

Devotions for the Season of Advent



Focused on the Narrative Lectionary, <http://narrativelectionary.org>, with Bible readings from the Narrative Lectionary Daily Bible Readings Calendar, Spirit & Truth Publishing, <https://spiritandtruthpublishing.com/calendar/>
Thank you to the Delaware-Maryland Synod Generosity Team, especially Teal, Rob, Sara, Karen, as well as Sarah for her design work.



SUNDAY WEEK ONE HOPEFUL GENEROSITY

A pattern for household devotions, for when you light the first Advent candle on Sunday.

Open by saying: *We joyfully gather in the name of God, full of love; Jesus, full of hope; and the Spirit, full of peace. Amen.*

Light the first advent candle, saying: *We are the light in the darkness. May we shine in God's grace and generosity every day and everywhere.*

Read Sunday, November 28th daily reading.

Explore the question and your responses.

Determine how to carry out the way to serve.

Sing: Joy to the World verse 1

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King! Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room, and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

Bless each other marking the sign of the cross on each others' foreheads or hands, and saying:

[Name], you are a generous, hopeful child of God.

End with the prayer for the day



Sunday, November 28, 2021

Read: Jeremiah 29:1, 4-14

Explore: God cheers the discouraged: "I know the plans I have for you ... to give you a future with hope!" How has God given you hope?

Serve: Spend quality time with a friend who is going through a hardship and needs your accompaniment and encouragement.

Pray: God of our past, present and future, help us always to open our hearts to hear and follow the hopeful plan you have for us.

Monday, November 29, 2021

Read: Jeremiah 30:1-11

Explore: God promises to free us from every yoke and bond. What oppresses you? From what do you need to be freed?

Serve: Learn about how God's people are working to stop human trafficking taking place in your area. Find a way to help.

Pray: Emancipating God, you desire that people live in your liberty. Free us from sin and every bond and yoke. Help us proclaim your freedom to others.

Tuesday, November 30, 2021

Read: Jeremiah 30:12-17

Explore: To people wounded and in pain, God promises health. How have you experienced God's healing?

Serve: Befriend and accompany people who are dealing with grievous wounds or serious health concerns. Visit, pray, and discover together God's healing presence.

Pray: Healer of our every ill, bind up our wounds of body, mind, and spirit. Let us know true health in you.

Wednesday, December 1, 2021

Read: Jeremiah 31:1-14

Explore: Like a drought, hard times can wither our lives, but God will make us "like a watered garden." What in your soul needs God's watering?

Serve: Find, join, or start a spiritual small group to "water" your soul through study, prayer, sharing and fellowship.

Pray: Gardener of our souls, pull our weeds, prune our branches, nourish our soil, water our shoots, that we may bear good fruit for your kingdom.

Thursday, December 2, 2021

Read: Jeremiah 31:31-40

Explore: God makes a “new covenant” in response to our changing situations. When have you felt God working in a new way?

Serve: What ministry, vision, or mission of your congregation needs renewal. Find one way to help your congregation establish a “new covenant” with God.

Pray: God of renewal, restoration, and rebuilding, let your spirit bring new visions to our congregation and its people.

Friday, December 3, 2021

Read: Ezekiel 1:1-3; 2:1-10

Explore: God gives courage to the prophet sent to speak a holy word to wild people. How does God help you speak truth in fearful circumstances?

Serve: God calls us to be the voice of truth in a world of liars and oppressors. Find a situation where you can deliver a much-needed word of God’s truth.

Pray: God of truth and courage, empower us to bring your holy words of hope and love to a world filled with despair and hate.

Saturday, December 4, 2021

Read: Ezekiel 3:1-11

Explore: God gives the prophet words, but he must first receive and hear them. Have you been open or resistant to receiving and hearing God’s words?

Serve: Through prayer, devotion, Bible study, and perhaps with partners, find ways to open your heart to receive and your ears to hear God’s words.

