



Keeping Advent

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Associate Pastor

Several years ago, I wrote this Advent “Calendar” for MAPC Life. We are offering it to you again as a way to observe Advent with a brief verse or two from scripture or a hymn and a suggestion for reflection.

Children’s Advent calendars are clearly counting down the days to Christmas. I love them, but they have little to do with what Advent is all about. They either have secular seasonal images under the doors that are opened each day, or a piece of candy or trinket, or, if they are religious, you may find a small portion of the nativity story under each little door. But even remembering the nativity story is not what Advent is all about.

Advent means “coming.” It is the season of the church year when we remember Christ’s promise that he will come again and make all things new. It is a time of expectation, waiting, hope, and preparation. Yes, we are looking forward to celebrating Christmas, when God first came to us as a human being, Emmanuel—“God with us.” But more than that we are looking to that time when the kingdom will be ushered in in all its fullness. It is a time for us to remember that all the sufferings and evils of this world will not have the final say: the pandemic, political turmoil, division, pain, suffering, violence, disease, war, racism, oppression, despair—God has already triumphed over all of these through the resurrection, and that triumph will be complete when Christ returns in glory. Advent is a time for us to remember that amidst the fear and struggles of our world, we are a people of hope. We live in hope—waiting, watching, trusting, and preparing for God to enter our lives and our world again—each and every day, and once and for all. Trusting in God’s promise, we can live as people of hope, as witnesses to the way of love and faith in a world where even those who profess Christ are often consumed by fear.

Below are verses appropriate to the Advent season—one for each day for you to reflect on, with a question or suggestion you may use as a jumping off point. Some of the verses are scriptural, others are lines from Advent hymns. Perhaps you can cut each day's verse out and put it in your pocket or purse as you begin the morning. Or commit it to memory as you shower and prepare for the day. Say it to yourself throughout the day and listen for what God may be saying to you through this verse.

May we all have a blessed Advent and learn to wait upon the Lord in hope and joyful expectation.

Advent Day	Verse/Hymn	Reflection
Sunday, November 29	"To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust." -Ps. 25: 1-2a	<i>What particular worry keeps you from trusting in God? Share that worry with God and pray for God's assurance.</i>
Monday, November 30	"Keep awake, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming." - Matthew 24:42.	<i>What can you do to wake up to God's presence today?</i>
Tuesday, December 1	"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." -Romans 15:13	<i>Ask God to transform whatever weighs heavily on your heart, that even in the midst of challenge or fear, God can fill you with joy and peace in believing.</i>
Wednesday, December 2	"O Lord, how shall I meet You, How welcome You aright? Your people long to greet You, My hope, my heart's delight! O kindle, Lord most holy, A lamp within my breast, To do in spirit lowly All that may please You best." -Paul Gerhardt, 1653, First verse of hymn "O Lord, How Shall I Meet You?"	<i>When we welcome guests, we clean and make preparations. What "cleaning up" and preparations do you need to do to welcome Christ aright?</i>
Thursday, December 3	"May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." -Romans 15:5-6.	<i>Who are you not in harmony with? How does that discord keep you from preparing for, and glorifying, God?</i>

Friday, December 4	<p>"O send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling." -Ps. 43:3.</p>	<i>Through the course of your day ask God to lead you by God's light and truth.</i>
Saturday, December 5	<p>"Come, Thou long expected Jesus, Born to set Thy people free; From our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in Thee." -Charles Wesley, 1744.</p>	<i>What fears and sins are keeping you from finding your rest in Christ?</i>
Sunday, December 6	<p>"For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light." -Ephesians 5:8</p>	<i>What does it mean to you to live as a child of light?</i>
Monday, December 7	<p>"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." -Isaiah 40:3.</p>	<i>How can you prepare the way of the Lord? Even the wilderness of your, or our society's, life?</i>
Tuesday, December 8	<p>"In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'" -Matthew 3:1-2.</p>	<i>What do you need to put behind you, turn away from, to be ready for the coming kingdom?</i>
Wednesday, December 9	<p>"Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts." -Ps. 85:8.</p>	<i>What do you need to put behind you, turn away from, to be ready for the coming kingdom?</i>
Thursday, December 10	<p>"The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance." -2 Peter 3:9.</p>	<i>Give thanks for God's grace and patience!</i>
Friday, December 11	<p>"In accordance with God's promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home." -2 Peter 3:13.</p>	<i>Think about what it would look like for righteousness to be at home. And give thanks for God's promise.</i>

