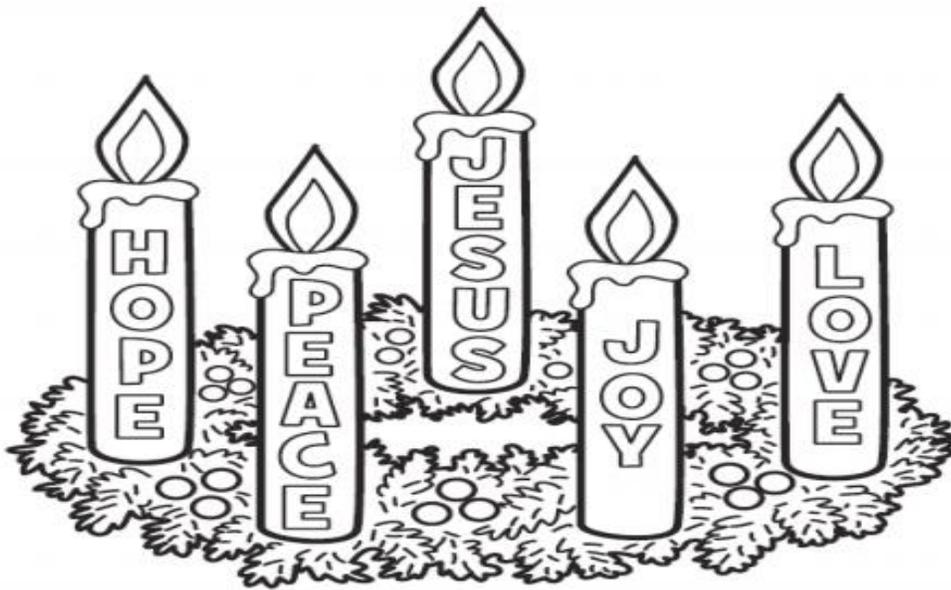


# **Covenant Presbyterian Church**



## **Advent Devotions and Reflections 2020**

**In-Person Advent Worship Sundays at 10AM  
Online Worship at [covhsv.org/sermons](http://covhsv.org/sermons)**

## **Preface from the Worship Team**

To our Church Family,

At Covenant we have always strived to have a true family atmosphere, where we worship together, serve together, and laugh together as a church family. And there is no time for families like the holidays, which began with a small, humble family in the town of Bethlehem.

This year, with all its challenges, has been the hardest time in memory for us to be a church family. The simple ability to even stay in the same room as a church has been limited or denied altogether. Even basic interaction requires extra effort and careful planning. But God is still present and active, even in this difficult time. The love and the special bond He gives us endures.

With all this in mind, the Worship Team felt it was time to bring back a Christmas tradition, the Advent Book, to share a small slice of Christmas together. Each day is a special letter from a member of the family; a moment of hope, faith, joy and peace shared by one of your Covenant brothers and sisters. These reflections can be accessed online via a downloadable PDF or you can also come to church to get a printed copy of the entire book from the box in front of the office.

Each Sunday this booklet will also give you an "outreach" focus provided by our Outreach Team to give you a suggestion of a way to serve our community during this season.

Pastor David Kling has also written a very brief script for a family worship service that is suitable for all ages that you family can use to celebrate your own family worship service around your advent wreath each Sunday.

Special thanks go out to Debbie Hester, for leading the project and putting in the time and energy to make it a reality.

Whether in written or electronic form, we hope that, as you read, you will think of each writer and pray for them, as they have prayed for you.

Elder Steve Mowery, Worship Team Chair

## **Editor's Introduction: "Celebrating Advent"**

The purpose of Advent is to prepare one's heart for the coming of Christ at Christmas. We celebrate the season of Advent during the four week period beginning on the Sunday nearest the feast day of St Andrew the Apostle (November 30) and through the following three Sundays. Historians estimate that Advent, which derives from the Latin word for coming, has been celebrated since the 4th century.

We reflect on the coming of Christ both in the flesh and in our hearts daily. What does it mean for Christ to be in and among us in this season of Advent and throughout the year?

We celebrate Advent by lighting the candles of the Advent wreath. The wreath's symbolism reflects on the nature of Christ. It is made of evergreen reflecting that our faith is always alive. The wreath is round with no beginning or end, showing us the eternal nature of God's love for us.

The candles represent the light of Christ. The purple candles symbolize both repentance and the royalty of Christ. We anticipate the coming King. The pink or rose candle represents joy and reveals a shift in the season of Advent from repentance toward celebration. The white Christ candle symbolizes His purity.

Each candle focuses our meditation during Advent on a key word - hope, faith, joy, and peace. Members of our congregation have written reflections to share with you focusing on one of these words for each week of Advent.

We encourage you to find a quiet moment for lighting a candle at the beginning of each week. Take time to read the daily meditations written for you by members of our church family. Pray for our church that we would bring the light of Christ to one another, to Huntsville, and to the world in the coming year.

Debbie Hester, Editor

<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Devotion Author</u></b>
Sunday, Nov. 29th	<b>"Hope" - Rev. David Kling</b>
Monday, Nov. 30th	<b>Debbie Sullivan</b>
Tuesday, Dec. 1st	<b>Betty and Larry Augsburgers</b>
Wednesday, Dec. 2nd	<b>Dir. Miranda Wilkinson</b>
Thursday, Dec. 3rd	<b>Mary Witherspoon</b>
Friday, Dec. 4th	<b>Susan Elrod</b>
Saturday, Dec. 5th	<b>Robin Strong</b>
Sunday, Dec. 6th	<b>"Faith" - Rev. Dave Hunsicker</b>
Monday, Dec. 7th	<b>Lydia Cole</b>
Tuesday, Dec. 8th	<b>Confirmation Class</b>
Wednesday, Dec. 9th	<b>Missy Belrose</b>
Thursday, Dec. 10th	<b>Greg Merijanian</b>
Friday, Dec. 11th	<b>Troy Hester</b>
Saturday, Dec. 12th	<b>Sheila Cloud</b>
Sunday, Dec. 13th	<b>"Joy" - Rev. Alison Kling</b>
Monday, Dec. 14th	<b>Leon Trotter</b>
Tuesday, Dec. 15th	<b>Jane Susic</b>
Wednesday, Dec. 16th	<b>Karl Johnson</b>
Thursday, Dec. 17th	<b>Joan Morehead</b>
Friday, Dec. 18th	<b>Tom Coon</b>
Saturday, Dec. 19th	<b>Hal &amp; Jean Oakley</b>
Sunday, Dec. 20th	<b>"Peace" - Dir. Steven Herriott</b>
Monday, Dec. 21st	<b>Cindi Ludwig</b>
Tuesday, Dec. 22nd	<b>April Shaw</b>
Wednesday, Dec. 23rd	<b>Debbie Hester</b>
Thursday, Dec. 24th	<b>"Christ Candle" - Rev. David Kling</b>

