



Advent @ Home

A devotional for 2020

Advent 2020 will be much different this year.

We may not meet in person, yet we will be together in spirit, especially with our livestream worship services.

We hope that this Advent Box is one way to make Advent 2020 a blessing to you.

Inside you will find:

- Items to make an Advent wreath: 3 purple candles, 1 pink candle, 1 white candle, 1 ft of green garland
- This devotional guide
- Special Christmas treats

To make your Advent wreath:

1. Choose a plate or a flat surface.
2. Place the white candle in the middle surrounded by the 3 purple and 1 pink candles.
3. Place the green garland around the candles, creating a wreath.

Note: Please remember not to leave lit candles unattended.

You may light the candles, following the directions, when you gather around the wreath.

May this be a time to center your heart during this unusual Advent. Emmanuel, God-is-with-us, is with you always.

First Sunday of Advent: November 29, 2020

Livestream worship @ 10 am
Luke 1:68-79, Song of Protest: *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

Set up your Advent wreath. As you light the first purple candle, pray:
*O come, Emmanuel, God who came to earth as one of us.
Be with me as I consider your presence in my life.
May you bless my spirit during this Advent season. Amen.*

Devotional Song of Reflection: ***Light of the World*** by Lauren Daigle

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLhaZIBSpo>

The world waits for a miracle
The heart longs for a little bit of hope
Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel
A child prays for peace on Earth
And she's calling out from a sea of hurt
Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel

And can you hear the angels singing

Glory to the light of the world
Glory, the light of the world is here

The drought breaks with the tears of a mother
A baby's cry is the sound of love
Come down, come down, Emmanuel
He is the song for the suffering
He is Messiah, the Prince of Peace
has come

He has come, Emmanuel

Glory to the light of the world (x4)
For all who wait
For all who hunger
For all who've prayed
For all who wonder
Behold your King
Behold Messiah
Emmanuel, Emmanuel

Glo-glory to the light of the world
Glory to the light of the world
Glory to the light of the world
Behold your King
Behold Messiah
Emmanuel, Emmanuel

The world waits for the miracle
The heart longs for a little bit of hope
Oh come, oh come Emmanuel

Reflection

The world is not an easy place to live in.
Humanity has a way of worshiping and striving for power.
Leaders rule, and do not always rule in ways that benefit all.

Such was the time of Zechariah, who served as a priest under the rule of King Herod. Herod was a puppet king, under the influence and power of Rome. Herod did not rule in a way that those under his rule could prosper. Instead, the Jews were viewed by Rome as inconsequential, required to follow Roman rule and laws. God's people longed for freedom, a way to rule over themselves as they had in the past. For them, there was no hope.

This was the situation in which Jesus was born. People longing for freedom. Unable to speak out against the corrupt powers-that-be without threat of violent retaliation. How might they protest in order for God's purposes to prevail?

Advent is the season when we remember that the Jewish people longed for Yahweh to come among them. They waited, until the time was right. We wait for the moment when Emmanuel, God-With-Us, Jesus Christ, will come again.

We pray for Christ our Messiah to come again because the world is not as it could be. Rulers do not always consider their people. Instead, power continues to corrupt. How might we protest?

Sing the songs of Advent. Sing songs that inspire us to seek the Light of the World in the darkest of times. Glory to the light of the world.

Prayer: Holy Lord, I await your return, when your kin-dom come will be upon us. May I find hope in the midst of the darkness. Amen.

Second Sunday of Advent: December 6, 2020

Livestream worship @ 10 am

Luke 1:46-55, Song of Power: *Do You Hear What I Hear*

Set up your Advent wreath. As you light the first purple and the pink candle, pray:

Savior God, I celebrate the ways you work in my life and in the world. Be with me as I consider how your power moves me and others into a spirit of thankfulness. May you bless my spirit during this Advent season. Amen.

Devotional Song of Reflection: ***Mary Did You Know?*** by Mark Lowry

Sung by Pentatonix <https://youtu.be/ifCWN5pJGIE>

Mary, did you know that your baby
boy would one day walk on water?
Mary, did you know that your baby
boy would save our sons and
daughters?
Did you know that your baby boy has
come to make you new?
This child that you've delivered, will
soon deliver you

Mary, did you know that your baby
boy will give sight to a blind man?
Mary, did you know that your baby
boy will calm the storm with his
hand?
Did you know that your baby boy has
walked where angels trod?
When you kiss your little baby, you
kiss the face of God

Mary, did you know? (x 5)

The blind will see, the deaf will hear,
the dead will live again
The lame will leap, the dumb will
speak the praises of the lamb!

