KAPAHULU BIBLE CHURCH

ADVENT AT KBC

2026

Anticipation · Reconciliation

Celebration · Acceptance



Daily readings for Advent and Christmas Eve

November 23–December 24, 2026

We make disciples in the shadow of Diamond Head.

A little time. An open Bible.

Advent gives us time to remember that Jesus came, receive what He has done, and look forward to His return. Read slowly. Ask the Lord to help you hear His Word and respond to Him.

Follow the dates in order. Each week has six readings, Monday through Saturday. The Sunday page comes next, with a hymn that matches the Advent theme of that particular Sunday. If you have an Advent Wreath at home, gather those in your house and light the number of candles pictured, and sing together.

Each day, consider the question, take the suggested step, and pray. The “Dig Deeper” passages are there when you have more time. If you miss a day, begin again. Keep coming to Him.

WEEK 1 · HOPE

November 23–28, 2026

Then Anticipation Sunday · November 29, 2026

Daily readings begin on page 3; Sunday and hymn on page 9.

WEEK 2 · PEACE

November 30–December 5, 2026

Then Reconciliation Sunday · December 6, 2026

Daily readings begin on page 10; Sunday and hymn on page 16.

WEEK 3 · JOY

December 7–12, 2026

Then Celebration Sunday · December 13, 2026

Daily readings begin on page 17; Sunday and hymn on page 23.

WEEK 4 · LOVE

December 14–19, 2026

Then Acceptance Sunday · December 20, 2026

Daily readings begin on page 24; Sunday and hymn on page 30.

CHRISTMAS WEEK · THE PROMISES FULFILLED

December 21–24, 2026

Four readings from prophetic Scripture lead us into Christmas Eve.

Daily readings begin on page 31; “Silent Night” and the Christ candle are on page 35.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23 · DAY 1

Six Miles Short

Matthew 2:1–6; Micah 5:2–4

> *"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." Matthew 2:2*

When the forecast calls for a big winter swell on the North Shore, you can tell who believes it. They're the ones waxing boards and setting alarms the night before. By sunrise they're already in the lineup. Plenty of other people read the same forecast. They can tell you the wave height, the wind direction, even the hour the swell is supposed to arrive. But they never leave the house. Same information. Very different response. Real expectation always shows up in what you do next.

The Magi came to Jerusalem looking for the newborn King. Herod called the priests and Bible teachers together and asked where the Messiah would be born. They knew the answer right away: Bethlehem. They could quote Micah's prophecy. But as far as Matthew tells us, none of them went to see Him. They knew where to go. They just didn't go. Bethlehem was only about six miles away. The Magi had traveled a long way with far less information.

Simeon and Anna show us a different kind of waiting. They were looking for God to keep His promise, and they were ready to welcome Him when He did. That is what Advent invites us to do. God sent His Son at just the right time (Galatians 4:4). He will keep His promise to come again too. We may know that. But does the way we live show that we believe it?

Maybe there is something God has already told you to do. You don't need another Bible study to understand it. You need to take the next step. What are your six miles?

What promise of God can give me hope and shape what I do today?

RESPOND TODAY

Choose one promise from today's readings and thank God for keeping His word. Think of one way you can live in light of that promise today: make a call, offer help, or follow through on something He has shown you. Pray, "Lord, help me welcome what You are doing."

PRAY

- Thank God for a promise that gives you hope.
- Remember one way He has helped you trust Him.
- Ask for a willing heart and one clear step of obedience.

DIG DEEPER

Numbers 24:17, Micah 5:2–4, Luke 2:25–38, Galatians 4:4–5, Titus 2:11–14

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24 · DAY 2

Walls Around a Throne

Matthew 2:3–8, 16–18

> *"When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." Matthew 2:3*

About three miles from Bethlehem, a cone-shaped hill rises out of the Judean wilderness. Herod the Great built it up into a fortress-palace and named it after himself — Herodium — with towers, courtyards, and walls ringing the summit. It was one of several strongholds he built across his kingdom, including Masada above the Dead Sea. A king who held his throne by Rome's permission spent his life building places to protect it. In 2007, an archaeologist announced he had found what he believed was Herod's tomb on that same hill. The man who built walls around his throne was buried within sight of the town where the true King was born.

When the Magi asked about a newborn King, Herod was troubled. He told them he wanted to worship too. But later he ordered the deaths of Bethlehem's little boys. His words sounded religious. His actions showed what mattered to him. He wanted to keep his throne.

It is easy to see Herod's problem. It is harder to see the same struggle in ourselves. Most of us aren't guarding a palace. We guard our schedules, our money, our plans, or our right to have the last word. We want Jesus to help us. But what happens when He asks to rule the part of our lives we want to control?

Here is the sad thing: the King Herod feared was the One who could have given him peace. Jesus later said, "Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful" (John 14:27). We don't find that peace by holding on more tightly. We find it by trusting Him. One day every knee will bow to Jesus. We can bow before Him willingly today.

Where can I welcome Jesus' good rule and receive His peace?

RESPOND TODAY

Read John 14:27 and thank Jesus for the peace He gives. Bring Him one decision or plan that matters to you. Pray, "Lord, I trust Your care. Help me follow Your lead." If you notice yourself holding tightly to control, name it honestly and place that concern in His hands.

PRAY

- Thank Jesus that His rule is wise and good.
- Tell Him where surrender is difficult, and ask for His help.
- Ask for peace as you follow His lead today.

DIG DEEPER

Psalm 2, Proverbs 3:5–7, Luke 22:41–42, John 14:1, 27, Philippians 2:9–11

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25 · DAY 3

Held Up to the Light

Isaiah 60:1–2

> *"Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you." Isaiah 60:1*

A lot of kids have had glow-in-the-dark stars stuck to a bedroom ceiling. Switch off the lights right after you put them up, and you see almost nothing. Those little plastic stars have no glow of their own. But hold one under a lamp for a minute, turn the lamp off, and it shines green in your hand. Leave them in the light all afternoon, and the whole ceiling glows at bedtime. What they give off at night depends entirely on what they soaked up during the day.

Notice the order in Isaiah 60:1: "Arise, shine; for your light has come." God's people don't have to make their own light. His light comes to them first. Then they shine. We need that reminder. We cannot give others what we have not first received from Him.

Isaiah is honest about the darkness around us. Sometimes we don't know what God wants. We need Him to teach us. The Magi needed Scripture to point them to Bethlehem. But sometimes we do know, and we would rather not face it. Jesus said people loved darkness because they did not want their deeds exposed (John 3:19–20). At that point, more information isn't what we need. We need to stop hiding.

When Moses came down from meeting with God, his face shone, and he didn't even know it. He had been in God's presence. That is where we begin too. Spend time with Jesus. Let His Word show you what is true. Receive His forgiveness, and do what He shows you. His light will have a way of showing up in your life.

How is Christ's light encouraging and guiding me today?

RESPOND TODAY

Read Isaiah 60:1–3 and John 1:4–9 slowly. Notice a truth that encourages you or helps you see more clearly. Thank God for it. If He shows you something to confess, receive His forgiveness. Choose one way to carry His light into your day.

PRAY

- Thank God for bringing His light into your life.
- Welcome His encouragement, teaching, and correction.
- Ask Him to help you share the light you have received.

DIG DEEPER

Exodus 34:29–35, John 1:4–9, John 3:19–21, 2nd Corinthians 4:6, Ephesians 5:8–14

My response:

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26 · DAY 4

What the Emperor Noticed

Isaiah 60:3; Matthew 5:14–16

> *"Nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising." Isaiah 60:3*

In the AD 360s, the Roman emperor Julian set out to undo the spread of Christianity and bring back the old gods. He restored temples, appointed pagan high priests, and tried to make the worship of the gods respectable again. But something kept getting in his way. Writing to one of his high priests, Julian complained that Christians were winning people over by their kindness to strangers, their care for the dead, and the holiness of their lives. Then he admitted, with obvious frustration, that "the impious Galilaeans support not only their own poor but ours as well." ("Galilaeans" was his name for Christians.) An emperor who opposed the faith had to confess what everyone could see.

Isaiah said that nations would come to the light God gave His people. Matthew gives us a glimpse of that promise when the Magi arrive from the east. These Gentile visitors bring gold and frankincense, gifts Isaiah had named. God's light was reaching people beyond Israel.

Jesus tells us to let our light shine so people will see our good works and glorify our Father (Matthew 5:16). People notice the coworker who refuses to gossip, the neighbor who forgives, and the family that keeps bringing meals when someone is sick. Our words about Jesus matter. So does the way we treat people.

And people notice when life is hard. How do I respond to a canceled flight, a rude customer, or disappointing news? Revelation 12 describes believers who stayed faithful even when it cost them their lives. Most of us won't face that today. But we will have opportunities to show that Jesus is worth trusting. Ask Him to make your conduct match your confession.

