

Journey to Bethlehem

Daily Devotion based on Adam Hamilton's book "Incarnation"
Advent Daily Devotional and Candle Lighting 2020

Hello and Season's Greetings,

We hope that this finds you well and that you enjoy this edition of St. Andrew's ConneXions. While we continue to wait for COVID to lessen in its spread we want to share with the whole of our church an Advent Daily Devotional, Candle lighting, and New Year's project.

We invite you to join your brothers and sisters at St. Andrew's as we Journey to Bethlehem and discover once again, God Incarnate, made flesh in Jesus. This is a positive journey we can take together as a people of God. Let us reacquaint ourselves with the faithful who heard Gods call and rejoice with the witnesses of God at work in his people.

As we make our way through this pandemic, we need to have something to look forward to. This simple devotional could be that one time of day where we can look forward to doing something together as a congregation, as people of God, journeying towards a Blessed Christmas.

The Scripture is all included , as are the pieces of the nativity and the candles. Use this resource as best fits your needs. If it is not suitable for you then please share it with someone who may benefit from it.

While this Christmas may not be filled with the 'expected' – let us pray for the blessings of the 'unexpected' that we are able to see the opportunities to experience something new and reach out to one another and to those in need.

Blessings to you all and a Merriest of Christmases!

Advent begins....

Nov 29	We light the candle of Hope (put a candle on hope) Hymn – Hope is a star that shines in the night, leading us on till the morning is bright. When God is a child there's joy in our song. The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong, And none shall be afraid.
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	Show in your Nativity – the prophet and the angel bringing good news. – perhaps the Wise Men or three kings could be there too.
Nov 30	Earthly Kings – Matthew 2:1-8 --Why do you think Herod was afraid? Do you think he had reason to be? <i>What fears do you have this Christmas? Write them down and pray about them, that they may be overcome.</i>
Dec 1	<i>Pray for our leaders – that they have the courage to do what is right to be brave in the face of uncertainty, to not be fearful – but hopeful in the future.</i>
Dec 2	Isaiah 9: 2-7 – What kind of ‘ruler’ do you think they were hoping for when you hear the words: <i>For unto 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.</i> We tend to get what we need, not necessarily what we want or think we need. What are you hoping for this Advent?
Dec 3	<i>Pray for those who are prophets for today – seeking change for the environment, for the way we treat each other. Pray that their voices may be heard on behalf of the poor, the hungry, the displaced, the discriminated against, all who feel disenfranchised and alone.</i>
Dec 4	Messiah - Luke 1: 26-38 – What must it have felt like to be Mary? What is it God might be calling you to carry for him?
Dec 5	Who could you call today and brighten their day with Good News? Is there a leader who needs encouragement?
Dec 6	We Light the Candle of Peace (put a candle on Peace) Hymn – Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth, giving a promise of safety and worth. When God is a child there’s joy in our song. The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong, And none shall be afraid.
	Show in your Nativity – Mary and Joseph and the donkey on a Journey, the Angel, and the Shepherds
Dec 7	Our Saviour is Born - Luke 2: 1-12 – How does hearing this story make you feel? Spend a moment imagining you are there – what do you notice

	the most? Is there something you haven't seen before? <i>Ask God to open your eyes and heart to something new this Advent</i>
Dec 8	<i>Pray for forgiveness, for times when you have not followed Jesus, where you have been cruel and unkind, where you have not sought the goodness of others...</i>
Dec 9	Matthew 1: 21 – What did the angel tell Joseph – Mary's son would do? How does knowing this make your life different? <i>Give thanks to God for this gift.</i>
Dec 10	<i>Pray for those who are in need of forgiveness, who are lost and alone, who feel abandoned and isolated, whose daily journey is difficult may they, may we call on Jesus for help</i>
Dec 11	Salvation is Ours – John 3:16 – You see this at sporting events, someone holding up the sign with John 3:16. Have you ever wondered how many people look it up... know to go to the Bible? If just one person does, then that sign has done its purpose. Have we? <i>Pray for opportunities to share your faith and the courage to boldly hold up your life as an example of a faithful Christian.</i>
Dec 12	<i>There will be fewer people journeying to family this year – call someone you will miss seeing this Christmas – share with them a story of a journey you took once to see them or took with them.</i>
Dec 13	We Light the Candle of Joy (put a candle on Joy -pink) Hymn – Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn, telling the world that the Saviour is born. When God is a child there's joy in our song. The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong, And none shall be afraid.
	Show in your Nativity – the Prophet, Mary and Joseph, the Angel
Dec 14	Emmanuel – Matthew 1: 18-24 – I wonder what it was like to be Joseph? The guy who did the "right" thing. <i>Pray for the men in your life... for the often overlooked burden they carry.</i>