**1st Sunday of Advent, Nov. 29<sup>th</sup>**

**Rev. David Kling**

**Week 1 Theme: "Hope"**

"He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope." - Isaiah 42:4

I remember as a little boy that *ONE* Advent Calendar was not enough for me and my little brother! We opened paper windows, tore paper chains, added animals to a manger scene *and* grew Santa's beard by one cotton ball daily. But my favorite way of telling "Advent Time" was each Sunday before we went to bed. That's when we had our family worship service around the Advent wreath on our kitchen table. My grandfather, a Presbyterian elder, had written a simple Advent worship service for his family of young children to do together in the 1960's, and my mother had carefully saved a copy of the type-written script. Looking back, these were perhaps the most spiritually powerful moments in my little life. The words were simple enough that I could learn them, and mysterious enough for me to ponder as I looked into the flickering candlelight. All my hope around *presents* and *decorations* and *candy* somehow found a deeper meaning. I challenge you and your family this Advent season to embrace the mystery and the majesty of this season by celebrating your own family worship service using this guide over these next 4 Sundays. Together we can celebrate the deepest hope of all: the coming of our savior Jesus Christ who, as the prophet Isaiah foretold, will not stop until he brings justice on earth, and in whom all the nations – and all the families – of the world can place their hope.

**Advent Outreach:** This week we focus on the important work of CASA (Care Assurance System for the Aging & Homebound) in Madison County. Just like our Advent theme this week, this organization does wonderful work to bring "Hope" to vulnerable aging and homebound people in our community. Everyone is invited to help assemble care baskets in the Fellowship Hall Today (November 29<sup>th</sup>) 11AM – Noon. Come start the season with service and fellowship!

## **Week 1 Family Advent Wreath Worship**

**Instructions:** *Gather around your family's advent wreath. If you don't have a wreath you can simply place 5 candles in the center of the table.*

*Take turns in your family leading each of the parts of your family worship service. One person can be the candle lighter. Another person can be the "leader" in the responsive reading (or the parts can be split up in larger families).*

**Parts to Assign:** *Reader, Liturgist, Candle Lighter, Song Leader, Prayer Leader*

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### **Advent Reading:**

*The Reader reads the following teaching.*

John the Baptist taught us to "hope" for Jesus. In John 1:23 he said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord."

### **Advent Liturgy:**

*The Liturgist leads and everyone responds*

Liturgist: The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

**Everyone: Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."**

Liturgist: We light this candle to remind us of the coming of the Christ Child.

*The Candle Lighter now lights the first purple candle in your Advent Wreath.*

### **Carol of Hope:**

*The Song Leader leads the family in this hymn*

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here,  
Until the Son of God appears.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

**Closing Prayer:**

*The Prayer Leader leads the family in this prayer:*

“Dear Jesus, please fill us with hope this week as we look forward to your coming on Christmas. Amen.”

**Monday, Nov. 30th**

**Debbie Sullivan**

A Hope on Which We Can Focus!

Read Luke 1:46-55

In my classroom at preschool, I have several child-friendly magnifying glasses. It's interesting to watch the students use these. At first, they hold it up very close to their face, touching their nose, so that the glasses don't really serve their purpose. But once they hold the glass closer to an object, THEN they can see to study an object and see it magnified. It's a problem of focusing correctly.

Mary, in her song of praise here in Luke, says that her "soul magnifies the Lord." She is an unwed young pregnant girl facing lots of unknowns, but instead of singing "woe is me," she sings "my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." She focuses on God's might, mercy and provision. She focuses on the promises God has kept and expresses faith that He can be counted on to fulfill all of them in the future. Her song is filled with hope even though she has not yet experienced many of the blessings she sings about. And we can see her joy because she is "magnifying" God.

Over the last several months, we have faced many unknowns and I have sung "woe is me!" But I pray that I can follow Mary's example by focusing on God's faithfulness, grace and sovereignty. I can focus on the hope that Christ's advent offers to me and to a hurting world. I can magnify the Lord so that others might see Him in me.

**Tuesday, Dec. 1st     Betty and Larry Augsburger**

### **The Coldest Christmas Ever**

On December 21, 1983, an Arctic air mass surged across Texas. Temperatures quickly plunged below freezing. My husband Larry and I were living in Houston with our four children, and by Christmas Day our thermometer registered 10°.

Pipes burst in attics all over Houston. Water gushed through ceilings and down the driveways of homes where the owners were out of town. Larry and I had waited until Christmas Day to travel, because I always played music for Christmas Eve in our church. I loved the hope, beauty, and joy of the services but also felt a little sad, missing family "back home."

Our own pipes were beginning to freeze, but we were in our house and could prevent disaster! Larry opened the attic, climbed up with a hair dryer and warmed the pipes before they could freeze. [*Comment from Larry: The city's weather had always been mild, so code permitted water pipes to be placed in attics and to be made of PVC rather than copper. PVC cracks and bursts when water freezes in it.*]

In the 1980's, Texas had some of the coldest days on record, but Christmas 1983 was "king of them all." Houstonians recovered, and perhaps we all became wiser. As Christmas 2020 approaches, we hope to overcome Covid-19 and gain wisdom.

By the way, in the years since "the coldest Christmas ever" I have never again felt sad – even a little - about staying in town to play for Christmas Eve services.

**Wednesday, Dec. 2nd**

**Preschool Dir. Miranda Wilkinson**

“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.” 1 Peter 5:10 (ESV)

The word we are contemplating for this week is hope, and what a powerful word to use for reflection at the conclusion of this year of so much turmoil, angst, and incredible situations beyond many of our wildest imaginations. For so many, this year has been devastating on many levels. The loss of interpersonal interaction, health, jobs, financial stability, and political turmoil has taken a toll on us all. So how is it, in the face of unprecedented difficulty for so many, that we can still hold on to hope in this season of Advent? In 1 Peter 5:10, Peter declares that while we will suffer a little while, we can find our hope in God’s eternal glory. A little while is not defined as a discrete increment of time. We are all too aware that for some, a little while may be an earthly lifetime of suffering, and for others, life may not look too difficult much of the time. No matter the circumstances we find ourselves in, we are all bestowed the magnificent promise of hope in a future with Jesus Christ. In all situations, with our faith in Jesus Christ, we are able to find joy, peace, and above all, hope for an eternity in glorious paradise with the Creator of our universe. What a gift beyond measure!