Where can someone see Christ's goodness through me today?

RESPOND TODAY

Remember a kindness through which someone helped you see Jesus, and thank God for that person. Choose one place you will be today and one kindness you can offer there. Listen patiently, give generously, or encourage someone. If a conversation opens, tell them what Jesus means to you.

PRAY

- Thank God for people who have shown you His goodness.
- Pray by name for someone who does not know Jesus.
- Ask for kindness and faithfulness in your ordinary moments.

DIG DEEPER

Matthew 5:14–16, Philippians 2:14–16, 1st Peter 2:11–12, 1st Peter 3:15–16, Revelation 12:10–11

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27 · DAY 5

Carried Home

Isaiah 60:4–5; Jeremiah 31:15–17

> *"Lift up your eyes round about and see; They all gather together, they come to you. Your sons will come from afar, And your daughters will be carried in the arms." Isaiah 60:4*

Spend an hour in the arrivals area at the Honolulu airport a few days before Christmas and you'll see it. Grandparents holding fresh lei. Little brothers holding hand-lettered signs. A college student from the mainland walks through the doors, and her mom drops everything to wrap her up. Somebody's toddler gets passed from arm to arm like treasure. Families scattered all year are, for a few days, home. But not everyone in the building is meeting a flight. For some, this season makes an empty chair feel emptier — a child who has drifted, a relationship that broke, a loved one who won't be coming home again.

Isaiah tells Jerusalem to look up. Her scattered children are coming home. Some will come from far away. Others will be carried. That word gives us a picture of a child held safely by someone who can be trusted. God has not forgotten His people, including those who cannot make the journey on their own.

Matthew also tells us about grief in the Christmas story. Herod's soldiers killed Bethlehem's little boys, and Matthew quotes Jeremiah's words about Rachel weeping for her children. But Jeremiah's story continues. God says, "There is hope for your future" (Jeremiah 31:17). Weeping is real. It will not have the last word.

That doesn't mean every broken relationship will be healed by Christmas. It doesn't mean every prayer will be answered the way we hope. It means we can trust the One who promises to make all things new. Isaiah says He gathers the lambs and carries them in His arms (Isaiah 40:11). You may not be able to carry this person or this sorrow another step. Bring it to Him. He is able to hold what you cannot.

What would it mean to rest in God's care for someone I love?

RESPOND TODAY

Read Isaiah 40:11 and picture the Shepherd holding His lambs. Bring Him the person or situation on your heart. Pray, "Lord, thank You that Your care reaches where mine cannot." Choose a small act of love if one is possible, and leave the outcome with Him.

PRAY

- Thank God that His care is steady and faithful.
- Bring Him the people and sorrows you are carrying.
- Ask Him to sustain your hope while you wait.

DIG DEEPER

Isaiah 40:10–11, Isaiah 46:3–4, Jeremiah 31:15–17, Matthew 2:13–18, Revelation 21:3–5

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28 · DAY 6

Every Coin on the Counter

Matthew 2:9–12; Isaiah 60:5–6

> *"After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh." Matthew 2:11*

A few days before Christmas, a little girl steps up to the counter of a small gift shop and pours out a sandwich bag full of coins — everything from her piggy bank. Pennies, nickels, a few crumpled dollar bills, one very sticky quarter. She has picked out a little ornament for her mom. It isn't an expensive gift. But nothing was held back. Every coin went on the counter.

The Magi were filled with joy when they found Jesus. Before they opened their treasures, they bowed down and worshiped Him. They gave themselves before they gave their gold. Paul described the same thing in the Macedonian churches: "they first gave themselves to the Lord" (2nd Corinthians 8:5). That is where worship begins.

Then the Magi opened what was precious to them. Gold was a fitting gift for a king. Frankincense was used in worship. Myrrh would later be used when Jesus was buried. The gifts help us think about who this Child is: our King, worthy of worship, and the Savior who would die for us.

Soon Joseph would take Mary and Jesus to Egypt to escape Herod. Did the gifts help pay for the trip? Scripture doesn't tell us. It does tell us that God was caring for this family. He also warned the Magi to go home another way. We should not miss the question their visit puts before us: Have I bowed before Jesus? Before He asks for what is in my hands, He calls me to give Him myself.

How would I like to express my love for Jesus this week?

RESPOND TODAY

Look back over the week and name one gift of God's grace. Let gratitude shape your response. Choose an offering of time, resources, attention, or service that expresses your love for Jesus. Write down how you will give it. Tomorrow, come ready to worship Him with your whole self.

PRAY

- Worship Jesus as your King and Savior.
- Thank Him for something you have received this week.
- Ask for open hands and joy in giving yourself to Him.

DIG DEEPER

Psalm 72:10–11, Matthew 6:19–21, Mark 14:3–9, John 19:38–40, 2nd Corinthians 8:1–5

Anticipation Sunday
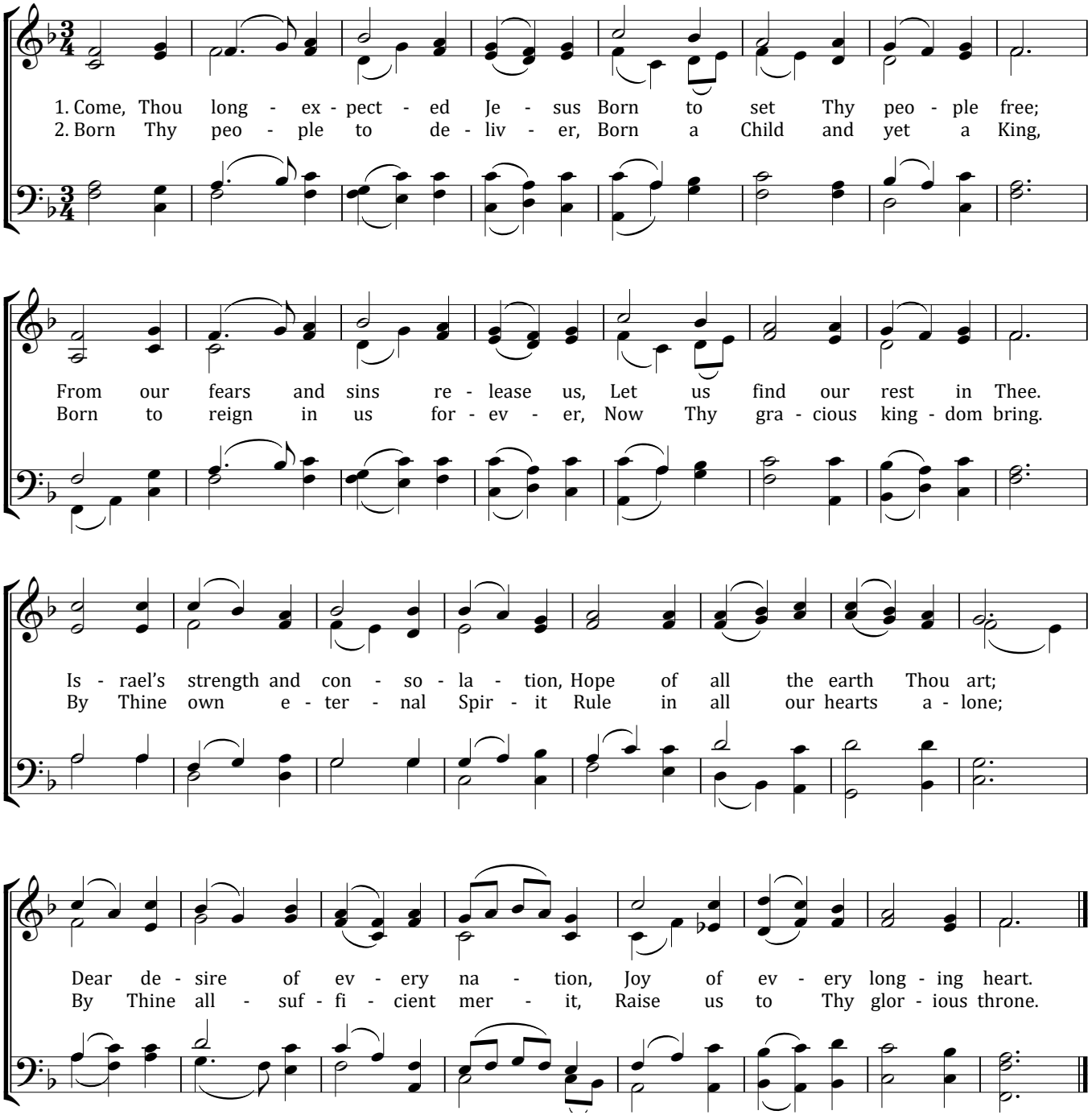
November 29, 2026

Matthew 2:1–12; Isaiah 60:1–6



SING TOGETHER

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus



Words: Charles Wesley, 1745. HYFRYDOL: Rowland H. Prichard, 1830. Public domain.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30 · DAY 1

The War Is Over

Isaiah 40:1–2; Romans 5:1–11

> *"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 5:1*

In March 1974, a Japanese army officer named Hiroo Onoda finally laid down his rifle on Lubang Island in the Philippines. World War II had ended almost twenty-nine years earlier. Leaflets had told him so. Family members had come into the jungle looking for him. He dismissed it all as enemy tricks. Onoda would not stop fighting until his own commanding officer told him it was over. So that officer, by then an old man selling books, was found and flown to Lubang. On March 9, 1974, he gave Onoda his orders in person: the fighting had ended. Only then did the soldier surrender.

