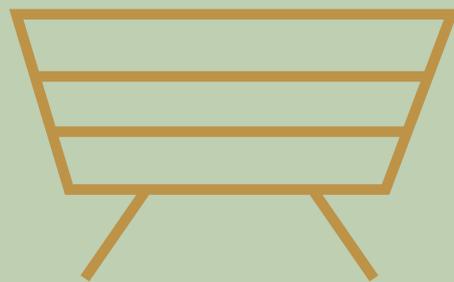
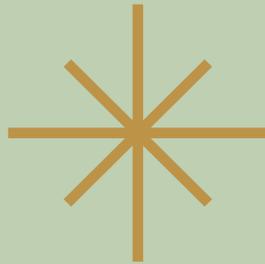


“THE HOPES AND  
FEARS OF ALL  
THE YEARS ARE  
MET IN THEE  
TONIGHT...”



NDPC  
Advent 2024

# ADVENT, 2024

Advent means “coming” or “arrival.” It’s a season in the church calendar set aside to wait, in a spirit of expectancy and hope, for the arrival of Christ – the full expression of God’s love.

There’s also a heck of a lot going on at this time of year. We’re all busy, and our busy-ness doesn’t help us, as spiritual beings, attend to that sense of expectancy and hope.

That’s where this devotional comes in. Each day of Advent, set aside a few minutes of quiet. Read the day’s entry and reflect on the questions in the silence. You might do some journaling.

There is also a daily prayer, with a link to music. If you prefer, you can do this activity with a friend or family member(s). Every Sunday, you are invited to light a candle on your Advent wreath.

Feel free to share this resource with friends or family. Thanks to Rick Neale for his assistance. The readings are taken from the Narrative Lectionary, and some of the ideas in this devotional are taken from a creative group of liturgy writers in the UK, Spill the Beans.

May God bless you with expectancy and hope.

Revs. David Lewicki, Mary Anona Stoops, & Erin Reed Cooper

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# 1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT: DECEMBER 1, 2024

## Daniel 6:6-27

6 So the administrators and satraps conspired and came to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! 7 All the administrators of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an interdict, that whoever prays to any god or human, for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the den of lions. 8 Now, O king, establish the interdict and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." 9 Therefore King Darius signed the document and interdict.

10 Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously. 11 Then those men watched and found Daniel praying and seeking mercy before his God. 12 Then they approached the king and said concerning the interdict, "O king! Did you not sign an interdict, that anyone who prays to any god or human, within thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the den of lions?" The king answered, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." 13 Then they responded to the king, "Daniel, one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the interdict you have signed, but he is saying his prayers three times a day."

14 When the king heard the charge, he was very much distressed. He was determined to save Daniel, and until the sun went down he made every effort to rescue him. 15 Then the conspirators came to the king and said to him, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no interdict or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed."

16 Then the king gave the command, and Daniel was brought and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you faithfully serve, deliver you!" 17 A stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet ring of his lords, so that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. 18 Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no entertainment was brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

19 Then at dawn, the king got up and at first light hurried to the den of lions. 20 When he came near the den where Daniel was, he cried out anxiously to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you faithfully serve been able to deliver you from the lions?" 21 Daniel then said to the king, "O king, live forever! 22 My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him; also before you, O king, I have done no wrong." 23 Then the king was exceedingly glad and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him because he had trusted in his God. 24 The king gave a command, and those who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and thrown into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. Before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

25 Then King Darius wrote to all peoples and nations of every language throughout the whole world: "May you have abundant prosperity! 26 I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people shall tremble and fear before the God of Daniel:

For he is the living God,  
enduring forever.

His kingdom shall never be destroyed,  
and his dominion has no end.

He delivers and rescues;

he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth;

he has saved Daniel

from the power of the lions."

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# LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

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Holy One,  
the season of hope is upon us:  
hope for the future;  
hope for the promise;  
hope for all that is to be.  
As we light this candle,  
Let us live in hope.

## For reflection:

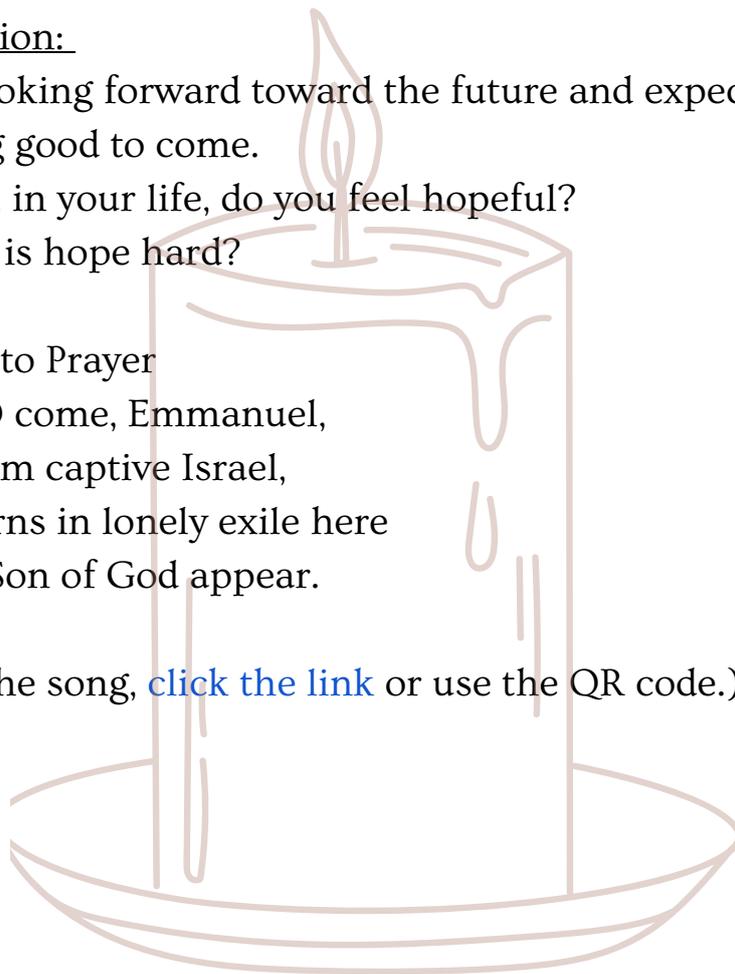
Hope is looking forward toward the future and expecting something good to come.