**Thursday, Dec. 3rd**

**Mary Witherspoon**

HOPE

Hope comes with butterfly wings,  
Seemingly fragile, but amazingly strong,  
Able to fly as far as necessary,  
Able to lift its wings in the storm.  
Using the wind to push it along.  
But dependent upon the lowly weed,  
Growing wild beside a busy road,  
As red as blood and as nourishing,  
Unassuming and steadfast.  
Nourished by the everyday acts of caring people,  
Hope comes when grieving has worn itself out,  
And longs to see the sun behind the clouds.  
Remembering a life that has made lives better,  
Bringing acceptance that all is not lost.  
Providing the impetus for living,  
For thriving, for giving,  
For following Jesus, once the babe  
But now our guide with a message of love  
For all people everywhere that He came  
That we might "have life and have it abundantly."

**Friday, Dec. 4th**

**Susan Elrod**

Reflections on Hope

A memory of Christmas 2000 continues to fill me with joy and hope. My Christmas present was the birth of our son, born December 21<sup>st</sup>. The joy and hope of motherhood fulfilled was indescribable.

This Christmas season gives me hope because I know that God promises us His presence. God is faithful and He knows what we need and what we want. Give your hopes to God. Practice hope. Decide not to allow adverse circumstances to rule your emotional and mental attitude. Dwell on heaven and eternity with Him. Call on the name of the Lord. It gives me hope knowing that God restores, redeems, renews, and revives us by His Spirit. My life has purpose and hope because I know God loves me with an everlasting love and this earthly life is a journey toward eternity with Him.

Isaiah 11:6 declares "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them."

In a world that is seemingly upside down today, this simple illustration of a little child leading gives me hope. It gives me comfort to know that God is in control. When I prepare my heart for the Christmas season and focus on the reason for the season, I am less tempted to put hope in people or material things. How do we live so that others can see our hope in Christ? I try to: Keep on keeping on. Persevere. Meditate. Be willing to share my testimony. Spend time with Him. Pray. Invite the Holy Spirit to give me Peace as I prepare the way for the Lord. Stressors can cause me to be a barrier between Christ and others during Christmas. One way to alleviate stress is to identify the stressors, simplify, and mindfully enjoy! I am trying to give others a chance to step up and take charge. This Christmas season, I hope to spend time with Him, be in His Word, be still, listen, and give thanks!

**Saturday, Dec. 5th**

**Robin Strong**

We were young, we barely had enough income to pay our bills, but we had been dating for three months and were deeply in love. It was our first Christmas together with the person that we knew was our soul mate. I splurged on my first live Christmas tree, having grown up in a home with artificial trees. That tree was barely 4 feet tall, but I was happy to pay \$40 for it at a Boy Scout tree lot, even though that could have paid for more than a week's worth of groceries. The money was going to a good cause, after all.

What I remember most about that Christmas was the overwhelming sense of possibility – anything felt possible as we were embarking on a life journey together, even though we had no idea where that journey might take us or what challenges would confront us. In ancient times the winter solstice was celebrated because the darkest days were behind you and you could look forward to a brighter tomorrow. Christianity supplanted the pagan festival with new symbolism, but the message was very much the same. With the coming of the Son, anything was possible. With Christ in our lives, anything IS possible!

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. – Isaiah 9:6

**Week 2 Theme: "Faith"**

I've been reading, teaching, and preaching about the Minor Prophets for the last month or so. Reading those 12 books in quick succession allows for certain overarching themes to emerge. One such theme is childbirth.

Most of the prophets tend to focus on the theme of travail—the pain of childbirth. In Hosea, the Israelites experience pains like childbirth on account of their sins. But these pains are fruitless, producing no child (13:13). The prophet Isaiah uses a similar metaphor to describe humanity's inability to save itself. We labor like a pregnant woman, but only give birth to wind (26:18). And finally, the prophet Micah warns the Judeans that they are about to experience the pains of defeat, and destruction, and exile. But it will be the pains of childbirth, because on the other side of this painful experience there will be the birth of a new king in Bethlehem, a shepherd-king who will lead God's people and protect them (chs. 4-5). The pains of childbirth will bear fruit that will make the pain worthwhile.

The pain of childbirth, you will remember, is one of the effects of Adam and Eve's sin (Gen. 3:16). And so, we are not surprised to find the prophets associating it with Israel's sins. The good news in Micah is that the pain that comes from sin is temporary while the promise of the birth of a new king and the renewal of God's covenant with Israel stands forever.

And this, I think, is the substance of our faith: that we endure the many pains that result from our sins and the sins of others because we believe in the coming of God's kingdom. The pain is not the end result; but it is part of the birthing process. Advent is a time when we put the things that are needed to endure front and center: faith, patience, perseverance. The whole world is pregnant with God's new-born kingdom. Keep faith by remembering that the pain is worthwhile.

**Advent Outreach:** One of the best ways that we can share our "faith" this year is through the work of the Christmas Market. Stop by today between 11AM and 3PM in the lower parking lot to share in fellowship and to support the important work of ministries and non-profits both in our own community and globally by purchasing gifts and making donations. During the regular Children's Church hour our kids will have the chance to shop for gifts for their families and friends. If you would like to make a contribution you can visit [www.covhsv.org/give-online/](http://www.covhsv.org/give-online/) then click the drop-down menu "I want to support" and select "Christmas Market" you then need to put in the "comments" section the particular organization that you would like to support. Or send the office a check with the organization in the memo line.

## **Week 2 Family Advent Wreath Worship**

**Instructions:** *Gather around your family's advent wreath. If you don't have a wreath you can simply place 5 candles in the center of the table.*

*Take turns in your family leading each of the parts of your family worship service. One person can be the candle lighter. Another person can be the "leader" in the responsive reading (or the parts can be split up in larger families).*

**Parts to Assign:** *Reader, Liturgist, Candle Lighter, Song Leader, Prayer Leader*

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*The Candle Lighter lights last week's "Hope" candle. There is now one purple candle burning as you begin family worship.*

### **Advent Reading:**

*The Reader reads the following teaching.*

The wisemen followed the star by "faith." In Matthew 2:11 "they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh."