Pray: You’re always speaking, God, but we close our ears and our hearts. Help us increasingly to be open to what you would have us learn and do.



SUNDAY WEEK TWO PEACE-MAKING GENEROSITY

A pattern for household devotions, for when you light the first two Advent candles on Sunday.

Open by saying: *We joyfully gather in the name of God, full of love; Jesus, full of hope; and the Spirit, full of peace. Amen.*

Light the first advent candle, saying: *We are the light in the darkness. May we shine in God's grace and generosity every day and everywhere.*

Read Sunday, December 5th daily reading.

Explore the question and your responses.

Determine how to carry out the way to serve.

Sing: Joy to the World verse 3

No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.

Bless each other marking the sign of the cross on each others' foreheads or hands, saying:

[Name], you are a generous, peace-making child of God.

End with the prayer for the day

Sunday, December 5, 2021*Read:* Ezekiel 37:1-14

Explore: God says to the bones, "I will... put breath in you, and you shall live." Amid the busyness of life, what helps you pause long enough to receive life-giving breath from God?

Serve: Think of a way you can invite someone else to pause and receive life-giving breath from God.

Pray: Lord, help us to know you and trust your promise of new life. Put your breath and your Spirit in us, that we may live in hope and peace. Amen.

Monday, December 6, 2021*Read:* Ezekiel 39:25-29

Explore: God promises a time when God's people will "live securely in their land with no one to make them afraid." In what ways is this promise fulfilled or not yet fulfilled in your life?

Serve: For millions of refugees awaiting resettlement, God's promise of security is not yet fulfilled.

What is a step you can take to share God's peace with people awaiting the fulfillment of this promise?

Pray: Holy One, you promise to "leave none of them behind." Grant that all peoples may "live securely in their land with no one to make them afraid." Amen.

Tuesday, December 7, 2021*Read:* Ezra 3:1-7

Explore: God's people gathered for in-person worship, not in the wake of a pandemic, but after decades of exile. They could make offerings, but the temple had not yet been rebuilt. How are things similar and different in your worship context?

Serve: Whether you attend worship in-person or online, what is one way you can support your worship community in gathering for worship?

Pray: Thank you, God, for gathering us together to worship you, in ways familiar and new. Grant us wisdom in using physical and virtual spaces to share your peace with our neighbors. Amen.

Wednesday, December 8, 2021*Read:* Ezra 3:8-11

Explore: When a new foundation was laid, the priests sang words of thanks and praise to God. For what can you thank and praise God, whose "steadfast love endures forever"?

Serve: New "foundations" are being laid in the form of new congregations and ministries in the Delaware-Maryland Synod. Consider how you can support these foundations through your prayers and your financial gifts.

Pray: Good and gracious God, thank you for staying with us, for loving us through the challenges that come amid the work of rebuilding, work that you direct in our lives and our communities. Amen.

Thursday, December 9, 2021

Read: Isaiah 11:1-9

Explore: The shoot from the stump of Jesse will make equitable, righteous decisions, rather than relying on sight or hearing. How might we take this to heart in our decision-making?

Serve: What is one step you can take toward living into the peaceful image of creation in Vv. 6-9?

Pray: Righteous One, you promise there will be no hurt or destruction on all your holy mountain. Give us wisdom to make equitable, righteous decisions. Amen.

Friday, December 10, 2021

Read: Isaiah 52:3-10

Explore: This week we “break forth... into singing” stanza 3 of “Joy to the World.” What other songs come to mind as you read about God’s action of redeeming God’s people?

Serve: In what way can you serve as a “messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation”?

Pray: Redeemer, thank you for rescuing us from the powers that oppose your peace. Equip us to share your peace wherever you send us. Amen.

Saturday, December 11, 2021

Read: Isaiah 54:10-14

Explore: Mountains usually erode so slowly that we can’t see them depart. God’s love and peace stay with us even when mountains go. When has God remained by your side?

Serve: How can you share God’s peace with someone who is “afflicted...storm-tossed, and not comforted”?