- When, in your life, do you feel hopeful?
- When is hope hard?

## Invitation to Prayer

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# ADVENT: WEEK 1

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Monday, December 2nd

The story of Daniel is a story of bravery and loyalty, trust and faith. Daniel is living in a “foreign” land, and working for the Persian King Darius, one of the world’s most powerful men. Darius signs a law that forbids anyone from worshiping anyone other than himself for 30 days. Daniel, however, prays to God every day. Even though Darius likes Daniel, when Daniel is found to have broken this law, Darius is required to execute justice. He locks Daniel in a cage overnight with a hungry lion.

For reflection:

- Have you ever lived in a “foreign” land? What did it feel like to be away from home?
- If you knew that there was a law that said it was illegal to pray to God, would you still do it? Why do you think Daniel disobeyed the law?
- What do you think Daniel felt when the door to the lion’s den was opened and he walked in? What do you think Daniel felt when he walked out?

Invitation to Prayer

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,  
Who orderest all things mightily;  
To us the path of knowledge show,  
And teach us in her ways to go.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# ADVENT: WEEK 1

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Tuesday, December 3rd

We do still use the phrase “going into the lion’s den” to refer to taking on a big challenge against insurmountable odds, but the phrase has lost its original connection from Daniel’s era where the king’s court was often referred to as ‘The Lion’s Den’: a place of power and danger.

With that in mind, can you read this story as a metaphor for people of faith confronting the powers of the world and trusting they will survive that confrontation instead of giving up on what’s important to them and to God?

For reflection:

- Where is power held in the world today? Where is power held in our community?
- Have you ever had to confront someone powerful? Why? What did it feel like? What happened?

Invitation to Prayer

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.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# ADVENT: WEEK 1

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Wednesday, December 4th

Daniel is a good introduction to Advent. We believe that God, in Jesus, “goes into the Lion’s Den” by becoming a fragile human being. Jesus doesn’t wear armor or raise an army. But he does confront the powers of the world and shows them a different version of power—God’s version. Jesus’ power is non-violent, compassionate, caring, forgiving.

For reflection:

- How do you think Jesus’ power is similar to or different from the power at work in the world and in your community?

Invitation to Prayer

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.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# ADVENT: WEEK 1

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Thursday, December 5th

King Darius, surrounded by his advisors, appears weak and easily led to make a strange, unfair law prohibiting worship to anyone but himself. But when he witnesses how God preserves Daniel, in spite of Darius' power, the king realizes what real power looks like. King Darius is "converted!" He changes.

For reflection:

- Do you ever wish you could change the minds of powerful people in our world?
- If you could change their minds about one thing, what would it be?

Invitation to Prayer

O come, Thou Root of Jesse's tree,  
An ensign of Thy people be;  
Before Thee rulers silent fall;  
All peoples on Thy mercy call.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# ADVENT: WEEK 1

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Friday, December 6th

Advent is a season of restoration. During this time, we can re-focus ourselves and our lives and dare to trust the ancient promise of the incarnation of a flesh-shaped, love-given, poverty-born kingdom among people who live where no palace or president can interfere.

For reflection:

- What does restoration mean to you this Advent season? Is it a change you long for in the world around you? Or something inside of you? Or both?

Invitation to Prayer

O come, Desire of nations, bind  
In one the hearts of humankind;  
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,  
And be Thyself our King of Peace.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# ADVENT: WEEK 1

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Saturday, December 7th

The activity of Advent is one of being a Daniel, daring to believe and confront a world that often moves in the opposite direction of God. Keep the faith in Advent. Listen for the Word of life and follow it. Trust the truth of the story we have been given and face the world, not with easy going Christmas clichés, but with the voice of protest, the call for justice, the belief in love and the rebalancing of the world by a God who is found in flesh just like us all.

Dare we enter the lion's den of a worldly Christmas dominated by consumerism and chintz, and trust in a message of rebalance and restoration?

For reflection:

- What would it mean for you to be like Daniel?

Invitation to Prayer

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# 2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT: DECEMBER 8, 2024

Isaiah 61:1-11

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me  
because the Lord has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the  
oppressed,

to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and release to the prisoners,

2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor  
and the day of vengeance of our God,  
to comfort all who mourn,

3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint  
spirit.

They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the Lord, to display his  
glory.

4 They shall build up the ancient ruins;  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.

5 Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks;  
foreigners shall till your land and dress your  
vines,

6 but you shall be called priests of the Lord;  
you shall be named ministers of our God;  
you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations,  
and in their riches you shall glory.

7 Because their shame was double  
and dishonor was proclaimed as their lot,  
therefore in their land they shall possess a  
double portion;  
everlasting joy shall be theirs.

8 For I, the Lord, love justice,  
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;  
I will faithfully give them their recompense,  
and I will make an everlasting covenant with  
them.

9 Their descendants shall be known among  
the nations  
and their offspring among the peoples;  
all who see them shall acknowledge  
that they are a people whom the Lord has  
blessed.

10 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,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland  
and as a bride adorns herself with her  
jewels.

11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to  
spring up,  
so the Lord God will cause righteousness and  
praise  
to spring up before all the nations.

# LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

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Holy One,  
the season of vision is upon us:  
a vision for the future;  
a vision of your promise;  
a vision for all that is to be.  
As we light this candle,  
May we keep our eyes on your vision.

