

The background is a solid teal color. Overlaid on this is a large, stylized leaf pattern in a slightly darker shade of teal. The leaves are elongated and have a serrated edge, with prominent veins. They are arranged in a way that suggests a branch or a cluster of leaves, with some leaves pointing upwards and others downwards.

Advent Sampler

Teach Us to Pray

Scripture-Centered Family Worship through the Year

Lora A. Copley and Elizabeth Vander Haagen

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CICW BOOKS
Calvin College Press
Grand Rapids, Michigan



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Published by CICW BOOKS
an imprint of Calvin College Press
3201 Burton St. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
calvin.edu/press

Printed in the United States of America

Publisher's Cataloging-in-Publication data

Names: Copley, Lora A., author | Vander Haagen, Elizabeth, author.

Title: Teach us to pray : scripture-centered family worship through the year / Lora A. Copley and Elizabeth Vander Haagen.

Description: Grand Rapids, MI: CICW BOOKS, an imprint of Calvin College Press, 2016.

Identifiers: ISBN 978-1-937555-00-9 | LCCN 2016953581

Subjects: LCSH Families—Prayers and devotions. | Christian life. | BISAC: RELIGION / Christian Life / Devotional

Classification: LCC BV200 .C67 2016 | DDC 249—dc23

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Advent

Advent · Introduction

How do you prepare for guests? Do you clean? Make special foods? Plan activities?

During the season of Advent, the church prepares to celebrate Jesus' first coming as a baby in Bethlehem and looks forward to Jesus' second coming to bring peace on earth.

For four weeks the church looks backward, remembering how Israel prepared for the long-awaited Messiah, and it looks forward, longing for and expecting at any time Jesus' return in glory.

So as you explore these Advent readings with your family, see if you can tell which of Jesus' comings each passage looks toward. It is in seeing both—the Baby who came and the King who will come again—that our hearts will be prepared.

Preparing: Our preparing action for Advent is setting an extra place at the table or adding an extra chair to where you pray as a sign of looking forward to Jesus' return.

Materials: extra place setting or extra chair

Other Activities: Here are other activities to make your Advent worship meaningful:

- Set up a crèche together or reenact the nativity story with your family.
- Use an Advent wreath.
- Make an Advent paper chain or Advent calendar to count down the days until Christmas.

- Make a Jesse tree and ornaments to put on it.
- Draw a picture together of Jesus' second coming and write down words of why you look forward to his return.

Singing: In each day's reading you will find a song (find the music in the appendix). Here are other songs to make your Advent worship meaningful:

- "Look Up, Look Up"
- "Make Way, Make Way"
- "Wait for the Lord"

Heads Up! Every year Advent begins on a different date than the year before, so some years Advent has more days than in others. Pay attention to the dates in each reading so you'll know when to skip forward to the last reading on Christmas Eve.

Advent · Day 1 · First Sunday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Prepare the way of the Lord,

and all people will see the salvation of our God. (p. 818)



Bible Reading: Philippians 2:6–11

In his very nature he was God.

Jesus was equal with God. But Jesus didn't take advantage of that fact. Instead, he made himself nothing.

He did this by taking on the nature of a servant.

He was made just like human beings.

He appeared as a man.

He was humble and obeyed God completely.

He did this even though it led to his death.

Even worse, he died on a cross!

So God lifted him up to the highest place.

God gave him the name that is above every name.

When the name of Jesus is spoken, everyone will kneel down to worship him.

Everyone in heaven and on earth and under the earth will kneel down to worship him.

Everyone's mouth will say that Jesus Christ is Lord.

And God the Father will receive the glory.

Dwelling

Imagine sitting next to Jesus and listening to these words. What questions would you want to ask Jesus?



Praying

We praise you, Lord Jesus! You came all the way down from the highest place to the lowest place. And you did it for us! What can we say but "thank you"? Our knees bow and our mouths will tell that you are Lord.