Mary, did you know that your baby
boy is Lord of all creation?
Mary, did you know that your baby
boy would one day rule the nations?
Did you know that your baby boy is
Heaven's perfect Lamb?
That sleeping child you're holding is
the great I am

Mary, did you know? (x3)

Reflection

One of the most intriguing characters in the Nativity story is Mary. Mother of Jesus.

Riding to Jerusalem on a donkey, 9-months pregnant.

However, her story doesn't begin on Christmas Eve, but 9 months before.

Chosen by God to bear the Son of God, Mary responds with faith. "Let it be with me, just as you say."

She knew this child she carried was special.

When she visited her cousin, Elizabeth, who was pregnant with who we now know was John the Baptist, there was a magical moment.

Elizabeth's babe jumped for joy when Mary and her babe came near.

Why? Because God's power and love would be born into the world.

Mary, Did You Know? has been a favorite Christmas song since it was written in 1984. It's intriguing because it invites us to imagine that Mary knew what was to come. That God's power would disrupt the earthly powers that claimed to be in control. That her child would heal the broken, calm the storms, and lead the people who were in darkness into God's glorious light.

This song challenges us to consider that the babe in the manger is not only a little child. But would grow up. Would challenge those in power. Would reveal that God's work was not yet complete. Instead, Emmanuel, God-With-Us, would change the world, and all of creation.

Prayer: Holy Jesus, you came so that I might experience the fullness of God's love that is beyond the powers of this world. Be with me as I strive to follow the example of Jesus in my life. Amen.

Third Sunday of Advent: December 13, 2020

Livestream worship @ 10 am
Luke 2:8-15, Song for Justice: *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*

Set up your Advent wreath. As you light 2 purple and the pink candles, pray:

God of the powerful and the powerless, I am grateful that your Son's life comes to us all. May you bless me this Advent season to see that you love and value me and everyone around me. Amen.

Devotional Song of Reflection: *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear* by Edmund Sears and Richard Storrs Willis

Sung by Johnny Mathis <https://youtu.be/pv5NMG1KYEa>

It came upon the midnight clear
That glorious song of old
From angels bending near the earth
To touch their harps of gold
Peace on the earth, good will to men
From heaven's all gracious king
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing

still through the cloven skies they
come
With peaceful wings unfurled
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world

Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing
And ever o'er its Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing

all ye, beneath life's crushing load
Whose forms are bending low
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow
Look, now for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing
O rest beside the weary road
And hear the angels sing
And hear the angels sing

Reflection

The angels sang to the shepherds.

Can you imagine what the shepherds thought?

Can you imagine encountering the *heavenly host* of angels?

How would you respond?

Throughout scripture, when angels appeared they began with the phrase, “Do not be afraid” because most of us would respond with fear if an angel began speaking to us. We can imagine the shepherds were no different.

What does it mean that God would send the angels, the heavenly messengers, to earth to announce such good news? What does it mean that the shepherds were the first to hear this message, rather than those with political or religious power? Was there a point made here?

Many of our familiar hymns and carols were written in times of difficulty and strife. Pastor Edmund Sears wrote the words to *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear* as a poem in 1849 that was then set to music. After serving seven years as a pastor, and after suffering a breakdown, he wrote this poem while serving as a part-time preacher. Additionally, the United States had ended its war with Mexico, and revolution in Europe added to his melancholy. Justice seemed far off.

Imagine how the news the angels brought could bring light into darkness, into our darkness. Midnight darkness on a winter’s night. Hungry for good news. News of peace coming to earth as the best news possible. Longing for God’s justice to fall upon all the earth.

Prayer: Just as your angels sang of your power that would transform the world, I sing a song of longing for peace for all, for justice to reign in your world. Let this be the message I hear today. Amen.

Fourth Sunday of Advent: December 20, 2020

Livestream worship @ 10 am
Luke 2:16-20, Song of Peaceful Rest: *Silent Night*

Set up your Advent wreath. As you light 3 purple and the pink candles, pray:

*God of new life, I hear the story of the infant Jesus and am awed.
New life was born in a manger, the most unexpected of places.
May you bless me this Advent season as I celebrate that your love
came into my world in an unexpected way. Amen.*

Devotional Song of Reflection: *What Child Is This?* by Williams Dix

Sung by Mandisa <https://youtu.be/FTvkWnvabTs>

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 praise
The babe, the son of Mary

So bring him incense, hold and myrrh

Come peasant king to own him
The king of kings, salvation brings
Let loving hearts enthrone him
Raise, raise a song on high
The virgin sings her lullaby
Joy, joy for Christ is born
The babe, the son of Mary

This, this is Christ, the king
Whom shepherds guard and angels
sing
Haste, haste to bring him praise
The babe, the son of Mary.

Reflection

There is a reason why nativity scenes are so popular.

How many do you have? If you haven't one (or more!), you've seen one.

Can you name all of the characters in the scene?

