

Journey To Bethlehem
An Advent Devotional Book
2015



Caldwell Presbyterian Church
71 Montcalm Street
Lake George, NY 12845

A Journey to Bethlehem

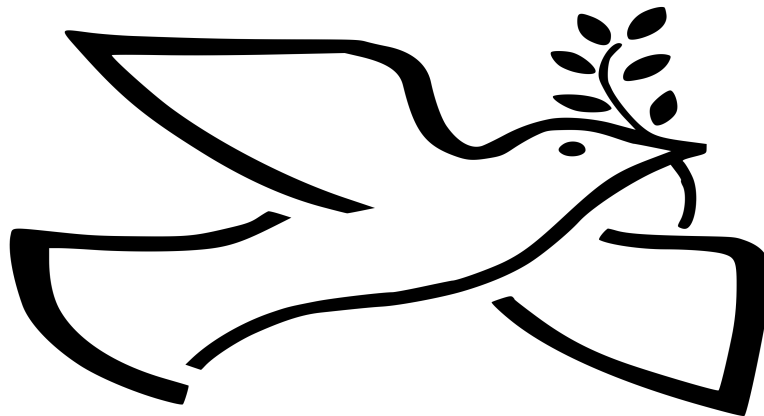
Dear Friends,

This booklet is offered as a companion to deepen your spiritual journey through Advent. In it are devotions offered by members of our church family as well as scripture, spiritual poems, and selected verses of Advent hymns, which are poetry in and of themselves. This compilation is organized in no particular order, except to say a gradual progression from the prophetic voices to the nativity. The beautiful traditional hymns of Advent help pave the way in the early days of Advent, and some of the lesser known verses of familiar Carols are found here. This Advent season, may you be led to new and holy places, all to God's glory.

Prayer:

Dear God, come close to me in these days of Advent. In the midst of my to-do lists and flurrying about and busyness this time of year, help me to pause each day and to listen for your still small voice of calm. Quiet in me any thoughts but your own for a few sacred moments, that I may listen for your word, grow in faith, and experience a deeper sense of your coming light, in the name of Jesus, the child of Bethlehem, I pray, Amen.

-Ali Trowbridge



Isaiah 40:1-11

40 ¹Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

² 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.

³ A voice cries out:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.⁵ Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

⁶ A voice says, “Cry out!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field.⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass.⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹ Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah,
“Here is your God!”

¹⁰ See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.

¹¹ He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

In Search of our Kneeling Places

*In each heart lies a Bethlehem,
an inn where we must ultimately answer
whether there is room or not...*

*This Advent let's go to Bethlehem
and see this thing that the Lord has made known to us.*

*In the midst of shopping spree
let's ponder in our hearts the Gift of Gifts.*

*Through the tinsel
let's look for the gold of the Christmas Star.
In the excitement and confusion, in the merry chaos,
let's listen for the brush of angels' wings.
This Advent, let's go to Bethlehem
and find our kneeling places.*

-Ann Weems, Kneeling in Bethlehem



Luke 1:26-38

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹

But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴ Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶ And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God."

³⁸ Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.



Fra Angelico's Annunciation (ca. 1450)

Blessings?

*And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was **no room** for them in the inn. (Luke 2:7)*

Mary was very pregnant. Ordered to return home by an uncaring government, she arrived on the back of a donkey, only to find there was no room for them and they would have to stay in the stable. Still, we hear no words of complaint from the parents-to-be as they prepared to receive this special blessing.

As a clergy family with small children, Christmas busyness often came to us in spades! There was, however one particularly memorable Christmas for our family. Tom was attending seminary in Louisville at the time, and serving as student pastor at a church 20 miles outside Louisville. JoEllen was working at a local hospital and the Steve and Jennifer were two and five years old. The church had a midnight Christmas worship service so in the best of conditions we would arrive home around 2AM, with toys yet to put together, gifts to wrap and place under the tree.

After the service, on this special night, there were borrowed choir robes to return to a church in a nearby town. You can ask JoEllen about the cow she hit that night and the (no) thanks she got from the other church's choir director when they opened the door to find the robes lying on the floor in a state of disarray.

