



THE SEASON OF ADVENT  
2021

Northminster Baptist Church

## The Season of Advent 2021

An inexhaustible storehouse of words can be associated with Advent, words such as “joy,” “light,” “faith,” “coming,” “anticipation,” “hope,” “beginning,” “healing.” The supply can be limitless. Why so many? Perhaps it is because of Advent’s close association with Christmas, and to all of us, “Christmas” brings magical thoughts of gifts given and received and the eternal verity of our God who loves and saves us.

Several weeks ago, Advent lectionary scriptures were divided among members of the Worship and Music Committee, and they began preparation for this year’s Advent Guide. As I began to receive their writing, I noticed a propensity for topics associated with the theme of “hope.” This could only be so, for this Advent, for all of us, is filled with hope. Our friends and family circles continue to live within the fear of Covid-19. We have endured loss of family members and friends, and our prayers for their healing have become ever more fervent, as have our prayers for the quick development of successful vaccines. Our hopes and prayers are dominated by wishes that lives can return to normal, that we can resume activities with our friends, and that our schools and churches can resume the activities and studies that give such unique identity to our living. Hanging over all of this is the bleak cloud of a war that finally has been brought to an end after 20 years of terrorism and lives lost. Even so, we are left with bitter political division and endless questions. Where is the hope in all this?

One stark moment of hope presented itself as recent conflicts in Afghanistan were being brought to a close and troops were being flown to their home bases. As evacuation planes were loaded with soldiers and military equipment for the flight home, a unique moment of hope and promise occurred. A young Afghan lady passenger was discovered to be in the midst of childbirth. Our medical personnel were quickly brought into place and organized. All

thought of time and recent conflict seemed to vanish in preparation for the impending birth. The loading bay of a giant C-17 was quickly filled with medical specialists and supplies to help bring this child into the world. Born among strangers, this child, whom most of us will never meet, was to gift the world of hurt and conflict with the hope of another Advent, similar in circumstance to the Advent associated with Jesus' birth.

Welcome to our poor world, young lady! May your coming bring a renewal of peace and hope to all of us, just as Jesus' coming did so long ago. God, the great giver of such perfect gifts, has given us another chance.

May your Advent days be filled with hope and renewal as you share these gifts of peace and hope from the pens of members of the Worship and Music Committee.

## Sunday, November 28, First Sunday of Advent

*Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 25:1-10; I Thessalonians 3:9-13;  
Luke 21:25-36*

“I will cause a righteous Branch to spring forth for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”

Jeremiah 33:12

“May the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another.”

I Thessalonians 3:12

Today’s verses call us to begin Advent. So much of Advent has to do with a frame of mind despite the frenzy of the season. The verses from Jeremiah tell of days coming in which God’s promises will be fulfilled. The verses anticipate Christ’s coming and set forth a hope for justice and righteousness. It seems justice and righteousness are fundamental parts not only of Advent but also of the Christian life. The verses from Psalm 25 go on to define our set of mind during Advent: “I lift up my soul. I wait for Thee. Teach me Thy paths.” Waiting with hope and listening to learn are parts of Advent also. I Thessalonians 3:12 further develops our Advent attitude that our love might grow to abundance for one another.

Boethius, a Roman senator who lived 480-525 AD, in his words from *Consolation of Philosophy*, reminds us of hope and purpose in our journey of Advent and journey of life: “Break through the mists of earth, the weight of the soil, shine forth in splendor, You that are calm weather, and quiet resting place for souls. To see You is the end and the beginning, You carry us, and you go before, You are the journey, and the journey’s end.”

## Monday, November 29

*Psalm 90; Numbers 17:1-11; 2 Peter 3:1-18*

“The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will pass away with a loud noise and the elements will be dissolved with fire... Since all these things will be, what sort of persons ought you be in lives of holiness and godliness.... Be zealous to be found without spot or blemish and at peace.”

