

2022

Advent Devotionals

Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church





**Mount Pleasant
Presbyterian Church**

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Advent Devotions

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Faith Formation at Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church

This Advent devotional booklet represents a collaboration between the Adult Faith Formation Ministry team with MPPC pastors, staff, and church members representing a wide swath of ministries and ages. Through the invitation to scripture, study, prayer, and action, may God more deeply form us into Christ's followers as we seek together to serve God in our congregation, our community, and the world.

Adult Faith Formation Ministry Team

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*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet
of the messenger who announces peace, who
brings good news, who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”*

— Isaiah 52:7

Advent

The word Advent derives from the Latin word meaning “to come.” Advent is a beginning — the start of the new liturgical year and a fresh opportunity to immerse ourselves in the great story of our salvation through Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem. Advent also points to an ending — the consummation of all things when Christ will return in glory to bring righteousness, justice, and peace. We begin the season of Advent with our eyes on the horizon: watching and waiting for Christ’s coming.

Advent is an annual refresher course on the nature of Christian hope. We look back across the long arc of history to understand and remember who God is and how God works in the world — mighty and merciful; ever-faithful and abounding in love; creating, redeeming, sustaining all that is. We look forward, too, straining to see the new thing God is doing — a river flowing in the desert, a fresh shoot growing from an old stump, weapons of war turned into instruments of peace. Thus, we learn to proclaim the gospel with confidence, trusting that the Spirit will work wonders, the promises of God will come to pass, and Jesus will continue to lead the way.²

This year the Adult Faith Formation Ministry team invites you to reflect during the season of Advent as each week we light a candle on the Advent wreath. In the ancient world, various peoples lit fires to mark the turning of the light into winter’s season and to pray for the return of the light. The church has Christianized that practice in the traditional lighting of the Advent wreath. These candles are signs of the growing light of Christ who is coming again in all fullness into the darkness of our world. Until that day, we watch and wait in holy expectation for Christ’s coming, lighting candles of hope, peace, joy, and love; and remembering the promises of God with prayer.³

Each week includes a simple liturgy that you are invited to use as you light your Advent wreath at home. You may wish to turn off the lights as your family gathers around the wreath. Different members of the family might each take a turn in the liturgical readings and prayers.

May hope, peace, joy, and love live in your hearts and minds as we celebrate the good news of Jesus Christ – Emmanuel, God With Us.

²David Gambrell, Presbyterians Today, <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/pt-1119-wpb/>

³https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/worship/pdfs/lighting_the_advent_wreath.pdf

Week 1 (November 27 - December 3)

Hope

Advent at Home: Liturgy for Lighting the Advent Wreath

Greeting

Watch and wait for Christ's coming! Light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, remembering the promises of God with prayer.

Lighting

We light this candle in hope. (Light the first candle)

Scripture

Hear God's promise of hope from Isaiah 40:31:
Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Reflect

Hope is the feeling of expectation and a desire for something to happen. This year has been such a trying time in the world with pandemic, social unrest, contentious elections, storms, fires, earthquakes, and personal challenges; hope can be difficult to find. However, it is in times like these that we need hope the most. The good news is that those who hope in the Lord will be renewed in strength. In this season of Advent, we wait with great expectation for the living hope promised to us through the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Prayer

God of hope, into our darkness come! (individual prayers may be offered...) Amen.



May you experience God's hope this week.

Hope

Scripture

Isaiah 2:1-5

The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!

Psalm 122:1-9

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!" Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem — built as a city that is bound firmly together. To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD. For there the thrones for judgment were set up, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers." For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, "Peace be within you." For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your good.

Devotional

"Hope"

It should not be surprising that the final chapters of the Bible proffer a strong vision of hope both for the church and the world. In these chapters, we read not of believers being lifted up to heaven, but rather, the holy city of God, the new Jerusalem, descending to earth.

"The home of God is among mortals," we read in Revelation 21: 3. Thus, we are given to see that a holy vision of hope is being realized in our lives as we go about the daily activities that we may call routine or ordinary.

My friend Emily Wilkes was recently ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament to serve as Mission Specialist for Domestic Refugee Ministries with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. After her graduation from Davidson College and before attending Princeton Theological Seminary, Emily was a Young Adult Volunteer at Ferncliff Camp and Conference Center in Arkansas. In a blog entry which she posted during her YAV year, she reflected on a shift in her perspective in which God opened her eyes to the ways that her daily acts embodied hope.