Close your prayer time by saying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 2 · Monday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Prepare the way of the Lord,

and all people will see the salvation of our God. (p. 818)



Bible Reading: Mark 13:32–37

"But no one knows about that day or hour. Not even the angels in heaven know. The Son does not know. Only the Father knows. Keep watch! Stay awake! You do not know when that time will come. It's like a man going away. He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge. Each one is given a task to do. He tells the one at the door to keep watch.

"So keep watch! You do not know when the owner of the house will come back. It may be in the evening or at midnight. It may be when the rooster crows or at dawn. He may come suddenly. So do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone. 'Watch!'"

Dwelling

I wonder what you do when you want to stay awake? I wonder how we might stay awake and watch for Jesus' return?



Praying

- praise God for the promise that Jesus is coming again
- offer thanks for the tasks that Jesus gives us each to do



Lord Jesus, we are so glad you are coming again—and it could be sooner than we think. Instead of trying to pin the exact date down, may we stay on our tip-toes, serving and loving, always on the lookout for you. Amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 3 · Tuesday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Prepare the way of the Lord,

and all people will see the salvation of our God. (p. 818)



Bible Reading: Matthew 25:1–13

"Here is what the kingdom of heaven will be like at that time. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went out to meet the groom. Five of them were foolish. Five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but didn't take any olive oil with them. The wise ones took oil in jars along with their lamps. The groom did not come for a long time. So the bridesmaids all grew tired and fell asleep.

"At midnight someone cried out, 'Here's the groom! Come out to meet him!'

"Then all the bridesmaids woke up and got their lamps ready. The foolish ones said to the wise ones, 'Give us some of your oil. Our lamps are going out.'

“‘No,’ they replied. ‘There may not be enough for all of us. Instead, go to those who sell oil. Buy some for yourselves.’

“So they went to buy the oil. But while they were on their way, the groom arrived. The bridesmaids who were ready went in with him to the wedding dinner. Then the door was shut.

“Later, the other bridesmaids also came. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’

“But he replied, ‘What I’m about to tell you is true. I don’t know you.’

“So keep watch. You do not know the day or the hour that the groom will come.”

Dwelling

Why do you think Jesus told this story? I wonder what kinds of things we could do to get ready for Jesus?



Praying

- for the many wonders of God’s creation
- for new ways to care for the earth



Lord Jesus, you are coming again—and it could be later than we think. Your return will be like a wedding party, and we don’t want to miss out. Help us to be ready for that happy day. Waiting for you, we pray. Amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 4 · Wednesday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Prepare the way of the Lord,

and all people will see the salvation of our God. (p. 818)



Bible Reading: James 5:7–10

Brothers and sisters, be patient until the Lord comes. See how the farmer waits for the land to produce its rich crop. See how patient the farmer is for the fall and spring rains. You too must be patient. You must remain strong. The Lord will soon come back. Brothers and sisters, don't find fault with one another. If you do, you will be judged. And the Judge is standing at the door!

Brothers and sisters, think about the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. They are an example of how to be patient.



Dwelling

Is God telling us to do something in this passage? Is God promising to do something?

Praying

- for people who want to have children
- for brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles



Coming God, when we get whiny or impatient, help us to be like farmers who trust a good crop is coming. You will bring showers of blessing on our world. In the name of our Judge and Savior we pray. Amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 5 · Thursday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Prepare the way of the Lord,

and all people will see the salvation of our God. (p. 818)



Bible Reading: 2 Peter 3:8–9, 11–15

Dear friends, here is one thing you must not forget. With the Lord a day is like a thousand years. And a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow to keep his promise. He is not slow in the way some people understand it. Instead, he is patient with you. He doesn't want anyone to be destroyed. Instead, he wants all people to turn away from their sins.

And what kind of people should you be? You should lead holy and godly lives. Live like this as you look forward to the day of God. Living like this will make the day come more quickly. On that day fire will destroy the heavens. Its heat will melt everything in them. But we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth. Godliness will live there. All this is in keeping with God's promise.

Dear friends, I know you are looking forward to this. So try your best to be found pure and without blame. Be at peace with God. Remember that while our Lord is waiting patiently to return, people are being saved.