2 Peter 3:10-14

On this second day of Advent, I think of “In the Bleak Midwinter” with Christina Rossetti’s words set to Gustav Holst’s music. Her words allude to God’s power and to the second coming mentioned in today’s verses from 2 Peter 3. “Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain. Heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign.” The biblical passage also poses the question of what sort of person ought we be in the meantime and how then should we live? I hear the music with Rossetti’s words sung as if in response: “What can I give Him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb. If I were a wise man, I would do my part. Yet what I can, I give him—give my heart.” There are so many ways to do our part and to give our hearts. Give of our overly-scheduled time, encouraging words, attentive listening, kind counsel, varied talents, or monetary gifts? The list could go on and on. What can we give Him this Advent? Where lie our hearts?

Tuesday, November 30

*Psalm 90; 2 Samuel 7:18-29; Revelation 22:12-16*

Read Psalm 90:

Psalm 90 is ostensibly the earliest Psalm, written by Moses after the wilderness wanderings just before his death. It served as a pattern for the other psalms. This Psalm declares the greatness of God in language we have come to know well. "Lord you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations...from everlasting you are God." Paul said something similar in Acts 17:28 "...in him we live and move and have our being." To Moses God was the God of history and of creation, who existed before the worlds were created and will exist long after they are all ash. The alpha and the omega, the beginning, and the end. We arise from dust and return to dust, but God is outside of time. He is the ONLY God as well. This was a concept unique to Judaism as the pagan gods had beginnings and ends and existed in a pantheon of gods.

There is a story of a little girl who learned in Sunday School that man came from dust and eventually returns to dust. She looked under her bed one morning and said, "Mother, mother come quick! There's someone under my bed, but I don't know if he is coming or going!!!"

The Psalmist toward the end writes "Satisfy us in the morning with thy steadfast love that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." (v. 14). One version uses the phrase "loving kindness." A little boy in Sunday School was asked by his teacher to describe "lovingkindness." He said to the teacher, "Well, teacher, if I ask my mother for a piece of bread and butter, and she gives it to me, that's kindness. But if she puts jam on it, that's lovingkindness."

In the seventeenth verse, Moses says, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." As we prepare once again for the coming of our Lord, may we see the beauty of God and his lovingkindness in that grand entrance of our Savior.

Prayer: Lord, we pray that we will not be so foolish as to build our lives on any basis than love for You and give ourselves to a life of lovingkindness. Amen.

## Wednesday, December 1

*Psalm 90; Isaiah 1:24-31; Luke 11:29-32*

Jesus and his disciples were beginning their journey to Jerusalem, but a crowd gathered of pharisees who wanted to test him by asking him to show them a sign that he was the Son of God as he claimed. The healings and other miracles had not convinced them as there were other magicians around who did similar feats. Jesus said their generation was evil and for Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so he was a sign to this time. As the Queen of Sheba came to the court of Solomon for wisdom, she will arise at the judgment day to denounce them, for something greater is right there in front of them.

In other words, Jesus is the sign from God and his message was God's message. We might conclude that the greatest sign was his resurrection, rising from death. There will be no "signs" such as Jesus appearing before us to convince us of his place in the Kingdom of God.

Many people today will only believe in God and in Jesus Christ if they can see them physically and analyze them scientifically. God is an abstract concept that to them is not rational. We as Christians know that God is real not from scientific analysis but from faith. We can see the signs the Pharisees called for in every flower that blooms or baby that is born or in every life lived well. We don't need or desire signs writ large in bold letters in the sky, we have the clouds and the stars and the rain and life itself.

We also have the impact of the Church universal, which is very imperfect but embodies God's love for us and our fellow creatures on this earth. This faith is our rock that holds us up and guides us and causes us to reach out to each other in love.

Prayer: God, may we strengthen our faith in You this Advent season as we celebrate the sign of your great love for us in the gift of your Son, Jesus. Amen.

