

# **God Comes Close: A Guide for Advent at Bethel**

## **Advent: Week 1 – Hope**

“Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” – Isaiah 40:31

Today we enter into the advent season, preparing our hearts to celebrate the birth of our savior, Jesus Christ. This week we focus on the theme of hope. As we move closer to the day of Christ's birth, the flame of hope begins to burn more brightly. Hope fueled the ministry of the prophets and the worship of Israel. May we be filled with hope as we prepare to celebrate Christ's birth and look forward to his return.

### **Scripture readings:**

Isaiah 9:2

John 8:12

Isaiah 40:28-31

Luke 1:26-38\*

1 Peter 1:3-4

Psalm 130:5-8

### **Questions for reflection:**

What do these passages tell us about hope? What does hope mean in the Bible?

How do you experience hope? What does hope mean for you?

What is the hope you are holding on to this advent season?

How can we share hope with others?

### **Sing or listen to:**

*O Little Town of Bethlehem,*

*O Come Let Us Adore Him*

### **Use this prayer as a guide for your prayers of hope this week:**

*Lord of hope, as night workers long for the sunrise, we long for the coming of Christ. We yearn for your Spirit to give us a glimpse of your glory, knowing that one day we will see in full. You know the suffering in our own lives and throughout all the world.*

*This weight is too much for us to bear alone,  
and so today we choose again to place our hope in you.*

(As you light an advent candle)

Say together: “We light this candle as a symbol of our hope. We choose to trust in this hope, as we wait for Jesus to be born and God to come close.”

\* *Worship service sermon text*

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## **Advent: Week 2 – Peace**

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” – Isaiah 9:6

This week we turn to the theme of peace. We look to the peace that comes from Jesus, that we cannot find anywhere else. During a season of busyness and a world in turmoil, we rest in the assurance of the coming of our redeemer, our Prince of Peace.

### **Scripture Readings:**

Isaiah 9:6-7

Isaiah 26:3-4

Psalms 23

Luke 1:39-56\*

Luke 2:14

John 14:27

### **Questions for reflection:**

What do these scripture passages tell us about peace?

What do you think of when you think of peace?

How are you experiencing peace and rest this advent season?

How can we share the peace of Christ with those around us?

### **Sing or listen to:**

*Silent Night*

*O Come, O Come Emmanuel*

*Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*

### **Use this prayer as a guide for your prayers of peace this week:**

*God of peace, you call us from the exile of sin with the good news of restoration.*

*We gladly declare that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

*Comfort us with the expectation of your saving power,  
made known to us in Jesus, our Messiah.*

(As you light your advent candles)

Say together: “We light this candle as a symbol of peace. We choose to take comfort in the peace that comes through Jesus' birth and our God who comes close.”

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## **Advent: Week 3 – Joy**

“Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for the great is the Holy One of Israel among you.” – Isaiah 12:5-6

We enter into this week with our hearts focused on joy. The prophets spoke of anticipated joy when the day of fulfillment would come. The angels spoke of great joy when Christ was born. The shepherds rejoiced when they received the good news of Jesus' birth. Let us rejoice and proclaim this great joy to the world.

### **Scripture Readings:**

Isaiah 12:2-6

Psalm 100

Luke 2:1-15\*

Isaiah 60:1-3

Isaiah 35:10

Philippians 4:4-5

### **Questions for reflection:**

What do these scripture passages tell us about joy?

Where does the Bible tell us joy comes from?

What does joy mean to you? What is bringing you joy this advent season?

How can we experience joy together and share the joy of Christ with others?

### **Sing or listen to:**

*Joy to the World*

*Angels We Have Heard on High*

### **Use this prayer as a guide for your prayers of joy this week:**

*Lord Jesus Christ, your first coming brought joy to your waiting people. Like expectant children, we wait now for you to return once again in glory. Holy Father, we rejoice that you have adopted us as your very own children. Holy Spirit, guide us in faith as we share the joy of salvation with all those whom we encounter.*

(As you light your advent candles)

Say together: “We light this candle as a symbol of joy. We choose to rejoice as we wait for Jesus to be born and God to come close.”

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## **Advent: Week 4 – Love**

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,  
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” – John 3:16

In this final week of advent, we focus on the theme of love, the love God showed the world in sending us his Son Jesus Christ. We celebrate the love shown to us in Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection. God's love for us is steadfast and everlasting, not just for the here and now, but for life eternal. We rejoice in the assurance of God's love for us in Christ.

### **Scripture Readings:**

Matthew 1:18-24  
John 3:16  
Isaiah 54:10  
Joel 2:13  
Zephaniah 3:17  
John 1:12-14  
1 John 4:9-10  
Romans 8:37-39

### **Questions for reflection:**

What do these scripture passages tell us about God's love?  
What does God's love mean to you? How do you respond to this love?  
How are you experiencing God's love this Advent season?  
How can we share the love of God with others?

### **Sing or listen to:**

*O Come all Ye Faithful*  
*Hark the Herald Angels Sing*

### **Use this prayer as a guide for your prayers this week:**

*Father, because of your steadfast love, you sent your Son to rescue us from our sin and brokenness. Remove anything that hinders our love of you. We know that there is no sin too great and that no one is out of reach of your arm that was outstretched on the cross. Fill our hearts with awe and wonder at the riches of your love.*

(As you light your advent candles)

Say together: “We light this candle as a symbol of love. We choose to remember, receive and share God's love as we wait for Jesus to be born and God to come close.”

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## **Christmas**

“Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord!”  
– Luke 2:11

Jesus is born! We have been waiting for and preparing for this day. On this Christmas day, let us live as people who have hope, peace, joy, and love reigning in our lives. As Christmas lights and advent candles burn brightly and light our path, let us live as those who have Christ’s light burning in us.

### **Scripture readings:**

Luke 2:1-20

Romans 8:19-23

Isaiah 52:7-10

Psalms 98

Hebrews 1:1-4

John 1:1-5

### **Questions for reflection:**

What do these scripture passages tell us about the Saviour’s role in our world?  
How have you experienced God’s love this Advent season?  
How can we share the love God showed us in the birth of Jesus with others?

### **Sing or listen to:**

*Joy to the World*

*O Holy Night*

*The First Noel*

### **Prayer:**

*Thank you, loving and gracious God, for sending your Son to us, born as a baby, to be worshiped and adored, to teach us your ways, to bring us hope, to make peace possible with you and with one another, to fill our hearts with joy, that we may honor and glorify you.*

(As you light your advent candles)

Say together: “We light this candle symbolizing the birth of Jesus, the Saviour of the world. We choose to rejoice in hope, peace, joy and love we have in Jesus.”