Dwelling

I wonder what it feels like to have someone wait for you? I wonder why Jesus seems to be taking so long to return?



Praying

- for our mayor, trash collector, and mail carrier
- for people who don't have a home



You are so good, Lord. Every day more people are coming to you. Thank you for keeping your promises, and for keeping them on your own time, not ours. We love you, patient God. Amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 6 · Friday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Prepare the way of the Lord,

and all people will see the salvation of our God. (p. 818)



Bible Reading: 1 Thessalonians 4:16–18

The Lord himself will come down from heaven. We will hear a loud command.

We will hear the voice of the leader of the angels. We will hear a blast from

God's trumpet. Many who believe in Christ will have died already. They will rise

first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with

them. We will be taken up in the clouds. We will meet the Lord in the air. And we

will be with him forever. So encourage one another with these words of comfort.



Dwelling

Is there a picture that comes to mind from what we have heard? Is there

anything you would like to ask Jesus?

Praying

- for people whose loved ones have died
- for helping us become more like Jesus



Lord, thank you for telling us about your return. It seems as if it will be a loud day, but the best day too. We are glad death doesn't win. But we're mostly glad we'll finally get to see you face to face. We can't wait! Amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 7 · Saturday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Prepare the way of the Lord,

and all people will see the salvation of our God. (p. 818)



Bible Reading: Isaiah 11:6–10

Wolves will live with lambs.

Leopards will lie down with goats.

Calves and lions will eat together.

And little children will lead them around.

Cows will eat with bears.

Their little ones will lie down together.

And lions will eat straw like oxen.

A baby will play near a hole where cobras live.

A young child will put its hand into a nest
where poisonous snakes live.

None of those animals will harm or destroy anything or anyone
on my holy mountain of Zion.

The oceans are full of water.

In the same way, the earth will be filled
with the knowledge of the LORD.

At that time, here is what the man who is called the Root of Jesse will do. He will be like a banner that brings nations together. They will come to him. And the place where he rules will be glorious.

Dwelling

What pictures come to mind as we listen to these verses? What might God be showing us?



Praying

- for many people to meet Jesus through the church
- for churches in Africa, and especially for people who are persecuted for believing in Jesus



Peacemaking God, when you return, we'll have nothing to fear. Wild animals will be our pets, and no one will be hurt anymore. You will rule over everything and everyone. In the Root of Jesse we pray, amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 8 · Second Sunday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Prepare the way of the Lord,

and all people will see the salvation of our God. (p. 818)



Bible Reading: Psalm 130:5–7

With all my heart I wait for the LORD to help me.

I put my hope in his word.

I wait for the Lord to help me.

I want his help more than night watchmen want the morning to come.

I'll say it again.

I want his help more than night watchmen want the morning to come.

Israel, put your hope in the LORD,

because the LORD's love never fails.

He sets his people completely free.

Second Sunday · Day 8 · Advent

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Dwelling

I wonder how guards on duty feel about the night? I wonder why people look forward to God's help like a guard waits for the morning?



Praying

Thank you, loving God, for sending Jesus—at just the right time—to come and set us free. Make us eager for the morning when Jesus will come again and put all things right.



Close your prayer time by saying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 9 · Monday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Prepare the way of the Lord,

and all people will see the salvation of our God. (p. 818)



Bible Reading: Isaiah 40:3–5

A messenger is calling out,

"In the desert prepare

the way for the LORD.

Make a straight road through it

for our God.

Every valley will be filled in.

Every mountain and hill will be made level.

The rough ground will be smoothed out.

The rocky places will be made flat.

Then the glory of the LORD will appear.

And everyone will see it together.

The LORD has spoken."

Dwelling

I wonder how it feels to know someone so great is coming? I wonder how we can “prepare the way for the LORD?”