Isaiah 40 begins with words God's people needed to hear: "Comfort, O comfort My people." Jerusalem's warfare had ended, and her sin had been dealt with. After a long season of judgment, God spoke comfort. He wanted His people to know what He had done.

Romans 5 gives believers the same good news. We have been made right with God through faith in Jesus. We have peace with Him now. Paul says that while we were still God's enemies, He reconciled us to Himself through His Son's death. Reconciliation means that the relationship has changed. We were His enemies. Through Christ, we are welcomed as His people. God made the first move.

But some of us still live like Onoda in the jungle. We keep trying to earn God's approval. We keep punishing ourselves for sins Jesus has already carried. We keep hiding from the Father who has come looking for us. Our part begins with believing what He says. Through Jesus, the war with God is over. Receive that peace. You cannot pass on a peace you refuse to receive yourself.

How can I enjoy the peace Jesus has already made for me?

RESPOND TODAY

Read Romans 5:1 aloud and thank God that peace with Him is His gift through Jesus. Write "I have peace with God through Jesus Christ" on a card. Keep it nearby today. When old guilt or the urge to prove yourself returns, let His promise help you rest.

PRAY

- Thank God that He made the first move toward you.
- Ask Him to help you receive the peace Jesus has made.
- Bring Him any guilt you are still carrying, and welcome His grace.

DIG DEEPER

Romans 5:6–11, 2nd Corinthians 5:17–19, Colossians 1:19–22, Hebrews 10:12–18, 1st John 1:9

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1 · DAY 2

Green Leaves on a Burned Tree

Isaiah 11:1–5

> *"Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him…" Isaiah 11:1–2*

In August 2023, wildfire swept through Lahaina and destroyed most of the town. Still standing in the ashes along Front Street was the great banyan tree, planted there in 1873, now charred and smoking. Many people assumed it was dead. Arborists and volunteers refused to give up on it. They watered it, fed the soil, and waited. About a month later, video showed clusters of bright green leaves sprouting from the blackened branches. For a grieving community, those leaves said something words couldn't: life was not finished here.

Isaiah 11 begins with another picture of life where no one expected it. A shoot grows from the stump of Jesse's family tree. Jesse was David's father. Judah's kings would fall, and David's royal family would look finished. But God had not finished keeping His promise. Jesus would come from that family.

Isaiah says God's Spirit will rest on this King. Wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, and the fear of the LORD will mark His life. At Jesus' baptism, the Spirit came down and remained on Him. This is the King Isaiah promised. He sees beyond appearances and judges fairly, including the poor and those others overlook.

We try to make peace with our own wisdom and strength, and sooner or later we run out. We need Jesus. Maybe a marriage, a friendship, or your own heart feels burned over right now. The One who brings life from a stump is able to work there too. That doesn't promise a quick or easy answer. It does give us someone to lean on. Ask for His wisdom before you rely on your own.

Where do I see, or hope to see, new growth through Jesus?

RESPOND TODAY

Read Isaiah 11:2. Thank Jesus for one quality of His character that you treasure. Ask for that quality in a relationship or situation you are facing. Notice any small sign of growth already there, and encourage it through one patient, wise, or loving action today.

PRAY

- Thank Jesus for His wisdom, strength, and faithfulness.
- Bring Him a place where you long for new growth.
- Ask His Spirit to help you recognize and nurture what is good.

DIG DEEPER

Job 14:7–9, Isaiah 9:6–7, Isaiah 53:2, Luke 3:21–22, John 1:32–34

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2 · DAY 3

Raise the Sail

Luke 2:25–28

> *"And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him." Luke 2:25*

On a breezy afternoon in Kailua Bay, you can watch dozens of canopies (kites) crossing the water pulling a surfer on top of a hydrofoil. Not one of those kite surfers can make the wind blow. They can't create it, schedule it, or store it for later. But every one of them has a part to play. They have to get out on the water, position the kite, and keep adjusting it to catch the wind that's already moving. A canopy left rolled up on the beach doesn't go anywhere, no matter how strong the trade winds are.

Luke mentions the Holy Spirit three times in Simeon's short story. The Spirit was upon him. The Spirit had promised that he would see the Messiah. And the Spirit led him into the temple when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus there. Many people were in the temple that day. Simeon recognized the One he had been waiting for because God was guiding him.

We cannot produce the Spirit's power. But we can listen and yield to Him. Paul tells believers to "be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). This is something we keep receiving from God. Jesus invites thirsty people to come to Him and drink. John tells us He was speaking about the Spirit. We come because we need Him.

Think about the relationships in your life. We need help to listen patiently, admit when we are wrong, and forgive. Galatians calls love, peace, and patience the Spirit's fruit. They grow as He works in us. After David sinned, he asked God for a clean heart and a renewed spirit. We can pray that too. Have you been asking for His help, or trying to manage with the canopy rolled up on the shore?

What good work might the Holy Spirit be inviting me to join today?

RESPOND TODAY

Read Galatians 5:22–23 and choose one fruit of the Spirit to pray about today. Ask Him for an opportunity to practice it. It may be a patient conversation, an encouraging word, or a kindness. As you respond, thank Him for helping you grow.

PRAY

- Thank God for the gift of His Spirit.
- Ask for a clean heart and a willing spirit.
- Ask Him to guide you toward a loving response today.

DIG DEEPER

Psalm 51:10–12, John 7:37–39, Acts 1:8, Galatians 5:16–25, Ephesians 5:18–21

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3 · DAY 4

Clear the Way

Isaiah 40:3–5; Luke 3:3–6

> *"A voice is calling, 'Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.'" Isaiah 40:3*

When heavy rain rolls through Mānoa, every neighborhood finds out which storm drains are clogged. A few days of fallen leaves and one plastic bag can turn a quiet street into a river. The water isn't the problem. It knows exactly where it wants to go. The problem is what's sitting in the way. Usually all it takes is one neighbor in slippers with a rake, pulling the mess off the grate, and suddenly the water rushes down where it belongs.

Isaiah hears a voice calling, "Clear the way for the LORD." Picture workers preparing a road for a king. Obstacles are removed. Rough places are made smooth. Luke tells us John the Baptist fulfilled this calling. He told people to repent and get ready for Jesus.

That gives us an uncomfortable question: Am I helping people see Jesus, or getting in the way? A sharp word, an old grudge, a critical post, or a schedule with no room for people can become an obstacle. Paul did not want his conduct to give anyone a reason to reject the message he carried (2nd Corinthians 6:3). We should care about that too.

Jesus makes it personal. If we remember that someone has something against us, He tells us to go and seek reconciliation before bringing our offering. He doesn't tell us to wait until the other person makes the first move. We can take responsibility for our part. Before asking God to change everyone around us, we can ask Him what needs clearing out of our own lives.

How can I help make the way clearer for someone to see Jesus?

RESPOND TODAY

Ask God how your words and actions could help someone feel welcome and cared for. Choose one step: listen, offer help, or make time. If He shows you an attitude or action that has hurt someone, own it and seek to repair it. His grace gives you room to begin again.

PRAY

- Thank God for people who helped prepare the way for you.
- Ask Him to show you anything that needs clearing away.
- Ask for courage and kindness in your next step toward peace.

DIG DEEPER

Luke 3:3–14, Matthew 5:23–24, Romans 14:13, 2nd Corinthians 6:3, Hebrews 12:14–15

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4 · DAY 5

My Side of the Bridge

Isaiah 11:6–10; Luke 2:29–32

> *"And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them." Isaiah 11:6*

Many families in Hawai'i know the word ho'oponopono. It means "to make right," and it names an old Hawaiian way of healing trouble in a family. The family sits down together and starts with prayer. Someone says plainly what has gone wrong. Then each person owns their part in it, confesses what they did, and asks to be forgiven. Finally, the wrong is released and let go. No one comes to win the argument. Everyone comes to make things right.