The kids, of course, had slept through the night and were up bright-eyed and eager at 5:30AM Christmas morning. The brightness of their eyes contrasted with the bleary ones of JoEllen and Tom. Our little one's joy helped us put aside our frustration, and focus, like Mary and Joseph on the blessings of the day.

How will we each choose to deal with the distractions of the season this year?

Blessings from Tom and JoEllen Parsons



O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

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.

O come, Thou Day-Spring, 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.

O come, Desire of nations, bind
All peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease;
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.





Isaiah 9:2-7

² 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.³ You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
⁴ For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
⁵ For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for
the fire.⁶ For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷ His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.



When the Season is Truly Here

“Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy” the ageless Christmas story, the tradition carried from generation to generation, that is the Christmas season for me. Lighting the candles on the Advent wreath, and singing the hymns bring me the warmth and joy of the season. Among my favorite Christmas carols are; The First Noel, Good Christian Men Rejoice, Angels We Have Heard On High and In the Bleak Mid-Winter.

I love to bake my favorite cookie recipes while Christmas tunes play. A white Christmas adds to the mood. Going off to the tree farm to find and cut the perfect balsam tree for my collection of precious ornaments to hang on the branches means the season is truly here.

**With love,
Margy Mannix**





In The Bleak Midwinter
CHRISTINA ROSSETTI, 1872

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him, nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away when He comes to reign.
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

Enough for Him, whom cherubim, worship night and day,
Breastful of milk, and a mangerful of hay;
Enough for Him, whom angels fall before,
The ox and ass and camel which adore.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;
But His mother only, in her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the beloved with a kiss.

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.



Psalm 24

¹ The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it;
² for he has founded it on the seas,
and established it on the rivers.

³ Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
⁴ Those who have clean hands and pure hearts,
who do not lift up their souls to what is false,
and do not swear deceitfully.
⁵ They will receive blessing from the LORD,
and vindication from the God of their salvation.
⁶ Such is the company of those who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

⁷ Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.

⁸ Who is the King of glory?

The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle.

⁹ Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.

¹⁰ Who is this King of glory?

The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory.





Nurturing the Seeds

The first time I remember feeling God's love was around 1975. Mr. Wormer was the Junior High Music Director at the Revena Coeymans School district but more important than that he was also the director of the Joyful Noise. It was a Christian Music Ministry that practiced and worshipped weekly. We would rehearse our songs and sing some Hymns. The rehearsals were held at a small church somewhere about 20 minutes from my house in the little Town of Feura Bush in NY. We would meet on Tuesday evenings at 6pm or 630pm and I remember it as if it were yesterday.

After rehearsal we would often go into the Sanctuary and Bill would tell us about God and His love for us. I can remember feeling this awesome sense of security. It felt like I was wrapped in a blanket of love. He would do his best to share snippets of the Word and promote discussion. I did not know it at the time, but he had planted a seed. We lived in that area for another couple of years. We attended Bethlehem Lutheran Church and my sister and I were confirmed there before moving to Clifton Park NY.

It was not until several decades later that I started to make time for God again and started attending Church again. And although it was not every week, it was very rewarding. Many times I had the joy of knowing that my Father had not forgotten about me, even though I had not sought Him for oh so long. Now I feel something missing when I do not start the day in the Word.

I can thankfully say, "Praise God and thank you Jesus for not giving up on me", and "Thank you Lord for people like Bill Wormer and the kids from Joyful Noise". And that is why I promised the Lord that I would plant seeds and started with Leah and Max. For I realize, daily, that decades might go by but God will eventually help remind us to dig deep and nurture that seed.

-Tom Jenne

Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates

Georg Weissel, 1642; Trans. Catherine Winkworth, 1855

Fling wide the portals of your heart:
make it a temple set apart
from earthly use for heaven's employ,
adorned with prayer and love and joy.

Redeemer, come! I open wide my heart
to you: here, Lord, abide!
Let me your inner presence feel:
Your grace and love in me reveal.





Winter Scene by Sabra Field

Memories of Christmas Past

Back in the early 1940's, the small Christian Missionary Alliance Church that I attended had a Christmas Program but nothing like the elaborate Christmas Pageant that we have today at Caldwell Presbyterian.