Praying

- praise God for the ways God shows faithfulness to us
- offer thanks to God for being the same yesterday, today, and forever



Thank you, God, for comforting us. Thank you for so being great that mountains and rocky places can't keep you from coming to us. Thank you for sending Jesus to show us how much you love us. Shine through us every day. Amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 10 · Tuesday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Prepare the way of the Lord,

and all people will see the salvation of our God. (p. 818)



Bible Reading: Jeremiah 33:14–16

"The days are coming," announces the LORD. "At that time I will fulfill my good promise to my people. I made it to the people of Israel and Judah.

"Here is what I will do in those days and at that time.

I will make a godly Branch grow from David's royal line.

He will do what is fair and right in the land.

In those days Judah will be saved.

Jerusalem will live in safety.

And it will be called

The LORD Who Makes Us Right With Himself."

Dwelling

How do we feel when someone keeps a promise he or she made to us? What promises has God made to us?



Praying

- for artists who help us see things differently
- for forests and loggers



Jesus, we are waiting with your people everywhere for the day when God's promise will come true. We want you to come and make everything fair and right. Please help us do what's fair and right too. Amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 11 · Wednesday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Prepare the way of the Lord,

and all people will see the salvation of our God. (p. 818)



Bible Reading: Micah 5:2, 4–5

The LORD says,

“Bethlehem Ephrathah, you might not be
an important town in the nation of Judah.

But out of you will come for me
a ruler over Israel.

His family line goes back
to the early years of your nation.

It goes all the way back
to days of long ago.”

That promised son will stand firm
and be a shepherd for his flock.
The LORD will give him the strength to do it.
The LORD his God will give him
the authority to rule.
His people will live safely.
His greatness will reach
from one end of the earth to the other.
And he will be our peace.

Dwelling

I wonder if there is anything you'd like to tell God? I wonder if there is anything you'd like to ask God?



Praying

- for babysitters
- for grandparents



Jesus, you are our shepherd and our king. You are strong enough to keep us safe.
You are our peace and we don't need to be afraid. We trust you. Amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 12 · Thursday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Prepare the way of the Lord,

and all people will see the salvation of our God. (p. 818)



Bible Reading: Isaiah 9:2, 6–7

The people who are now living in darkness

will see a great light.

They are now living in a very dark land.

But a light will shine on them.

A child will be born to us.

A son will be given to us.

He will rule over us.

And he will be called

Wonderful Adviser and Mighty God.

He will also be called Father Who Lives Forever

and Prince Who Brings Peace.

There will be no limit to how great his authority is.

The peace he brings will never end.

He will rule on David's throne

and over his kingdom.

He will make the kingdom strong and secure.

His rule will be based on what is fair and right.

It will last forever.

The LORD's great love will make sure that happens.

He rules over all.

Dwelling

I wonder what it feels like to live in darkness? I wonder how Jesus' light shines on us?



Praying

- for our president or prime minister and other government leaders
- for the people who live in Asia



Light of the world, thank you for shining on us. You came as a baby, and now you are king, and you are making everything right! Fill the world with your bright light. Amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 13 · Friday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Prepare the way of the Lord,

and all people will see the salvation of our God. (p. 818)



Bible Reading: Zechariah 2:10–11, 13

"'People of Zion, shout and be glad! I am coming to live among you,' announces the LORD. 'At that time many nations will join themselves to me. And they will become my people. I will live among you,' says the LORD. Then you will know that the LORD who rules over all has sent me to you. . . . All you people of the world, be still because the LORD is coming. He is getting ready to come down from his holy temple in heaven."



Dwelling

I wonder what God is telling us to do? I wonder what God is promising to do?

Praying

- for God to be first in our hearts
- for courage when we are afraid



How amazing, God, that you come to live among us! Thank you for the Holy Spirit, who joins us to you. We are so glad! We wouldn't want to belong to anyone else. In Jesus' name, amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 14 · Saturday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Prepare the way of the Lord,

and all people will see the salvation of our God. (p. 818)



Bible Reading: 2 Peter 1:19–21

We also have the message of the prophets. This message can be trusted completely. You must pay attention to it. The message is like a light shining in a dark place. It will shine until the day Jesus comes. Then the Morning Star will rise in your hearts. Above all, here is what you must understand. No prophecy in Scripture ever came from a prophet's own understanding of things. Prophecy never came simply because a prophet wanted it to. Instead, the Holy Spirit guided the prophets as they spoke. So, although prophets are human, prophecy comes from God.



