The Active Wait Advent 2025

The Active Wait

Advent 2025

A gift of the Central Kentucky Cooperative Parish of the United Methodist Church.

This started as an idea as the clergy of the parish got together. We asked, what would be a good thing that the members of our churches could do to offer the world? So, we invited the writers of our communities to prepare devotions for advent. In this little volume, you will find several different formats yet one Hope: that you might find the love of God through these pages. Some devotions have prayers, some do not, some are long, some are short, yet all will engage your heart and your mind. The Cover Art is by Sharon Dunca

Advent 1 - November 30, 2025

All day long

Psalm 25: 1-10

Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of salvation; for you I wait all day long.

- Psalm 25: 5 NRSV

A powerful word: hope! And yet it is also something that seems to be blown away like feathers. About 29 years ago, I had a dream. My eldest had gone through a late-stage miscarriage, and the adults in the family were mourning. Jim and I were busy trying to raise two baby boys and Becca and Mike were beginning their life together as a family. Email was a new thing and living three hours apart from Mike and Becca, I took great advantage of this instant-like form of communication, we would share hopes and dreams with each other in the late evenings. Well, I had a dream in this, I saw a baby girl who I believed to be beautiful. I described this child to Becca in the email and she, seeing the Hope in the Vision, began to hope as well for her family. Nine months later Jim and I began the adoption of who would be our youngest child. We would name her Elizabeth Ruth the name we had ready for both of our boys.

Neither of them would have made a good Elizabeth. Before we left Texas with our daughter, Melissa, her birth mother asked us to consider the name Hope. Have you ever waited for God? Hope can give you that strength today. I know that God has so much more for each of us than we will ever dream. In this advent, can you hope all day long?

Prayer: Holy God, to you whom all hearts are open, all desires known. I come before you with my whole self, asking that you help me to trust you for this journey, sit with me while I wait. Guide me in your ways that I may then offer this grace to others. -Amen Prayer Focus: Families walking through infertility.

-Rev. Sylvia Baker-Noren

Harrodsburg UMC

Advent 2 - December 1, 2025

Our Help Comes from the Lord

Psalm 124

"Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of

Heaven and Earth." -Psalms 124:8 NIV

The main message of Psalm 124 is that God is the sole source of salvation and protection, especially during times of great peril. The psalm uses vivid imagery of being "*swallowed alive*" or swept away by a flood. Israel's survival was only because the Lord intervened on its behalf and was not because of their own military might. Every believer faces battles in life. They can be battles within us about struggling to do the right things, to have perseverance to carry on, or having the courage to step out in faith. Other times our battles come from outside ourselves. These can often be the most challenging. We do not know what is coming next and we can feel so out of control. During these times we must remember who is truly in control. Stop searching for solutions and really talk to God. Stop the racing of our minds and listen to God. The Lord is in control of every situation we face. He can and will rescue us and give us victory over every situation.

This psalm also reminds us to remember and give thanks for God's past deliverances and recognize that He is the one who has been Israel's constant help throughout history and continues to be ours.

-Vicki Lay

Junction C

Advent 3 December 3, 2025

Why Do We Pinky Promise?

Genesis 9:1-17

As a kid, I remember the infamous "pinky promise". A particularly strict and binding contract. I have no idea where it comes from. But they are especially important.

We have all faced the masked figure of "an empty promise." Where the words "I promise," become a form of excuse, hiding under a veil of commitment. Sometimes promises are just words, but the message is: "I don't actually care."

We have all been there. But ask any seven-year old how to fix it, they have a good answer. See, there is this powerful little gesture. A clear, visible act, which becomes a symbol, and is capable of extinguishing all doubt. Oh, and it is simple to do! Just curl your fingers in and hold your pinky out! Somehow it becomes a virtual guarantee!

And sure, maybe the judge in the courtroom rarely (but not never!) Asks us to pinky promise on our testimonies, but they do ask for a right hand on the bible. It is society's legal equivalent, no doubt.

Having a symbol to refer to at any point, makes it easier not only to trust others, but to keep our own word. Maybe, God knew when he made his covenant with Noah, that this particular promise needed a "raised pinky". Maybe, the rainbow in the sky, that we all look up to, is meant as a gentle and beautiful reminder that our promises must be more than our words.