## Thursday, December 2

*Luke 1:68-79; Malachi 3:5-12; Philippians 1:12-18a*

The prophet Joel had uttered, “I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, your sons and daughters shall prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams...In those days, I will pour out my spirit.” (Joel 2:2-29)

In this passage early in Luke, we find the father of John the Baptist, Zechariah, who was very old and mute, and his wife Elizabeth, a relative of Mary, had no children. The Angel Gabriel appeared to him to tell him that Elizabeth would give birth who would fulfill the prophecy of Malachi. He “unmuted” Zachariah and the Holy Spirit poured over him and he came forth with a song. As did the others: Elizabeth and Mary.

Zechariah’s song is an ideal one for Advent meditation as he prophesies about his new son whom he named John:

“And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;  
For you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,  
to give his people the knowledge of salvation  
through the forgiveness of their sins,  
because of the tender mercy of our God,  
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven  
to shine on those living in darkness  
And in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

John went on to become John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus. And with the birth of Jesus Christ, that Holy Spirit poured out among all people once and for all.

Prayer: God, pour your Holy Spirit on us that we may remain faithful in our faith and effective in our outreach to others. In this time of Advent, may we be receptive to you and to your love for us all. Amen.

## Friday, December 3

*Luke 1:68-79; Malachi 3:13-18; Philippians 1:18b-26*

From the “sound of silence” for the past few months, Zechariah breaks out into his prophecy of “song” that is often called the Benedictus (Luke 1:68-79).

Zechariah, whose Hebrew name means “God has remembered,” and Elizabeth, whose Hebrew name means “the Oath of God,” have been joined together in the prophecy, “God has remembered the Oath of God.” This has been done through the birth of their son John, Yochanan, which means the “grace of God.” This expression of gratitude by Zechariah rejoices in the birth of his son and in the realization that the Jewish hope for a Messiah is near.

Their son John, born of elderly and seemingly barren parents, has been given the role of “preparing the way” for the long-awaited Messiah as predicted by Isaiah and fulfils God’s promise to Abraham to make of him a great nation.

Zechariah’s enthusiasm sets a good example for us as we settle into this season of Advent. Let us approach it with anticipation, joy, appreciation, and gratitude for the birth of our Lord Jesus. As Christians, we know that Christ came and died to give us salvation. We place our hope in Him knowing that he is preparing our eternal home for us as we breathe this very moment.

**Saturday, December 4**

*Luke 1:68-79; Malachi 4:1-6; Luke 9:1-6*

In I Timothy 6, Paul states that we bring nothing into this world and we take nothing when we leave it. It does appear to be that way.

Jesus was born in humble circumstances and we know that as a child, he studied in the synagogue and sought the will of his Father in heaven. After being baptized by John the Baptist and presented to the world by him as the sacrificial Lamb of God, Jesus started his mission.

He gathered his disciples and prepared them both spiritually and physically. Spiritually, He gave them authority to preach and heal, knowing they would have to continue this when He was gone. Physically, he sent them on their journeys with instructions to take nothing with them.

But they did have something. Much as a child in the womb moves and knows it's surroundings, the disciples knew that Jesus had given them the knowledge and power to teach, to heal, and to spread the word of the love of God. And, they anticipated returning to Jesus to tell Him of all their works.

So it is with us. We burst from the familiar and warm womb that we know, and we go on this journey of our lives. We know there is an earthly end to this journey, and hopefully, we look forward to the next journey. We can go on to heaven with anticipation, excitement, hope, and joy. That's not "nothing". We know that "earth is not our goal" and in the book of Revelation, we are told that He is making everything NEW for us. We will see the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb in all their glory and splendor. This new, sparkling, beautiful, and holy place with no trouble or sorrow will be our real home. Forever. Physically, we come and go with nothing, but spiritually, we leave with everything.

*Come Lord Jesus. Come.*

## December 5, Second Sunday of Advent

*Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:68-79; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6*

Today we light the advent candle of Hope. Life during these times of illness and unrest may seem a bit hopeless. Even the most optimistic souls are experiencing despair and longing. But even in these dark times there is hope.

One of the most loved Christmas carols, "O Holy Night" is based on a French poem by Placide Cappeau in 1843 and set to music by Adolphe Adam in 1847. It has been said that the carol reflects on the birth of Jesus as humanity's redemption. When I think of hope, I think of one line from that beautiful carol: "A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices."