She moved from saying: "I'm dumping smelly, sloppy leftover food covered with fruit flies into a pile of dirt" to also saying, "through composting, I have the opportunity to intimately participate in the cycles of death and life, perhaps one of the most tangible examples of resurrection on earth."

She moved from saying: "I'm hitting a drum completely out of rhythm" to also saying, "I'm creating a 'joyful noise' with people experiencing homelessness... I'm worshiping God in a space where anyone can play any instrument they choose, regardless of skill level; we're valued for whatever gifts we bring to the table."

She moved from saying: "I'm pulling weeds out of a raised bed...I'm planting seeds, watering sprouts, harvesting crops" to "I'm living into my call to be a steward of the earth...I'm creating space for new life to emerge."

Devotional Continued

May Advent 2022 be a season in which you embody God's vision of hope as you see your daily activities in a new light and are given to say:

"Not only am I grocery shopping, planning meals, cooking breakfast, packing lunches, getting dinner on the table for the thousandth time," but also "I'm participating in the sacramental act of sharing food as Jesus shared communion with his disciples and in so doing, I remember to share what I have so that no child on the planet goes to bed hungry."

"I'm stuck in traffic yet again on my way home from work," and also "I have been given the gift of time and I dare not squander it by getting needlessly annoyed, but I am called to use it to pray for my neighbors near and far."

"I'm putting money in the offering plate at church," and also, "I'm grateful to God for gifts and blessings which know no bounds, and I trust that God will use my meager gifts and talents to witness to the hope that one day it truly will be on earth as it is in heaven." During Advent 2022, may you experience in new ways how your own daily activities are a witness to God's vision of hope for the world.

~ Rev. Lib McGregor Simmons, Parish Associate

Prayer

HOPE

Hold on to the promise of God's faithfulness!

Obstacles will be overcome!

Prayers will open the door!

Exclaim the name of the Lord always!

~ Poem by Stephen Leader, Brandon Guest



This week... Explore what God's Word says about Hope:

Jeremiah 29:11

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with HOPE.

Romans 12:12

Rejoice in HOPE, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.

Isaiah 40:31

But 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.

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the assurance of things HOPED for, the conviction of things not seen.

Psalms 62:5

For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my HOPE is from him.

Lamentations 3:21-23

But this I call to mind, and therefore I have HOPE: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Psalms 42:5

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? HOPE in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.



Artwork by Weller.

Peace

Advent at Home: Liturgy for Lighting the Advent Wreath

Greeting

Watch and wait for Christ's coming! Light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, remembering the promises of God with prayer.

Lighting

We light this candle in hope.
(Light the first candle)

We light this candle for peace.
(Light the second candle)

Scripture

Hear God's promise of peace from
Luke 1:78-79:

*By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

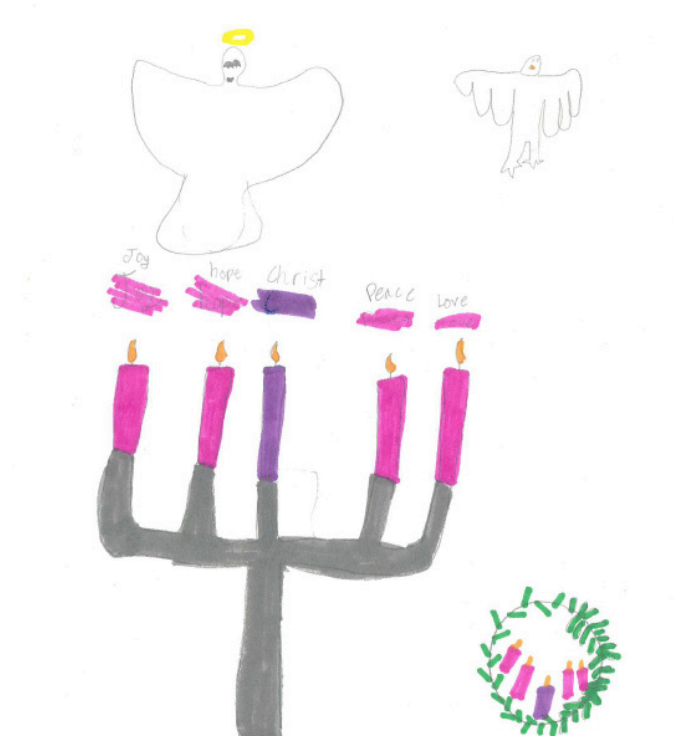
*May you
experience
God's peace
this week.*

