



Advent

## Introduction:

The word *Advent* comes from the Latin *Adventus*, meaning “coming.” It echoes the Greek *Parousia*, the word used to describe both Christ’s first coming in Bethlehem and his promised return in glory. During Advent, we live in the tension of both looking back to Christ’s birth and looking forward to his return.

Advent is not just a countdown to Christmas morning or fun calendars filled with chocolate (no shade, chocolate calendars). It is a season of holy waiting. It marks the beginning of the Christian year, a rhythm followers of Jesus have practiced for centuries. In this season, we rehearse the story of hope, peace, joy, and love breaking into the world through Jesus Christ.

But waiting in Advent is never passive. To wait on Christ is to prepare our hearts inwardly and to join in his work outwardly. We turn our attention to God in prayer, quiet reflection, and watchfulness. And then we move out to live as his people in the world—bringing good news to the poor, relief to the weary, and light to the places of deepest night.

This year, our Advent journey will weave together two movements:

- Inward Work — through contemplative prayer practices like the Prayer of Examen, Lectio Divina, and Colloquy, we will slow down to notice God’s presence and listen for his voice.
- Outward Doing — through acts of compassion, justice, and witness, we will join in Christ’s mission, especially among the poor and marginalized in our city.

Together, as a congregation, we will also participate in our Bags of Hope campaign, filling bags with practical items for Kelowna Gospel Mission. These bags are more than gifts—they are tangible signs of the hope, peace, joy, and love we find in Jesus.

Our prayer is that this Advent will be a season of renewal for you and your household. As you wait on Christ, may you encounter the Spirit shaping you inwardly and sending you outwardly, until the day Christ comes again in glory.

May this Advent season be blessed with holy waiting and holy action.

## Week One HOPE

### Read

Advent begins in the dark. We wait, not knowing exactly how God will show up, but trusting that he will. Hope is not wishful thinking, but confidence rooted in the God who has come near in Jesus.

Biblical hope always spills outward—it is never just about our personal longing but also about God’s kingdom breaking through in our neighbourhoods, workplaces, and streets.

Hope says: *God has not forgotten the poor. God has not abandoned the suffering. God is still at work.*

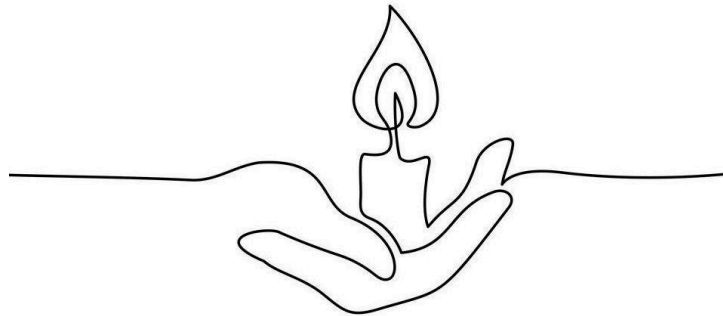
### Light

Light the first candle on your wreath—the Hope candle. As the flame flickers, remember that even a small light can push back the dark.

Get into God’s Word

Read and reflect on:

- Isaiah 9:2–7
- Luke 1:46–55



Contemplative Practice: Prayer of Examen

At the end of one day this week, review your day prayerfully:

1. Where did I notice signs of hope today?
2. Where did I encounter despair or indifference?
3. How might God be inviting me to bring hope tomorrow?

## **Pray**

Pray for hope to be known:

- In our homes and neighbourhoods
- Among people experiencing homelessness
- In places of war and violence (Israel, Gaza, Ukraine)
- In your own restlessness as you prepare for Christmas

## **For Parents: Dinner Conversation**

Read Mary's Song (Luke 1:46–55). Ask your children about times they've had to wait, hopefully for a birthday, a holiday, or a special visitor. How did it feel?

Now talk about waiting for Jesus. What do they imagine Mary, Elizabeth, or Joseph felt as they waited? How can we practice waiting with hope in our family?

## **Journaling Prompts**

- What moments of hope stand out in your life story?
- How do you usually respond to seasons of waiting?
- What might it look like to bring Christ's hope to your neighbour or coworker?

## **Engage in Advent Challenge**

Pick up your Bag of Hope. Begin filling it with shelf-stable foods. As you place each item in, pause to pray for the person who will receive it—ask God to fill them with hope

## Week Two: PEACE

### Read

Advent peace is more than the absence of conflict. It is the wholeness of God's kingdom breaking into a fractured world. Jesus tears down walls that divide us—between rich and poor, neighbour and stranger, insider and outsider.

Peace is personal, but it is also public. We are called to live as peacemakers, agents of reconciliation in our families, workplaces, and city.

### Light

Light two candles—the Hope candle and the Peace candle. As the light grows, pray that peace would spread in widening circles from your home outward.