Dwelling

I wonder what words prophets speak? I wonder what words the Holy Spirit gives us to speak?

Praying

- for pastors and worship leaders
- for churches in Europe, and especially for people who are persecuted for believing in Jesus



Lord, thank you that your word is a lamp and a light. Help us to pay attention when we hear the Bible. Let your words shine in our dark places and make them light. Amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 15 · Third Sunday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. (p. 819)



Bible Reading: Isaiah 40:9–11

Shout it out loud. Don't be afraid.

Say to the towns of Judah,

"Your God is coming!"

The LORD and King is coming with power.

He rules with a powerful arm.

He has set his people free.

He is bringing them back as his reward.

He has won the battle over their enemies.

He takes care of his flock like a shepherd.

He gathers the lambs in his arms.

He carries them close to his heart.

He gently leads those that have little ones.

Dwelling

I wonder what God might set us free from? I wonder what it would feel like to be a lamb in Jesus' arms?



Praying

Shepherd God, you have strong and gentle arms. Thanks for loving little ones like us and carrying us close to your heart. Thanks for gently leading the mom and dad sheep.



Close your prayer time by saying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 16 · Monday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. (p. 819)



Bible Reading: Luke 1:11–18

Then an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah. The angel was standing at the right side of the incense altar. When Zechariah saw him, he was amazed and terrified. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah. Your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will have a child. It will be a boy, and you must call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you. His birth will make many people very glad. He will be important in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or other such drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will prepare the way for the Lord. He will have the same spirit and power that Elijah had. He will bring peace between parents and their children. He will also teach people who don't obey to be wise and do what is right. In this way, he will prepare a people who are ready for the Lord."

Dwelling

I wonder what an angel might look like? I wonder what would it be like to see one?



Praying

- praise God for being wise and our Counselor
- offer thanks for the ways God gives us wisdom and guidance



Thank you, Holy Spirit, for preparing the way for Jesus to come. Make us ready. We want to obey you. Help us always to listen to what you are saying to us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 17 · Tuesday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. (p. 819)



Bible Reading: Luke 1:57, 66–67, 76–79

The time came for Elizabeth to have her baby. She gave birth to a son.

Everyone who heard this wondered about it. And because the Lord was with John, they asked, "What is this child going to be?"

John's father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit. He prophesied,

"And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High God.

You will go ahead of the Lord to prepare the way for him.

You will tell his people how they can be saved.

You will tell them that their sins can be forgiven.

All of that will happen because our God is tender and caring.

His kindness will bring the rising sun to us from heaven.

It will shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death.
It will guide our feet on the path of peace.”

Dwelling

I wonder what being filled with the Holy Spirit would be like? I wonder what the Holy Spirit might tell us to say?



Praying

- for business owners and farmers who use the land
- for people or places without clean water



Tender and caring God, may your rising Sun, Jesus, chase the shadows away.
We praise you for the new day that dawns because of him. We praise you for
opening eyes and guiding feet. We love you, Lord. Amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 18 · Wednesday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. (p. 819)



Bible Reading: Luke 3:2–5, 15–16

At that time God's word came to John, son of Zechariah, in the desert. He went into all the countryside around the Jordan River. There he preached that people should be baptized and turn away from their sins. Then God would forgive them. Here is what is written in the book of Isaiah the prophet. It says,

"A messenger is calling out in the desert,

'Prepare the way for the Lord.

Make straight paths for him.

Every valley will be filled in.

Every mountain and hill will be made level.'" (Isaiah 40:3–5)

The people were waiting. They were expecting something. They were all wondering in their hearts if John might be the Messiah. John answered them all,

"I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I am will come. I'm not good enough to untie the straps of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

Dwelling

I wonder if there is anything you are waiting for? I wonder if it is hard or easy to wait?