### **Advent Liturgy:**

*The Liturgist leads and everyone responds*

Liturgist: The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

**Everyone: Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."**

Liturgist: We light this candle to remind us of the coming of the Christ Child.

*The Candle Lighter now lights the second purple candle in your Advent Wreath.*

### **Carol of Faith:**

*The Song Leader leads the family in this hymn*

We three kings of Orient are

Bearing gifts, we traverse afar.  
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,  
Following yonder star.

O Star of Wonder, Star of Night,  
Star with Royal Beauty bright,  
Westward leading, Still proceeding,  
Guide us to Thy perfect Light.

**Closing Prayer:**

*The Prayer Leader leads the family in this prayer:*

“Dear Jesus, please fill us with faith this week as we look forward to your coming on Christmas. Amen.”

**Monday, Dec. 7th**

**Lydia Cole**

Hebrews 11:3

"The fundamental act of existence is that this trust in God, this Faith is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see. The act of Faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd. By Faith we see the world called into existence by God's word, what we see created by what we don't see."

I was sitting with my 3-year old granddaughter having a "quiet time." She was cuddled up on my lap drawing colorful rainbows in my journal, while I was writing a devotion from Hebrews 11, known as the Bible's "Hall of Faith."

For weeks I've been thinking about the correlation between Faith and Hope. In my own life it seems like there's a miraculous cause and effect relationship. There are times I beat myself up for my lack of Faith. Why do I, a committed Christian, give in to fear and anxiety when God clearly tells me to have Faith? Thanks be to God, something always happens-like God's Grace- to pick me up by my bootstraps, calm my storms, and ignite my Hope- in spite of my humanity. When I am too weak, tired, or discouraged to go through the door of Faith, God steps in and carries me through the door of Hope. Whether I have the strength to walk through the door of Faith or He carries me through the door of Hope, I end up in the same place- the place of Assurance that I can trust God and hang on to Jesus.

All of a sudden, a text message came through asking that we pray for the beating heart of a newborn child. As a nurse, this is not the first time I've received a prayer request like this, and it won't be the last. Be it a beating heart, a clear medical report, a restored marriage, or a returned prodigal, these are among the most important things in our lives. These are the nuts and bolts of our Faith- the reality of what we Hope for.

There are times in life when our Faith is not evident, and all we can do is choose to hang our HOPE on what we don't see. The miracle of Faith and the power of Hope grow exponentially when we allow our brothers and sisters in Christ to be a part of this journey. Even though we were thousands of miles away from our loved ones, Faith sent a text, and Hope built a bridge that allowed us to stand together before our Heavenly Father. The Person, Promise, and Power of Christ showed up and invited us to hang our Hope on Jesus.

As we closed our eyes and prayed for the beating heart of this precious new life, my granddaughter lifted her hands, looked up as in Faithful surrender, and spoke Hope as she declared, "baby's my best friend!" No coincidence that the rainbows she was drawing all over my journal were created by God in Biblical times to be a sign of Hope. Within the rainbow is the Promise of Hope.

What does it mean to be a child of God?

"It means a lot because I know he is always helping and looking after me. Christmas is a time we can come together to celebrate God's one and only Son's birth"

"It is a way to be called when you have faith in Him. During the Christmas season we celebrate the birth of the child of God, so we come together and celebrate what God has given us. Being the child of a king means you believe He is the king of heaven."

"It makes me realize what Christmas is all about: the time for giving and not getting."

"It gives me reassurance that I love God and he loves me. It shows that I will have more faith in God."

"It means that God loves all of us like children. God died for us because he wants to give us a chance. God came to birth on Christmas to save us all. It means a lot to me that God, the highest of high, cares about me."

***14** For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. **15** The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.<sup>[f]</sup> And by him we cry, "Abba,<sup>[g]</sup> Father." **16** The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. **17** Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. Romans 8:14-17*

**Wednesday, Dec. 9th**

**Missy Belrose**

There are many Old Testament scriptures foretelling the birth of Jesus on Earth beginning with the Fall of Man in the garden of Eden when God tells the serpent in **Genesis 3:15** "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head and you will strike His heel." Faith in God's words and His plan kept the Nation of Israel looking for a Messiah throughout the Old Testament years. One of my favorite prophecies of Jesus's first coming to Earth is written in **Isaiah 7:14** "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel."

History tells us this happened approximately 2,020 years ago in Bethlehem with the birth of Jesus. Jesus's entrance as the Son of God incarnate in human flesh was part of God's plan to redeem man to a right relationship with Himself. It is through Jesus's righteous life, death and resurrection that we, His followers are credited as righteous for our faith in Him. This faith is not of our own doing but is a gift from God. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." **Ephesians 2:8-9**

We no longer have to worry about ourselves and our state of being. We are righteous through Jesus Christ! It is through His righteousness that we live and breathe and create good things with our actions and desires. Whenever you doubt or are tempted to sin, say to yourself "I am righteous through Jesus!"

**Thursday, Dec. 10th**

**Greg Merijanian**

Faith is a gift from God.

Faith helps us take another step when it is hard to walk. God will carry us.

Faith helps us to love when we do not feel love.

Faith helps us to carry on when tomorrow is uncertain.

Faith is the light when all around is dark.

Faith existed before time and will be with us always.

Faith helps us to know there will be brighter tomorrows.

Faith is bigger than any of our problems.

Faith allows us to know we are loved always.

Faith has always been and will always be a gift...from God.

**Friday, Dec. 11th**

**Troy Hester**

(from Covenant's 1995 Advent book)

"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

Who is this child that sleeps tonight  
In cold and dreadful state  
How does he stand from all mankind  
That suffer and sin and hate  
And what fate waits to challenge him  
And what deeds will he do  
And how will he change souls of men  
Whom mercy never knew  
He has no stature, rank, or fame  
To ease his earthly task  
Only distant David's name  
And prophecies of the past  
How can he alone address  
The blindness of his peers  
How can he presume to bless  
And speak beyond his years  
And how can one of sinless youth  
Bear burdens not his own  
And will he fall, and rise again  
And then ascend the throne  
How can one child so change the world;  
Convict, instruct, redeem  
Lest God dispatch and charge him go  
And give him strength unseen  
Lest he be God indeed himself  
And Holy Ghost, and man.