### Bible

Read and reflect on:

- Isaiah 11:1-10
- Ephesians 2:13-18



### Contemplative Practice: Lectio Divina

With Ephesians 2:14 (“For he himself is our peace”):

1. Read slowly—what word or phrase stands out?
2. Read again—what invitation is God offering you?
3. Pray—respond to God in your own words.
4. Rest—sit quietly in his peace.

## **Pray**

Pray for:

- God's peace in divided communities
- Courage to welcome the stranger
- Leaders and shelters working for peace with justice

## **For Parents: Dinner Conversation**

Ask your kids: What does peace feel like at home? What does it feel like when there's no peace?

Share that Jesus came to make peace between God and people, and to help us live in peace with others. Brainstorm one way your family can bring peace this week.

## **Journaling Prompts**

- Where are there walls of division in your life or community?
- How do I contribute to peace—or to conflict?
- Who is Jesus inviting me to welcome?

## **Engage in Advent Challenge**

Add hygiene items (soap, toothpaste, deodorant) to your Bag of Hope. As you add them, pray for the dignity and wholeness of those who will receive them.

## Week Three: JOY

### Read

Joy is not just happiness—it is the deep gladness that God’s kingdom is breaking in, even when life is hard. Advent joy is rooted in the promise that Jesus is making all things new.

God’s joy is for the brokenhearted. As Jesus read in the synagogue: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.” Our joy grows when we join in that mission.

### Light

Light three candles—the Hope, Peace, and Joy candles. Joy grows brighter as we share it with others.

### Bible

Read and reflect on:

- Isaiah 35:1–6
- Luke 4:16–21



### Contemplative Practice: Imaginative Prayer

Picture yourself in the synagogue as Jesus announces his mission.

- What do you see and hear?
- How do people around you react?
- How do you feel as you listen?
- What does Jesus’ declaration stir in you today?

## **Pray**

Pray for:

- Joy to bloom in broken places in your family and neighbourhood
- Comfort for those who are grieving
- Opportunities to share good news this week

## **For Parents: Dinner Conversation**

Ask: What makes you feel joy? When do you feel God's joy?

Read Isaiah 35:1-2 and imagine together what it would be like to see a desert bursting into bloom. Talk about how God brings joy to sad or lonely places.

## **Journaling Prompts**

- Where do you see brokenness around you?
- What would it look like for joy to spring up there?
- When have you felt joy in serving others?

## **Engage in Advent Challenge**

Add warm items (socks, mittens, scarves) to your Bag of Hope. As you do, pray that God's joy would wrap around those living in the cold this winter.



## Week Four: LOVE

### Read

Advent love is God taking on flesh and moving into the neighbourhood (John 1:14). Love is not abstract—it is embodied in Christ, and it becomes embodied through us when we serve, give, and speak good news.

Love is the heart of Advent. It is why Christ came, and it is what he leaves us to carry forward.

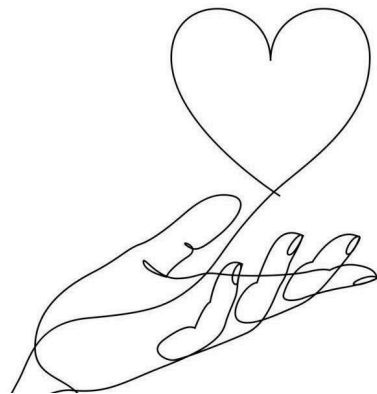
### Light

Light all four candles—Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. Let the full glow remind you of God's love poured out through Christ.

### Bible

Read and reflect on:

- John 1:1-14
- 1 John 4:7-12



### Contemplative Practice: Colloquy

Spend time in prayer as if speaking directly with Jesus.

- Ask him: *What did it mean for you to leave heaven to dwell among us?*
- Listen for what he might say back.
- Share with him where you most long to embody his love.

## **Pray**

Pray for:

- Courage to embody God's love in tangible ways
- Those most forgotten or excluded in our city
- Our church to be known for love that reflects Christ

## **For Parents: Dinner Conversation**

Ask: What does love look like in our family? How do we show it?

Read 1 John 4:7–8 and talk about how love comes from God, and we show love when we share what we have, listen to others, and serve together.

## **Journaling Prompts**

- How has God shown his love to me this Advent?
- Where is God calling me to embody love in my neighbourhood?
- How can I live out love beyond Christmas?

## **Engage in Advent Challenge**

Add treats or small celebrations (cookies, tea, chocolate) to your Bag of Hope. Deliver it to the Gospel Mission this week. Pray a blessing over those who will receive the bags—that they may know the love of Christ.

## **Conclusion: From Waiting to Witness**

Advent invites us into a holy rhythm: waiting inwardly and acting outwardly. This season, we have prayed, reflected, and served. As we bring our Bags of Hope to the Gospel Mission, let them be symbols of our deeper calling—to carry Christ's hope, peace, joy, and love into every corner of our lives.

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you came to dwell among us—poor, vulnerable, and full of love. As we celebrate your birth, may we also carry your presence into our city. Make us people of hope, peace, joy, and love. May our waiting shape us into witnesses until the day you come again. Amen.