Saturday, December 12:	<p>“O come, O come, Emmanuel, And ransom captive Israel, That mourns in lonely exile here Until the Son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel!”</p> <p><i>-Latin, c. 12th century.</i></p>	<i>What in you is captive, and in need of Christ's ransoming?</i>
Sunday, December	<p>“I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.”</p> <p><i>-Ps. 89:1.</i></p>	<i>Throughout this day, rejoice in the steadfast love of the Lord.</i>
Monday, December 14	<p>“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.”</p> <p><i>-John 1:6-9.</i></p>	<i>How can your life today, your words and deeds, testify to the light?</i>
Tuesday, December 15	<p>“For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water.”</p> <p><i>-Isaiah 35:6b-7b.</i></p>	<i>Imagine life-giving water breaking forth in abundance to quench all thirsts, and to make the wilderness flower—your own wilderness and that of all who suffer.</i>
Wednesday, December 16	<p>“Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your heart, for the coming of the Lord is near.”</p> <p><i>-James 5:7-9</i></p>	<i>What can you do to strengthen your heart as we wait for the coming of the Lord?</i>

Thursday, December 17	<p>"Rank on rank the host of heaven Spreads its vanguard on the way, As the Light of Light descendeth From the realms of endless day, That the powers of hell may vanish As the darkness clears away." - Verse 3, "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent." From Liturgy of St. James, 4th Century.</p>	<p><i>Use this verse as a meditation. Imagine the Light of Light descending from the realm of endless day, clearing away the darkness.</i></p>
Friday, December 18	<p>"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near." -Philippians 4:4-5</p>	<p><i>In expectation and trust that Christ is near, practice gentleness, kindness.</i></p>
Saturday, December 19	<p>"Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'" -Luke 1:38.</p>	<p><i>Mary said "yes" to God's improbable, possible-only-for-God call. What is God calling you to say "yes" to this Advent?</i></p>
Sunday, December 20	<p>"The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the Lord, and the neediest people shall exult in the Holy One of Israel." -Isaiah 29:19.</p>	<p><i>As you move through this day pay careful attention to the "meek and the neediest" around you. Remember that God's promises are for them as well, especially for them.</i></p>
Monday, December 21	<p>"And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." -Luke 1:45.</p>	<p><i>Mary and Elizabeth believed in God's promises to them, though they seemed impossible. Author Madeleine L'Engle referred to Jesus' birth as a "Glorious Impossible." As you walk through this day, remember God has blessed you with a faith in the "Glorious Impossible."</i></p>
Tuesday, December 22	<p>"Creator of the stars of night, Your people's everlasting light, O Christ, Redeemer of us all, We pray You hear us when we call." -Latin Hymn, 9th Century, Verse 1 of "Creator of the Stars of Night"</p>	<p><i>We know God hears the cries of God's people. Offer the cries of your heart to God—for yourself, your family, our neighbors and world, then rest in the knowledge that God hears our cries and is with us.</i></p>

Wednesday, December 23	<p>"Redeemer, come! I open wide My heart to Thee; here, Lord, abide. Let me Thy inner presence feel; Thy grace and love in me reveal." - Georg Weissel, 1642, third verse of "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates."</p>	<p><i>In the course of the day, mindfully inhale and be aware of God's "inner presence", and as you exhale, pray that God's grace and love may be revealed in you and thus shared with others.</i></p>
Thursday, December 24	<p>"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined." -Isaiah 9:2.</p>	<p><i>In the bustle of Christmas Eve, give thanks for the light that shines in the darkest corners of our lives and our world, the light that will one day dispel all darkness.</i></p>



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