**Saturday, Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>**

**Sheila Cloud**

“Faith of a Child”

It was a Wednesday, March the 4<sup>th</sup>. I was standing in a circle of other 10 year old girls in front of the rustic stone “Girl Scout House” in my hometown of Decatur. We were lowering the flag as we always did and singing the lyrics to taps: “Day is done, Gone the sun, From the hills, From the lakes, From the skies, All is well, Safely rest, God is nigh.” Then I looked out to the street and saw my mother’s car pull up and I noticed that a long-time friend of our family was driving rather than my mother. I thought this was odd and my first thought was that my grandmother might have died since she had experienced a stroke and been paralyzed and bedridden for many months.

My second thought was that it was not my grandmother, but someone closer even than she. My second thought was correct and somehow I instinctively knew it. I got into the backseat of the car and my mother turned sobbing and said, “the Lord has taken your father from us.” We returned home. For a number of days there were countless friends and family coming and going bringing food and flowers as my mother and I tried to get our arms around the death of my father at 49 years old from an accident that no one could have anticipated. It was a shock we did not expect or ever imagine.

This is when the extraordinary strength of my mother and her faith was as clear as the sunshine in July and her wise words were, “we are heart broken but we will not ask God why this happened, but we will carry on as your father would have wanted us to do.” And, that is what we tried to do. My assessment is that in God’s loving mercy and care of us is the rock on which we stood even if we did not realize the depth and breadth of His loving care at the time. He provided the grace through faith as small as a mustard seed that I continue to see expanded, even now, as needed to provide the strength, discernment, wisdom, confidence, and resolve to live each day centered on Him.

Like so many of you, I’ve lost mother, father, grandmother, aunts, and husband and it is God’s provision of faith that allows us to know they are all in a better place and that reliance on our faith is the rock on which we can stand. And, thanks be to God for the countless blessings of sons, grandsons and granddaughter and daughter-in-laws and our dear friends that make our life complete and a joy each day. I feel exceedingly thankful and blessed to have had the short but concentrated influence of my parents and my grandmother. Their examples supported God’s calling and His infusing me with the desire to seek Him even as a child. What a precious gift to reflect upon in this season.

**3rd Sunday of Advent, Dec. 13th**  
**Week 3 Theme: "Joy"**

**Rev. Alison Kling**

"But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people." Luke 2:10

This week we focus on the theme of "Joy." During the Christmas season one of the things that fills my heart with joy is baking with my boys. There is something so wonderful about engaging all of our senses in the act of baking. The sound of 1940's big-band Christmas wafts from the stereo. The aroma of sugar and spice fills the kitchen. The texture of flour and dough sticks to our fingers. The taste of "sampling" the frosting and sprinkles turns the whole experience into one long dessert. The sight of the smiles (and shenanigans) of George and Teddy tell me that this is a memory we will all treasure. Sometimes it's hard to remember the joy we have in this season. There are so many worries and anxieties that – quite rightly – claim our attention. But when the angel appears to the shepherds on that first Christmas he tells them "Fear not!" Jesus' arrival is "good news" that causes "great joy." I love that the good news of Jesus *causes* joy. The Christmas story continues to fill our hearts with joy and to give us all a fresh reason and new season to show each other love. I hope that your family makes some wonderful memories this Christmas and that you share that love together.

**Advent Outreach:** This week we receive a special offering for the Presbyterian "Joy Offering." This is a nationwide offering that focuses on providing financial assistance to Presbyterian pastors and missionaries living in poverty. This shares the church's "joy" at Christ's coming with those who have worked hard for the gospel but feel the burden of poverty. If you would like to make a contribution you can visit [www.covhsv.org/give-online/](http://www.covhsv.org/give-online/) then click the drop-down menu "I want to support" and select "Joy Offering." Or send the office a check with "Joy Offering" in the memo line.

### **Week 3 Family Advent Wreath Worship**

**Instructions:** *Gather around your family's advent wreath. If you don't have a wreath you can simply place 5 candles in the center of the table.*

*Take turns in your family leading each of the parts of your family worship service. One person can be the candle lighter. Another person can be the "leader" in the responsive reading (or the parts can be split up in larger families).*

**Parts to Assign:** *Reader, Liturgist, Candle Lighter, Song Leader, Prayer Leader*

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*The Candle Lighter lights the "Hope" and "Faith" candles. There are now two purple candles burning as you begin family worship.*

#### **Advent Reading:**

*The Reader reads the following teaching.*

Mary responded with "joy" at the angel's news. In Luke 1:46-47 she sang: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."

#### **Advent Liturgy:**

*The Liturgist leads and everyone responds*

Liturgist: The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

**Everyone: Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."**

Liturgist: We light this candle to remind us of the coming of the Christ Child.

*The Candle Lighter now lights the pink candle in your Advent Wreath. Or if you do not have a pink candle, you can light a third purple candle.*

#### **Carol of Joy:**

*The Song Leader leads the family in this hymn*

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.  
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,

The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

**Closing Prayer:**

*The Prayer Leader leads the family in this prayer:*

“Dear Jesus, please fill us with joy this week as we look forward to your coming on Christmas. Amen.”

**Monday, Dec. 14th**

**Leon Trotter**

"... there was no place for them in the inn." Luke 2:7

Among the many wonderful Christmas stories, the story of the birth of Jesus is the most joyful. Considering the visitation by angels of the shepherds in the fields, the subsequent visitation by the Wise Men, who brought gifts, but most of all, the child himself, who was not only a beautiful baby, but who was also holy, majestic, and worthy of worship, our hearts resound with joy for this wonderful picture.

It may be said that beyond the birth of the child, there was little joy for the parents. Having a baby who was born in a barn, where people come and go at all hours, where there is no bed, just straw that may be months or years old, and where there is dirt and dust in abundance does not provide a joyful atmosphere.

Let's consider some facts. First, both Joseph and Mary were in the family line of King David, who was a native of Bethlehem so they likely had family or friends in the area who would take them in. Second, the joyful shepherds could have offered them room, and third, Mary had family in Judah, which was near to Bethlehem. They likely would have had choices over that of a barn.

The Greek word for "inn" is *kataloomah*, and it can mean *lodging place* or a *guest room*, where family or friends would gladly welcome them. A better interpretation may be *guest room* because the most recent edition of the New International Version of the Bible uses "guest room."