Praying

- for cousins
- for people who are afraid or facing hard times



O valley-tiller and mountain-leveler, pave the roads of our hearts for you. Even though you are the great king for whom everyone has been waiting, and even though we are not fit to untie your sandals, thank you for coming to us. You are the best, Lord Jesus! Amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 19 · Thursday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. (p. 819)



Bible Reading: John 1:6–9, 15

There was a man sent from God. His name was John. He came to be a witness about that light. He was a witness so that all people might believe. John himself was not the light. He came only as a witness to the light.

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

John was a witness about the Word. John cried out and said, "This was the one I was talking about. I said, 'He who comes after me is more important than I am. He is more important because he existed before I was born.'"



Dwelling

I wonder what it is like to be sent from God? I wonder how John gave witness to the light?

Praying

- for people who create television, radio, movie, or Internet content
- for refugees and immigrants



Jesus, you are the only light of the world. May we stop hogging the spotlight and instead point people to you. You are the most important! In the bright name of Jesus, amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 20 · Friday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. (p. 819)



Bible Reading: Luke 1:26–35

In the sixth month after Elizabeth had become pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee. He was sent to a virgin. The girl was engaged to a man named Joseph. He came from the family line of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel greeted her and said, "The Lord has blessed you in a special way. He is with you."

Mary was very upset because of his words. She wondered what kind of greeting this could be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary. God is very pleased with you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. You must call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord God will make him a king like his father David of long ago. The Son of the Most High God will rule forever over his people. They are from the family line of Jacob. That kingdom will never end."

“How can this happen?” Mary asked the angel. “I am a virgin.”

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come to you. The power of the Most High God will cover you. So the holy one that is born will be called the Son of God.”

Dwelling

I wonder what Mary felt like when the angel came to visit? I wonder why God was very pleased with Mary?



Praying

- for greater trust in God, even when we can't understand God's ways
- for a willingness to serve God



What a scary thing you asked of Mary, Lord! To be “Mom” to God-in-the-flesh, your Son, our Savior. How can it be that the God who created the whole wide world would grow as a baby in Mary's body? It's too big for us to figure out, but our hearts say, “Wow!” and “Thank you.” Amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 21 · Saturday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. (p. 819)



Bible Reading: Luke 1:35–45

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come to you. The power of the Most High God will cover you. So the holy one that is born will be called the Son of God. Your relative Elizabeth will have a child even though she is old. People thought she could not have children. But she has been pregnant for six months now. That's because what God says will always come true."

"I serve the Lord," Mary answered. "May it happen to me just as you said it would." Then the angel left her.

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in Judea's hill country. There she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby inside her jumped. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she called out, "God has blessed you more than

other women. And blessed is the child you will have! But why is God so kind to me? Why has the mother of my Lord come to me? As soon as I heard the sound of your voice, the baby inside me jumped for joy. You are a woman God has blessed. You have believed that the Lord would keep his promises to you!”

Dwelling

I wonder how Mary felt when she heard Elizabeth’s words? I wonder how the baby inside Elizabeth knew to jump for joy?



Praying

- for prayer ministries and prayer warriors of the church
- for churches in the Middle East, and especially for people who are persecuted for believing in Jesus



Dear Jesus, the unborn baby John knew who you were even before you were born, and he jumped for joy. May we know you too. May we believe you and do just what you say, and jump for joy at the kindness of your coming to us. In the blessed name of Jesus, amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 22 · Fourth Sunday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. (p. 819)



Bible Reading: Luke 1:46–51

Mary said,

“My soul gives glory to the Lord.

My spirit delights in God my Savior.

He has taken note of me

even though I am not considered important.

From now on all people will call me blessed.

The Mighty One has done great things for me.

His name is holy.

He shows his mercy to those who have respect for him,

from parent to child down through the years.

He has done mighty things with his powerful arm.

He has scattered those who are proud in their deepest thoughts.”