Before the advent candle of hope is lit, the wick is dark, symbolizing the darkness that sometimes fills our world and our souls. After it is lit, it burns a light that will indeed give us hope. We are not in darkness; the Light of Christ is with us always.

As we journey through this season of waiting and watching, let us rejoice in the thrill of hope!

Monday, December 6

*Psalm 126; Isaiah 40:1-11; Romans 8:22-25*

TODAY, CHOOSE TO...

BELIEVE.

Believe that Christ is coming to bring light to the world.

GIVE.

Give to others so that they may see the light of Christ in you.

HOPE.

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

LISTEN.

Listen for the still small voice that will lead you to a deeper understanding of God's Love.

LOVE.

Love your neighbor as you love yourself.

PRAY.

Pray with joy and gratitude, asking for God's guidance and grace.

REST.

Rest in God's love.

TRUST.

Trust that God's love is steadfast and true.

WAIT.

Wait with patience for the coming of Christ.

Tuesday, December 7

*Psalm 126; Isaiah 19:18-25; 2 Peter 1:2-15*

When God revealed his gracious name,  
And changed my mournful state,  
My raptures seemed a pleasing dream,  
The grace appeared so great.  
The world beheld the glorious change,  
And did thy hand confess;  
My tongue broke out in unknown strains,  
And sung surprising grace.

Isaac Watts

## Wednesday, December 8

*Psalm 126; Isaiah 35:3-7; Luke 7:18-30*

“...Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?”

Luke 7:19

“...Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?”

Luke 7:20

In our own living, how often do we look for someone in a group of people and fail to recognize the person we seek? The writer of Luke 7 seems to be clearly intentional in asking this searching question, “Are you the one we seek, or should we expect someone else?”

This account reminds me of an old spiritual dialogue:

“Go and tell John what you see and hear!”

“Go and tell John what you see and hear!”

“Go and tell John what you see and hear....  
that the blind recover their sight!”

“Go and tell John what you see and hear....  
that the lame are made to walk!”

“Go and tell John what you see and hear....  
that the dead shall rise again!”

If we had witnessed Jesus as He gave sight to the blind, enabled the lame to walk, and healed the sick, perhaps our reaction would have been similar.

Perhaps we would have reacted in disbelief to the Healer who was promised to us.

Perhaps we would have felt that this was just too good to be true!

Thursday, December 9

*Isaiah 12:2-6; Amos 6:1-8; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15*

How glad we are, O God, for the great things you have done for us. We listen now for your word of promise and for the instruction we need. Unite us in remembrance with all your saints. Link us with one another in gospel partnership, that love may abound more and more and our wisdom increase. Make us instruments of your saving grace. Amen.

Feed your flock, O Shepherd. Save us by your strength as we enjoy the sunshine of your love. Fill us with such gratitude that our first impulse is to praise you and do your will. Speak now to our deepest impulses, not just to our reasoning minds, as we anticipate Christ's Advent. Amen.

Lavon Bayler, [Refreshing Rains of the Living Word](#)

Friday, December 10

*Isaiah 12:2-6; Amos 8:4-12; 2 Corinthians 9:1-15*

Carry your songs of praise into the world;  
let others know the glad anticipation of Advent.  
God goes with us, continuing to renew and bless;  
filling our lives with joy and expectation.  
We remember the promises and healing of our baptism  
and celebrate the flames of the Spirit.  
We are learning how to be abased and how to abound  
that we may be content in all circumstances.  
God us transforming us day by day,  
working within and among us to heal the world.  
The God of peace is with us; we can do all things in Christ,  
who strengthens us. Amen.

Lavon Bayler, [Refreshing Rains of the Living Word](#)

## Saturday, December 11

*Isaiah 12:2-6; Amos 9:8-15; Luke 1:57-66*

“Surely God is my salvation;  
I will trust, and will not be afraid,  
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might;  
he has become my salvation.  
With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.  
And you will say in that day:

Give thanks to the LORD,  
call on his name;  
make known his deeds among the nations;  
proclaim that his name is exalted.

Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;  
let this be known in all the earth.  
Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,  
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”

Isaiah 12:2-6

What wonderful imagery comes to mind when I read verse 3, “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” We can substitute words and see “With joy we shall draw grace from the wells of Christ Jesus.” The imagery of water and grace is soothing because both water and grace can be softening, purifying, cooling, and refreshing. Both water and grace quench a thirst that is both realized and unrealized. Being able to draw from the well of Christ Jesus is a gift of God, and sometimes requires diligence, strength, and labor through prayer, reading of Scripture, and attendance on the Word and attendance to one’s faith. When we draw grace from the well of Christ Jesus, we experience joy. Salvation itself is received with joy and can be unspeakable and full of glory.

Prayer: In this season of Advent, Gracious God, help us experience true joy through knowing that the grace of Christ Jesus will refresh us and quench our thirst. As we draw grace from your well, may we share that grace with others so we all experience the joy of the Advent season. Amen.

## December 12, Third Sunday of Advent

*Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18*

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

### Philippians 4:4-7

Aren't we fortunate? Here is another opportunity in Advent scripture for us to rejoice – to be joyful! “Rejoice in the Lord *always*,” can be interpreted as “at all times,” in other words, don't stop rejoicing. Don't wait on a particular circumstance to experience joy. Make this an ongoing activity, embracing past, present, and future opportunities to see joy in the world around you, even in times of trials and uncertainties. Paul reminds us to “Rejoice in the *Lord*...” This continuous rejoicing in the Lord is a very important concept for Paul. It is a distinguishing mark for Christians, a characteristic of life in the kingdom of God, and a fruit of the Spirit.

Some passages of Scripture are convicting. Some bring comfort. Still others are apparently doing their best to confuse and confound. And yet there are also verses that lift the spirit and cause one to celebrate with great, great joy. Philippians 4:4-7 is one such passage. Rejoice!

Prayer: Father God, let us rejoice in every season of our lives, knowing that you are with us whether we are with you or not. Let our lives be characterized by joy at all times, not just some. Amen.

**Monday, December 13**

*Isaiah 11:1-9; Numbers 16:1-19; Hebrews 13:7-17*

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

Hebrews 13:8

For 19 months our world has been uncertain. Our decisions regarding our movements and our relationships and our activities have required a balancing act with our health and safety. The world has shut down and opened up and partially shut down again. We have needed to be flexible and adaptable and understanding. Routines have been set aside and rearranged and set aside. We know that change is a certainty, but lately we have struggled to find the footing necessary to handle and accept the change. A new year is upon us with the start of Advent. The words in today's scripture can help to reestablish our footing. Our God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. This period of preparation reminds us of the certainty in our God who gives us the message of love shared in the birth of a baby.

Tuesday, December 14

*Isaiah 11:1-9; Numbers 16:20-35; Acts 28:23-31*

“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;  
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.  
The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—  
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and of might,  
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—

...

The wolf will live with the lamb,  
the leopard will lie down with the goat,  
the calf and the lion and the yearling<sup>a</sup> together;  
and a little child will lead them.  
The cow will feed with the bear,  
their young will lie down together,  
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.  
The infant will play near the cobra's den,  
and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.  
They will neither harm nor destroy  
on all my holy mountain,  
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD  
as the waters cover the sea.”

Isaiah 11:1-2; 6-9

Our God is a topsy turvy, head over heels, upside down God. Our scriptures are filled with stories redefining our understanding of “neighbor,” of reminders to care for the poor and hungry, and of examples of God using a broken, imperfect life to further God’s plan. The prophets, like Isaiah, who listened to God and spoke God’s truth, spread the message of hope for a time when our world would be as God intended — a time of wisdom and understanding, a time of peace and cooperation. Unlike our world where the big and powerful and loud rule our days, God’s world is one where the youngest son of Jesse can become king, a child’s birth can bring a renewed message of love, the lamb need not be afraid of the wolf. Advent is the time where we hope for glimpses of God’s world - the peaceable kingdom. We prepare for a time when God will be all in all.

