



Advent & Christmas

A Prayer Guide

2015



TRINITY
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

And the Grinch, with his Grinch-feet ice cold in the snow, stood puzzling and puzzling, how could it be so? It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags. And he puzzled and puzzled 'till his puzzler was sore. Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before. What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store. What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more.

-Dr. Seuss, How the Grinch Stole Christmas! (1957)

What is Advent?¹

Dr. Seuss was right. Christmas means a little bit more than what comes from a store. Indeed, it means a lot more! Christmas is about the Incarnation - God coming to be with us in Jesus, and many are familiar with that. Advent, on the other hand, is not so familiar to us. Advent is a word that simply means “coming” or “arrival.” It is a four-week period in which the church looks back to Jesus’ first coming in the Incarnation, and looks forward with hopeful anticipation to his second coming when he will establish the New Heavens and the New Earth.

For this reason, Advent is a season of waiting. The world is broken, and so we long for Jesus to come back and complete his work of making all things new. The cry of Advent is a cry for those who know something about suffering and longing. It is a time to grieve your own losses. It is also a time to join with all creation, which is, as Paul wrote, “groaning as it awaits the coming redemption.” Advent reminds us that this world is not the way that it is supposed to be, but it does so by pointing us to the hope that the second coming of Jesus holds.

Of course, Scripture reminds us that we need redemption from our broken world because we have broken it! Advent calls us to prepare for Jesus’ return by repenting and believing. We are to turn away from the false hopes and desires that twist our hearts and destroy our relationships. Instead, we are to turn toward Jesus, who frees us so that we may love and serve one another in grace and truth. Just as John the Baptist was born to prepare the way for Jesus’ first coming, so we are given to each other in the community of the church to encourage each other and challenge the world around us to prepare for his coming again.

¹ Many readings, prayers, and explanations are from Resurrection Brooklyn, Christ Church Berkeley, *The Book of Common Prayer*, & Christ the King.

What is Christmas?

At Christmas, we remember the birth of Jesus, the fulfillment of all our Advent expectations. Derived from “Christ Mass,” Christmas is a feast, and it’s not a one-day affair. It’s actually a twelve-day celebration beginning at sunset on Christmas Eve. How could it not be a multiday, extravagant and joyous feast when the King of Kings, the Prince of Peace, Creator and Redeemer has come to make the world and us new?!

How to Use this Guide

The season of Advent-Christmas provides a wonderful opportunity for us to rekindle our relationship with God and his people, and especially to focus on the quality of our worship as a church, as families, and as individuals. We have prepared this guide for daily prayer with the hope that this season will be a time of renewal for you as well.

Each week of Advent has its own page with a simple liturgy of prayers and readings. This liturgy could be read and prayed by individuals or with friends or family. If you are praying with others, have one person read the plain words and have the rest respond with the words in bold.

There are three readings for most days, but you may omit the middle reading for the sake of time. The readings are also available on your mobile device at www.esvbible.org/devotions/bcp/.

A suggested hymn is included each week, but feel free to supplement with any hymn that you’d like.

Our goal is not to load you down with more tasks in an already busy life, but rather to provide you with materials to let you experience God’s goodness and grace more fully. So use the guide as just that: a guide.

Our hope is that this guide will be an aid to your worship during Advent and Christmas this year!

Week One of Advent: November 29 – December 5

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, make us ready for this Advent. Prepare us for the Way of the Lord. We are listening to your Word as you announce the arrival of our Savior, who is Jesus, the King of Kings, the Prince of Peace, the Creator and Redeemer. **Amen.**

Confession of Sin

Because we are busy to prepare for the holidays, but lazy to prepare for your coming, Lord, have mercy on us. Forgive us and rouse in us by your Holy Spirit true hope and expectation. Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

May the Almighty God grant us forgiveness of all our sins, and the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Invitation

Lord, open our lips.

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

Alleluia! Our King and Savior now draws near: O Come let us adore Him.
Alleluia!

Readings

The readings are available on your mobile device at esvbible.org/devotions/bcp/

Sunday, Nov. 29 (The First Sunday of Advent)

Amos 1:5-2:5; (1 Thess. 5:1-11); Luke 21:5-19

Monday, Nov. 30

Amos 2:6-16; (2 Pet. 1:1-11); Matt. 21:1-11

Tuesday, Dec. 1

Amos 3:1-11; (2 Pet. 1:12-21); Matt. 21:12-22

Wednesday, Dec. 2

Amos 3:12-4:5; (2 Pet. 3:1-10); Matt. 21:23-32

Thursday, Dec. 3

Amos 4:6-13; (2 Pet. 3:11-18); Matt. 21:33-46

Friday, Dec. 4

Amos 5:1-17; (Jude 1-16); Matt. 22:1-14

Saturday, Dec. 5

Amos 5:18-27; (Jude 17-25); Matt. 22:15-22

Hymn for the Week

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

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

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.