Reflect

"May the peace of Christ Jesus be with you." We say this every Sunday in worship, but what do we mean by these words? Peace can have many meanings. It can be a feeling of calmness or a serene sense of comfort. Sometimes during Advent, we can get overwhelmed with things to do and with expectations to "make Christmas perfect," that we can easily miss the peace of the season. How can you take time this year to let go of busyness and make room for peace?

Prayer

God of hope, into our darkness come!
(individual prayers may be offered...) Amen.



Peace

Scripture

Isaiah 11:1-10

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious..

Psalms 72:1-7, 18-19

Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son. May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice. May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness. May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor. May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations. May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth. In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more.

Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed be his glorious name forever; may his glory fill the whole earth. Amen and Amen.

Devotional

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" (Luke 2:14).

More than 2,000 years after the song of the angels there is even less peace on earth than then. And the longer we continue our warring madness, the more destructive weapons of war seem to become.

And it is not only in countries far away, but in our own communities, and in our own lives there seems to be little peace, as we experience struggles for power all around us. The busy-ness of our lives afford us little time to experience peace as a reality.

Often, as soon as I start to think about peace and what we need at this very moment, I hear this song, short, repetitive, but so powerful.

"Dona nobis pacem pacem."

"Dona nobis pacem."

Perhaps God knows that we are in need of peace, that we need to take a moment to close our eyes, breathe, release some stress, and focus on something other than the lack of peace we feel right now. Maybe we need to just stop for a minute and take a break to shut the world out, to focus on something other than the noise, the hustle and bustle, and all that is the opposite of peace.

Let us use advent this year for an honest prayer for peace, a prayer coming from the deepest place in our lives, representing the deepest cry from creation. "Glory to God ... and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" (Luke 2:14).

~ Rev. Danie de Beer,
Interim Pastor & Head of Staff

Prayer

Dear Lord,

You are called the Prince of Peace. May we each seek you as our chosen Lord and Savior so that we, too, may know the peace that passes understanding which you have promised us. May the busyness of the season and the weight of our to-do lists be replaced with your peace. Quiet our hearts and allow Your peace to abide in each one of us.

In the name of the Prince of peace. Amen

~ Mary Allen Edgerton, Deacon



This week...Explore what God's Word says about Peace:

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

2 Thessalonians 3:16

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.

Colossians 3:15

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.



Artwork by Lydia.

Activities

Share the hope, peace, joy, and love of this

We wait for Jesus, the HOPE that he brings as the Light of the world.

Share Hope:

Talk about Hope. Read Romans 8:25, "But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." Having hope might also mean having patience. "What does it feel like to wait? I wonder what hoping feels like."

- ◇ Draw a picture of the things you hope for.
- ◇ Fill a box with your hopes and dreams. Keep your box private or share with your family members.
- ◇ Planting seeds can be a symbol of hope, because it takes a long time for them to grow. Plant some seeds and watch them grow. If it's too cold to plant seeds now, make a plan to plant later.

Choose a charity at the beginning of the year and put out a large jar to collect loose change and bills for the year. Then, in the middle of December, take all the money to the bank and write one check to the organization. Include a note explaining that your family collected funds all year and thought and prayed for their work all year. Keep a sign or a note next to the jar explaining what the funds are for, and visitors to your home will have the opportunity to learn about the charity you're supporting as well.

Take a walk with your family or friends and look for ways the earth is getting ready for winter's season of rest. How do we get ready for the Savior's coming? (Taken from MPPC 2020 Advent Devotion Booklet)

May the PEACE of Christ be with you and among you.

Share Peace:

Talk about peace with your family. Consider, "How does peace within your own heart help create peace in the whole world? I wonder what peace feels like. I wonder how you share that peace with others."

- ◇ Draw a picture of what peace means to you.
- ◇ Write a letter to someone you think is a peacemaker and thank them for their work.
- ◇ Look in magazines for pictures that seem peaceful or calming. Make them into a collage as a family.