## Wednesday, December 15

Isaiah 11:1-9; Micah 4:8-13; Luke 7:31-35

The word “Advent” comes from the Latin and means “coming;” it’s a season that focuses on waiting. So, Advent means something new is coming. The dawn of a new and better time. Given our world today, let us pray for a new era, a time where we welcome Christ to break into time and space and enter our world.

Let us pray for attentiveness to what truly matters, without being distracted by trivial things and differences that divide.

Pray for grace to be able to rest, to become aware of God’s presence, and embrace it.

Pray for strong relationships with others in the bond of a loving community.

Pray for an enlivened imagination that helps you contribute to community in creative ways.

Pray for freedom from all that burdens you- past mistakes, fears, hurts others have inflicted, and more.

Feelings of pain, rejection, and despair are emotions we have all felt at some point, so pray for patience to travel that path to happier days. All the while, on that journey commit to treating others with compassion, empathy, and respect.

Pray for a sense of humor.

Pray for confidence in God’s love and trust in His power to work things out for the best in your life.

Loving God, we whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of Your presence. We are Your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the Light. To You we say, “Come Lord Jesus!”

Henri Nouwen, adapted

## Thursday, December 16

*Psalm 80:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 10:10-18*

In some ways, Advent can be anything but peaceful. The stress of the season is all around us. It can be increasingly difficult to find peace – peace while out in public, peace in the media, even peace in our own space can be elusive.

But, as people of faith, we know that we do not seek peace in vain. Advent invites us to prepare for the coming of the peace of Christ with scripture and prayer for each day.

Let this Advent Guide accompany you as you travel through the season and continue on, all the way to the manger and the celebration of Christmas.

Loving and Eternal God,  
We give you thanks for the blessings of this holy Advent Season. You are the source of life, of hope, and all good things. We look forward to the coming of the Light of Christ. Help us to turn towards that Light in our lives. We rejoice at the gift of Your Son who taught us to love in Your name. May we be people of peace and justice all the days of our lives. Your kingdom come and Your will be done now and forever. Amen.

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

Friday, December 17

*Psalm 80:1-7; Isaiah 42:10-18; Hebrews 10:32-39*

“Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.”

Psalm 80:7

“You never know what may cause tears. The sight of the Atlantic Ocean can do it, or a piece of music, or a face you’ve never seen before. A pair of somebody’s old shoes can do it . . . You can never be sure. But of this you can be sure. Whenever you find tears in your eyes, especially unexpected tears, it is well to pay the closest attention. They are not only telling you something about the secret of who you are, but more often than not, God is speaking to you through them of the mystery of where you have come from and is summoning you to where, if your soul is to be saved, you should go next.”

Frederick Buechner, *Listening to Your Life*

Come darkness, come light,  
Come new star, shining bright,  
Come love to this world tonight, Alleluia!

Come broken, come whole,  
Come wounded in your soul,  
Come anyway that you know, Alleluia!

Come running, come walking slow,  
Come weary on your broken road,  
Come see Him and shed your heavy load, Alleluia!

There’s a humble stable and a light within,  
There’s an angel hovering and three wise men,  
Today a baby’s born in Bethlehem, Alleluia!

Come darkness come light,  
Come new star burning bright,  
Come love to this world tonight! Alleluia!

Mary Chapin Carpenter

Saturday, December 18

*Psalm 80:1-7; Isaiah 66:7-11; Luke 13:31-35*

“The Waiting Place”

Waiting for a train to go or a bus to come,  
or a plane to go or the mail to come,  
or the rain to go or the phone to ring,  
or the snow to snow or waiting around for a Yes or No  
or waiting for their hair to grow.

Everyone is just waiting.

Waiting for the fish to bite  
or waiting for wind to fly a kite  
or waiting around for Friday night  
or waiting, perhaps, for their Uncle Jake  
or a pot to boil, or a Better Break  
or a string of pearls, or a pair of pants  
or a wig with curls, or Another Chance.  
Everyone is just waiting.