Let us welcome Jesus Christ as a special guest into our hearts and families this season.

**Tuesday, Dec. 15th**

**Jane Sucic**

We lived in Germany for three-and-a-half years from 3<sup>rd</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> grade. My father was in the Army stationed there. He was often in the field for a week or more. One Christmas he had been gone for a week but was supposed to be home on Christmas Day. On that day my mother made my sister, my brother, and me stay in our bedroom until he arrived. She tried to keep us busy and brought us hot chocolate, but it seemed forever. He surprised us by coming home early. What joy we felt that he was home on Christmas Day. That was a very special Christmas.

Walk into any big box store from Black Friday to Christmas and the deterioration of this beloved holiday into a commercial feast is dreadfully evident. This once Christian celebration has become an overly advertised money trap which is difficult to escape. The shopping season expanded earlier each year. We get caught up in the need to purchase more and more gifts for everyone. We begin to lose sight of our friendships, family and the spiritual meaning of the season. The tradition of Christmas gift giving overshadows the real gift. The gift that was given to us when Jesus was born.

We all seem to find Joy at Christmas as this is a season of miracles and faith. Take time to reflect on God's love for you. You can bring joy to others by sharing the good news that God loves them also. When you share the joy we feel in God's love you will receive the Christmas present that is Joy.

**Wednesday, Dec. 16th**

**Karl Johnson**

It was December, 1941, and I was in the first grade. Japan had bombed Pearl Harbor, destroying most of our ships there, and Germany declared war on the USA a few days later, even though she had been sinking our merchant ships for some time.

I didn't understand much about what was going on, but the adults were surely upset. Little did I know what our family and much of the rest of the world would be going through in the next few years. Actually we got off pretty light compared to many. All men physically able were going to be in the military, either by volunteering or by the draft. My father was a little too old, but many of my uncles and cousins saw action. For those of us who stayed at home, there was rationing - food products, gasoline, tires. Everything was done for the war effort. We collected metal and newspapers. There was not much time for entertainment although we did go to the picture show on Saturday to watch war movies.

So, it was a bad time, almost like a pandemic.

As Christmas day drew near, we asked for presents that might not be forthcoming. Steel to make bicycles and such was needed to make tanks and guns. Even small toys were not available because they were made in Japan.

Still, we managed to cut down a small pine tree and decorate it with what we had. Christmas morning was pure joy, and I loved my gifts, even if they weren't exactly what I wanted.

The world was immersed in the awful realities of war but in spite of this, the Holy Spirit was living within us to give us Joy and the Peace which passes all understanding.

**Thursday, Dec. 17th**

**Joan Morehead**

"The joy of the Lord is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10)

Let's go back to the beginning and identify a working definition for joy. Simply put, Biblical joy is choosing to respond to external circumstances with inner contentment and satisfaction, because we know that God will use these experiences to accomplish His work in and through our lives. (reference: [www.christianity.com](http://www.christianity.com))

This Biblical definition of joy has helped me identify why I can feel joy during this pandemic, when life as we know it seems upside down. My best gift of joy this year is my life has slowed down, so I can see and hear the small things and find great joy from them. This includes: birds chirping outside, butterflies savoring the nectar of the zinnias, a brilliant sunrise over the lake, time with my family and a friendly neighbor chatting at the fence as I swing on my patio.

As we move into the Christmas season, I anticipate it too will be different. I think it will be like the effect of my Christmas tree. I always select the best location to be seen from outside and lights to give it a wow moment when it is lit and I walk in the room. This year it is about each little ornament we hang on the tree. Who is it from? What city was I in? What year was that? What event does it represent? Why does it have special meaning? I will be savoring the past, but enjoying the present, knowing that all these moments helped shape my life and my faith, just as the little joys of this year will into the future. Finding joy in life's little things, while celebrating the birth of Christ, is God's gift to us this year as we move forward.

**Friday, Dec. 18th**

**Tom and Donna Coon**

***Joy to the world, the Lord has Come.*** How many times have you sung that song while thinking about things that rob joy from you? Things like stressing out over the self imposed jobs you need to accomplish during the Christmas season to make Christmas enjoyable for your family, or feeling the sadness for the loss of a loved one, or worrying because an unexpected event that has recently introduced unwanted change in your life. It is easy to let concerns in life blind us from joy. The song "Joy to the World" tells us all we need to know to experience Joy, - ***that the Lord has Come.*** For Christians, that fact with the knowledge provided in the Bible gives us the ability to live life with Joy all the year round, but especially during the Christmas season when we celebrate the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. Donna and I celebrated our first Christmas as parents in the hospital with our son Richard who was born on December 22, 1969. Each Christmas since his untimely death in 1988 is poignant for us - remembering Richard in life and in death - but we can celebrate Christmas with joy and thanksgiving and gratitude for life, because of our belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God whose life was sacrificed by God for you and me and knowing that God has a plan for each one of us. Jesus is the reason for the season and thinking of that brings me JOY. God bless each and every one and have a Merry Christmas - with Joy.

**Saturday, Dec. 19th**

**Hal and Jean Oakley**

“This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!”

Psalm 118:24

“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” I Thessalonians 5:16-18

JOY! Webster says it is a feeling of delight or pleasure. We like to think of joy as a state of mind, an attitude, however constant or fleeting. C.S. Lewis thought of joy as the most singular experience imaginable. He used words like delight, bliss, ecstasy to describe the experience of joy, especially as it related to his relationship with Christ and his most important human relationships.

This Advent and Christmas, as we view and live life through the lens of joy, thanksgiving and hope in Christ, our hearts are dancing with delight. While we miss you deeply, our hearts are filled with gratitude for the experience of sharing life’s journey with our Covenant family!

We rejoice in the love we experienced when we arrived at Covenant in November 1986, a young family of five and an inexperienced senior pastor. You welcomed, taught, guided and loved us well. We rejoice in the significant relationships we developed over the years. Each of those friendships shaped us into the people we are today. We remember family camps, meals around a table, talent shows, Mariners’ carol sings, Bible studies, retreats, all of which imbued us with a joy that sustains us presently.

We rejoice, delight and give thanks to God for His gift of living life together! We rejoice in the ways Covenant made our world a better world. What a privilege it was to represent our Lord Jesus Christ in Huntsville and around the world. These shared experiences of building Habitat Houses, mission trips (youth and adult), birthing Covenant Preschool and Second Mile continue to inspire us to go forth in joy.