There is at least one that has to be present – the baby Jesus!

The baby asleep in the manger, of course. No crying he makes! [Okay, that's in *Away in a Manger*.] Yet, we celebrate when Mary's waiting is over, when all of creation's waiting is over. The baby is born. The angels have sung. The shepherds have left after a quick visit.

What do babies need to sleep peacefully? A lullaby, of course. Some of our favorite Christmas carols are lullabies. Sweetly sung at a slow pace. Often in 3/4 time (waltzing to get the newborn to sleep).

This lullaby, *What Child Is This?*, is familiar to us. It invites us into the moment when the newborn is sleeping, perhaps resting in preparation for what will come.

"Haste, haste, to bring him praise, the babe, the son of Mary." We praise the infant Jesus. We glorify this one who is born. We honor him as the One who has come that will change our lives, will change our world. We sing and we praise, knowing that in that moment, the Savior of the world has just been born.

What words might we sing sweetly to our Lord? To Jesus whose birth, life, death and resurrection have given us new life?

***Prayer: I sing to you, Jesus, of my love for you. Your love is beyond my comprehension, yet I strive to give you thanks and praise this day.
Amen.***

Christmas Eve: December 24, 2020

Livestream worship:

4 pm Family Service & Virtual Pageant

6 pm Traditional Christmas Eve Service

11 pm Christmas from Home with Communion

Set up your Advent wreath. As you light the purple, pink and white candles, pray:

What a glorious night, O God of Salvation! I celebrate the birth of your son who came so that I might have life. Be with all who are experiencing a challenging Christmas Eve. May you help me and all I love to find the joy in Jesus' birth tonight. Amen.

Devotional Song of Reflection: *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas* by Hugh Martin and Ralph Blane

Sung by Judy Garland <https://youtu.be/MKG5X0QMSWA>

Have yourself a merry little Christmas
Let your heart be light
Next year all our troubles will be out
of sight

Have yourself a merry little Christmas
Make the yuletide gay
Next year all our troubles will be
miles away

Once again as in olden days
Happy golden days of yore
Faithful friends who are dear to us
Will be near to us once more

Someday soon we all will be together
If the fates allow
Until then we'll have to muddle
through somehow
So have yourself a merry little
Christmas now

Reflection

This has been a difficult year.

No one could have imagined a year ago that 2020 would be filled with so much worry and uncertainty. Our perceived safety and security were upended in March, and we have not returned to what we would want to call normal.

Yet, we have gone through difficult times before. We know that there is usually a light guiding us to the end, to a new future, even an unexpected one.

This song was written in 1943 for the movie *Meet Me In St. Louis*. Judy Garland sang this song at a moment when the family was unsure about the future. Their father was moving out of state for a job promotion, and the family did not know when they would be together again.

Interestingly, the original lyrics were deemed too depressing. They were changed to provide *some* hope for a family that felt hopeless. A lyric that appears in the movie, “until then we’ll have to muddle through somehow” was later changed to “hang your shining star upon the highest bough” at the request of Frank Sinatra who wanted the composer to “jolly up that line” for him.

Sometimes we need songs to cheer us up. Sometimes we need songs that reflect how we are feeling, even the most difficult feelings. The Smith family in *Meet Me in St. Louis* was sad, knowing they would not be together as a family for the foreseeable future. We may feel a kinship with them today.

We have many Christmas carols and Christmas songs that remind us that no matter how dark the night, there is God’s light, the Son of God, shining in our midst. Maybe you need to hear that you are not alone in

your darkness. We are together. Even a global pandemic cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

May this song reflect how we long for the day when we can be together without fear. May we sing the concerns of our hearts trusting that one day soon, our troubles will seem far away. God in Jesus is with us now and always.

Prayer: Holy Jesus, we long to be together. Yet, you are with each of us, this holy night, wherever we are. We give thanks for your everlasting presence, and for our hope for our future. Amen.



Christmas Eve Services

4 pm *Family Service & Virtual Pageant*

6 pm *Traditional Christmas Eve Service*

11 pm *Christmas from Home with Communion*

Livestream Worship:
[YouTube.com/ParkHillUMC](https://www.youtube.com/ParkHillUMC)

 **PARKHILL** United Methodist Church
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Advent 2020 at Park Hill UMC

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Check out our Playlists of Christmas Videos on YouTube
(https://www.youtube.com/c/ParkHillUMC/playlists?view_as=subscriber)

- [Staff Recommended Christmas Music 2020](#)
- [November 29 2020 Playlist](#)
- [December 6 2020 Playlist](#)
- [December 13 2020 Playlist](#)
- [December 20 2020 Playlist](#)
- [December 24 2020 Playlist](#)
- [Christmas Fun 2020 Playlist](#)