Or maybe, God just likes a bit of flair. Who could say, really?

-Jonny Ross

Danville UMC

Advent 4 December 3, 2025

God is there for us

Psalms 124

The lesson written in Psalms 124 is what if God had not been on their side? It is written as a song of ascent, a symbolic image of our upward journey in life. The psalmist uses vivid images of times of danger, threat, or vulnerability in their lives, in which they could have been swallowed up, swept away, or engulfed. But God was there to see their way through to safety and escape.

Can you relate? Can you relate to times in life when you felt the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual challenges or dangers that appear to have no way through? I can. There was a time we were without a job and not sure which way to turn or even how to plan, a time we made a move to a new city with no family or friends nearby, to a time when my husband was deployed to a war zone over half a world away, to a time an adult child made a decision that had us cringing with what the outcome might be. Those are dark times for most of us, sleepless nights, physical and emotional pain. Yet…once we get to the other side of the event, once it is in our rearview mirror… we can see God's hand in the outcome. At times God's hand is clearly present, other times it might be cloudy and hard to see. Look again.

The Advent Season, the preparation for Christ's birth, is not immune to cringe worthy life altering events. It is not all roses and happy moments. But be at peace that God is here in our midst for all. Reach out, share with a close friend or a pastor for support and prayers.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your presence in our challenging times, both today and yesterday, thank you for bringing victory even when we cannot see our way through the trials. Amen

-Becky Lindsay

Harrodsburg UMC

Advent 5 – December 4, 2025

A Drop in the Ocean

Psalm 72: 1-7

Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness.

- Psalm 72:1

Solomon had a reputation as a wise man. As a human, a wise one, he dreamed as big as he could, yearning for the blessing of a savior king and yet Solomon's conception of the grace and gift of Christ and Christ's actual embodiment is as vastly different as a drop of water is from the whole of the ocean.

Just as a drop of water offers a hint of the ocean, Solomon's prayer offers a hint of the actual savior and is instead a vision of a king that fits within mortal imagination – an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. And yet, in the enormity of God, the math is different, what is up is down, and what's down is up. Solomon cannot imagine that the kingly image he conjures is infinitely different than the baby in the manger; that the king he craves comes not as a victorious warrior wielding a sword, but as a human, offering food, offering peace, offering healing, offering comfort. He cannot imagine that there is no us and them—only God's people – God's people in need, needing a savior. He hasn't considered a savior who loves not just *his* people, but *all* people, who comes to crush the tools of oppression - fear, hate, prejudice – through love and grace that cover everyone and everything, watering creation.

As we enter the season of preparation, let us look for the savior that is bigger than our wildest imagination, whose love and grace are wider and deeper than the ocean. Let us live in the light of a savior who made and loves the whole of creation, who sees us in our wholeness, and loves us still; let us look with wonder and awe at the infinite miracle of a baby in a manager, who contains the multitudes of love and grace that make everyone, absolutely everyone, belong.

Dear God, Thanks for being infinitely larger and more creative than the confines of the human mind. Help us in this season see the tremendous miracle of Jesus; helps us see the miracle of the one who conquers hate with love; help us see the miracle of each person who crosses our path and be reminded that we and they are made, loved, and redeemed by the Creator of everyone and everything. Amen.

-Winn Crenshaw Wheeler

Stanford UMC

Advent 6 December 5, 2025

The God Who Hears Our Cries

Isaiah 30:19-26

"*People of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious He will be when you cry for help! As soon as He hears, He will answer you*." (***Isaiah 30:19***)

In this passage, Isaiah reminds the people that God hears their cries. That He promises better days and that we are not alone in our suffering. When we walk in His way, when we trust in Him, He will provide. He will save us.

When my daughter was born in 2013, we received devastating news. Her prognosis was grim, and we were recommended to say goodbye to the precious baby we had just met. My cries to the Lord were loud and constant. I knew He could hear me, and I felt his presence as He met me in my pain. Almost 12 years later, that little girl is here and is the biggest blessing we could have ever received. She touches the hearts of all she meets, and although she has many disabilities, she is pure joy, and the Lord is ever at work through her.