Pray: Compassionate One, establish us on a secure foundation, far away from every form of oppression or terror. Grant us your promised peace. Amen.



SUNDAY WEEK THREE

JOYFUL GENEROSITY

A pattern for household devotions, for when you light the first three Advent candles on Sunday.

Open by saying: *We joyfully gather in the name of God, full of love; Jesus, full of hope; and the Spirit, full of peace. Amen.*

Light the first advent candle, saying: *We are the light in the darkness. May we shine in God's grace and generosity every day and everywhere.*

Read the Sunday, December 12th daily reading.

Explore the question and your responses.

Determine how to carry out the way to serve.

Sing: Joy to the World verse 2

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

Bless each other marking the sign of the cross on each others' foreheads or hands, and saying: [Name], you are a generous, joyful child of God.

End with the prayer for the day.

Sunday, December 12, 2021*Read: Isaiah 55:1-13*

Explore: We hear about a community that is to be freed and return home after forced time away. Where have you experienced people who are fraught with unfairness, thwarted opportunities and lack of opportunity?

Serve: How can you support a community or individual that has less opportunity or joy than you?

Pray: Loving and caring God, you promise a peace and joy that starts inside and works its way out. Make me strong and sure in the face of difficulty for you are my joy and my redeemer, Amen.

Monday, December 13, 2021*Read: Proverbs 8:1, 22-26*

Explore: God created Wisdom and then so many other things. In Genesis God said all these things were good and we can imagine God's joy and delight in creation. Can you look outside your window with joy and name something you see that God has created?

Serve: How can you care for God's creation in a simple practical way today?

Pray: Creating God, you are filled with joy for your creation from Wisdom to the mountains to every bit of soil. Fill us with that same joy for all of your creation. Amen.

Tuesday, December 14, 2021*Read: Proverbs 8:27-31*

Explore: God rejoices in the inhabited world. What does it mean for you to delight in the human race with God? Have you seen or experienced someone not rejoicing in the human race?

Serve: Our friends and family who are BIPOC often receive microaggressions multiple times per day. Send a note, email or text to someone you know and give them words of joy in how you delight in them as a person.

Pray: God, you delight in the human race. Help us to use words that are joy filled to all the human race. Amen.

Wednesday, December 15, 2021*Read: Psalm 8:1-9 & John 4:13-14*

Explore: Jesus is the living water. What is your favorite thing to drink that brings you joy during the winter? In other seasons?

Serve: Safe drinking water is essential for joy in life. Globally, 1.8 billion people – that's about one out of every four people – drink from contaminated water sources. Make a financial gift to ELCA World Hunger's water ministries today.

Pray: Sustaining God, thank you for the life sustaining water available to me. May my generosity gush through me as a sign of my joy of my knowledge of eternal life. Amen.

Thursday, December 16, 2021

Read: Luke 1:5-25

Explore: Zechariah is terrified when Gabriel appears, but Gabriel promises joy, for God has heard Zechariah's prayer. When have you experienced joy at God's answer to your prayer?

Serve: How might your generosity today be a source of joy and comfort, providing an answer to someone's prayer?

Pray: Holy One, calm our fears. Hear our prayers, and grant us joy and gladness. Amen.

Friday, December 17, 2021

Read: Luke 1:26-45

Explore: Mary's greeting to Elizabeth spurs John to leap for joy in the womb. When has someone's greeting made you leap for joy, literally or figuratively?

Serve: Share joy by reaching out to greet someone by phone, letter, text, or other means.

Pray: Lord, thank you for Gabriel's greeting to Mary and Mary's greeting to Elizabeth. As we send and receive greetings, may we experience your joy. Amen.

Saturday, December 18, 2021

Read: Luke 1:46-55

Explore: Mary rejoices in God, reflecting on how God brings down the powerful and lifts up those without power. What kinds of power do you have? How have you been brought down or lifted up?