Isaiah pictures wolves and lambs, leopards and goats, calves and lions living together in peace. Natural enemies are no longer hurting each other. Simeon saw the beginning of that promise when he held Jesus. This Child would bring salvation to Israel and to the nations. Paul says Jesus "is our peace," bringing people together who had been divided (Ephesians 2:14).

We are still waiting for the full peace Isaiah describes. But Jesus calls us to live as people who belong to His coming kingdom. Romans 12:18 puts it plainly: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." You cannot make someone else walk across the bridge. You can take care of your side.

That means admitting what was yours without adding a "but." It means asking forgiveness instead of waiting for an apology first. It also means leaving room for the truth that peace is not always possible right away. The other person may not be ready. You can still do your part and leave the outcome with God. He sees the step you take.

What is mine to own, and what loving step toward peace can I take?

RESPOND TODAY

Begin by thanking Jesus for welcoming you and making peace with God possible. Bring Him one strained relationship. Ask for help to listen well and take responsibility for your part. If an apology is needed, offer it plainly. Consider another kindness you can extend, and leave the other person's response with Him.

PRAY

- Thank Jesus that He brings divided people together.
- Ask for honesty about your part and grace to act on it.
- Pray for the other person's good, and entrust the outcome to God.

DIG DEEPER

Isaiah 2:2–4, Ephesians 2:13–18, Colossians 3:12–15, Romans 12:17–21, James 3:17–18

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5 · DAY 6

This Is a Day of Good News

Luke 3:1–6; 2nd Corinthians 5:17–21

> *"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." 2nd Corinthians 5:20*

During a long siege, the city of Samaria was starving. Outside the gate sat four men with leprosy. The Law required anyone with leprosy to "live alone" outside the camp (Leviticus 13:46), so these men were outcasts — the last people anyone in the city expected to hear from. With nothing to lose, they walked into the enemy camp and found it empty. God had sent the Arameans running in the night, leaving behind food, silver, gold, and clothing. The men ate, drank, and started hiding treasure. Then their consciences caught up with them: "We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, but we are keeping silent" (2nd Kings 7:9). So, the men nobody wanted near the city became the ones who brought it the news that saved it.

God often uses people others overlook. Luke 3 lists an emperor, governors, rulers, and high priests. Then we are told that God's word came to John in the wilderness. John was the son of a priest, living in the desert, dressed in camel's hair. The announcement that the King was coming did not depend on John's importance. It depended on the God who sent him.

Paul tells ordinary believers that God has given us "the ministry of reconciliation" and made us "ambassadors for Christ" (2nd Corinthians 5:18, 20). An ambassador speaks for the one who sent him. We don't have to be impressive. We do need to be faithful with the message entrusted to us. Like the men outside Samaria, we are carrying good news we did not earn.

And we carry it with warmth. Paul says, "we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." Isaiah speaks of bringing comfort to people's hearts. Simeon and Anna did that when they recognized Jesus. An old man and an elderly widow praised God and told others about Him. Neither needed a title to speak up. Neither do we. If we have received peace with God, someone near us needs the good news we are holding.

Who might be encouraged by the good news I have received?

RESPOND TODAY

Thank God for someone who shared Jesus with you. Name three people you would love to encourage with His peace, and pray for each. Choose one for a conversation this week. Share what Jesus has done, offer prayer, or invite them to a Christmas service.

PRAY

- Thank God for trusting you with His good news.
- Pray for the three people you named.
- Ask for a caring conversation and courage to speak.

DIG DEEPER

2nd Kings 7:3–11, Luke 2:36–38, Luke 4:16–21, Romans 10:13–15, 1st Peter 3:15

Reconciliation Sunday
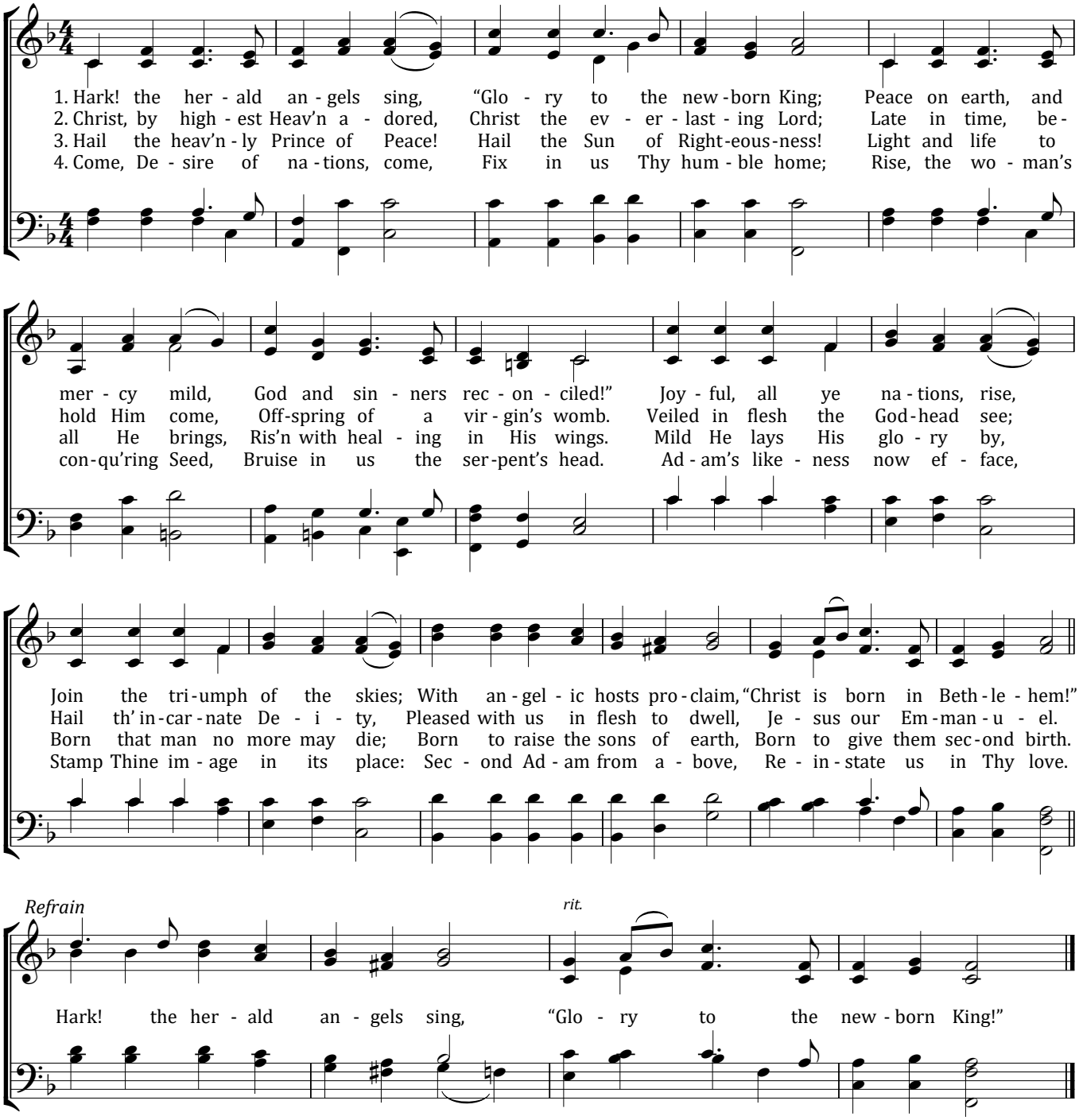
December 6, 2026

Luke 2:25–32; Isaiah 11:1–10



SING TOGETHER

Hark! the Herald Angels Sing



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MENDELSSOHN: Felix Mendelssohn, 1840; arr. William H. Cummings, 1857. Public domain.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 7 · DAY 1

Prayers That Are Not Thrown Away

Luke 1:5–13, 24–25

> *"Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John." Luke 1:13*

In Jerusalem, visitors from all over the world fold small paper prayers and tuck them into the cracks of the Western Wall, a surviving section of the retaining walls Herod the Great built around the temple mount. Prayers for healing, for children, for a marriage, for a job. Hundreds of thousands of them pile up between the stones. But they are not simply swept into the trash. Twice a year, before Passover and before Rosh Hashanah, workers carefully remove the notes and bury them on the Mount of Olives. They are treated with respect, because they are prayers.

Zacharias and Elizabeth had lived faithfully before God for years. They were also growing old without a child. Faithfulness had not kept them from disappointment. Elizabeth later called their childlessness her disgrace. That tells us something about the weight she had carried.

Then Zacharias was chosen to offer incense in the temple. While the people prayed outside, an angel appeared and told him, "your petition has been heard." Scripture often connects incense with prayer. David asked that his prayer rise before God like incense. Revelation gives us that picture too. Zacharias may have stopped asking for a son by then. But God had not forgotten what he had prayed.