The Sunday School students were each given a "piece" to memorize that came from scripture or if they played an instrument they were asked to play a Christmas Carol. My cousin Ward and I seemed to be called on to do "our song" quite a few years in a row. Ward, who is four years older than me, played the guitar. I sang "Silent Night." In preparation for this special program at church, Ward's mom, always bought me a fancy holiday dress. My wardrobe was made up of school clothes many handed down from other cousins.

The program was arranged by alternating those who were speaking "pieces" with those who were doing something musical. The whole event didn't last more than an hour and ended with the congregation singing a few of their favorite carols.

Our Sunday School teachers passed out a small stocking made of red netting, filled with an orange in the toe and some walnuts. In addition to the stocking we received a small box of hard candy. It was an old fashioned assortment still found in some stores today.

The drive to and from the church was most enjoyable seeing the houses that were decorated with strings of colored lights or candles in the windows.

-Jess King

People, Look East
Eleanor Farjeon (1881-1965)

People, look east, the time is near
of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able,
trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east:
Love, the Guest, is on the way.



Isaiah 11:1-9
The Peaceful Kingdom

11 A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

² The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

³ His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

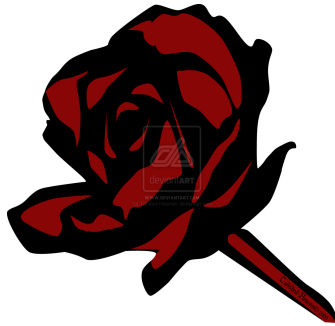
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;

⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

⁶ The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.





Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

German, 16th c.

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming
from tender stem hath sprung,
of Jesse's lineage coming
as saints of old have sung.
It came, a floweret bright,
amid the cold of winter,
when half-spent was the night.

Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
the Rose I have in mind;
with Mary we behold it,
the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright
she bore to us a Savior,
when half spent was the night.

This flower, whose fragrance tender
with sweetness fills the air,
dispels with glorious splendor
the darkness everywhere.
True man yet very God,
from sin and death he saves us
and lightens every load.

Held in Jesus' Hands



In 1993 a CT Scan was performed on our 10-month old son, Ben, when his pediatrician noticed an unusual increase in his head circumference. The CT Scan revealed a mass on his brain.

We met with a Pediatric Neurosurgeon the very next morning, and additional tests showed a grapefruit-sized mass on our sweet baby Ben's brain. He was admitted the next morning and surgery was scheduled for the morning after that. It's hard to describe the fear and heartache we felt.

I spent that night in the hospital with Ben. Unable to nurse him because of the surgery, he was hungry and fussy and I spent much of the night hugging and rocking him. I also prayed a lot.

As I held and bounced him, I was enveloped by this very strong 'feeling' that, just as I was holding my son, we were both being held in Jesus' hands. Almost immediately, I had the same intense and very clear 'feeling' that instead of an operating table during surgery, he would be lying in Jesus' hands. Though I was still afraid, the knowledge that God was with us gave me great comfort.

The mass turned out to be a large, benign cyst. It was removed and Ben came home the first week of Advent, 1993. And although Ben was closely monitored for several years, he has grown up into a strapping 22-year old young man, a "miracle baby" to his parents and big sisters.

May you experience first hand the miracle of God's love during this Advent Season.

-Linda Nicols

Silent Night

Joseph Mohr, 1818

Silent night, holy night!
Son of God,
Love's pure light,
radiant beams from thy holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Silent night, holy night!
Wondrous star,
Lend thy light;
With the angels let us sing,
Alleluia to our King;
Christ the Savior is born,
Christ the Savior is born.





St. John the Baptist Bearing Witness, Annibale Carracci, ca. 1600-1602

Mark 1:1-8

The Proclamation of John the Baptist

1 The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ,
the Son of God.

² As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,
“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;

³ the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,’”

⁴ John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a
baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

⁵ And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people
of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in
the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁶ Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt
around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

⁷ He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming
after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his
sandals. ⁸ I have baptized you with water;
but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Christmas on Pulpit Hill Road



Church Bell, by Georgia O'Keeffe, 1917

Christmas in the 1950's at our home in Amherst, Massachusetts was like many of my other friends. A Christmas tree, with tinsel, colored lights; strings of cranberries and popcorn decorated the parlor and dining room. Paper chains were strung around the archways that were made during church parties or with friends after school.