Our hearts still burn with joy from our retirement celebration two years ago. It was more than we could have hoped or imagined. Moreover, it was the culmination of thirty two years of a beautiful shared life of faith with our Covenant family! Your love is still bearing the fruit of joy in us!

As much as we rejoice in our past relationships with you, our joy creates in us a longing for the joy, peace and light of Christ in your lives. Joy fuels the hope we have that you, Covenant, will continue to reflect the love of Jesus Christ in your relationships with one another and the surrounding world.

This past year has been hard for everyone. For us it has been an inconvenience, a time of heightened anxiety. For many others, it has been far more traumatic. Many have lost loved ones, jobs, homes. Many of you have had to make dramatic adjustments in how you live and work. We have

observed your Covenant staff doing an outstanding job of leading you in worship, fellowship and outreach during this difficult season of Covid. Your elected leaders have acted wisely in guiding you in continuing ministry. As we live in thanksgiving to God, He brings us His joy, grace, peace and hope!

In these difficult times we remember Jesus' word, "You have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you."(John 16:22)

In this Advent and Christmas Season, a time like no other, may we experience His joy and encourage one another as we reflect and share the love, hope and joy of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our prayer for all of you is from Philippians 1: 2-11 – We thank God every time we remember you and always pray with JOY because of your partnership in the gospel, forever.

**Week 4 Theme: "Peace"**

Around Christmas time, a hot cup of coffee while sitting in a comfortable chair by the Christmas tree seems to be the definition of peace. Of course, this is very fleeting as four kiddos seem to keep running through the room as they play/argue about playing. So, is peace simply a moment in time? Jesus speaks of peace in times and feelings of great distress.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. John 14:27

Jesus came to us to bring us peace. A peace that can sustain us through anything that can possibly happen in our lives. So, how do we wrap our minds around this?

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7

Jesus even explains how we can't understand it. Peace is a part of the grace that comes with salvation. Christ does the work and we simply need to be willing recipients. He offers this peace freely and in such abundance that we can never exhaust it. So, what then?

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Matthew 5:9

We get to share! We are called to be peacemakers. As we draw near to Jesus and experience His peace, we can offer it to all who are in our lives. We all know of those in our lives who are missing the peace of Christ. It could be that they have never known Jesus, or that they have taken a temporary wrong path away from His light. Peacemakers pray for these people. Peacemakers get involved in the lives of these people. Peacemakers willingly join in with people in the midst of tribulation as they seek to share the PEACE of Jesus Christ. It is not easy or quick. After all, Jesus came to us in the same way. He joined us on earth as a baby. He prayed for us, he walked with us, and then walked through great tribulations so that He could leave us His PEACE.

**Advent Outreach:** This week we focus our prayer on the ministry of serving mental health needs in our community through the Vine Pastoral Counseling Center. This center is led by Presbyterian ministers who are licensed therapists. Now, more than ever, many people in our community are feeling

mental health challenges with the stress of the pandemic and the disruption of our regular jobs and lives. Tune in to today's worship service for a word from the Vine's Executive Director, the Rev. Dr. Amanda Ragland about finding mental "peace" during what can be a difficult season for many. Perhaps the information will be helpful to you personally or perhaps it will be helpful for you to learn how to share "peace" with others in your life.

## **Week 4 Family Advent Wreath Worship**

**Instructions:** *Gather around your family's advent wreath. If you don't have a wreath you can simply place 5 candles in the center of the table.*

*Take turns in your family leading each of the parts of your family worship service. One person can be the candle lighter. Another person can be the "leader" in the responsive reading (or the parts can be split up in larger families).*

**Parts to Assign:** *Reader, Liturgist, Candle Lighter, Song Leader, Prayer Leader*

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*The Candle Lighter lights the "Hope," "Faith," and "Joy" candles. There are now three candles burning as you begin family worship.*

### **Advent Reading:**

*The Reader reads the following teaching.*

The angels said Jesus would bring "peace." In Luke 2:46-47 they sang: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

### **Advent Liturgy:**

*The Liturgist leads and everyone responds*

Liturgist: The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

**Everyone: Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."**

Liturgist: We light this candle to remind us of the coming of the Christ Child.

*The Candle Lighter now lights the last purple in your Advent Wreath.*

### **Carol of Peace:**

*The Song Leader leads the family in this hymn*

Hark the herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn King!  
Peace on earth and mercy mild  
God and sinners reconciled"

Joyful, all ye nations rise  
Join the triumph of the skies  
With the angelic host proclaim:  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"  
Hark! The herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

**Closing Prayer:**

*The Prayer Leader leads the family in this prayer:*

"Dear Jesus, please fill us with peace this week as we look forward to your coming on Christmas. Amen."

**Monday, Dec. 21st**

**Cindi Ludwig**

How Do We Find Peace That Rises Above Our Circumstances?

Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all the joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit

I have not been a lifelong believer. I was a bit of a scoffer for most of my life. I knew people who had something I didn't, but I felt like it was make believe, to me at least. In 1995 we moved to Huntsville where much to my dismay I found myself surrounded by people who prayed at the drop of a hat. It made me uncomfortable. Over the next six years my life was very full, but it also got more complicated. I was fighting a personal battle that I thought I could handle alone. Our family had members who were also fighting their own battles, and I was powerless to help them. Our parents' health was declining, and three of them moved here for help. Not to worry, I had a plan! Then nothing went according to my plan. I was the caretaker, the one in control, yet I could not control my own battles.

A friend suggested that she had a solution, but the catch was it involved a spiritual journey. I thought to myself, I should have known it! However, I was defeated, felt alone, and out of options. I was just desperate and defeated enough to be willing to give it a try. She said to just ask God for help each day. So I did, but I felt like a phony. Several months into this journey, I reached a point where I knew without a doubt I could not fix this alone. So I cried out to a God I wasn't even sure I believed in, and in that moment I knew He was real.

From that day forward I have never felt alone again. As I rode in our car with all of my family to see my mother Christmas morning after she passed away, I felt so alone. God said to me, "You are never alone again." I rode in an ambulance after a serious health scare and a feeling of peace washed over me. Life did not get perfect. Our parents died one at a time; our family is splintered due to some of the members' issues. I have cried and grieved, but I have found strength, hope, joy and peace in seeing them all at different times. I am not in charge any more. That brings relief, peace and a sense of well being. Today I know no matter what I face I am not alone. The plan is not mine, it is His and in the end it will be alright.