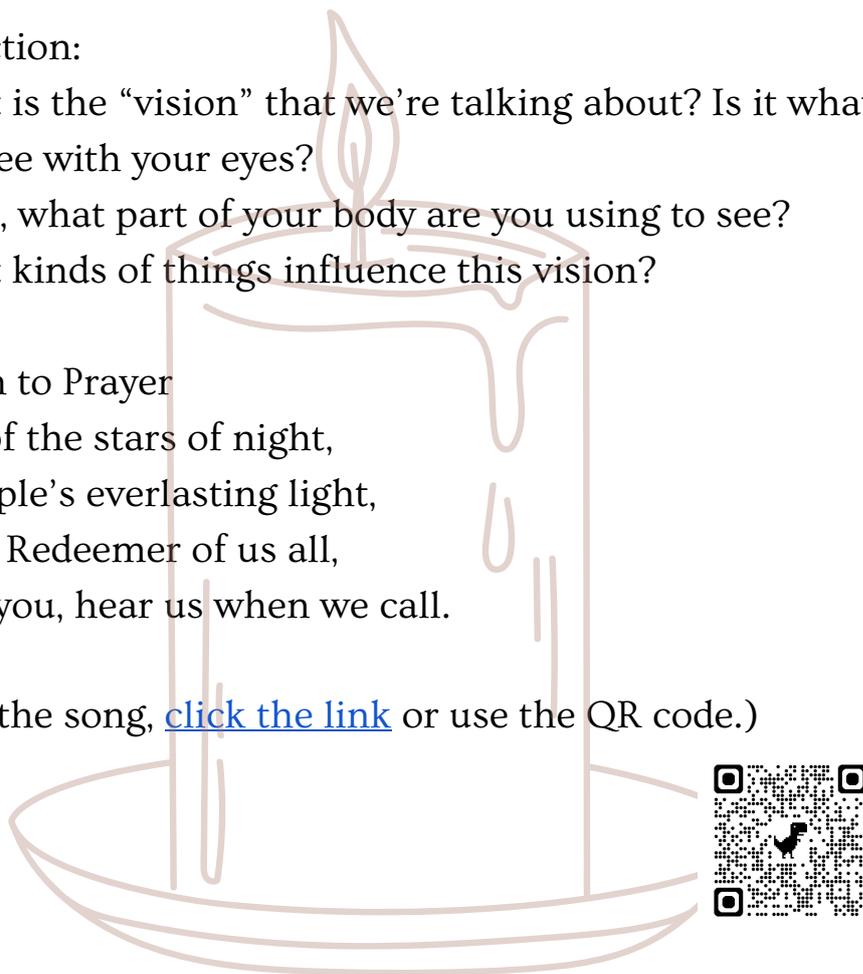
For reflection:

- What is the “vision” that we’re talking about? Is it what you see with your eyes?
- If not, what part of your body are you using to see?
- What kinds of things influence this vision?

Invitation to Prayer

Creator of the stars of night,  
Your people’s everlasting light,  
O Christ, Redeemer of us all,  
We pray you, hear us when we call.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# ADVENT: WEEK 2

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Monday, December 9th

This dream of Isaiah's is an expression of the landscape on which the kingdom of God grows. Read the passage again.

For reflection:

What features of the landscape are described?

What parts of this landscape are natural?

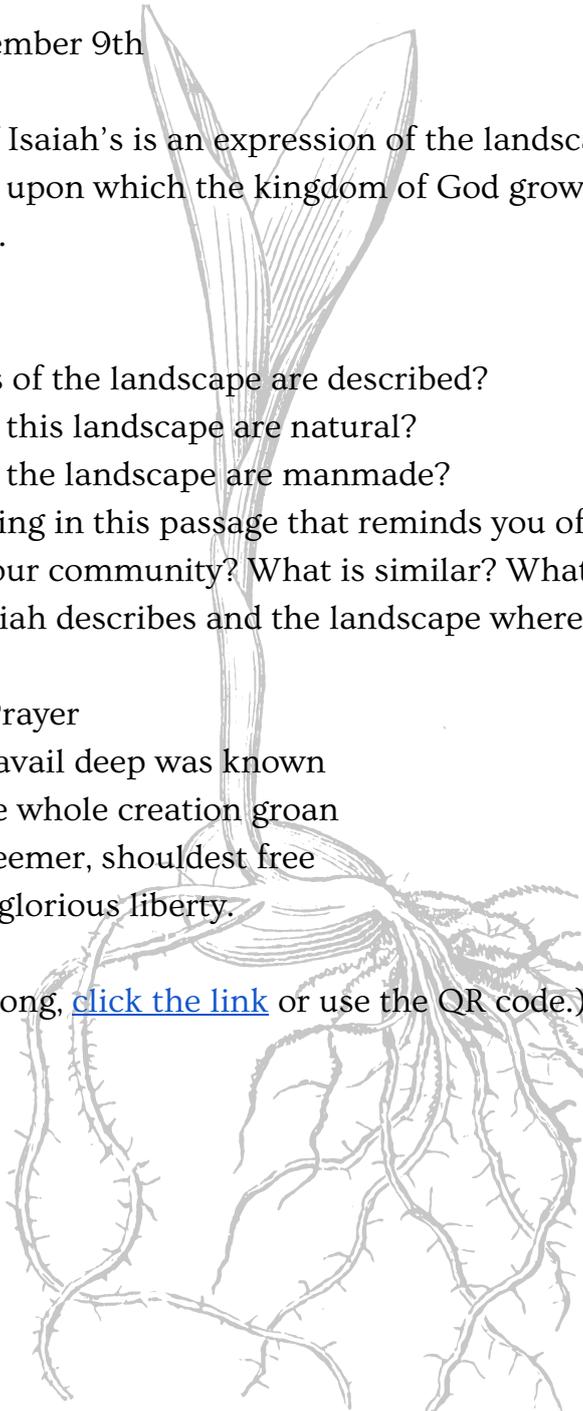
What parts of the landscape are manmade?

Is there anything in this passage that reminds you of the landscape of our community? What is similar? What is different from what Isaiah describes and the landscape where you live?