Not every long prayer will be answered as Elizabeth's was. God does not promise us the same outcome or the timing we would choose. He does hear us. Elizabeth began rejoicing before her son was even born because she knew the Lord had seen her. That is a place for our joy to begin too. The God who hears has not forgotten us.

What prayer can I place again in the care of the God who hears?

RESPOND TODAY

Read Luke 1:13 and Psalm 141:2. Bring God a prayer you have carried for a long time. Picture it rising before Him like incense. Thank Him that you can keep coming. Leave the answer and timing in His hands, and ask for His companionship while you wait.

PRAY

- Thank God that He hears and remembers His people.
- Bring Him a long-held prayer with honesty and hope.
- Ask Him to comfort someone who is waiting with disappointment.

DIG DEEPER

1st Samuel 1:9–20, Psalm 56:8, Psalm 141:1–2, Hebrews 4:14–16, Revelation 8:3–4

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8 · DAY 2

Looking at the Water

Luke 1:18–22

> *"I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news." Luke 1:19*

Picture a little boy at the edge of a swimming pool for the first time. His dad is in the water, arms stretched out, saying, "Jump! I've got you." The boy wants to. But he keeps staring at the water — how deep it looks, how far down it is, how small he is. His eyes are on everything that could go wrong. The one thing he isn't looking at is his father's face. When he finally looks up and jumps, it isn't because the water got any shallower. It's because he decided to trust the one holding out his arms.

Zacharias had just heard wonderful news. His first response was to point out why it couldn't happen: he was old, and so was Elizabeth. Gabriel turned his attention back to the One who had sent the message. The important question was not how old Zacharias was. It was whether God could be trusted.

Luke places his response beside Mary's. Zacharias did not believe the message. Mary did. Believing God means more than agreeing that His words sound good. It means putting our weight on what He has said. Abraham had faced the same difficulty with Sarah, and he learned to trust God's promise when the situation looked impossible.

There is mercy in Zacharias's story. His doubt did not cancel God's promise. He lost his voice for a season, but God's word would still be fulfilled at the right time. Maybe you keep looking at all the reasons God cannot work in your situation. Bring that honestly to Him. "I do believe; help my unbelief" is a prayer He has heard before (Mark 9:24). Look up from the water to the One holding out His arms.

What doubt can I bring honestly to God, and what promise can I trust?

RESPOND TODAY

Read Numbers 23:19 and remember a time when God proved faithful. Thank Him for it. Bring Him a situation that feels uncertain, including any doubts you have. Pray, "I do believe; help my unbelief." Choose one small step that rests on His character and His Word.

PRAY

- Thank God for a way He has shown His faithfulness.
- Bring Him your questions and ask for help to trust.
- Ask for courage to take the next step with Him.

DIG DEEPER

Genesis 18:9–14, Numbers 23:19, Mark 9:20–24, Romans 4:18–21, Hebrews 11:11

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9 · DAY 3

His Name Is John

Luke 1:23–25, 57–66

> *"And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, 'His name is John.' And they were all astonished. And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he began to speak in praise of God." Luke 1:63–64*

Most of us have a call we never made. A friend went through a hard season, and we meant to reach out. A neighbor asked a question about faith, and we changed the subject. The moment passed, then the weeks passed, and the silence started to feel permanent — as if it is too late now and we would only make things awkward. But sometimes, when we finally pick up the phone, the voice on the other end says, "I was hoping you'd call."

Zacharias left the temple unable to speak. But he could still obey. When his service ended, he went home, and Elizabeth soon became pregnant. His doubt at the altar was part of his story. It was not the end of it.

When the baby was eight days old, the relatives assumed he would be named after his father. Elizabeth said his name would be John. Zacharias asked for a tablet and wrote, "His name is John." God had already settled the name. Zacharias was finally agreeing with Him. At once he could speak again, and his first words were praise.

Even the family names remind us of God's faithfulness. Zacharias means "the LORD remembers." Elizabeth is usually understood to mean "my God is an oath." John means "the LORD is gracious." God remembered His promise and showed grace to a man who had doubted. He gave Jonah another opportunity. He restored Peter after his denials. He has not finished with you either. The next step of obedience is still worth taking.

What opportunity is God giving me to respond to His grace today?

RESPOND TODAY

Remember how God gave Zacharias, Jonah, and Peter another opportunity. Thank Him that His grace makes room for your next step too. Choose a call, conversation, apology, or word about Jesus that you can offer today. Follow through, then thank God for helping you respond.

PRAY

- Thank God that He remembers His promises and shows grace.
- Ask Him to renew your willingness where you have hesitated.
- Ask for joy in taking the next step of obedience.

DIG DEEPER

Psalm 51:12–15, Lamentations 3:22–23, Jonah 3:1–3, John 21:15–19, Acts 4:18–20

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10 · DAY 4

Yes Before the Details

Luke 1:26–38

> *"Behold, the bondslave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." Luke 1:38*

At a wedding, two people stand in front of family and friends and make promises about a future they cannot see: for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health. They don't know which of those they will face. They don't know where they will live in ten years or what hard days are coming. They say yes anyway — not because they have all the details, but because they trust the one standing across from them.

Mary had plans. She was engaged to Joseph. Then Gabriel told her she would bear a Son whose kingdom would never end. She had a question, just as Zacharias did. But there was a difference. Zacharias asked for proof. Mary asked how this would happen. She was trying to understand what God would do.

Gabriel assured her that nothing would be impossible with God. Mary answered, "may it be done to me according to your word." She did not have every detail. She did know whose servant she was. She gave God her yes.

That yes could cost her. People would question the pregnancy. Joseph almost ended their engagement. Still, Mary trusted the Lord. Soon she was visiting Elizabeth and singing about God's goodness. Her surrender opened the way to joy. We may not understand everything God is doing either. But we can bring Him our questions and trust Him with what comes next.

What could I place in God's hands with a willing yes?

RESPOND TODAY

Write Luke 1:38 on a card. Think of a hope or plan for Christmas or the coming year. Thank God that He welcomes you into His work. Pray Mary's words over that plan and ask for a willing heart, even while you have questions.

PRAY

- Thank God that His Word can be trusted.
- Bring Him your questions and hopes for what is ahead.
- Offer Him your willingness to follow, one step at a time.

DIG DEEPER

1st Samuel 3:1–10, Isaiah 6:8, Isaiah 55:10–11, Romans 12:1–2, Philippians 2:5–8

My response:

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11 · DAY 5

Leaping for Joy

Luke 1:39–45

> *"For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy." Luke 1:44*

If you have ever come home to a dog, you know what joy looks like when it can't sit still. The car pulls into the driveway, and the dog is already at the door — spinning, wagging, jumping, barely able to contain itself. It doesn't care what you brought home. It isn't excited about a gift. It is excited about you. Your arrival is the whole celebration.

John recognized the joy of Jesus' presence before he was born. When Mary greeted Elizabeth, the baby leaped, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. The word Luke uses for leaping also appears in the Greek Old Testament when Malachi describes calves released from their stall. Malachi also promised the coming of Elijah. Now John, who would serve in Elijah's spirit and power, was leaping before his Lord. He really did! God's Word is so cool.

Gabriel had said John would be filled with the Spirit while still in his mother's womb. Here we see God keeping that promise. That should affect how we pray for the keiki in our homes and church. God is able to work in their hearts while they are young. The One who formed them knows them and can give them joy in Jesus.

Elizabeth shared that joy. She blessed Mary and called Mary's Child "my Lord." Then she said Mary was blessed because she believed God's word would be fulfilled. Their joy came from recognizing that Jesus was near and trusting what God had said. Christmas gives us that same invitation. Before we look under the tree, we can look at the One who has come.

What about Jesus gives me joy today?

RESPOND TODAY

Take ten quiet minutes with Jesus today. Read Luke 1:39–45 and Psalm 16:11. Tell Him what you love about who He is. Then pray by name for children in your family or church, asking Him to work in their hearts.

PRAY

- Thank Jesus that His presence gives us joy.
- Pray for God's Spirit to work in the children you named.
- Ask for a heart that believes His Word and welcomes Him.

DIG DEEPER

Psalm 16:11, Psalm 139:13–16, Malachi 4:2–6, Luke 6:22–23, 1st Peter 1:8–9

My response:

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12 · DAY 6

In On the Surprise

Luke 1:13–17

> *"You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth." Luke 1:14*

Anyone who has helped plan a surprise party knows a special kind of joy. You have spent weeks keeping the secret, sending texts behind someone's back, hiding decorations in the garage. Then the guest of honor walks in, the lights come on, and everyone shouts. Being a guest at that party is fun. But being one of the people who helped make it happen — watching the look on their face, knowing you had a part in it — is a joy all its own.