Prayer: Oh, merciful God, thank You for hearing our cries. Guide us throughout our days as we trust in You, oh Lord. Let us hold on to Your promise of glorious days to come when You return. Amen.

Prayer Focus: Parents and families trusting God through difficult circumstances.

- Mary Gross

Junction City UMC

Advent 7 December 6, 2025

A Glory to Humble Kings

Psalms 72:1-7, 18-19 (NIV)

“Praise be to the LORD God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvelous deeds. Praise be to his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen.”

In these verses we are given a shining example of humility, from which we can all learn a valuable lesson. A lesson we learn from a king, no less.

In major contrast with the general sense of pride and arrogance we are accustomed to in the political world today, we open with a ruler who humbles himself before the Lord and asks to be guided with God’s own sense of justice & righteousness. To be given the power to protect the poor & the needy. He asks for the ability to destroy their oppressors, yearning to be a man worthy of rule. Let that sink in. He asks for the Lord’s wisdom, so that he can help those around him and let peace, prosperity, and righteousness fall like rain across the land.

While we are not all kings, you will find that even kings are mere mortals and even the highest of kings will inevitably fall short of the glory of the King of Kings. Verses 18 & 19 remind us that it is only through the glory of God that we may find this kind of peace, prosperity, and righteousness, which Solomon speaks of. He knows that even a just king is only great when he acts as an instrument of the Lord and yearns for his Holy sense of direction. I believe it is important today that we humble ourselves, take a look around and ask God what we can do in our own lives to rise up, help those in need, and bring to others the kind of peace, prosperity, and wisdom Solomon longs for here.

- Dallas Martin

Danville UMC

Advent 8 December 7, 2025

Joy, Peace and Hope

Romans 15: 4-13

In today's reading, Paul is speaking to believers with a strong foundation of faith in Christ. In these verses, Paul points out that Jesus is our life example of putting others ahead of self. And when we follow this example, we will be filled with hope (v. 3-4). Paul encourages believers to live in unity with one voice and one mind, welcoming all into God's house (v 5-7). Finally, Paul's prayer asks for God to fill believers with joy and peace so that hope will overflow (v. 13).

I am reminded of how many of the lessons we learn from the Bible are repeated in the language of the day. Remember in the 1980-90's the "What Would Jesus Do" (WWJD) movement. These words encouraged us to follow Jesus' example of how to live life. We had WWJD bracelets that were not just a fashion statement, but it was also a moral compass on your wrist, a gentle reminder. It was a reminder of Paul's words to walk in Jesus's footstep, to live in unity with each other, welcoming all to become a part of the family of God.

Advent is a time of preparation and waiting for Jesus' birth. And we are often busy with our own holiday preparations to celebrate with family and friends, to decorate, to buy gifts and plan for the festivities. Let us be reminded of Paul's words so very long ago, and yet so very specific to today… WWJD. Let us strive to live like Jesus, with caring and compassion for others before self. WWJD.

-Becky Lindsay

Harrodsburg UMC

Advent 9 - December 8, 2025

When Crisis Rolls

Ruth 4:13-17

There had been a crisis in Ruth's life. There was despair. An immigrant woman with no husband. That was Ruth.

The following is from 'A Celtic Psalter': "Let your graces of healing flow this day for my soul is wounded, and there is brokenness in my life.

There are agonies in the life of the world. Let your graces flow."

Like Ruth, our lives may be in turmoil. But God is listening…. there is HOPE.

-Susie Langford

Stanford UMC

Advent 10 - December 9, 2025

Living Water for a Thirsty Soul

Isaiah 41:14-20

"When the poor and needy search for water and there is none, and their tongues are parched from thirst, then I, the LORD, will answer them. I, the God of Israel, will never abandon them." - Isaiah 41:17 (NLT)

As a small girl growing up in a coal camp in Eastern Kentucky, life was hard. There were nine of us living in a small four-room house. We didn't have indoor plumbing, just an old outhouse out back, and the only water we had come from a pump in the middle of camp, far from where we lived.

Each day we carried buckets to fetch water. It was especially hard on those days when my mother had to do laundry. We made four or five trips to the pump on those days, and sometimes that meant being late for school.

