throughout the darkness. It only takes a little light to help us navigate darkness. Darkness must yield to light.

Since the shepherds were out in the fields on the night of our Savior's birth, I have always imagined it to be a clear night with a star-filled sky. And, of course, there was that one special star that seemed to rest right over the city of Bethlehem. Stars greeted the arrival of the Christ Child. Stars shining in the darkness remind us of God's light piercing the darkness of this world, especially on that night.

Jesus Christ is the Light of God piercing the darkness of this world. The Gospel writer references the birth of Jesus Christ as the "true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world" (John 1:9). The celebration of Christmas reminds us that God provides the light needed to navigate the darkness. The greater the darkness, the greater is our gratitude for the Light of God penetrating the darkness. The lights of Christmas help us deal with the long nights of winter.

Sometimes it seems that the darkness of this world penetrates even our spirits. We all have dark places within us known to no one else. May this Christmas be a new birth of God's brilliance in our lives to illuminate all the dark places within us. May the Light of Christ chase away the darkness within us. May we all be the bearers of the Light of Christ to the world.

*"Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, kindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."*  
(Book of Common Prayer)

With Confidence in Christ,  
Pastor Jeff





## THANK YOU

This devotional is provided to you by our Adult Spiritual Formation Team. Thank you to all the members of our Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church family who contributed to making this year's Advent Devotional.

Special thank you to Cathy Weaver for her assistance in organizing and editing the devotional submissions and to Wray Hodgins for reviewing the final copy of this devotional for print.

This devotional is also available by email; please send a note to Melody Emerson at [memerson@wesleymemorial.org](mailto:memerson@wesleymemorial.org). You may also find online at [wesleymemorial.org/communications](http://wesleymemorial.org/communications).

More copies of this devotional are available at the Front Desk - please feel free to take a copy to a neighbor, a friend, or someone in need of a way to connect with God and with the community of faith during this Advent season.

We hope to see you on Sunday mornings. As a reminder, our Sunday morning schedule is:

8:30 am Traditional Worship (Chapel)

9:45 am Contemporary Worship (Fellowship Hall)

11:00 am Traditional Worship (Sanctuary)

## CHRISTMAS MEMORIALS

We will Decorate the Entire Church for Christmas this Year!

You may order wreaths, poinsettias in honor or memory of your loved one. Because we are bringing back our traditional Lovefeast Service on Christmas Eve, we will offer new this year, Moravian Buns and candles to be used at the Lovefeast for you to purchase in memory or honor of your love ones in lots of \$25, \$50 or \$100.

Place your order now by calling Sue Schoch at 336-812-4806.

## EPIPHANY SUNDAY

Epiphany is the day Christians remember the coming of the Magi to visit Jesus, bringing their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The word “epiphany,” from the Greek word epiphania, means appearance or manifestation. The arrival of these visitors was a sign that the incarnation of God in Christ had been made known and was recognized by the heavens to the whole world, so that even Gentile wise men from the East came to pay him homage. This is an observance of great majesty, solemnity and awe.

This year Epiphany Sunday occurs on January 1st and we will have a regular schedule with all three services. Wesley Memorial Kids will be having Poptarts and Pajamas - kids wear your PJs to Sunday School!

## ADVENT SERMON SERIES

Beginning November 27th is our Advent Sermon Series, “A Thrill of Hope.” This four week Advent series reminds us of the promises God made to His people about a coming Messiah and shows how Jesus’ birth fulfilled God’s promise of hope.

## JANUARY SERMON SERIES

“Questions Worth Asking” - Have a burning question about God, faith and more? Join us for our January sermon series called Questions Worth Asking, and we need your (anonymous) questions. We will incorporate answers to questions in each week of the series. Visit [wesleymemorial.org/questions](http://wesleymemorial.org/questions) today to let us hear from you!

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## WESLEY MEMORIAL

1225 Chestnut Drive, High Point, NC 27262

336.884.2204

[wesleymemorial.org](http://wesleymemorial.org)

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