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12/18/2016 • --/--/2017 • 12/23/2018 • 12/22/2019 • 12/20/2020 • 12/19/2021

Dwelling

What words or phrases from this passage stick in your mind? I wonder what songs remind us about the great things God has done for us?



Praying

Savior, thank you for noticing us. Mighty One, thank you for doing great things for us. Merciful One, thank you for the gift of Jesus and for making us your children.



Close your prayer time by saying the Lord's Prayer together.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 23 · Monday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. (p. 819)



Bible Reading: Luke 1:46–47, 52–55

Mary said,

“My soul gives glory to the Lord.

My spirit delights in God my Savior. . . .

He has brought down rulers from their thrones.

But he has lifted up people who are not considered important.

He has filled with good things those who are hungry.

But he has sent away empty those who are rich.

He has helped the people of Israel, who serve him.

He has always remembered to be kind

to Abraham and his children down through the years.

He has done it just as he promised to our people of long ago.”

Dwelling

I wonder how God lifts up people who are not important? I wonder how we give glory to God?



Praying

- praise God for being a servant-king
- offer thanks for ways God can use you to serve people who are hurting



Savior, thank you for always being kind. You feed the hungry with good things and you lift up people who are not treated as important. Make us just like you. Amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 24 · Tuesday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. (p. 819)



Bible Reading: 1 Chronicles 17:7, 11–14

"So tell my servant David, 'The LORD who rules over all says, "I took you away from the grasslands. That is where you were taking care of your father's sheep and goats. I appointed you ruler over my people Israel.

" "Some day your life will come to an end. . . . Then I will give you one of your own sons to become the next king after you. I will make his kingdom secure. He is the one who will build me a house. I will set up his throne. It will last forever. I will be his father. And he will be my son. . . . I will never take my love away from your son. I will place him over my house and my kingdom forever. His throne will last forever." "

Dwelling

I wonder how David felt when he heard these promises? I wonder who will sit on the throne forever?



Praying

- for veterinarians and other people who take care of animals
- for wise energy use that does not harm God’s creation



Great Son of David, thank you for adopting us into the King’s family. Thank you that you will never take your love away from us. And thank you that because we belong to you, one day we will rule with you. Amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 25 · Wednesday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. (p. 819)



Bible Reading: Psalm 89:1–4, 26–29

LORD, I will sing about your great love forever.

For all time to come, I will tell how faithful you are.

I will tell everyone that your love stands firm forever.

I will tell them that you are always faithful, even in heaven itself.

You said, "Here is the covenant I have made with my chosen one.

Here is the promise I have made to my servant David.

'I will make your family line continue forever.

I will make your kingdom secure for all time to come.'"

He will call out to me, 'You are my Father.

You are my God. You are my Rock and Savior.'

I will also make him my oldest son.

Among all the kings of the earth, he will be the most important one.

I will continue to love him forever.

I will never break my covenant with him.

I will make his family line continue forever.

His kingdom will last as long as the heavens.

Dwelling

I wonder what about God makes us sing? I wonder what promises God makes to us?



Praying

- for our neighbors and neighborhood
- for people who don't have a mom or dad in their lives



Jesus, we want to sing how wonderful you are! You love us. You rescue us. You are strong. You are a safe place to hide. You are King and you always will be. Thank you that we belong to you! Amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 26 · Thursday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. (p. 819)



Bible Reading: Isaiah 11:1–3

Jesse's family is like a tree that has been cut down.

A new little tree will grow from its stump.

From its roots a Branch will grow and produce fruit.

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on that Branch.

The Spirit will help him to be wise and understanding.

The Spirit will help him make wise plans and carry them out.

The Spirit will help him know the LORD and have respect for him.

The Branch will take delight

in respecting the LORD.



Dwelling

I wonder how these words make you feel? I wonder what it's like for the Spirit to rest on us?