**Tuesday, Dec. 22nd**

**April Shaw**

I have been meditating on peace in the midst of the storm the past few months as we all navigate this year of constant change and upheaval. How do we find peace as the earth shifts beneath our feet? How do I share peace daily with my family, peers, and strangers I glimpse behind the masks? Throughout Jesus' earthly life, he brought peace into a culture fraught with religious, political, ethnic and economic division. Peace is not simple. Or pretty. Or neat. Peace is a daily choice to stop myself, moment by moment, from getting wrapped up in my life and worries, and try to see others and myself through Christ's eyes. As Paul encourages us, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you..." Colossians 3:15-16

But how do I let the peace of Christ rule in all of the chaos? Join a monastery? Whittle my to-do list down to nothing? No. I am learning to let peace rule in my heart. I must hourly forgive others, take some deep breaths, and slow down enough to see the mini opportunities God brings me to share peace. A smile. An "I'm sorry " to my kids or spouse when I snap at them. Sharing a coffee with my neighbor after she has had the worst week. (Even though I have way too many things to do today!) A moment to listen to a story a friend or stranger tells, even if I am not that interested in it. Being content with myself even as I struggle with perfectionism.

When I visited Israel several years ago, I loved hearing the greeting, "Shalom!", as I walked the streets in areas not used by the tourists. Shalom (peace) in modern Hebrew is used for hello and goodbye. The typical response is the same: "Shalom!" But from a friend, you might hear "Shalom! Mah shelomcha?", meaning "Hey, how are you?". Literally, Mah shelomcha means "What is the state of your peace?" I love this. Not just a hit and run, "Good? Great!", but instead asking someone how their world is going today: "What is the state of your peace?" My prayer is that the Lord will use our weaknesses to show His strength----to share the peace of the Gospel just as he shared the greatest peace of all with us---the baby born in the hills of Bethlehem. Jesus.

**Wednesday, Dec. 23rd**

**Debbie Hester**

As a former history teacher, I believe that reflecting on historical events gives us perspective and a better understanding of the present. I told my students to put a face on history and really imagine themselves living a moment in time. One such moment that is very powerful to me is the Christmas truce that happened during the first year of WWI. Soldiers on both sides left for war in August of 1914, confident of a quick victory over their enemy. Instead, the massive death continued through the fall until the soldiers ended up existing in a long series of trenches. Sometimes the trenches left the two sides only yards from each other. The account of Christmas Eve of 1914 is that a German soldier began singing Silent Night, and a British soldier responded by singing the song in English. There are many details in between, but the end result was that these enemies called a truce and celebrated Christmas Day together.

The soldiers' reflections on the coming of Christ brought about a moment of peace. Who do we today imagine to be our bitter enemy? Have we become entrenched in our own ideas and battles so that we forget the things we share in common with others? While the peace celebrated by the soldiers on Christmas in 1914 was short lived, I pray that we will find our way to lasting peace today. I pray that we will pause at Christmas to celebrate the peace that Christ's coming can bring to us and that this peace will be felt in our hearts and demonstrated in our actions.

Philippians 4:7 "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

**Christmas Eve, Thursday, Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> Rev. David Kling**

**"The Christ Candle"**

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. – John 1:14

"He's just going to play with the box!" That's what everyone told me my first Christmas as a father. Sure enough, when little George received his presents on his first Christmas, he *delighted* in the wrapping paper, he *reveled* in the boxes and he ... largely ignored the toys! This Christmas I fully expect little Teddy to show the same love for the packaging (rather than the packages) under the tree. And in reality, the toddlers in our lives have it right. That's the true meaning of Christmas. That the eternal God – whom no person could ever see or comprehend – has taken on some very special wrapping paper: the smooth skin of a newborn baby. John opens his Gospel by telling us that the eternal Word became flesh and dwelt among us. This is the deep mystery of the Incarnation, that Jesus Christ is fully human and fully God. And on Christmas we – like a toddler – *delight* in the packaging of this precious gift. Because Jesus was willing to wear the wrapping paper of his humanity, he was able to deliver to us the free gift of our salvation on the cross. This Christmas eve, I pray that you would know that all-surpassing joy and that your family would be richly blessed this Christmas.

**Advent Outreach:** Each year we dedicate our Christmas Eve offering to support the work of Second Mile Preschool. Christ was not born in the wealthy neighborhood of Jerusalem. Instead he was a child in neighborhoods that were poor in income but rich in God's love. Second Mile Preschool provides a similar environment, nurturing God's love in young children living in the Terry Heights and Hillendale neighborhoods of our city. We dedicate our Christmas Eve worship service offerings with them today to celebrate the childhood of Christ and his gift to us that we, too, might become children of God. If you would like to make a contribution you can visit [www.covhsv.org/give-online/](http://www.covhsv.org/give-online/) then click the drop-down menu "I want to support" and select "Christmas Eve Offering." Or send the office a check with "Christmas Eve Offerng" in the memo line.

## **Christmas Eve Family Advent Wreath Worship**

**Instructions:** *Gather around your family's advent wreath. If you don't have a wreath you can simply place 5 candles in the center of the table.*

*Take turns in your family leading each of the parts of your family worship service. One person can be the candle lighter. Another person can be the "leader" in the responsive reading (or the parts can be split up in larger families).*

**Parts to Assign:** *Reader, Liturgist, Candle Lighter, Song Leader, Prayer Leader*

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*The Candle Lighter lights the "Hope," "Faith," "Joy," and "Peace" candles. There are now four candles burning as you begin family worship.*

### **Advent Reading:**

*The Reader reads the following teaching.*

On Christmas, the shepherds became the first followers of "Christ." In Luke 2:16 they "hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger."

### **Advent Liturgy:**

*The Liturgist leads and everyone responds*

Liturgist: The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

**Everyone: Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."**

Liturgist: We light this candle to remind us of the coming of the Christ Child.

*The Candle Lighter now lights the white candle in the center of your Advent Wreath.*

### **Carol of Christ:**

*The Song Leader leads the family in this hymn*

Silent night, holy night  
All is calm, all is bright  
'Round yon virgin Mother and Child

Holy infant so tender and mild  
Sleep in heavenly peace  
Sleep in heavenly peace

**Closing Prayer:**

*The Prayer Leader leads the family in this prayer:*

“Dear Jesus, please fill us with your Holy Spirit this week as we celebrate your coming on Christmas. Amen.”