



ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

# ADVENT AT HOME

CELEBRATING A HOLY ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

## A LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

Dear Friends in Christ,

Advent is about making a fresh start. The prophets like Isaiah and John the Baptist call out to us from the wilderness with good news: it's never too late (or too soon!) to offer our lives to Christ, who in this holy season comes to us as a child born in a manger and as our Savior at the end of the age. Advent means that God continues to act, as the old hymn goes, to "close the paths of misery" and open up a highway for us to come home to God.

Since March, we have witnessed heartbreaking misery locally and throughout the world. Yet, God has been faithful to us, summoning us to adapt to new forms of worship, prayer, study, and service to God's people. Through it all, your devotion to God and neighbor has been extraordinary, and I'm deeply thankful to God for your resilience and faith.

I invite you and your loved ones to make a fresh start with your church family. Make a wreath (it doesn't have to be perfect—you should see some of my past creations!) and light a new candle each week as you offer up prayer and read Scripture. Join us for virtual Advent Lessons and Carols and invite a friend to join you — all are warmly invited to join us in prayer!

Keep this booklet close, as it will help you observe this season of spiritual preparation. And know that your clergy team stands by, ready to support you as you eagerly await the birth of Jesus, who is Christ our Lord.

Faithfully,

Dave +





## ADVENT, CHRISTMAS, AND EPIPHANY AT ST. JOHN'S

This booklet is a resource designed for the spiritual nourishment of individuals and families who desire to observe this holy season at home. Visit the church website ([saint-john.org](http://saint-john.org)) for updates on events offered online and in-person throughout the season.

### ***Advent Wreaths***

Saturday, November 28 from 9:00–9:30 am  
Children's Ministry

Sunday, November 29 from 2:00–4:00 pm during Communion in the Garden  
Parish-wide

### ***Special Advent Speaker***

Thursday, December 3  
Ashley Brown Ruiz, Senior Director, Brené Brown Education and Research Group  
Online event

### ***Advent Lessons and Carols***

Sunday, December 6 at 7:00 pm  
Streamed service

### ***Service of Comfort and Healing***

Wednesday, December 16 at 12:10 pm  
In-person and streamed service

A prayerful time for reflection and healing as we gather together to remember the presence of the Christ-child in our midst. This service is especially intended for those experiencing grief and loss during the holiday season.

### ***Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Services***

Thursday, December 24 and Friday, December 25

Please visit the St. John's website for the latest updates on our services for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

### ***The First Sunday After Christmas***

Sunday, December 27 at 10:00 am  
In-person and streamed service of Holy Eucharist

### ***Epiphany Pageant***

Wednesday, January 6 at 6:00 pm  
Streamed children's pageant

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In Advent, the Christian church begins its watch for the coming of our Savior. We begin a whole new season of grace and are called once again to live the great cycle of salvation mysteries:

*the birth,  
the life and the miracles,  
the saving death,  
the glorious resurrection,  
the descent of the Spirit,  
the foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ.*



Advent is a time of looking both forward and backward, of remembering and anticipating, of bringing past and future into the present. We remember and celebrate the historical birth of Jesus of Nazareth at Christmas; we await His coming in glory. We do this in the ordinariness of the moment, in the midst of our everyday lives.

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# SYMBOLS OF THE SEASON

- **Advent** means “The Coming of Our Lord” and comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means “coming.”
- **Blue** is the liturgical color of the season and symbolizes thoughtful expectation and preparation.
- **Wreaths** symbolize God’s eternity. Wreaths serve as a reminder to prepare our hearts and minds for the real meaning of Christmas.



- **Evergreens** symbolize God’s gift of life and growth and life to come.
- **Four Candles** symbolize the awaiting of the coming of Christ, the four Sundays before Christmas, the four Gospels, and the four great words of this season, “Prepare ye the way.”
- **Blue Candles** symbolize preparation. Royal colors remind us to watch and prepare for the coming of our King.
- **The Pink Candle** symbolizes joy, and expresses the joy present in the Third Sunday of Advent.
- **Flames** symbolize the coming of Christ as the “light of the world.”



- **Posada** is a Spanish word meaning “inn” and is a Mexican tradition. Each day of Advent, figures of Mary and Joseph travel around from household to household, announcing the imminent arrival of Jesus, before arriving back at St. John's on Christmas Eve in time to celebrate the savior's birth.

A photograph of three candles in a church setting. On the left, a tall blue candle with a gold-colored top is lit. In the center, another tall blue candle with a gold-colored top is lit. On the right, a shorter white candle with a gold-colored top is unlit. The background is a blurred view of a church interior with a stained glass window showing figures in red and blue. The candles are set against a dark blue background.

# BIDDING PRAYER

FROM THE SERVICE OF ADVENT  
LESSONS AND CAROLS

# BIDDING PRAYER

*While this prayer initiates the Service of Advent Lessons and Carols, we invite you to pray these words with us throughout this season. Our virtual Lessons and Carols service will be streamed at 7:00 pm on Sunday, December 6.*

Beloved in Christ, in this season of Advent, let it be our care and delight to prepare ourselves to hear again the message of the Angels, and in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem, to see the Babe lying in a manger.