Invitation to Prayer

To thee the travail deep was known  
That made the whole creation groan  
Till thou, Redeemer, shouldst free  
Thine own in glorious liberty.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# ADVENT: WEEK 2

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Tuesday, December 10th

In Isaiah's powerful vision, the fortunes of the poor, the downtrodden, and the forgotten are reversed.

For reflection:

- Why would God want these reversals of fortune?
- How do you think those whose fortunes improve will feel?

Invitation to Prayer

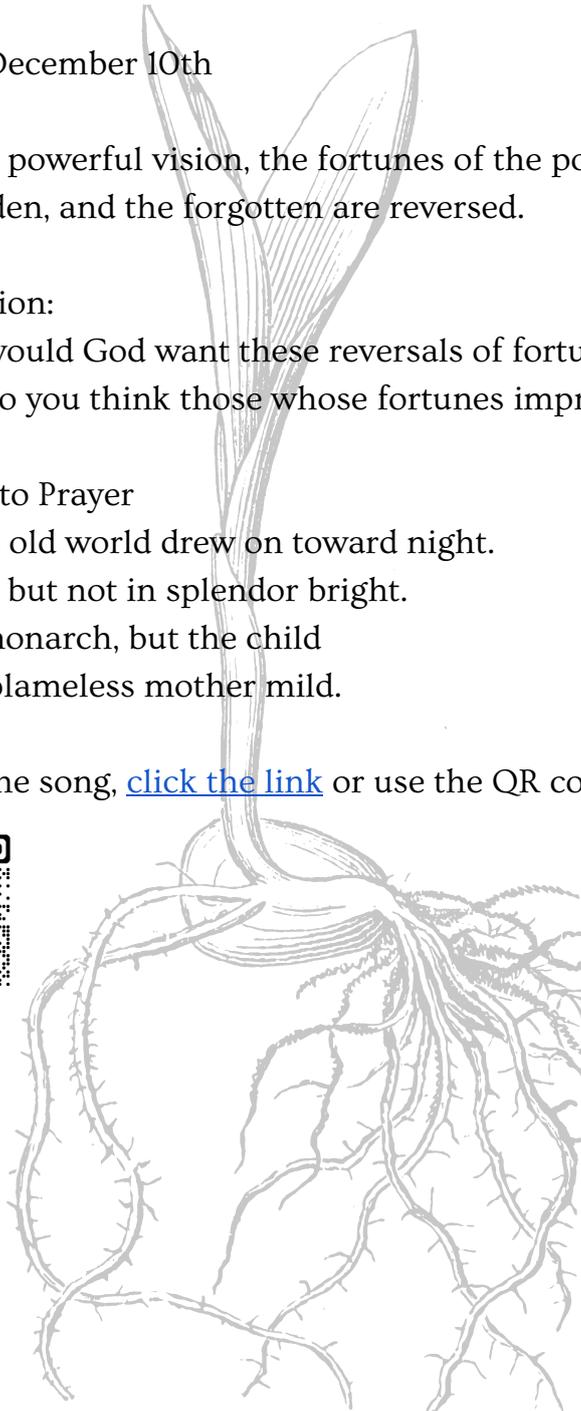
When this old world drew on toward night.

You came, but not in splendor bright.

Not as a monarch, but the child

Of Mary, blameless mother mild.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# ADVENT: WEEK 2

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Wednesday, December 11th

Is Isaiah's vision a reversal or a renewal? A reversal would be a switching of locations—the rich would become poor, the poor rich; the tables would be turned, but there would still be an imbalance. A renewal would be a reorganization of social relationships so that the categories “rich” and “poor” had less meaning, or didn't exist at all.

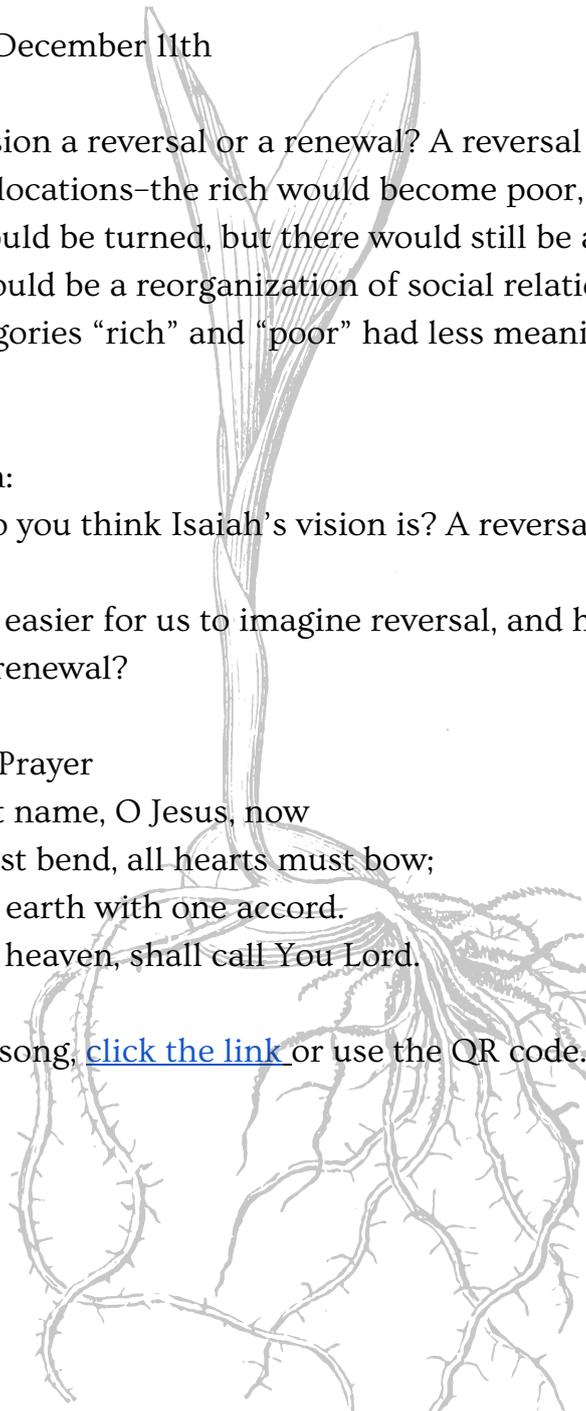
For reflection:

- Which do you think Isaiah's vision is? A reversal, or a renewal?
- Why is it easier for us to imagine reversal, and hard for us to imagine renewal?