Serve: Find a way you can participate in God's work of filling the hungry with good things?

Pray: Mighty One, you have done great things for us. With Mary, we rejoice in you, grateful for your work to bring about justice. Amen.



SUNDAY WEEK FOUR LOVING GENEROSITY

A pattern for household devotions, for when you light all four Advent candles on Sunday.

Open by saying: *We joyfully gather in the name of God, full of love; Jesus, full of hope; and the Spirit, full of peace. Amen.*

Light the first advent candle, saying: *We are the light in the darkness. May we shine in God's grace and generosity every day and everywhere.*

Read Sunday, December 19th daily reading.

Explore the question and your responses.

Determine how to carry out the way to serve.

Sing: Joy to the World verse 4

He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove the glories of His righteousness and wonders of His love, and wonders of His love, and wonders, wonders of His love.

Bless each other marking the sign of the cross on each others' foreheads or hands, and saying: [Name], you are a generous, loving child of God.

End with the prayer for the day



Sunday, December 19, 2021

Read: John 1:1-18

Explore: Jesus, God incarnate, the fullness of the divine, gives us God's grace. How have you experienced God's grace through Jesus?

Serve: As you become aware of God's grace in your life, pray with someone who needs to receive more of God's grace.

Pray: Holy God, Jesus came in your fullness and showed us the fullness of your love. Grant that we may walk in your grace and love.

Monday, December 20, 2021

Read: Luke 1:57-66

Explore: Elizabeth's loved ones rejoiced in God's mercy shown to her. How has your family or church rejoiced in God's love?

Serve: Look for instances of God's mercy and love revealed to your family and church. Find ways to rejoice today with those who are so blessed.

Pray: Loving, holy God, you pour your love, grace, and mercy into our lives. Help us be aware of them, that we may rejoice together and praise your name.

Tuesday, December 21, 2021

Read: Luke 1:67-80

Explore: Jesus will "give light to those who sit in darkness." How has (or does) the light of Christ illumined your life?

Serve: Begin a spiritual practice of meditating before a candle for five minutes a day, praying silently that the light of Christ will fill you.

Pray: We have no light but you, o Christ. Let your light fill our hearts, illumine our paths, and guide our lives.

Wednesday, December 22, 2021

Read: Psalm 57:8-11

Explore: God's love awakens our souls. We overflow with thanks and praise. How has God's love been present to you? What has it awakened in your soul?

Serve: Dedicate yourself to finding one way every day to share God's love. As you do, give thanks and praise for God's love.

Pray: Holy God, you give us more than we can ever deserve and much more than we need. Help us to receive your love and embody it in the world around us.

Thursday, December 23, 2021

Read: Psalm 85:8-13

Explore: "God's salvation is at hand" for us. What do you need to be saved from, and what do you think you are saved for?

Serve: As you prayerfully contemplate the salvation you have in Jesus, complete this sentence:
"Because I've been saved by Christ, I will ____."

Pray: You saved us because you love us, O God. Let our lives evidence the righteousness and peace of your love.

Friday, December 24, 2021

Read: Luke 2:1-20

Explore: As with the first hearers of the good news, the gospel dispels our fear and brings joy. What joy, love, and peace has the Gospel brought you?

Serve: Make a "gratitude list" of all the joys God has given you. Keep the list and pray over it regularly, thanking God for each one.

Pray: Thank you, Divine One, for good news of Jesus Christ, who out of your love came to free us and give us joy. Embolden us to live fully in your love.

Saturday, December 25, 2021

Read: Luke 2:21-38

Explore: Having seen the Messiah, Simeon felt peace, love, joy, and hope. How does Jesus' coming fill you with good things?

Serve: For each of the four themes leading up to Christmas – hope, peace, joy, and love – pray and ask God to reveal how they are present in your life and how you can share them.

Pray: Dear God, we are like Simeon, our spirits aglow with the coming of your messiah, Jesus. Help us to carry your light into the world throughout the year.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!