Dr. Seuss

“Whoever you are, you are human. Wherever you are, you live  
in the world, which is just waiting for you to notice the holiness in it.”

Barbara Brown Taylor

## Sunday, December 19, Fourth Sunday of Advent

*Micah 5:2-5a; Psalm 80:1-7; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45*

During Advent we light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, remembering the promises of God with prayer. The fourth Sunday of Advent represents Love.

“Love is never abstract. It does not adhere to the universe or the nation or the institution but to the singular sparrows of the street, the lilies of the field, “to the least of these my brethren.”

“Love is not, by its own desire, heroic, it is heroic only when compelled to be. It exists by its willingness to be anonymous, humble and unrewarded.”

“Love is what carries you, for it is always there, even in the dark, or most in the dark, but shining out at times like gold stitches in a tapestry.”

“It may be that when we no longer know which way to go, we have begun our real journey. The mind that is not baffled is not employed. The impeded stream is the one that sings.”

“When I rise up, raise me up joyful like a bird. When I fall, let me fall without regret, like a leaf.”

Wendell Berry

Monday, December 20

*Psalm 113; Genesis 25:19-28; Colossians 1:15-20*

“Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD, you, his servants;  
praise the name of the LORD.  
Let the name of the LORD be praised,  
both now and forevermore.”

Psalm 113:1-2

I stood willingly and gladly in the characters of everything, other people, trees, and clouds. And this is what I learned, that the worlds otherness is antidote to confusion, that standing within this otherness, the beauty and the mystery of the world, out in the fields or deep inside books, can re-dignify the worst- stung heart.

Mary Oliver

In my lifetime  
leads back to this:  
the fires and the loss  
whose other side is salvation,  
whose meaning  
none of us will ever know.  
To live in this world  
you must be able to do three things:  
to love what is mortal;  
to hold it against your bones knowing  
your own life depends on it;  
and, when the time comes to let it go,  
to let it go.

Mary Oliver

## Tuesday, December 21

*Psalm 113; Genesis 30:1-24; Romans 8:18-30*

Let the day come, Lord,  
when our misery will find your mercy.

Let the day come, Lord,  
when our poverty will find your riches.

Let the day come, Lord,  
when our path will find the way to your house.

Let the day come, Lord,  
when our tears will find your smile.

Let the day come, Lord,  
when our joy will find your heaven.

Let the day come, Lord,  
when your church will find the Kingdom.

May you be blest, for that day  
when our eyes will find your face!

Throughout all the days of our life,  
you have not ceased to come before us  
in your son, our brother.

Lucien Deiss, adapted

Wednesday, December 22

*Luke 1:46b-55; Micah 4:1-5; Ephesians 2:11-22*

One liability of having heard the Christmas story over and over again is that we all know how it turns out. There is no way to recapture the initial shock of the news: that God is coming in the flesh to show us what real life looks like.....

“My soul magnifies the Lord,” Mary sings right there in Elizabeth’s living room, “and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” Elizabeth and Zechariah are the first to hear her song, but it is not just for them. It is also for her, Mary, and for the Mighty One who has done great things for her. It is for Gabriel, who first gave her the good news, and for all who will benefit from it.... Her song is for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—for Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel—for every son and daughter of Israel who thought God had forgotten the promise to be with them forever, to love them forever, to give them fresh and endless life.

It was all happening inside of Mary, and she was so sure of it that she was singing about it ahead of time—not in the future tense but in the past, as if the promise had already come true. Prophets almost never get their verb tenses straight, because part of their gift is being able to see the world as God sees it—not divided into things that are already over and things that have not happened yet, but as an eternally unfolding mystery that surprises everyone....