Invitation to Prayer

At Your great name, O Jesus, now  
All knees must bend, all hearts must bow;  
All things on earth with one accord.  
Like those in heaven, shall call You Lord.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# ADVENT: WEEK 2

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Thursday, December 12th

How might we, as a faith community in this season, find this vision of Isaiah among the day to day experiences of our lives? Incarnation is the possibility of God taking on flesh among us. God's promise is among us, around us, in us. The day when the blind are given sight and the broken hearted are bound up is here, among us.

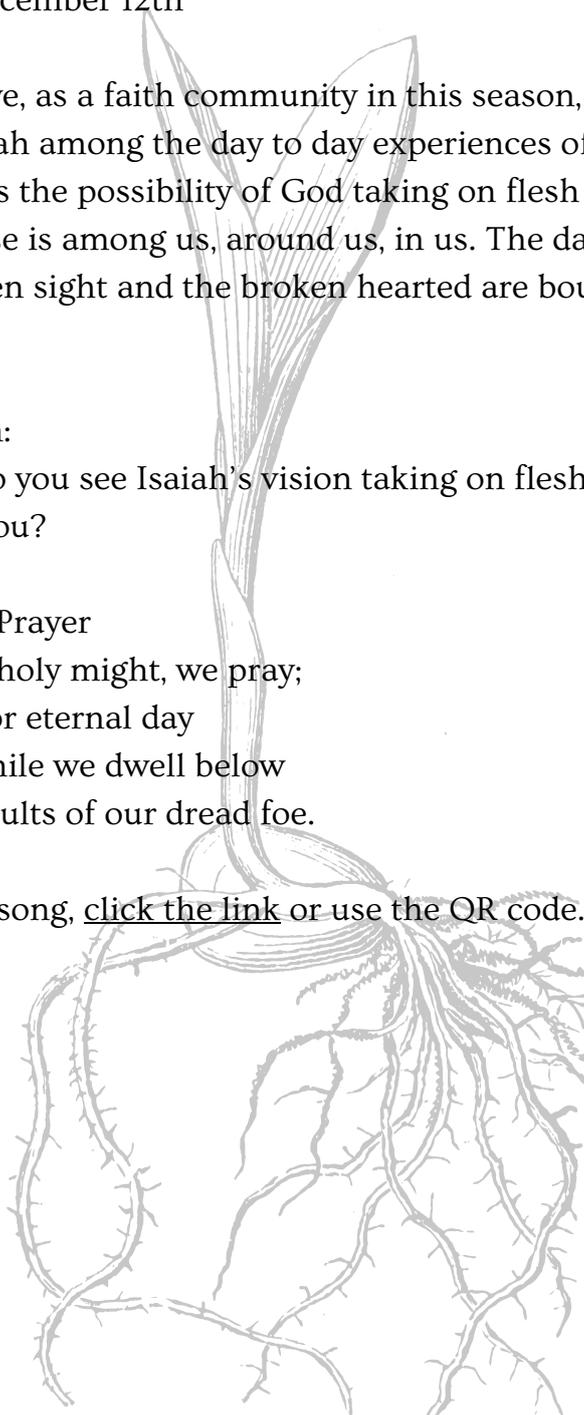
For reflection:

- Where do you see Isaiah's vision taking on flesh in the world around you?

Invitation to Prayer

Come in thy holy might, we pray;  
Redeem us for eternal day  
Defend us while we dwell below  
From all assaults of our dread foe.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# ADVENT: WEEK 2

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Friday, December 13th

People of God are called to enflesh God's dream in our world's reality.

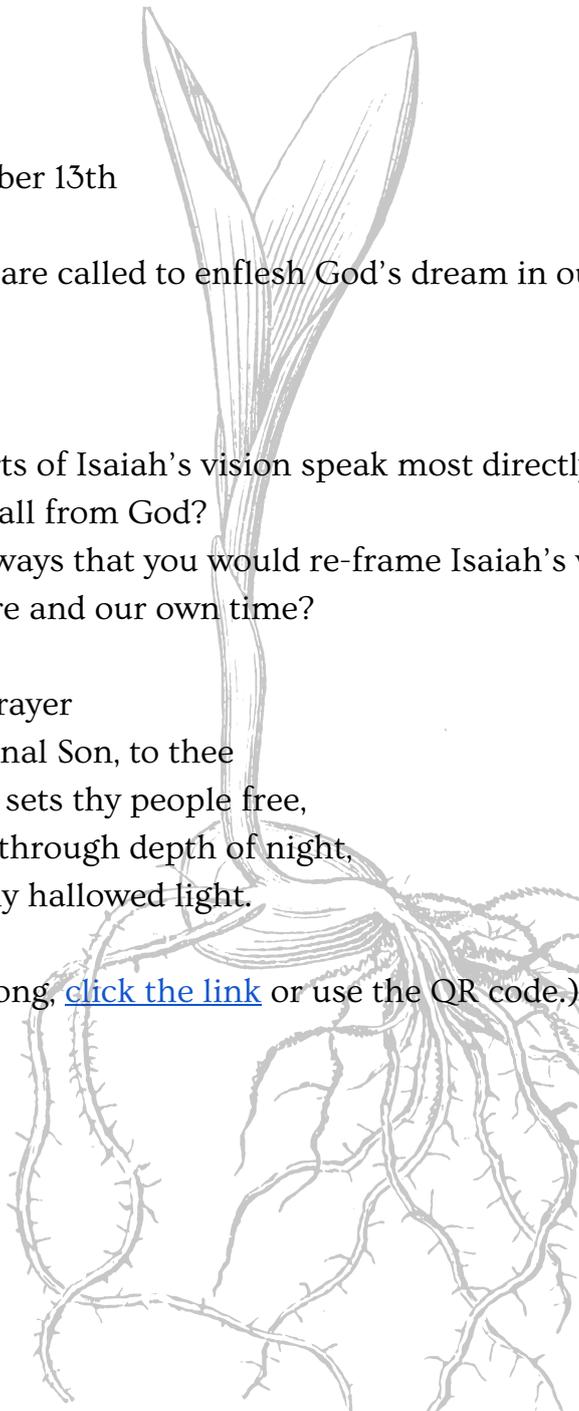
For reflection:

- Which parts of Isaiah's vision speak most directly to your life and your call from God?
- Are there ways that you would re-frame Isaiah's vision for our own culture and our own time?
- 

Invitation to Prayer

All praise, eternal Son, to thee  
Whose advent sets thy people free,  
Abide with us through depth of night,  
As we await thy hallowed light.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# ADVENT: WEEK 2

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Saturday, December 14th

Isaiah's words were heard not only in his era but in many more. They were heard in Jesus' era, too. Read Luke 4, where Jesus comes to the synagogue in Nazareth and preaches his first "sermon." It's very short and very direct. He says, "these words are fulfilled."

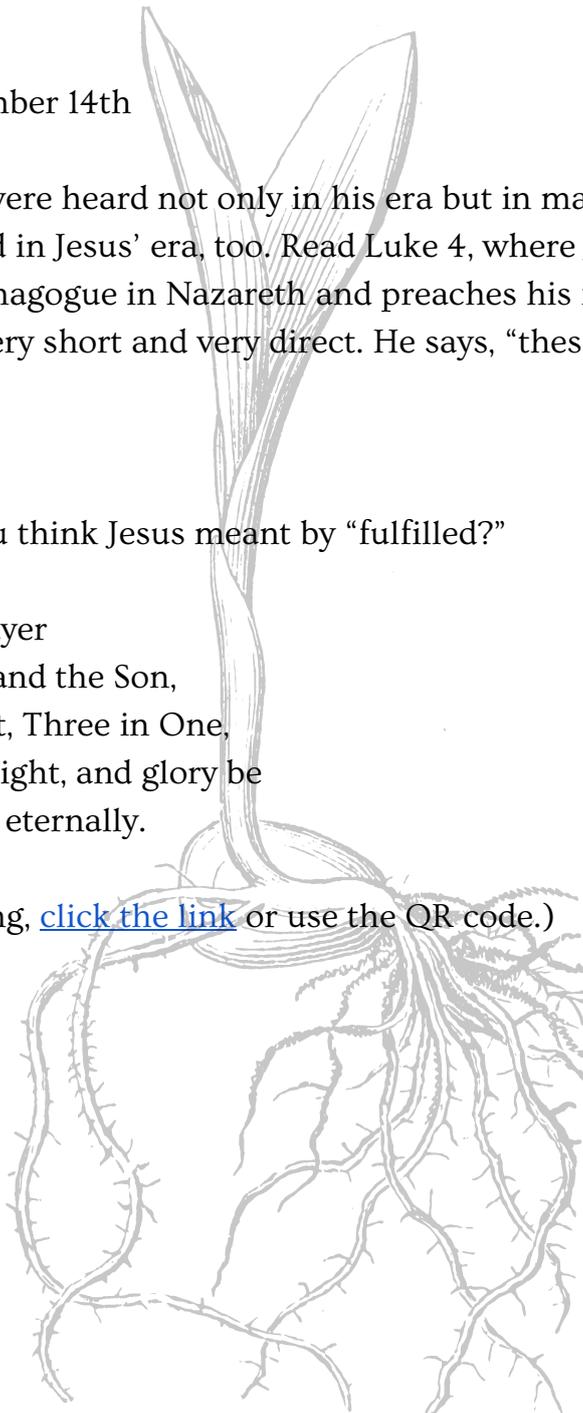
For reflection:

- What do you think Jesus meant by "fulfilled?"

Invitation to Prayer

To our Creator and the Son,  
And to the Spirit, Three in One,  
Praise, honor, might, and glory be  
From age to age eternally.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



## 3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT: DECEMBER 15, 2024

Joel 2:12-13, 28-29

12 Yet even now, says the Lord,  
return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;

13 rend your hearts and not your clothing.  
Return to the Lord your God,  
for he is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love,  
and relenting from punishment.

28 Then afterward  
I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;  
your children shall prophesy,  
your elders shall dream dreams,  
and your young people shall see visions.

29 Even on the male and female slaves,  
in those days I will pour out my spirit.

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# LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

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Holy One,  
the season of dreams is upon us.  
Dreams of possibilities,  
dreams for what might be,  
dreams for all the world.  
As we light this candle  
may live in the direction of your dream for us.