It wasn't until years later, after we moved to where we live now, that I came to understand something deeper. Jesus is the Living Water. When we give our lives to Him, we will never thirst again. He fills the emptiness of our souls with His presence. Jesus is our Precious Redeemer who will always hold us in His arms, if only we let Him.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, fill us again with Your living water. Quench the thirst of our souls and help us rest in Your unfailing love. Amen

Prayer Focus: Those longing to feel God's presence.

-Janice Noe

Junction City UMC

Advent 11 – December 10, 2025

Fresh Water or Nasty Water?

Matthew 12: 33-37

"… For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him."

-Matthew 12:34b-35 (NIV)

One spring my grandchildren helped me plant flowers in the back yard. They threw themselves into the job, and soon both were covered in dirt. When they finished tamping the soil around the purple and red petunias, four-year-old Lyam said, "We're done." "Not quite," I replied. "Now we have to water them. I put the watering can in the shed last summer. Layla, will you get it and fill it up?" Seven-year-old Layla ran to the shed and returned carrying the can in both hands. "It already has water in it," she announced. She tilted the spout over a plant and out poured muddy brown water. "Eeeww," she said, wrinkling her nose. "That's nasty water. It stinks." "I guess it has been in there since last year," I told her. "We'll have to clean the can and fill it with fresh water." As I said those words, I thought of Jesus's lesson in Matthew 12. Whatever is in our hearts is what will come out of our mouths. If our hearts are full of nasty things, that's what we'll speak. Instead, let's fill our hearts with good things, so our words are evidence of the living water Jesus gives us.

-Ginny Logan

Danville UMC

Advent 12 - December 11, 2025

What It Looks Like to Love Jesus

Psalm 146:5-10

Advent is the perfect time to be The Candle of Joy. A few years ago my then nail tech shared with me her family tradition that spanned the time between Thanksgiving and Christmas that will remain in my heart forever. On Thanksgiving Day her parents presented a letter sized, white envelope to every member of the family regardless of their age. Inside was a crisp one hundred-dollar bill with these instructions. During Advent, be acutely aware of those around you who could use this unexpected gift. Be awake. Be aware. Find someone you do not know to give it to. You see this action called for some discernment yet came as a surprise to the recipient. The only requirement was to return to the family on Christmas Day to share the rationale behind their choice and the receiver's reaction. This seemingly simple act touched so many, my nail tech explained and provided each family member the "right" frame of mind for Advent--to focus on the needs of others and the sharing that brings great joy. Perhaps this story stuck with me precisely because I had once been the recipient of such a gift. In December 1971, I was a newlywed living in a basement apartment far away from home. We were college Juniors who held part-time jobs in addition to a full load of classes and a kidney machine in our house.

My husband had become critically ill in October after our August 14th wedding, and we were subsequently trained to provide treatment in our home. As Christmas approached, we sorely lacked a tree but were able to gather fifteen dollars and some change to purchase a miniature tree of our dreams at McAlpins in Turfland Mall. Oh, the joy that filled us until the exact moment we realized we had NOTHING to decorate it with. So it stood in a corner unboxed for a week. One day we heard a muffled thud outside our door and found a large box marked FROM SANTA although clearly addressed to us. Inside was everything imaginable to "dress" our tiny Christmas tree. You have no idea the measure of our joy. My husband died on December 26th the following year and Santa has yet to be revealed. During this season, be the anonymous bearer of joy and risk looking just like Jesus.

-Jerri Weitzel-Kennedy

Harrodsburg UMC

Advent 13 December 12, 2025

The Least of These

Psalm 146:5-10

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. -Psalm 146:8b

As we journey through Advent and Christmas, we anticipate and then celebrate the arrival of Jesus on earth. We celebrate the joy and wonder of the incarnation, and we are reminded of the importance of generosity as we focus on giving gifts not just to family and friends but to the needy among us. As this Psalm reminds us, God gives food to the hungry, sets the prisoners free, gives eyesight to the blind, and lifts up those who are bowed down. There are some who view social justice issues as controversial, who use the term "social gospel" as a criticism and claim that churches should be focused only on saving souls. But this view overlooks much of the Bible's teaching. Micah tells us, "He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?" In Luke, Jesus' mother tells us that God "has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty."