Praying

- for enemies and peaceworkers
- for people in the military and their families



God, you bring life out of death, new trees out of dead stumps. Jesus, thank you for coming as a baby. Just as you grew to be wise and understanding, make us grow to be wise and understanding. As fruit grows from trees, let love and joy grow from us. Amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 27 · Friday



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus’ return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Rejoice! Rejoice!
Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. (p. 819)



Bible Reading: Revelation 12:1–5, 10

A great sign appeared in heaven. It was a woman wearing the sun like clothes. The moon was under her feet. On her head she wore a crown of 12 stars. She was pregnant. She cried out in pain because she was about to have a baby. Then another sign appeared in heaven. It was a huge red dragon. . . . The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to have a baby. The dragon wanted to eat her child the moment he was born. She gave birth to a son. He “will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.” (Psalm 2:9)

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven. It said,

“Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God have come.
The authority of his Messiah has come.
Satan has been thrown down.”

Dwelling

I wonder what you think about this picture? I wonder what God may be showing us?



Praying

- for eyes to see the Holy Spirit's work
- for a heart that can tell right from wrong



Mighty God, thank you that the baby is the king and the dragon has to flee.
Salvation, power, and your kingdom have come—in a manger! We are amazed,
O Lord. Amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Advent · Day 28 · Christmas Eve



Preparing

Set an extra place where you eat or add an extra chair to the place where you pray as a sign of expecting Jesus' return.



Inviting

In the wilderness **prepare the way for the LORD.** (Isaiah 40:3)



Stilling

In the silence, ask the Holy Spirit to help you pay attention to God.



Singing

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. (p. 819)



Bible Reading: Matthew 1:18–25

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about. His mother Mary and Joseph had promised to get married. But before they started to live together, it became clear that she was going to have a baby. She became pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph was faithful to the law. But he did not want to put her to shame in public. So he planned to divorce her quietly.

But as Joseph was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit. She is going to have a son. You must give him the name Jesus. That's because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to bring about what the Lord had said would happen. He had said through the prophet, "The virgin is going to have a baby. She will give birth to a son. And he will be called Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) The name Immanuel means "God with us."

Joseph woke up. He did what the angel of the Lord commanded him to do. He took Mary home as his wife. But he did not sleep with her until she gave birth to a son. And Joseph gave him the name Jesus.

Dwelling

I wonder how Joseph felt when he found out Mary was going to have a baby? I wonder what it is like to see an angel in a dream?



Praying

- for churches in the Americas, and especially for people who are persecuted for believing in Jesus
- for people who don't know the story of Jesus



God, everything happened as you said it would. Thank you that Joseph and Mary obeyed your plan. Thank you for coming to us in Jesus to save us from our sins. Help us welcome you as Joseph and Mary did. Amen.

Blessing

Wait for the LORD; **be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.** (Psalm 27:14)



Songs · Advent · Days 1–14

Prepare the Way of the Lord

① E♭ A♭ E♭ ② A♭ E♭ ③

Pre - pare the way of the Lord. Pre - pare the way of the Lord, and

A♭ E♭ ④ A♭ E♭

all peo-ple will see the sal - va - tion of our God. Pre -

This song can be sung in a round or canon, as indicated by the numbers.

Song Title: "Prepare the Way of the Lord"

Words: Isaiah 40:3, 52:10

Music (PREPARE THE WAY): Jacques Berthier (b. 1923; d. 1994) © 1984 Les Presses de Taizé, admin. GIA Publications, Inc., exclusive North American agent

Rejoice! Rejoice/Vendrá, vendrá

Chords: D, Em, Bm, G, Am, D, Em, D, G, C, Am, Em/B, Bm, Em

Lyrics:

Re - joice! Re - joice! Im - man u - el shall
Ven - drá, ven - drá rey E - ma - nuel; a -

come to thee, O Is - ra - el.
lé - gra - te, Oh Is - ra - el.

Song Title: "O Come, O Come, Immanuel" or "O Ven, O Ven, Emanuel"

Words: *Psalterium Canticum Catholicarum*, Köln, 1710; English tr. composite, P.D.; Spanish tr. F.J. Pagura

Music (VENI EMMANUEL): French processional, 15th c., adapt. Thomas Helmore, 1854, P.D.