Gabriel told Zacharias that he would have joy and gladness, and many others would rejoice at John's birth. That joy soon began to spread. John leaped in Elizabeth's womb. Elizabeth blessed Mary. Mary sang about God her Savior. What God was doing was too good to keep to themselves.

John would help turn people back to the Lord and bring families together. Few things bring more joy than seeing someone we love come home to God. Jesus said heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents. In Luke 15, the shepherd calls his friends to celebrate, the woman does the same, and the father throws a party for his returning son.

We are invited to take part in that work. John helped prepare people for the Lord. We can pray, pay attention, speak about Jesus, and welcome people. Paul called the Thessalonian believers his glory and joy. John said he had no greater joy than hearing that his children walked in the truth. It is a gift to receive the good news. It is also a gift to help someone else receive it.

Who am I praying will come home to God?

RESPOND TODAY

Pray for the three people on your list, or write three names now. Thank God for any signs of His care in their lives. Ask for one opportunity to share a meal, offer an invitation, or tell what Jesus has done for you. Share the joy of that step with another believer.

PRAY

- Thank God for the people who helped you know Jesus.
- Pray for the people on your list.
- Ask for an open door and joy in joining His work.

DIG DEEPER

Malachi 4:5–6, Luke 15:3–10, Philippians 1:3–5, 1st Thessalonians 2:19–20, 3rd John 4

My response:

Celebration Sunday

December 13, 2026

Luke 1:5–45



SING TOGETHER

Joy to the World

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re - ceive her King;
2. Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let men their songs em - ploy;
3. No more let sins and sor - rows grow, Nor thorns in - fest the ground;
4. He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the na - tions prove

Let eve - ry heart pre - pare Him room,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
He comes to make His bless - ings flow
The glo - ries of His right - eous - ness,

And heav'n and na - ture sing, And heav'n and na - ture sing,
Re - peat the sound - ing joy, Re - peat the sound - ing joy,
Far as the curse is found, Far as the curse is found,
And won - ders of His love, And won - ders of His love,

(1) And heav'n and na - ture sing, And heav'n and na -

And heav'n, and heav'n, and na - ture sing.
Re - peat, re - peat, the sound - ing joy.
Far as, far as, the curse is found.
And won - ders, won - ders, of His love.

ture sing,

Words: Isaac Watts, 1719. ANTIOCH: George F. Handel; arr. Lowell Mason, 1836. Public domain.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14 · DAY 1

A Verse We Know by Heart

John 3:1–2, 16

> *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:16*

If you live in Honolulu, you probably drive past Diamond Head without a second look. It's just there, part of the view on the way to work or the store. But stand at a bus stop in Waikīkī and watch the visitors. They stop in the middle of the sidewalk, point, pull out their phones, and stare. It's the same mountain. The only difference is that they are seeing it for the first time, and many of us stopped seeing it years ago.

John 3:16 can become that familiar. We learned it as children. We have seen it on signs, bookmarks, and cards. We can say it without stopping to hear it. Sometimes we treat it as a verse for someone else, the person who doesn't know Jesus yet.

But look at the man Jesus was speaking with. Nicodemus was a respected Bible teacher, and he had come at night with questions. He needed what Jesus was saying for himself. So do we. Knowing Scripture does not mean we have finished receiving its truth.

"Whoever believes" includes every person who puts their trust in Jesus. God's love reaches the world, and it reaches you. Paul made it personal when he wrote about the Son of God "who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). Before you share John 3:16 with someone this Christmas, stop and receive it. You are part of the world God loved. You are part of the "whoever."

What changes as I receive the truth that Jesus loves me?

RESPOND TODAY

Read John 3:16 aloud three times. On the third reading, think about how "the world" and "whoever" include you. Then read Galatians 2:20. Finish this sentence: "The Son of God loved me, and He showed it by…" Thank Him for what you write.

PRAY

- Thank Jesus personally that He loved you and gave Himself for you.
- Ask Him to help this familiar truth become fresh encouragement.
- Pray for someone who needs to know that His love reaches them too.

DIG DEEPER

Psalm 139:1–6, Isaiah 43:1–4, Jeremiah 31:3, Galatians 2:19–20, Ephesians 3:17–19

My response:

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15 · DAY 2

Love You Can Measure

John 3:16; 1st John 4:7–11

> *"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1st John 4:10*

In O. Henry's short story The Gift of the Magi, a young couple in New York has almost nothing on the day before Christmas. Della sells her long, beautiful hair to buy a chain for Jim's prized pocket watch. Jim, meanwhile, sells the watch to buy a set of combs for Della's hair. Both gifts end up useless, but no one who reads the story doubts how much these two love each other. You can measure their love by what it cost them.

When John says God "so loved" the world, he is showing us how God loved. God gave. His love took action, and the gift was His own Son. We do not have to guess what His love looks like.

Think of Abraham taking Isaac up the mountain. God stopped Abraham and provided a ram. But when the Father gave His own Son, Jesus went all the way to the cross. Romans 8:32 says God did not spare His Son but gave Him up for us. That is the cost of the love we celebrate at Christmas.

We can spend a lot of time trying to decide whether God loves us by how the day is going. A difficult circumstance can make us doubt. A good feeling can reassure us for a while. God has given us something firmer to look at. He sent His Son. Look at the manger, then look at the cross. Whatever is happening today, His gift tells you that His love is real.

How does the Father's gift help me recognize His love today?

RESPOND TODAY

When you wrap, give, or receive a gift this week, pause and pray, "Thank You, Father, that You gave Your only Son." Write Romans 8:32 on a gift tag and put it where your family will see it. Be ready to explain why it matters to you.

PRAY

- Thank the Father for giving His Son.
- Ask Him to help you rest in His love on a difficult day.
- Ask for joy in giving in a way that reflects His heart.

DIG DEEPER

Genesis 22:1–14, Isaiah 53:4–6, Isaiah 9:6, Romans 8:31–32, 2nd Corinthians 9:15

My response:

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16 · DAY 3

Sent to Rescue

John 3:17–18

> *"For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him." John 3:17*

On a big surf day on the North Shore, the lifeguards are watching the water constantly. When a swimmer gets caught in a rip current and starts waving for help, a lifeguard grabs a rescue board and paddles straight out. He doesn't pull up beside the struggling swimmer and lecture him about the warning signs he ignored. He doesn't critique his stroke. He came for one reason: to get that person back to shore alive.

Jesus told Nicodemus why He had come: so the world might be saved through Him. Later He said He came to seek and save the lost. We need to hear that when our instinct is to hide. He knows we need rescuing. That is why He came.

Verse 18 says the person who believes in Him is not judged. Romans 8:1 says there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. Yet some of us live as though the verdict is still undecided. We keep trying to prove our worth to a parent, a boss, people at church, or the critic in our own head. Through faith in Jesus, we are accepted by God. We don't have to keep arguing our case.

There is also an urgent warning here. The person who does not believe remains under judgment. A swimmer who refuses the rescuer is still in danger. Jesus has come, and we are called to trust Him. That is good news worth receiving and sharing. He is able to do what we cannot do for ourselves.

How can I live today with the confidence that I am accepted in Christ?

RESPOND TODAY

Read Romans 8:1 and thank God for the welcome you have through faith in Jesus. Write the verse on a card. Let it encourage you to offer one act of love without needing to prove yourself. When the pressure to earn approval returns, come back to His promise.

PRAY

- Thank Jesus that He came to save you and bring you to God.
- Bring Him the pressure you feel to prove your worth.
- Ask for freedom to love others from the welcome you have received.

DIG DEEPER

Psalm 103:8–12, Isaiah 53:4–6, Zephaniah 3:17, Luke 19:10, John 5:24, Romans 8:1–4

My response:

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17 · DAY 4

Two Loves

John 3:19; Romans 5:6–10

> *"This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil." John 3:19*

Some parents leave the porch light on every night for a son or daughter who has walked away. Months go by, sometimes years. The child is off loving something else — a crowd, a lifestyle, a life that keeps them far from home. But every evening, the light goes on again. It's a small, stubborn sign of a love that won't quit.

John puts two loves beside each other. God loved the world. People loved the darkness. The same word for love appears in both verses. That should make us stop. We can be very loyal to something that is hurting us and keeping us from God.

God's love is faithful. The Old Testament often calls it lovingkindness. Psalm 136 keeps reminding us that His lovingkindness is everlasting. He loved a world that had turned away from Him. Hosea was told to love his unfaithful wife again as a picture of God's love for His wandering people. Romans 5:8 says Christ died for us while we were still sinners.

What darkness do you keep returning to? Maybe it is resentment, a secret habit, or a way of numbing the hurt. Name it honestly. The hope in this passage is that God loved us before we had cleaned ourselves up. Christmas is the Father keeping the light on and sending His Son to bring us home. We can turn toward Him today.