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells us that when we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, take care of the sick, and visit the prisoner, we have done those things for Him. So this year, as we read the nativity story, as we decorate our trees, as we sing carols and give and receive gifts, let us remember that we are called to love and serve the least of these, that God's work is about justice, not just us.

-Charles Fegan

Stanford UMC

Advent 14 December 13, 2025

No Rock Like Our God

1 Samuel 2: 1-8

"*There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God."* **-1**

Samuel 2:2 (NIV)

Hannah praised God for His answer to her prayer for as son, Samuel.

How has God answered your prayers?

Did you praise Him with Thanksgiving?

Hannah praised God for being a Rock — strong, firm, and unchanging. We live in a world which is fast paced and constantly changing. We work so hard to obtain possessions that will one day pass away. But God is always present. Place your hope in Him — He will never fail.

Hannah saw God as a solid Rock. He is *always in* control! When God answered Hannah's prayer, she followed through on her promise to dedicate Samuel to God service.

As mothers, we sometimes forget that our children are gifts from God. Hannah discovered that the greatest gift in having a child is to give that child fully back to God – What a Joy!

Just like Mary, the mother of Jesus, Hannah experienced both the pains and pleasures of motherhood. Mary had the unique privilege of being mother to the Son of God. She saw Jesus arrive as her son and watched Him die as her Savior.

Both Hannah and Mary were mothers who witnessed that God answers prayers. Let us always be aware of God answering our prayers and thanking Him always! Truly, there is no Rock like our God!

Prayer: Lord, thank You for being our Solid Rock and unchanging foundation. Help us to trust Your promises, give You praise for answered prayers, and rest in Your faithful love. Amen.

-Gail Owens

Junction City UMC

Advent 15 December 14, 2025

Patience is a Virtue

James 5:7-10

7 Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. **8** You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. James 5:7-8 (NIV)

"I can't stand it, Mom!" I moaned to my mother. "I *have* to know what's in that box!" I was sixteen. We stood in front of our Christmas tree admiring the brightly wrapped packages piled beneath it. The smallest one was for me, and the mystery of the contents drove me nuts. Was it earrings? A necklace? Maybe (*please, please, please*) a set of car keys? "Patience is a virtue, Ginny," my mother said. I'd heard that adage all my life, but that particular virtue evaded me.

James talked about exercising patience as we wait for the Lord's coming. He pointed out that farmers must wait through the seasons, trusting that the harvest would come in the right time. That message is a good one for us today as we anticipate the day, we celebrate the coming of the Christ Child – and His second coming too.

The gift? A set of keys to my first car!

-Ginny Logan

Danville UMC

Advent 16 - December 15, 2025

Choose Hope

Psalm 42

Sometimes in life, in spite of all our good efforts, we find ourselves estranged from God. In Psalm 42 David paints a picture of despair and a loss of hope that many can relate to-a period of emptiness that seems devoid of God. Sometimes it's a week, a month, or a season of internal struggle that seems like a spiritual storm. A storm where our soul may sink. But David imbeds in this account helpful hints for restoring ourselves when we've lost our way. In essence, David throws us some spiritual lifesavers. First, he fails to believe God is absent by recalling God's faithfulness in his past. He literally reminds himself of what God has done not only for himself but for others. In this reflection he literally "counts his blessings." He actively chooses to hope for he knows God to be good and faithful. David also recalls the comfort of his church when he imagines being back in that place feeling the safety and comfort God supplied to him there. This personal reflection, recall, and subsequent gratitude transforms David's woe into hope.

For me, in recent years, gratitude has become my touchstone-my yardstick and anchor to keep me on an even keel. My gratitude journey began with a note pad beside my bed entitled, Things I Am Thankful For, given to me by a friend. Over time I transitioned to a mental list of gratitude that I constructed in my mind every morning before rising from bed. I repeated the exercise nightly as I reflected on my day setting a wonderful tone for my waking and sleeping, and I noticed that everyday went better when couched in this attitude of gratefulness. Spiritual woes may indeed be inevitable but spiritual practices often "right" us on our journey.