OR pick any favorite Advent hymn.

Open Prayer

Pray for your family, friends, the church, and the world.

The Lord's Prayer

Conclude the prayer time with the Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Closing Prayer

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

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Week Two of Advent: December 6 – December 12

Opening Prayer

God of hope, who brought love into this world, be the love that dwells between us. God of hope, who brought peace into this world, be the peace that dwells between us. God of hope, who brought joy into this world, be the joy that dwells between us. God of hope, the rock we stand upon, be the center, the focus of our Advent and always. **Amen.**

Confession of Sin

Because we are awake with our buying and selling, but often asleep with our prayer, Christ, have mercy. Forgive us and strengthen us by your Holy Spirit so that we may delight in your presence with us and long for your return. Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

May the Almighty God grant us forgiveness of all our sins, and the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Invitation

Lord, open our lips.

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

Alleluia! Our King and Savior now draws near: O Come let us adore Him.
Alleluia!

Readings

The readings are available on your mobile device at esvbible.org/devotions/bcp/

Sunday, Dec. 6 (The Second Sunday of Advent)

Amos 6:1-14; (2 Thess. 1:5-12); Luke 1:57-68

Monday, Dec. 7

Amos 7:1-9; (Rev. 1:1-8); Matt. 22:23-33

Tuesday, Dec. 8

Amos 7:10-17; (Rev. 1:9-16); Matt. 22:34-46

Wednesday, Dec. 9

Amos 8:1-14; (Rev. 1:17-2:7); Matt. 23:1-12

Thursday, Dec. 10

Amos 9:1-10; (Rev. 2:8-17); Matt. 23:13-26

Friday, Dec. 11

Haggai 1:1-15; (Rev. 2:18-29); Matt. 23:27-39

Saturday, Dec. 12

Haggai 2:1-9; (Rev. 3:1-6); Matt. 24:1-14

Hymn for the Week

Once in Royal David's City

Once in royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed
Where a mother laid here baby
In a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little child.

He came down to earth from heaven
Who is God and Lord of all,
And his shelter was a stable,
And his cradle was a stall:
With the poor, the mean, and lowly,
Lived on earth our Savior holy.

And our eyes at last shall see Him,
Through His own redeeming love,
For that Child so dear and gentle
Is our Lord in Heav'n above,
And He leads His children on
To the place where He is gone.

Not in that poor lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see Him; but in Heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high;
Where like stars His children crowned
All in white shall wait around.

OR pick any favorite Advent hymn.

Open Prayer

Pray for your family, friends, the church, and the world.

The Lord's Prayer

Conclude the prayer time with the Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Closing Prayer

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

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Week Three of Advent: December 13 – December 19

Opening Prayer

May the splendor of your glory dawn in our hearts, we pray, Almighty God, that all shadows of the night may be scattered and we may be shown to be children of light by the Advent of your Only Begotten Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Confession of Sin

Because we have forgotten Advent disciplines, because they are crowded out by end-of-year functions and Christmas celebrations that arrive so quickly, Lord, have mercy. Forgive us and renew in us the joy of your salvation. Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

May the Almighty God grant us forgiveness of all our sins, and the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Invitation

Lord, open our lips.

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

Alleluia! Our King and Savior now draws near: O Come let us adore Him.
Alleluia!

Readings

The readings are available on your mobile device at esvbible.org/devotions/bcp/

Sunday, Dec. 13 (The Third Sunday of Advent)

Amos 9:11-15; (2 Thess. 2:1-3, 13-17); John 5:30-47

Monday, Dec. 14

Zech. 1:7-17; (Rev. 3:7-13); Matt. 24:15-31

Tuesday, Dec. 15

Zech. 2:1-13; (Rev. 3:14-22); Matt. 24:32-44

Wednesday, Dec. 16

Zech. 3:1-10; (Rev. 4:1-8); Matt. 24:45-51

Thursday, Dec. 17

Zech. 4:1-14; (Rev. 4:9-5:5); Matt. 25:1-13

Friday, Dec. 18

Zech. 7:8-8:8; (Rev. 5:6-14); Matt. 25:14-30

Saturday, Dec. 19

Zech. 8:9-17; (Rev. 6:1-17); Matt. 25:31-46

Hymn for the Week

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

O come, O come Emmanuel

And ransom captive Israel

That mourns in lonely exile here,

Until the Son of God appears.