My most vivid memory is what happened on the night before Christmas when the three Seymour children, were all on school vacation. I was the middle child with a sister Carolyn two years older and a brother, David, three years younger than me. I guess you could say I was more or less the ringleader of this little event. Using the church bulletin from the North Amherst Congregational Church as a guide, I put together an abbreviated Christmas church service where everyone in our family took part.

Carolyn, Judy and David all played the piano so that was an easy fix. My mother had a lovely alto voice so she was always willing to sing her favorite hymn, "Silent Night". My father was never one to think that attending church was all that important. Dad said that he could talk to God while he was working outside, shoveling snow, but never discouraged our efforts in this event that we took great pride in.

Chairs and other furniture were carefully arranged and programs were hand printed as we prepared for the service. At the end of the service we all had a special cake and ice cream that my mother was key in providing. I am not sure how many years the Seymour family had this special service but it is still remembered by all of us and was a special part of our holiday.

-Judy Guilford

IT CAME UPON THE MIDNIGHT CLEAR

Edmund Hamilton Sears, 1849

It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, goodwill to all
From heavens all gracious King!"
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.

O ye beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow;
Look now, for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing;
Oh rest beside the weary road
And hear the angels sing.

For lo! the days are hastening on,
By prophets seen of old,
When with the ever-circling years
Shall come the time foretold,
When the new heaven and earth shall own
The Prince of Peace, their King,
And the whole world send back the song
Which now the angels sing.





Philippians 4:4-7

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think on these things. ⁹ Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.





A Lovely Reminder

As I open my Christmas card book, again I see this little poem. It is a lovely reminder to me to think about each person on the list and what they mean to me and perhaps offer up a prayer. This year I will include it with my cards since I have not done so for many years. I offer it as a reminder of the importance of people more than things at this holiday season.

-Lynda Glenn

**I HAVE A LIST OF FOLKS I KNOW,
ALL WRITTEN IN A BOOK,
AND EVERY YEAR AT CHRISTMAS TIME, I GO AND TAKE A
LOOK, AND THAT IS WHEN I REALIZE,
THAT THESE NAMES ARE A PART,
NOT OF THE BOOK THEY'RE WRITTEN IN,
BUT OF MY VERY HEART.**

**FOR EACH ONE STANDS FOR SOMEONE,
WHO HAS CROSSED MY PATH SOME TIME,
AND IN THE MEETING THEY'VE BECOME, THE "RYTHEM OF
THE RHYME",
AND WHILE IT SOUNDS FANTASTIC,
FOR ME TO MAKE THE CLAIM,
I REALLY FEEL I AM COMPOSED,
OF EACH REMEMBERED NAME.**

AND WHILE YOU MAY NOT BE,

**AWARE OF ANY SPECIAL LINK,
JUST MEETING YOU HAS SHAPED MY LIFE, MORE THEN YOU
CAN THINK.**

**FOR ONCE YOU'VE MET SOMEBODY,
THE YEARS CANNOT ERASE,
THE MEMORY OF A PLEASANT WORD,
OR OF A FRIENDLY FACE.**

**SO NEVER THINK MY CHRISTMAS CARDS,
ARE JUST A MERE ROUTINE,
OF NAMES UPON A CHRSTMAS LIST, FORGOTTEN IN
BETWEEN, FOR WHEN I SEND A CHRISTMAS CARD, THAT IS
ADDRESSED TO YOU,
IT'S BECAUSE YOUR ON THAT LIST OF FOLKS,
I AM INDEBTED TO.**