-Jerri Weitzel-Kennedy

Harrodsburg UMC

Advent 17 – December 16, 2025

I want to be with you

Psalm 42, Jude 1:17-25

It is Advent, the magical and mysterious time of year that reminds us of the deep longing imprinted in our hearts for the coming of our Savior, much like the psalmist in Psalm 42 who cries out, 'As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.' This vivid imagery reminds me of my family in Puerto Rico, where the joy of the season comes from being together. Of course, the gifts are also appreciated, but being with loved ones gives us a sense of oneness. This passage speaks to our natural desire for connection with our Creator. In this season of preparation and anticipation, let us reflect on our devotion to God and explore how we can deepen our relationship with Him. Just as the deer seeks water, may we seek the living water that Jesus offers, especially during the hustle and bustle of Christmas.

This Advent, let us pause and listen to the gentle whisper of God's love inviting us closer to Him. Let us hold onto the truth found in Jude 1:17-25, where we are encouraged to keep ourselves in the love of God; just as my family, in seeking togetherness, caring for each other and looking forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior, may our devotion lead us to greater faith, deeper love, and unwavering hope that reflect the true spirit of Christmas.

-Rev. Eric Espada

Richmond UMC

Advent 18 – December 17, 2025

Touched and Made Whole

Matthew 8: 14-17, 28-34

"*He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him*."

-Matthew 8:15 NIV

We find Jesus in Capernaum with His disciples. After teaching all day in the synagogue, He went to Peter's house. There, he found Peter's mother-in-law with a fever. He simply proceeded to touch her hand, and at once she rose and began to serve supper.

This was not just a healing…it was confirmation of who Jesus really was. It fulfilled the prophecy in Isaiah that "the Son of Man would bear all our infirmities and diseases."

All Jesus did that day in Peter's house was *touch* Peter's mother-in-law. No big show… just a "*touch*." The touch of Jesus can make us whole. That touch can save and heal today just as it did that day.

Will we let the Son of God touch us today? Will we allow that baby born in the manger to become our Savior?

The song written by Bill Gaither, *"He Touched Me,"* can be our prayer and hope:

"Then the hand of Jesus touched me, and now I am no longer the same. Something happened, and now I know He touched me and made me whole."

Prayer: Lord Jesus, *touch* us today with Your healing and saving power. Make us whole in body, mind and spirit, and help us share Your love with others. Amen

-Karen Logue

Junction City UMC

Advent 19 – December 18, 2025

God’s Gifts for the Journey

Galatians 3:23-29

> And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.
>
> - Galatians 3:29

A Life Story holds many chapters – as each chapter unfolds from Birth to Death, many good and bad experiences form the lifespan allotted by our Father God. As each Person lives, their book gets thicker, more complex, but less orderly; the journey described can only be understood through the rearview mirror. The windshield view is too broad, deep, and cluttered to focus on everything along the road - specifics, particulars, or absolutes. The Person is constantly moving, stopping, and starting; by the time the Driver understands the route, the Earthly trek is over.

As a Christmas gift from God, Christ gives each of us a clear lens to discern and determine each movement, as we embark on our individual journeys. But the drive is complicated, and arrival plans can fail – but with the Biblical, sacrificial gift map from Christ, His Love and Care eliminates the need to continuously view each human life through the rearview mirror of unnecessary, legalistic judgment. As an eighty five-year-old Pastor Friend ride-shares a weekly devotional message with Senior Living residents, each rearview of Life becomes less about differences and more about spiritual sharing. Each week he brings a new Gift of Hope to each person as their individual journeys unfold – no longer a death march, but a living, earthly transition to the happiness of Eternal Life.

-Joe Lancaster

Danville UMC

Advent 20 – December 19, 2025

Watch

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Reading this Psalm repeatedly preparing to write a devotion, one word kept centering in my head: restore. The Psalm has some twists and turns, some highs and lows. The psalmist begins with an earnest plea for God's attention while acknowledging God's guiding presence in Israel's past. With this introductory sentence, we get to the heart of the matter: "Restore us, O God."