Dec 15	<i>Pray for moments when you are uncertain, not too sure God is in charge or in control or the plan seems kind of scary...</i>
Dec 16	Isaiah 41: 10 – How do these words bring comfort in this new normal? Sit quietly and just say the words of Isaiah... let them bring you a peaceful joy as you move through this Advent Season
Dec 17	<i>Pray for the joy of this season, the love of friends and family, the hope for the new year, the peace that soothes you...</i>
Dec 18	God Is With You – Psalm 23 – Do you have this memorized for such times as these? What is your go to scripture? Read it now and reflect on how it encourages you or reassures you.
Dec 19	JOY – Jesus, Others, Yourself Give thanks to Jesus for... Give thanks to an ‘Other’ for... Give thanks to “yourself” for....
Dec 20	We Light the Candle of Love (put a candle on Love) Hymn – Love is a flame that burns in our heart. Jesus has come and will never depart When God is a child there’s joy in our song. The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong, And none shall be afraid.
	Show in your Nativity – The manger, with the star above
Dec 21	Jesus, The Light of the World – John 1: 1-14 – Read it and insert Jesus for ‘The word’ and ‘the light’. Do the different words change the meaning at all? Make you see creation or Jesus in a new way? On this longest night... let us pray for the light to come...
Dec 22	<i>Say a prayer of thanksgiving for those who bring light to you, who bring a smile to your face, who listen to you, who cry with you... and help you shine for others...</i>

Dec 23	We are light in the World - Matthew 5:16 - Has your light been shining for others? If not, how can you let it?
Dec 24	We Light the Christ Candle (put a white candle in the middle) Read the nativity story – Luke 2: 1-20 Show in your Nativity – everyone gathered around the manger Hymn – Silent Night, Holy Night, Son of God, Love’s pure light Radiant beams from thy holy face With the dawn of redeeming grace. Jesus Lord at thy birth Jesus Lord at thy birth.
Dec 25	We Light all of the Candles – read again the story of Jesus birth. For unto you a child is born... Know that Jesus was born for you In the manger - is the foreshadowing of a cross – that he bore for you YOU are the story of Christmas, the reason for the season!
Dec 26-- Jan 6 th	How can you share your light – do good works and give God glory into the new year?

The Readings, in order, various translations

Matthew 2:1-8 - New International Version - The Magi Visit the Messiah

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi^a from the east came to Jerusalem² and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. **4** When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. **5** “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

6 “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”^b

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. **8** He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

Isaiah 9: 2-7 NRSV

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.

3 You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

⁴ For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁶ For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness

from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Luke 1: 26-38 NIV

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

³⁴ "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called ³⁶ the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail."

³⁸ "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

Luke 2: 1-12 NIV

The Birth of Jesus

2 ¹⁻⁵ About that time Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. This was the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant.

⁶⁻⁷ While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel.

⁸⁻¹² There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

Matthew 1: 21 NRSV

²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

John 3: 16 NRSV

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Matthew 1: 18-24 NRSV

The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah^o took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

which means, "God is with us." ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son;^o and he named him Jesus.

Isaiah 41: 10

Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

Psalms 23 KJV

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:
for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵ Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

John 1: 1-13 NRSV

John presents Jesus as the Word, the Messiah and the incarnate Son of God, who has come to reveal the Father and bring eternal life to all who believe in him.

The Word Became Flesh

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life,^[a] and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own,^[a] and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

Matthew 5: 16 NRSV

¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others,
so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Luke 2: 1-20 NRSV

The Birth of Jesus

² In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴ Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

The Shepherds and the Angels

⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is

the Messiah,^[a] the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host,^[b] praising God and saying,

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"^[c]

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Your family at St. Andrew's hope that you enjoyed this journey to Bethlehem
We wish you HOPE, PEACE, JOY, and LOVE today and always.



Twelve Days of Sharing

Boxing Day started as a day off for servants and staff who had to work on the 25th. They were given a small 'Christmas Box' often filled with small gifts, money, and leftovers from Christmas Dinner.

One idea behind the words to the song 'The 12 Days of Christmas' was that it was developed to share some of the tenets of the Christian faith. First day – Jesus; 2nd – New and Old Testament... can you guess the third? Between Christmas and Epiphany, we will let the light of Christ shine as we remember and care for others.

If you would like to participate; find a bag or box (or two). Each day add the item(s) as indicated by the song. You can add more or less or put in substitute items. Don't have 10 cans of vegetables? – do 5 cans of vegetables and \$5. If you don't want to do it on your own join those in your bubble or partner with a friend and share the days – make a box between yourselves – or bring/have picked up – whatever you are able to share. We will use December 26th as the first day. *You are not expected to do it like the song and give 364 items, but 78 +/- items of food or money*

26 – On the first day of Christmas I share with those in need...

(and) A bag of dog or cat feed

27 – On the second day of Christmas I share with those in need...

Two bottles of salad dressing

28 – On the third day of Christmas I share with those in need...

Three tomato sauces

29 - On the fourth day of Christmas I share with those in need....

Four jars of Jam

30 – On the fifth day of Christmas I share with those in need...

Five cans of Tuna....

31 – On the sixth day of Christmas I share with those in need...

Six packages of pasta

J1 – On the seventh day of Christmas I share with those in need...

Seven boxes of “fake” potatoes, rice, or pasta

J2 – On the eighth day of Christmas I share with those in need...

Eight bags of potato chips

J3 – On the ninth day of Christmas I share with those in need...

Nine cans of soup

J4 – On the tenth day of Christmas I share with those in need...

Ten cans of vegetables

J5 – On the eleventh day of Christmas I share with those in need...

Eleven ‘ichiban’ noodle soups

J6 – On the twelfth day of Christmas I share with those in need...

Twelve ‘rolls’ of toilet paper

On January 6th, Epiphany - there will be some kind of ‘event’ - To Be Determined

The items will go to anyone in need from St. Andrew’s and then to the Food Bank. You can drop your donations off on January 7th or 8th; or call the church for pick up.