Let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our disobedience unto the glorious Redemption brought us by his holy child; and let us look forward to the yearly remembrance of his birth with hymns and songs of praise.

But first, let us pray for the needs of his whole world; for peace and goodwill over all the earth; for the mission and unity of the Church for which he died, and especially in this country and within this city.

And because this of all things would rejoice his heart, let us at this time remember in his name the poor and the helpless; the hungry and the oppressed; the sick and those who mourn; the lonely and the unloved; the aged and the little children; and all those who know not the Lord Jesus, or who love him not, or who by sin have grieved his heart of love.

Lastly, let us remember before God his pure and lowly mother, and all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore and in a greater light, that multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom, in this Lord Jesus, we for evermore are one.

These prayers and praises let us humbly offer up to the throne of heaven, in the words which Christ himself hath taught us:

*Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.*



# FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

NOVEMBER 29

# FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Advent is a season to watch and wait for Christ's coming. We light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, remembering the promises of God with prayer.

## ***Light one candle***

Today, we light this candle of **hope**.

## ***Read***

Hear God's promise of peace from Isaiah:

He will feed his flock like shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

## ***Sing***

Hymn 56, v. 4 *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

O come, thou Key of David, come,  
And open wide our heavenly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel,  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

## ***Pray***

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.



## ***Prayerful Practice***

Advent is about waiting, preparing, and seeking out hope. This week, when you find yourself waiting (in lines or at traffic lights or for someone you know to arrive) try putting away your phone and other distractions. Take a moment to offer a prayer of thanksgiving, share a word of hope, or spend time in God's presence.



# SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 6

# SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Advent is a season to watch and wait for Christ's coming. We light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, remembering the promises of God with prayer.

## ***Light two candles***

We light this candle of **hope**.

Today, we light this candle of **peace**.

## ***Read***

Hear God's promise of hope from Isaiah:

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins... See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.

## ***Sing***

Hymn 66 v. 1 *Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus*

Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth Thou art;  
Dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

## ***Pray***

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.



## ***Prayerful Practice***

Think back to a time when you needed comfort. What made you feel better? Was it words of encouragement? Someone reminding you that you are loved? Maybe a friend spending time with you without any words at all? What words of comfort can you speak to someone this week?

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a dark book. Three lit Advent candles are visible: a purple one, a red one, and a blue one. A white ribbon is also visible, tied around the book. The background is dark and out of focus.

# THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 13

# THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Advent is a season to watch and wait for Christ's coming. We light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, remembering the promises of God with prayer.

## ***Light three candles***

We light this candle of **hope**.

We light this candle of **peace**.

Today, we light this candle of **joy**.

## ***Read***

Rejoice! For our Lord is coming into the darkness of oppression's exile to lead us home, as we hear in Isaiah: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness."

## ***Sing***

Hymn 65 v. 1 *Prepare the Way, O Zion*

Prepare the way, O Zion, your Christ is drawing near!  
Let every hill and valley a level way appear.  
Greet One who comes in glory, foretold in sacred story.  
Oh, blest is Christ that came in God's most holy name.

## ***Pray***

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

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## ***Prayerful Practice***

Is there a seasonal song that makes you smile every time you hear it? Play your favorite Christmas or Advent song as loud as you can to spread some joy!



# **FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

DECEMBER 20

# FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Advent is a season to watch and wait for Christ's coming. We light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, remembering the promises of God with prayer.

## ***Light four candles***

We light this candle of **hope**.

We light this candle of **peace**.

We light this candle of **joy**.

Today, we light this candle of **love**.

## ***Read***

Out of love for the people of God, the Lord speaks through the psalmist:  
Your love, O Lord, for ever will I sing; from age to age my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness. For I am persuaded that your love is established for ever; you have set your faithfulness firmly in the heavens.

## ***Sing***

Hymn 79 v. 4 *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!

## ***Pray***

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.



## ***Prayerful Practice***

Write someone whom you love a Christmas note this week. What do you love about them? What do you hope for them in this new year? What is one way you can pray for them? What is one way they can pray for you?



# CHRISTMAS EVE

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24

# CHRISTMAS EVE

## **Read**

Luke 2:1-14

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

## **Sing**

Hymn 83 v. 2 *O Come All Ye Faithful*

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation;  
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God, Glory in the highest;

O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
Christ the Lord.

## **Pray**

O God, you have caused this holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light: Grant that we, who have known the mystery of that Light on earth, may also enjoy him perfectly in heaven; where with you and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.



# CHRISTMAS DAY

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25

# CHRISTMAS DAY

## **Read**

John 1:1-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

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.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

## **Sing**

Hymn 100 v. 4 *Joy to the World*

He rules the world with truth and grace  
And makes the nations prove  
The glory of His righteousness  
And wonders of His love  
And wonders of His love  
And wonders, wonders, of His love

## **Pray**

Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled 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 for ever. Amen.



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