This introduction of plea and praise moves rather abruptly to an accusation, maybe even an "in your face" moment. "O Lord God Almighty, how long will your anger smolder...." "You have fed them with bread of tears; You have made them drink tears by the bowlful, You have.....". And there it is, the author of the Psalm's more negative attributes briefly appears. He's not to blame, God's people are not the problem, the author all too quickly blames God for the problems of his world.

But just as quickly as the Psalmist got off track, he gets back on track: "restore us, O God Almighty....". The ending of the Psalm has us thinking of Jesus: "Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand, the son of man you have raised up for yourself". This is followed by one more "Restore us, O Lord God Almighty".

We too, today pray "Restore us, O God Almighty."

God's desire goes even beyond our request. God longs to give us much more than we can even envision in our requests. Restoration we ask, but God grants us new life. I think of items that wear out or get broken, stained, or chipped, and I want to find someone to restore them to their former luster. In my experiences, the end results seldom met my expectations. But when we offer our lives to God, our expectations are not only met they are exceeded. We are given much more than we ever dare to dream. Through the grace of God and the Christ event, we are given new life.

Let each of us pray the psalmist's request: "Restore us, O God Almighty." Then sit back and watch in amazement and wonder as God does his thing.

-Jim Allison

Harrodsburg UMC

Advent 21 – December 20, 2025

Shine

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

As we journey through Advent this year it is easy to look around us in dismay at the heartache, suffering, confusion and contention that seems so prevalent in our world. Much like the Israelites in this scripture passage, we find ourselves crying out, "God Almighty restore us, shine your face on us that we may be saved." The birth of Christ was God's answer to those prayers long ago. God heard the prayers of his people and sent Jesus, the Messiah. He chose to shine His face through the face of an infant, his Son, radiant with the love and light of the Father.

We sing about this shining at Christmas through the words of a familiar carol:

> "*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."*

In this season of expectation, hope, and waiting, let us reflect on that first shining of God's face and look forward with hope to the return of the Messiah - the Prince of Peace. May we keep seeking the face of Christ, whether we are experiencing His light, love, and salvation for the very first time, or as we continue in faith to pray for restoration and revival through His grace. Let us reflect those radiant beams of love and hope into the world around us.

Prayer: Lord, hear our prayer. Restore us, revive us, make your face shine upon us that we might be saved. Almighty God, equip us, strengthen us, and sustain us so that through the power of your Holy Spirit we might take your light into the world. Amen

-Celia Taylor

Stanford UMC

Advent 22 – December 21, 2025

When Fear Sat Beside Me, So Did God

Isaiah 7: 10-16

"The virgin will conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel."

What do you do when fear takes over? King Ahaz knew that feeling well. With enemies pressing in and his kingdom shaking, he longed for security. But God gave him a sign he never expected: *"The virgin will conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel."*

A child hardly seems like an answer to fear. But that was God's point. He wasn't offering military power or quick fixes. He was promising His presence.

Centuries later, that promise became flesh in Bethlehem.

Jesus was born. Not a distant God. Not a far-off rescuer. But *Immanuel, "God with us".* That's the heart of Advent. In our darkest nights, God does not send us away to figure it out alone. He comes near.

I'll never forget January 1995 at Central Baptist Hospital in Lexington. My mom was in surgery for a triple bypass, and I was home on leave before reporting to the USS *Kauffman*. Fear gripped me. What would happen to my 12-year-old brother Kevin if she didn't make it? And even if she did, who would help her recover once I had to leave for the Navy?

That night, Kevin was at Perryville UMC with Pastor Jimmy and Gail Owens, who cared for him during Family Night. Afterward, Jimmy came to the hospital, sat with me, and prayed for me through the long evening until Mom came safely out of surgery. But God's care didn't end that night. Kevin stayed with Jimmy and Gail until Mom was well enough to come home, and the church family continued to help watch over him when I had to return to sea.

Looking back, I see it clearly: God was with us, in the prayers, in the people, in the faithful love of Perryville UMC. That's what the body of Christ is meant to be, an expression of *Immanuel, "God with us."* For my family and me, Perryville UMC became His hands and feet..

Prayer: Lord, thank You for being with us in our fear and uncertainty. Restore us, shine on us, and remind us that You are always nearby. Amen.