What is God inviting me to leave behind as I turn toward His love?

RESPOND TODAY

Read Romans 5:8 and Psalm 136:1–9. Thank God that His love reached you first. Ask what He is inviting you to leave behind. If He brings a sin to mind, confess it and choose a better step with His help. Let the Christmas lights remind you that you can come home.

PRAY

- Praise God for His everlasting lovingkindness.
- Confess what He shows you, trusting His love and forgiveness.
- Ask Him to help you welcome what is good and pray for someone far from Him.

DIG DEEPER

Psalm 136:1–9, Hosea 3:1–5, Jeremiah 31:3, Luke 15:11–24, Ephesians 2:4–5

My response:

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18 · DAY 5

Nothing to Fear in the Light

John 3:20–21

> *"But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God." John 3:21*

Most of us know someone who put off seeing a doctor because they were afraid of what the tests might show. As long as nobody looks at the pain or the symptom that won't go away, we can pretend it's nothing. But the scan isn't the enemy. In the hands of a good doctor, seeing clearly is the first step toward healing.

Jesus says people avoid the light because they fear being exposed. We understand that. Adam and Eve hid after they sinned, and we have been doing the same thing ever since. David described how exhausting it was to keep his sin covered. Hiding did not heal him.

But verse 21 describes someone coming into the light. What becomes visible there is the work God has done. First John tells us that walking in the light brings fellowship and cleansing through Jesus' blood. Coming to Him honestly opens the way to receive the forgiveness He offers.

Remember whose light this is. It belongs to the God who loved the world and sent His Son to save it. Sometimes what we hide is sin. Sometimes it is a worry, a grief, or a need we are too proud to admit. God often helps us through His people. You can bring the truth to Him, then let a trusted believer walk and pray with you.

What can I bring into God's light with confidence in His grace?

RESPOND TODAY

Pray Psalm 139:23–24, thanking God that He knows and loves you. Bring Him what He shows you: a sin to confess, a burden to share, or a gift to use. Choose a trusted believer to pray with. Receive the encouragement of walking in the light together.

PRAY

- Thank God that you can come to Him honestly.
- Ask Him to search, cleanse, and encourage your heart.
- Ask for courage to share your life and receive another believer's care.

DIG DEEPER

Psalm 32:1–5, Psalm 139:23–24, Proverbs 28:13, Ephesians 5:8–14, 1st John 1:5–9, James 5:16

My response:

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19 · DAY 6

From Night to Daylight

John 3:21; 7:45–52; 19:38–42

> *"Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight." John 19:39*

On Christmas Eve, many churches end their service by passing a flame from candle to candle. One person lights the next, row after row, until a dark room glows with hundreds of small lights. No one lights their own candle. Each person receives the flame from someone who already has it, and then turns to share it with the person beside them.

Watch Nicodemus through John's Gospel. He first came to Jesus at night. Later he spoke up when the religious leaders wanted to condemn Jesus without a hearing. After the crucifixion, he helped Joseph bury Jesus and brought a costly supply of spices. The man who once came in the dark was willing to be seen.

God had been at work in him. John 3:21 speaks of deeds "wrought in God," the good that comes from God's work in a person's life. Paul calls us God's workmanship, created in Christ for good works (Ephesians 2:10). As you look back over this year, remember who deserves the credit for the good He has brought through you.

And what we have received is meant to be shared. "Accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us" (Romans 15:7). Christmas can be hard for someone who is grieving, lonely, or sick. You do not need to fix every sorrow. You can sit with someone, listen, bring a meal, or make a call. Bring your candle close. Let the love of Christ become visible through your presence.

Who can I share Christ's welcome with this Christmas?

RESPOND TODAY

Remember someone who has helped you feel Christ's welcome, and thank God for that person. Choose one person facing a dark season. Reach out with a call, visit, meal, or card. Your presence can be a gift. Tomorrow, celebrate Jesus with His people and carry His love into Christmas week.

PRAY

- Thank God for those who have shared Christ's love with you.
- Celebrate something He has done in or through you this year.
- Pray for the person you will reach out to, and ask how you can be present.

DIG DEEPER

Psalm 90:14–17, Isaiah 9:2, Micah 7:8, Matthew 5:14–16, Romans 15:5–7, Ephesians 2:8–10

Acceptance Sunday

December 20, 2026

John 3:16–21



SING TOGETHER

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

1. Love di - vine, all loves ex - cell - ing, Joy of Heav'n to earth come down;
2. Breathe, O breathe Thy lov - ing Spir - it In - to eve - ry trou - bled breast!
3. Come, Al - might - y to de - liv - er, Let us all Thy life re - ceive;
4. Fin - ish, then, Thy new cre - a - tion; Pure and spot - less let us be;

Fix in us thy hum - ble dwell - ing; All thy faith - ful mer - cies crown!
Let us all in Thee in - her - it, Let us find that se - cond rest.
Sud - den - ly re - turn, and nev - er, Nev - er - more Thy tem - ples leave.
Let us see Thy great sal - va - tion Per - fect - ly re - stored in Thee;

Je - sus, Thou art all com - pas - sion, Pure un - bound - ed love Thou art;
Take a - way our bent to sin - ning; Al - pha and O - me - ga be;
Thee we would be al - ways bless - ing, Serve Thee as Thy hosts a - bove,
Changed from glo - ry in - to glo - ry, Till in Heav'n we take our place,

Vis - it us with Thy sal - va - tion, En - ter eve - ry trem - bling heart.
End of faith, as its be - gin - ning, Set our hearts at lib - er - ty.
Pray and praise Thee with - out ceas - ing, Glo - ry in Thy per - fect love.
Till we cast our crowns be - fore Thee, Lost in won - der, love, and praise.

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MONDAY, DECEMBER 21 · DAY 1

A Promise in the Broken Pieces

Genesis 3:8–15; Colossians 2:13–15

> *"He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel." Genesis 3:15*

Picture a child who has just broken a favorite Christmas ornament. One minute it was hanging on the tree. Now it is scattered across the floor. The child knows there is no putting it back together and slips behind the couch before anyone comes into the room. A parent walks in, sees the pieces, and starts looking for the child. The broken ornament matters. But so does the little person hiding behind the couch.

Genesis 3 takes us to something far more serious. Adam and Eve had disobeyed God. Sin had entered His good world, and now they were hiding from the One who made them. God came looking for them. He held them responsible for what they had done. But even as He spoke about the consequences, He gave a promise: a descendant of the woman would defeat the serpent.

The serpent would wound Him, but the wound he received in return would be a crushing defeat. Christians have long recognized this as the first promise pointing to our Savior. The baby born to Mary came to face the sin and evil we could not overcome. His road would lead from the manger to the cross. Colossians 2 tells us that through the cross, our debt was canceled and the powers of evil were defeated.

Christmas did not begin with shepherds or a star. Its promise reaches back to the place where everything first went wrong. God saw the brokenness and promised a Rescuer. Maybe there is something in your own life you wish you could put back together. You cannot undo it by hiding. Come to the Savior who came looking for us. He already knows what is broken, and He knows how to bring us home.

How does God's promise of a Savior give me hope for what is broken?

RESPOND TODAY

Read Colossians 2:13–15 and thank Jesus for His victory through the cross. Bring Him one broken part of your life: a sin, a regret, or a sorrow. Ask for His forgiveness or care as you need it. Write one sentence about the hope His promise gives you.

PRAY

- Thank God that He promised a Savior from the beginning.
- Bring Him what needs His forgiveness, healing, or comfort.
- Thank Jesus that His victory gives you reason for hope.

DIG DEEPER

Genesis 3:1–21, Romans 5:12–19, Romans 16:20, Hebrews 2:14–15, 1st John 3:8

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22 · DAY 2

Someone in the Room

Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18–25

> *"Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14*

A hospital room can feel lonely even with people coming in and out all day. Someone checks a monitor. Someone brings a meal. Someone asks another question. Then a familiar face walks through the door, pulls a chair beside the bed, and stays. The test results haven't changed. There may still be a long night ahead. But the room feels different. Someone who loves you is there.

Isaiah spoke God's promise in a frightening time for His people. A child would be born, and His name would be Immanuel. Matthew points us back to that promise when he tells us about Mary's pregnancy. She would bear Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit. Matthew explains the name for us: God with us.

That is what makes Christmas so wonderful. God did not only send instructions or a message of encouragement. The Son of God came Himself. He entered our world as a real baby, born to a real mother. He would know hunger, weariness, grief, and rejection. When we bring our troubles to Him, we are speaking to the Savior who has entered our human life.