The only thing that is absolutely sure in this scenario is that we have a partner who is with us and for us and who wants us to have life. Mary’s trust in that fact is really all she has. What she does not have is a sonogram, or a husband, or an affidavit from the Holy Spirit that says, “The child really is mine. Now leave the poor girl alone.” All she has is her unreasonable willingness to believe that the God who has chosen her will be part of whatever happens next—and that apparently, is enough to make her burst into song. She does not wait to see how things will turn out first. She sings ahead of time, and all the angels with her.

If there are any big changes going on with you right now—if something is underway you cannot predict the end of, and your stomach is rolling with your own version of morning sickness—then you might try following Mary’s lead. Who knows? Maybe the Holy Spirit has come upon you. Maybe that shadow hanging over you is the power of the Most High.

While it would certainly be nice to have some details about how it will all turn out, that is not really necessary, is it? You know how God has acted in the past...

May your souls magnify the Lord, and your spirits rejoice in God your Savior. For he has looked with favor on you, and all generations will call you blessed. For the Mighty One has done great things for you, and holy is his name.

Barbara Brown Taylor, *Home By Another Way*

**Thursday, December 23**

*Luke 1:46b-55; Micah 4:6-8; 2 Peter 1:16-21*

Speak to me in the light of the dawn -  
Mercy comes with the morning.  
I will sigh and with all creation groan  
As I wait for Hope to come to me.

For we are not long here,  
Our time is but a breath,  
So we best breathe it.

And I,  
I was made to live,  
I was made to love,  
I was made to know You.  
Hope is coming for me.  
Hope.

Brooke Fraser

Friday, December 24, Christmas Eve

*Psalm 96; Isaiah 9:2-7; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20*

LISTEN!

There's a Song in the Air!

LOOK!

There's a Star in the Sky!

There's a mother's deep prayer -

And a baby's low cry!

And the star rains its fire - while the beautiful sing,

For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!

CELEBRATE!

We rejoice in the light

And we echo the song that comes down thro' the night from the  
Heavenly throng.

Every hearth is aflame

And the beautiful sing - as we greet in His cradle our Saviour and  
King!

Josiah G. Holland

**THANKS BE TO GOD!**

## In Appreciation

We are deeply thankful for the creative expressions contributed by members of the Worship and Music Committee for the 2021 edition of The Season of Advent.

Introduction.....	Richard Joiner
Sunday, November 28, First Sunday of Advent.....	Jeanne Cook
Monday, November 29.....	Jeanne Cook
Tuesday, November 30.....	Rush Miller
Wednesday, December 1.....	Rush Miller
Thursday, December 2.....	Rush Miller
Friday, December 3.....	Rose Mary Porter
Saturday, December 4.....	Rose Mary Porter
Sunday, December 5, Second Sunday of Advent.....	Gwen Anderson
Monday, December 6.....	Gwen Anderson
Tuesday, December 7.....	Monica Daniels
Wednesday, December 8.....	Monica Daniels
Thursday, December 9.....	Gray Jackson
Friday, December 10.....	Gray Jackson
Saturday, December 11.....	Crisler Boone
Sunday, December 12, Third Sunday of Advent.....	Crisler Boone
Monday, December 13.....	Holly Wiggs
Tuesday, December 14.....	Holly Wiggs
Wednesday, December 15.....	Joe Rankin
Thursday, December 16.....	Joe Rankin
Friday, December 17.....	Shirley Foster
Saturday, December 18.....	Shirley Foster
Sunday, December 19, Fourth Sunday of Advent.....	Linda McGehee
Monday, December 20.....	Linda McGehee
Tuesday, December 21.....	Amy Williams
Wednesday, December 22.....	Amy Williams
Thursday, December 23.....	Anne Brawley
Friday, December 24, Christmas Eve.....	Anne Brawley
Cover Art and Layout Design.....	Amy Williams
Editor.....	Richard Joiner

## Cover Art

This year's Season of Advent cover art depicts that for which we wait, for which we long, for which we hope...the Sunrise from on high, the New Day to break upon us, the Dayspring from on high to visit us, the Love and Kindness to shine upon us like the sun rising in the sky...the life-giving light of Christ that pierces the darkness of our world and illumines our hearts.

“O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel!”