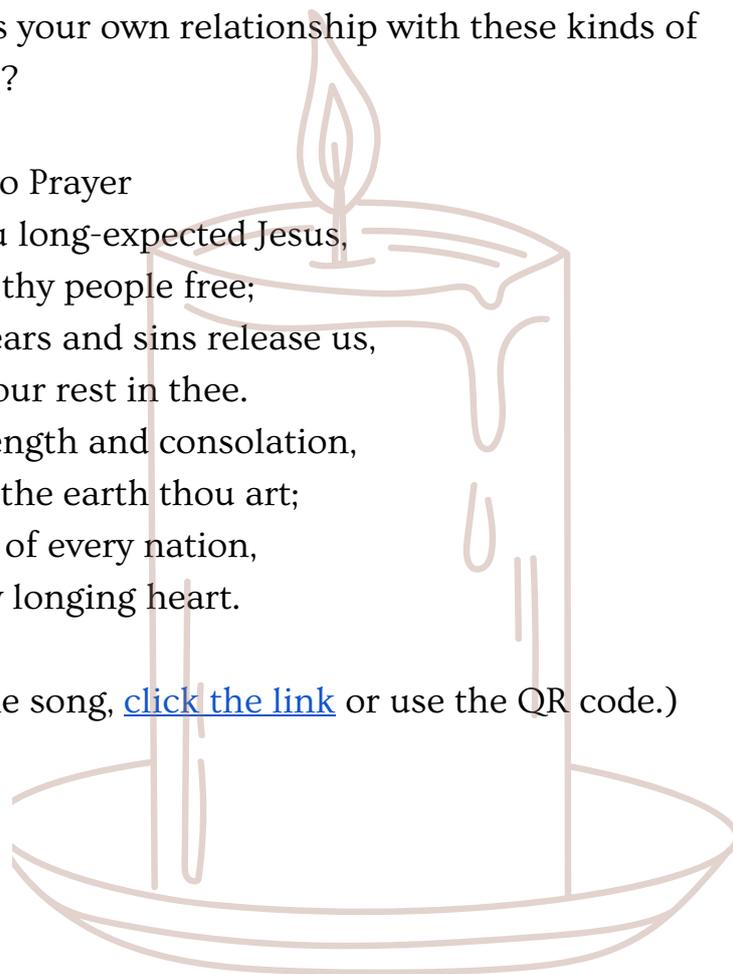
For reflection:

- What is your own relationship with these kinds of dreams?

Invitation to Prayer

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.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# ADVENT: WEEK 3

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Monday, December 16th

There are two ways of responding to prophecy like Joel's. One is to listen and believe and wait for those words to be fulfilled. In this way, the words concern the future and, as we are not there yet, we have to wait in hope and believe into that future. Indeed we keep the dream alive for others who are coming after us. The dream is the story that is passed on from one generation to the next. It is laudable and necessary to keep dreams alive; it is faithful and honest to do so.

For reflection:

- In what ways have you kept dreams for a better future alive?
- Where do you keep those dreams? Where did you get them from?
- With whom do you share them?

Invitation to Prayer

Born thy people to deliver,  
born a child and yet a King,  
born to reign in us forever,  
now thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By thine own eternal spirit  
rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all sufficient merit,  
raise us to thy glorious throne.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# ADVENT: WEEK 3

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Tuesday, December 17th

Another way of responding to prophecy is to become the dream itself. Joel is the kind of prophet who says: go dream; go be the dreamer and in dreaming things will happen. Keep the dream alive not only by passing it on but by living it and changing the era as you do so. It is as if Joel is saying: “Here’s what will happen if you change as God calls you to do: you young and old will dream, your men and women will dream, and in dreaming and longing and becoming the dream, the era changes.”

For reflection:

- Have you ever tried to become your dream?
- When? How? What did it feel like?

Invitation to Prayer

Comfort, comfort now my people;  
speak of peace! - so says your God.  
Comfort those who sit in darkness,  
burdened by a heavy load.  
To Jerusalem proclaim:  
God shall take away your shame.  
Now get ready to recover;  
guilt and suffering are over.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# ADVENT: WEEK 3

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Wednesday, December 18th

Martin Luther King Jr was the Joel-kind of prophet that believed dreams made a difference: they reshaped how you saw the landscape and gave you the power to reshape the landscape. When you can dream a different world, you live as if it is that different world. By living that way, the world changes.

Listen to (or read) Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech. [Click here to read](#), or use this QR code to listen.



For reflection:

- What is Dr. King's dream of the world?
- In what ways have you lived in the direction of this dream?

Invitation to Prayer

Hear the herald's proclamation  
in the desert far and near,  
calling all to true repentance,  
telling that the Lord is near.  
Oh, that warning cry obey!  
For your God prepare a way.  
Let the valleys rise to greet him  
and the hills bow down to meet him.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# ADVENT: WEEK 3

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Thursday, December 19th

Who are the dreamers, the visionaries, the possibility-merchants in our world today? In politics? In health? In the arts? In the church? Who do you know who is dreaming of a different world?

For reflection:

- What inspires you about the dreamers you know?
- Share these inspirational dreams with one other person.

Invitation to Prayer

Straighten out what has been crooked,  
make the roughest places plain.

Let your hearts be true and humble,  
live as fits God's holy reign.

Soon the glory of the Lord  
shall on earth be shed abroad.

Human flesh shall surely see it,  
God is ready to decree it.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# ADVENT: WEEK 3

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Friday, December 20th

Beloved Community does not need everyone to have a dream. It just needs one person. Community development, of which the prophet Joel is an advocate, begins with someone and a small group of people who see possibility and dare believe it can happen. If you look at how ideas take root and big things happen, it only takes a very small percentage of people to have a dream. It is something like three percent of a community. That is all it takes. Then about ten percent of others will hear it and likely join the dream and start talking about it which then leads to a third of the rest of the community adopting it and trusting it can happen. After a short while, another third join up once they have seen it begin to work. Then you have got almost 90 percent of people who have caught the vision. And it started with just three of four people having a dream.

For reflection:

- Do you agree or disagree with the idea that not everyone has to be a dreamer?
- Are you a dreamer or perhaps one of the 10% who embrace the dream early on?
- What dream would you like to see spread in our community like this? What is your role in bringing this dream forward?

Invitation to Prayer

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 and sing today:  
Love, the guest, is on the way.

Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,  
One more seed is planted there:  
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,  
That in course the flower may flourish.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the rose, is on the way.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# ADVENT: WEEK 3

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Saturday, December 21st

At the heart of all of our dreaming, Joel says, is God. Joel describes God as “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from punishment.”

For reflection:

- How do you think God’s mercy creates energy for and inspires our dreams?

Invitation to Prayer

Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim  
One more light the bowl shall brim,  
Shining beyond the frosty weather,  
Bright as sun and moon together.

People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the star, is on the way.