REFRAIN

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel

Shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free

Thine own from Satan's tyranny;

From depths of hell Thy people save,

And give them victory over the grave.

REFRAIN

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel

Shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer

Our spirits by Thine advent here;

Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,

And death's dark shadows put to flight.

REFRAIN

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel

Shall come to thee, O Israel

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.

REFRAIN

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

OR pick any favorite Advent hymn.

Open Prayer

Pray for your family, friends, the church, and the world.

The Lord's Prayer

Conclude the prayer time with the Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Closing Prayer

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

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Week Four of Advent: December 20 – December 24

Opening Prayer

Grant that your people, we pray, almighty God, may be ever watchful for the coming of your Only Begotten Son, that as the author of our salvation himself has taught us, we may hasten alert and with lighted lamps to meet him when he comes. **Amen.**

Confession of Sin

Gracious Father and Loving God, forgive us our sins, and cleanse our hearts through the shed blood of your Son Jesus. Fill us with hope where there has been despair, compassion where there has been indifference, and faith where there has been unbelief. Help us to live in reliance upon your grace. Protect us from growing callous to the glory of Christ's Incarnation and the hope of his return. Through Christ we pray. Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

May the Almighty God grant us forgiveness of all our sins, and the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Invitation

Lord, open our lips.

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

Alleluia! Our King and Savior now draws near: O Come let us adore Him.
Alleluia!

Readings

The readings are available on your mobile device at esvbible.org/devotions/bcp/

Sunday, Dec. 20 (The Fourth Sunday of Advent)

Gen. 3:8-15; (Rev. 12:1-10); John 3:16-21

Monday, Dec. 21

Zeph. 3:14-20; (Titus 1:1-16); Luke 1:1-25

Tuesday, Dec. 22

1 Samuel 2:1-10; (Titus 2:1-10); Luke 1:26-38

Wednesday, Dec. 23

2 Samuel 7:1-17; (Titus 2:11-3:8a); Luke 1:39-56

Thursday, Dec. 24

Isa. 59:15b-21; (Phil. 2:5-11)

Hymn for the Week

What Child is This?

What Child is this who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste, to bring him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

Why lies he in such mean estate,
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce Him through;
The cross be borne for me, for you.
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,
The babe, the son of Mary.

So bring him incense, gold and myrrh;
Come peasant, king to own him;
The King of kings salvation brings,
Let loving hearts enthrone him.
Raise, raise the song on high,
The virgin sings her lullaby:
Joy, joy for Christ is born,
The babe, the son of Mary.

OR pick any favorite Advent hymn.

Open Prayer

Pray for your family, friends, the church, and the world.

The Lord's Prayer

Conclude the prayer time with the Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Closing Prayer

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

Christmas: The 12 Days of Christmas

Opening Prayer

Shout for joy all the earth, and everything within! Rejoice! For Light has come into the world! The mountains sing, the seas resound to the praise of your name. Salvation once promised is here on earth! The angels' song rings in the air, a child has been born. Hallelujah! The Savior of the world is here! **Amen!**

Prayer of Thanksgiving for Christmas

Spend a few moments reflecting on the many ways you've experienced God's goodness this season and this past year and give thanks to God. If you're with others, share your thanksgivings and pray together.

Readings for Christmas

Christmas Day: Micah 4:1-5; 5:2-4; (1 John 4:7-16); Luke 2:1-7

Saturday after Christmas: Luke 2:8-21

Sunday after Christmas: Luke 2:22-40

Monday after Christmas: Heb. 2:10-18

Tuesday after Christmas: Isa. 12:1-6

Wednesday after Christmas: Isa. 25:1-9

Thursday after Christmas: Isa. 26:1-9

Friday after Christmas: Isa 65:17-25

2nd Saturday after Christmas: John 6:35-51

2nd Sunday after Christmas: John 10:7-17

2nd Monday after Christmas: 1 John 2:12-17

2nd Tuesday after Christmas: Matthew 2:1-12

Closing Prayer

Almighty God, you have given your only begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to be born of a pure virgin: Grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with you and the same Spirit be honor and glory, now and for ever. **Amen.**