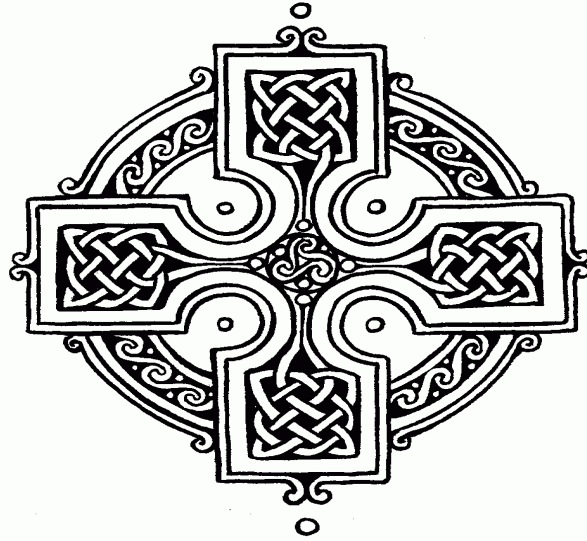
**FOR I AM BUT A TOTAL,
OF THE MANY FOLKS I'VE MET,
AND YOU HAPPEN TO BE ONE OF THOSE, I PREFER NOT TO
FORGET.**

**AND WHETHER I HAVE KNOWN YOU,
FOR MANY YEARS OR FEW,
IN SOME WAY'SYOU HAVE HAD A PART,
IN SHAPING THINGS I DO.**

**AND EVERY YEAR WHEN CHRISTMAS,
COMES I REALIZE ANEW,
THE BIGGEST GIFT THAT LIFE CAN GIVE, IS MEETING FOLKS
LIKE YOU.**

**AND MAY THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS
THAT FOREVER AND EVER ENDURES,
LEAVE IT'S RICHEST BLESSINGS,
IN THE HEART OF YOU AND YOURS.**





Jeremiah 31:31-34

A New Covenant

³¹ The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.





O Little Town of Bethlehem

Phillips Brooks, 1868

O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight

For Christ is born of Mary
And gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love
O morning stars together
Proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God the King
And Peace to men on earth

How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him still,
The dear Christ enters in.

Preparing Our Hearts



Advent, a time of preparation, has always been a wonderful time at our house. Each week we would add to the holiday decorations filling the house with the wonder of Christmas. I loved when we put up the trees. For many years we have had two. One 'My Angel Tree', decorated with bought or gifted angels until today when I put 167 angels on the tree. And then we have a regular tree filled with ornaments again many given by friends and families. At this time as I hand them out we share who has given them or the history behind their origin. A lovely time of remembrance.

Each week we also did a project. We would make and decorate/paint cookies for family and friends, make a variety of gifts, decorate, paint or fill ornaments to give away. One year we made hard candy and the kids almost burned their fingers off. It was so much fun to gather as family and make things for others. This is a tradition that I am thankful KC has decided to carry on. Now we are a three generation cookie making family. I can't wait.

We light the Christ candle on our Advent wreath at our traditional Christmas breakfast, egg casserole and Raspberry Sourdough Bread in the shape of a candy cane, before we go to the tree. The stockings are hung on the back of our chairs. We go around the table opening the often forgotten fun stocking stuffers.

And of course, there are many activities at church especially the Christmas Eve Service to round out Advent.

Remembering this time of preparation is not only about cookies and gifts but also and more importantly about preparing our hearts for the Savior.

During this Advent time it is important to take time to be still

-Lynda Glenn

Luke 2:1-20

The Birth of Jesus

2 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴ 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. ⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ 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.

The Shepherds and the Angels

⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ 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: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.





A Prayer for Christmas:

Gracious and loving God, you reveal your love for the world in the vulnerability of a child, this babe of Bethlehem, and I am in awe, once again, of this gift of love. Thank you that the Advent journey has led me here, to find my place among the shepherds beside the manger, to kneel and pay homage to you, the Light of the World.

I am grateful today for the long legacy of the faithful who, even in days of discouragement, when the night was long, still watched for the morning, and trusted in your promises. Be with all who are lonely or afraid, and bless all people with a new understanding of the profound mystery of this birth, that you are with us, Emmanuel.

Thank you for my loved ones with whom life has deeper meaning and grace upon grace. O God, whose shining coming into the world was heralded by the heavenly hosts, fill the whole world with your peace. And may how generously we love be the one true measure of our faith, and our prayer of thanksgiving to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord, the child of Bethlehem. Amen

-Ali Trowbridge