



ADVENT TWO LOVING JOY Prayers for everlasting love

The line from the hymn, “Joy to the World,” that is our worship series title, “Heaven and Nature Sing” comes from the Psalm 98 and many, many other biblical references that depict the heavens above and nature on earth glorifying God’s works of wonder. Nature gives us ample metaphors that help us see our spiritual journey—the coming of spring out of the dead of winter, the growing and blossoming of things that are well-tended, the beauty and diversity of all that is, and the delicate interrelationship of all things in order to sustain the survival of all things.

Each week focuses on a metaphor from nature that has developed as our Christmas traditions developed. These metaphors will help us pray in worship and pray at home. This insert invites you bring joy to your life by making photo ornaments and a way of praying—which is simply the act of becoming aware of our connection to God, the source of Joy, the source of Hope.

In Week 2, we celebrate the evergreen as a symbol of the everlasting love of God. From a post on The History of Christmas Trees on the Why Christmas? website:

The first person to bring a Christmas Tree into a house, in the way we know it today, may have been the 16th century German preacher Martin Luther. A story is told that, one night before Christmas, he was walking through the forest and looked up to see the stars shining through the tree branches. It was so beautiful, that he went home and told his children that it reminded him of Jesus, who left the stars of heaven to come to earth at Christmas. Legend has it that Martin Luther attached lighted candles to a small evergreen tree, trying to simulate the reflections of the starlit heaven and displayed it in his home.

GREENERY PRAYERS

If you have a tree sit by it.

As you look at your tree

Pray for the people that bring color and light to your life: family, friends, relatives;

Pray for the homeless, the sick, those dealing with illness and loss, the dying, those struggling with mental illness and depression all who are seeking the light of everlasting love and peace.

Read Psalm 98 and pray for creation, its struggles and for the light of healing.



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DIY Photo Ornaments

Personalize your Christmas decorations by creating your own ornaments featuring family photos! You can hang your photos on a tree at home if you have one or bring your photo ornaments to church to be added to our giving Christmas tree!

Here's what you'll need for supplies:

Card stock for the backing
Circle cutter — there are plenty of circle cutting tools available in craft stores. You can also do it the old-fashioned way: Trace a circle around a jar lid onto a piece of card stock and cut around the circular outline. This video tutorial shows examples of how to do both options: <https://youtu.be/eveC8hdyyZ8>
Family photos for cutting
Single paper hole punch
Glue stick or craft glue
String or twine for hanging on the tree
Fishing hooks to attach to the string for easier hanging (optional)

Instructions:

Cut a circle out of card stock for the backing.
Cut a slightly smaller circle out of the photo you want to use for the ornament.
Apply a thin layer of glue to the back of the photo and position it in the center of the card stock backing. Smooth out so it adheres fully.
Punch a single hole in the top of the ornament with the paper hole punch.
Thread the hole with a length of string or twine, and tie the string into a loop. You can also attach the string to a fishing hook to making hanging even easier.



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