Angels, announce with shouts of mirth  
Christ who brings new life to earth.  
Set every peak and valley humming  
With the word, the Lord is coming.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the Lord, is on the way.

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



## 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT: DECEMBER 22, 2024

Luke 1:26-45

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.

39 In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, 40 where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit 42 and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43 And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? 44 For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

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# LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

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## Lighting the Advent Wreath

Holy One,  
the season of Word made flesh is upon us:  
the Word for the future;  
the Word that assures promises;  
the Word that creates all that is to be.  
As we light this candle, we pray  
that we may listen for you, the living Word.

## For reflection:

- One of the names of Jesus, especially in the Gospel of John, is “The Word.” It’s a funny name. A word is a collection of letters on a page. Jesus, on the other hand, was a bundle of human cells, flesh and blood, just like you. How was Jesus both Word and a human body?
- How do you imagine Jesus the Word is connected to the body of Jesus?

## Invitation to Prayer

No wind at the window, no knock on the door;  
No light from the lamp stand, no foot on the floor;  
No dream born of tiredness, no ghost raised by fear;  
Just an angel and a woman and a voice in her ear.  
“O Mary, O Mary, don't hide from my face.  
Be glad that you're favored and filled with God's grace.  
The time for redeeming the world has begun,  
And you are requested to mother God's son.”

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# ADVENT: WEEK 4

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Monday, December 23rd

The hopes, dreams, and visions of generations of prophets were for a world re-made and renewed—a world so aligned with God’s will that God would again be “at home” among people. Daniel imagined a world in which the King of Persia would be “converted” to the way of God. Isaiah saw a landscape in which those who struggle and suffer now have their lives and well-being restored. Joel said that God’s world would come if we take steps to become what we dream about.

God’s world came into being this way: a messenger from God came to a young woman and said, “you will become pregnant, and give birth to a child, and this child will bring the Beloved Community into reality.”

For reflection:

- What did Mary say in response to God’s messenger?
- In the orthodox Christian tradition, Mary is sometimes called “theotokos,” which means “God-bearer.” What do you think it feels like to be a “God bearer?”

Invitation to Prayer

“This child must be born that the Kingdom might come:

Salvation for many, destruction for some.

Both end and beginning, both message and sign,

Both victor and victim, both yours and divine.”

No payment was promised, no promises made.

No wedding was dated, no blue print displayed.

Yet Mary, consenting to what none could guess,

Replied with conviction, “Tell God I say yes.”

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)



# CHRISTMAS EVE: DECEMBER 24, 2024

Luke 2:1-14

In those days a decree went out from Caesar 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 in the guest room.

8 Now in that same 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,

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"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom God favors!"

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# LIGHTING THE CHRISTMAS CANDLE

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Holy One, the season of Word made flesh is here!  
the Word is knocking;  
the Word awaits with bated breath;  
the Word is ready to live with us.  
As we light this candle,  
Let us receive Jesus:  
a gift,  
the Word,  
the light,  
our friend,  
the love of God with us.

For reflection:

The arrival of a baby in the best of circumstances brings upheaval that cannot be anticipated. Whether homeless on the streets, or camped in a refugees enclosure, or crouched in squalor among the animals, birth comes heralding joy and sorrow, excitement and danger, signalling despair and hope, fear and longing. Into uncertainty, God is born. The world is not suddenly transformed. The experience of birth is still traumatic. The chaos and squalor do not disappear. But the world is charged with a new reality: the Beloved Community is among us. And you - you who are deeply, deeply loved by a God who is love - you belong to this community of love.

Invitation to Prayer

Still, still, still, He sleeps this night so chill.  
The Virgin's tender arms enfolding,  
Warm and safe the Child are holding.  
Still, still, still, He sleeps this night so chill.

Sleep, sleep, sleep, He lies in slumber deep.  
While angel hosts from heav'n come winging,  
Sweetest songs of joy are singing.  
Sleep, sleep, sleep, He lies in slumber deep

(To hear the song, [click the link](#) or use the QR code.)

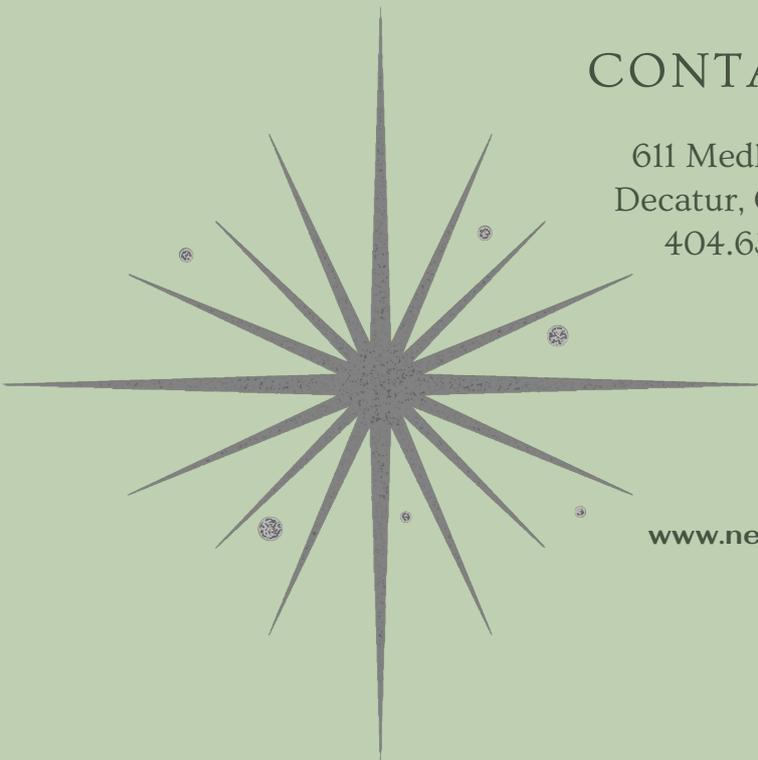




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