And He came with a purpose. Joseph was told to name the Child Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. His presence brings more than a little comfort in a hard moment. He came to bring us back to God. Whatever this Christmas holds for you, remember who this Child is. You do not have to make yourself presentable before coming to Him. Immanuel has come near.

How can the promise of Immanuel shape the way I live today?

RESPOND TODAY

Write "Immanuel—God with us" on a card and place it where you will see it. Let it prompt a simple thank-you for Jesus' presence. Bring Him a concern, and ask how you might share His care with someone else today through a call, a visit, or a listening ear.

PRAY

- Thank Jesus that He came Himself to be our Savior.
- Welcome His presence in a place where you feel alone.
- Ask Him to help you share His care with someone today.

DIG DEEPER

Isaiah 8:8–10, John 1:14, Hebrews 2:17–18, Hebrews 4:14–16, Matthew 28:20

My response:

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23 · DAY 3

God Knew the Address

Micah 5:2–5; Luke 2:1–7

> *"From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel." Micah 5:2*

At Christmas, a little box can travel thousands of miles and end up on one particular doorstep. It moves through airports, sorting rooms, trucks, and a neighborhood full of houses. To everyone handling it, it is one package among many. But the person who sent it wrote a name and an address on the label. All that movement is meant to bring it to the right door.

Long before Jesus was born, God named the town. Micah said that the promised ruler would come from Bethlehem, a small place in Judah. This was David's town, but it was hardly the place people would expect the world's attention to turn. God knew the address centuries before Mary and Joseph arrived.

Luke tells us that a decree from Caesar sent people to their towns to register. Joseph went from Nazareth to Bethlehem because he belonged to David's family. While they were there, Jesus was born. An emperor issued an order. A couple made a difficult journey. In the middle of it, God kept His word. The ruler Micah promised had come.

And this Child's story did not begin in Bethlehem. Micah describes a ruler whose origins reach back to ancient days, and John's Gospel tells us that the Son was with God in the beginning. The One laid in the manger was already Lord. We cannot always explain how God is working through the details of our lives. But Bethlehem gives us a reason to trust Him. He had not forgotten His promise, and He did not lose His way.

What evidence of God's faithfulness can encourage my trust today?

RESPOND TODAY

Read Micah 5:2 and Luke 2:1–7 side by side. Thank God for keeping His promise in Bethlehem. Recall one way He has cared for you. Bring Him a present uncertainty, and ask for help with the next faithful step. His past faithfulness gives you reason to trust Him today.

PRAY

- Thank God for keeping His promises.
- Remember a way He has shown His care for you.
- Ask for trust and faithfulness in the step ahead.

DIG DEEPER

2nd Samuel 7:12–16, Matthew 2:1–6, John 1:1–3, John 7:40–42, Hebrews 13:8

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24 · DAY 4

The Light We Could Not Make

Isaiah 9:2, 6–7; Luke 2:8–14

> *"For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us." Isaiah 9:6*

When the power goes out after dark, the whole house changes. The refrigerator goes quiet. Someone reaches for a phone. Someone else tries to remember which drawer has the matches. Then a candle is lit, and suddenly you can see the faces around the table again. The room is still the same room. But now there is light. The unlit candle could not give that light to itself. It had to receive a flame.

Isaiah spoke of people walking in darkness who would see a great light. Then he told them where their hope would come from: a Child would be born, a Son would be given. God would bring help His people could not produce for themselves. That is the good news we celebrate tonight.

Look at the names Isaiah gives this Child. He is Mighty God and Prince of Peace. The baby in Bethlehem is worthy of our worship. His rule will last, and He will set things right. When the angels announced His birth, they brought news of joy and peace. The promised King had arrived, and His coming would change everything.

We have spent these weeks thinking about hope, peace, joy, and love. All four bring us to Jesus. Tonight, the center Christ candle reminds us that He is the One we have been waiting for. We cannot forgive our own sin, save ourselves, or light our own way back to God. He has come to do what we could not. Before you hurry on to the gifts and meals and plans for tomorrow, take a few quiet minutes to receive the greatest gift. Jesus has come. There is reason to sing.

How will I welcome and celebrate Jesus tonight?

RESPOND TODAY

Gather your household, or take a quiet moment on your own. Read Luke 2:8–14. If you have an Advent wreath, light the four Advent candles and the center Christ candle. Turn to the final page and sing "Silent Night." Thank Jesus for coming to bring us back to God.

PRAY

- Thank the Father for giving His Son.
- Worship Jesus as your Savior and King.
- Pray for someone who needs His light this Christmas.

DIG DEEPER

Isaiah 60:1–3, Matthew 4:12–17, Luke 2:15–20, John 1:1–14, John 8:12

Christmas Eve

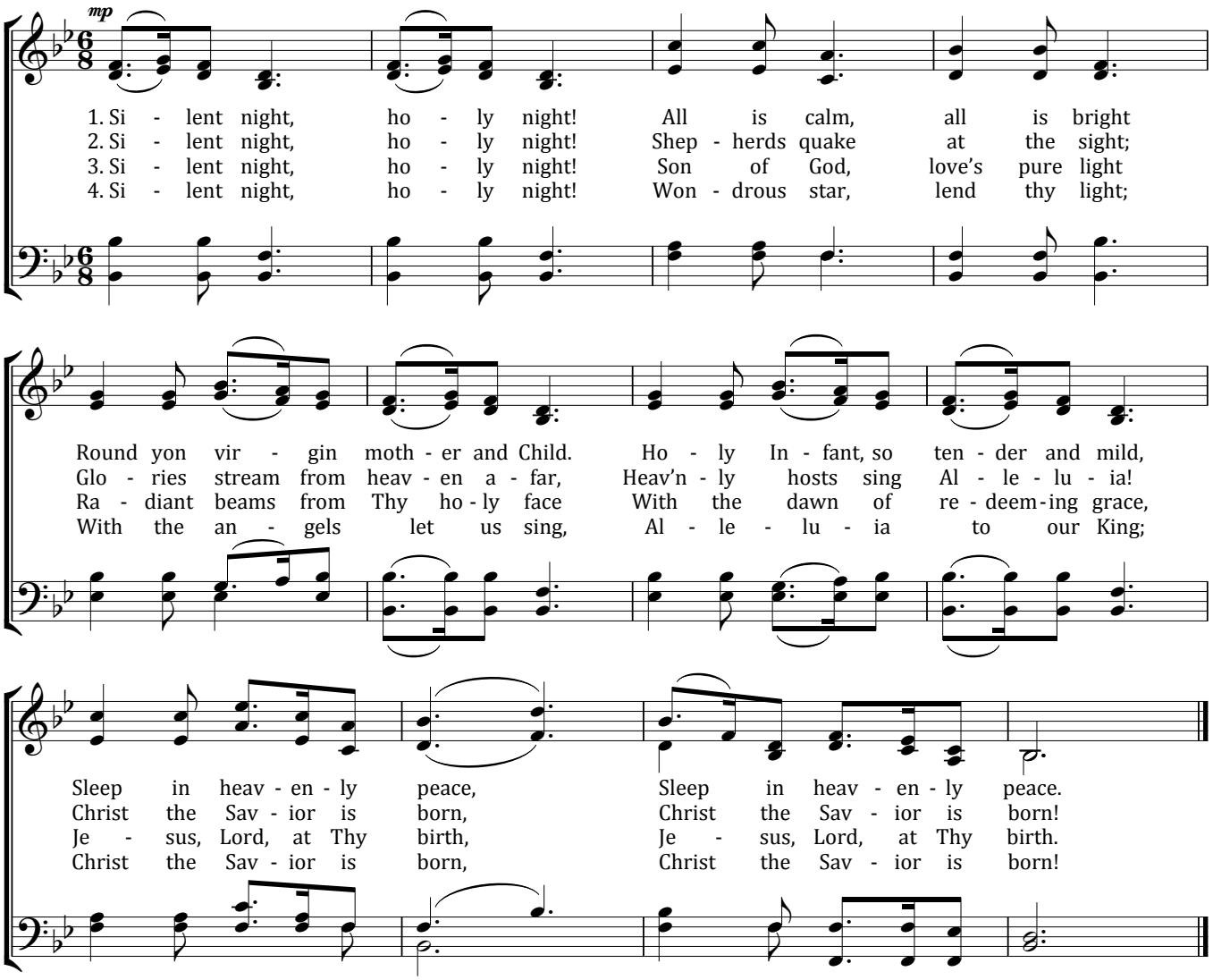
December 24, 2026

Luke 2:1–20; John 1:1–14



SING TOGETHER

Silent Night



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Lord Jesus, thank You for coming. You are the Savior we could not provide for ourselves. Help us receive Your light, rest in Your peace, and carry Your love into Christmas Day. Amen.

Scripture quotations: New American Standard Bible® (1995), © The Lockman Foundation.