-Edward Krueger Junction City UMC Advent 23 – December 22, 2025

Advent 23 - December 22, 2025

Visions and Expectations

Isaiah 33:17-22

The Lord's majesty will be there for us:

The Lord is our judge; the Lord is our leader; the Lord is our king— he will deliver us.

-Isaiah 33:21-22 (CEB)

Did you ever dream of what your life might be like in the future? Even as a child I would spend hours thinking of what my future might be like. Sometimes I would even make very detailed architectural style drawings of my future home and draw out a potential family tree. I would sit on my grandpa's lap and show him all the drawings. He was always encouraging that all could come to be, but it wouldn't happen magically. I had to plan and work towards my vision. I can't say I prayed every day all the time about this topic, but there were definitely times in my life when I worried if my vision for my future could possibly come to be. I would lay in bed and pray sincerely, diligently, and sometimes desperately to God for the relationships and circumstances that I hoped for and envisioned. Experience taught me that God has envisioned good for me even if it wasn't exactly what I planned. When I gazed upon my future, I came to understand that the Lord's majesty will be there for us all. He will deliver us. I thank God that he saw a future better than I had dreamed. I can look back now and thank him for some specific unanswered prayers. And know that he will be with me always delivering me into his majesty.

-Rev. Christine Ross

Danville UMC

Advent 24 - December 23, 2025

A Song of Joy

Luke 1:46b-55 (ESV)

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!" – Luke 1: 46b-47

I have always loved this passage, known as the Magnificat (from its first word in Latin) and sometimes as "Mary's Song." It has been set to music countless times, which feels incredibly appropriate for a song! Mary was a young girl who had just received the most incredible news from an angel: she would be the mother of the Son of God! Can you imagine her awe?

The primary reason I love this passage is Mary's immediate response: she bursts into song! She doesn't dwell on the fact that she was still a child, that she was a virgin, that she would face ridicule and shame, that her own fiancé would consider leaving her, or what this would do to her body or how it would change her life forever. Mary responded as she had been taught and as she always had—with humility and obedience to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Mary sang a song of praise to God because He has done (and always will do) "marvelous things for me! Holy is His name!" (Luke 1:49).

This song prompts me to closely examine my own responses to God's Word and work in my life. Do I obey without question, regardless of the implications? Do I respond with humility, trusting that God's plan for me will never bring harm? Do I praise God in every circumstance, no matter what is happening in my life? I pray that Mary's example gives all of us the courage to sing a song of JOY to the Lord for His marvelous work in our lives, no matter what!

-Martha Robertson

Harrodsburg UMC

Advent 25 - December 24, 2025

A Joy We Already Have

Isaiah 9:2-7

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

-Isaiah 9:6 NIV

It is hard not to get caught up in the drama of the season of Christmas, secular or religious alike. From the lights to the presents, the food to the fun, the worship to the waiting, and the carols to the cards, it is an all-encompassing assault on the senses, for better or worse. When on the culminating eve of a season bent towards celebration and joy, it is hard, even impossible, to hold back our own rejoicing. Our author today in Isaiah believes that the time is now, as they announce that "the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." From yokes of oppression, war, and unrest will come the Prince of Peace in the line of David, to whom the zeal of the Lord will bring justice and righteousness.

If ever there was a time to celebrate, it is for this! So, I implore you, celebrate! Bear witness to the light, call forward those in darkness to the true joy that is found in Christ. Isaiah is in the middle of a critique of Judah, who has decided not to join Israel in their fight against the Assyrians trying to conquer them. It is in the middle of this critique that he moves from condemning those who cannot see the light, to where we are in chapter 9 and the promise of the prophetic light that is coming. But most importantly, they anticipate the joy of a coming Christ, a light they do not yet have. The same light and joy that we are already recipients of.

So, as Christmas rounds the corner and the ads increase, the breakneck pace of the schedule seeks to take you under, and the cookie begins to crumble, remember, none of this is the light. No number of parties, presents, or pomp will ever amount to true joy…. a joy that we already have. Remember this day, where the light that drowns out the darkness comes from, and hold fast to the joy that is being born. A joy that cannot be removed by the turn of a calendar page or consumed by a corporation. This day we are with Joy, let us never lose it.

-Rev. Craig Taylor

Stanford & Danville UMCs

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