Make a prayer garland with red and green construction paper. Cut strips to link. On each strip, write the name of someone or something you will pray for (family, friends, your church, those who are ill, those for whom Christmas may not be a very happy time or who need to be blessed with peace.) Use glue or staples to link your prayer chain together. Hang the chain where it will remind you to pray. (Taken from MPPC 2020 Advent Devotion Booklet)

"Interview" a neighbor near your home. Ask how they celebrate Christmas and what this season means to them. Invite them to tell you about a special Christmas memory. Talk about the angel's announcement to the shepherds, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace, goodwill among people!" [Luke 2:14] How does Jesus' coming help us feel peace? (Adapted from MPPC 2020 Advent Devotion Booklet)

& Actions

Advent Season with one another and the world.

JOY to the World, the Lord has come!

Share Your Joy:

Around the table, talk about joy. “Do you think there is a difference between happiness and joy? How would you describe it? I wonder what joy feels like.

- ◇ Draw a picture of something that brings you great joy.
- ◇ Smile at others when you see them. See if they smile back!
- ◇ Spend time together as a family and share in joy together: bake cookies, play a game, or read a story.

The Kindness Rock Project was started by one person, Megan Murphy, in 2015 when she painted a rock with the words “You’ve got this” and left it on the beach for someone else to find. Many other people have picked up on this trend and have left painted rocks around for others to find and collect. The project has grown in popularity, and you can find detailed instructions on the movement’s website (thekindnessrockproject.com). Gather some rocks, paint, and a paint brush and spread some kindness during the Advent and Christmas season.

Make Luminaries – many people make luminaries to use around the church or a home on Christmas Eve. They are a beautiful addition to the sidewalk or driveway. Traditional luminaries are made with paper bags. Designs are cut out of the bag, and tissue is affixed behind the cutouts. After the design is done, the bags are filled with a couple of inches of kitty litter or gravel, and candles are carefully placed inside. (Battery operated candles are great for luminaries, too. And they are safe.)

LOVE one another as Christ loves you.

Share Love:

Talk about what love means using the following thoughts: “How can we show love to our neighbors during Advent? Who needs to know and feel our love most of all?

- ◇ Think of something kind to do for someone who needs to feel love today.
- ◇ Draw a picture of what God’s love means to you.
- ◇ Learn about sending love to others through a loving-kindness meditation.

The Gift of You – sometimes the best thing we can give someone for Christmas is a piece of us. Spend time together and celebrate your love for each other. If you want to give your friends and family something really special, give them something that only you can give: a drawing, or a letter, or something else you made all yourself.

Acts of Kindness Advent Tree – This Advent calendar is created by adding acts of kindness on a tree as they are completed. Here’s how to make it:

Step 1: Find a branch from outside and put it in a vase.

Step 2: Write down acts of kindness on paper ornaments and place them in a basket.

Step 3: As you complete each act of kindness throughout the Advent season, punch a hole in the ornaments and tie it to your acts of kindness tree.

Examples:

- ◇ Hold the door for someone at the store.
- ◇ Return grocery carts in a parking lot.
- ◇ Bake sweet treats and take them to a neighbor.
- ◇ Help a family member or friend put up Christmas lights or decorate their house.
- ◇ Leave a kind note on someone’s windshield.
- ◇ Write a thank-you note to someone who serves you.
- ◇ Collect mittens and hats for a local charity.
- ◇ Provide an Angel Tree gift at MPPC.
- ◇ Pick up trash in your neighborhood or local park.
- ◇ Bring dog or cat food to a pet shelter.

Gather items to be given to persons finding shelter at Tricounty Family Ministries. Socks are especially appreciated to keep feet warm as winter approaches. Contribute a new pair of white or black socks (athletic type). Also consider making a “toiletries” bag (these bags are given to incoming guests and are depleted weekly): in a large Ziplock bag, put one pair of socks, toothpaste and toothbrush, a bar of soap, and deodorant. Bring your gift of love for neighbors to the “Sock Box for Tricounty Family Ministries” in church reception area by December 22 (no gift wrap needed). (Taken from MPPC 2020 Advent Devotion Booklet)

Joy

Advent at Home: Liturgy for Lighting the Advent Wreath

Greeting

Watch and wait for Christ's coming! Light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, remembering the promises of God with prayer.

Lighting

*We light this candle in hope.
(Light the first candle)*

*We light this candle for peace.
(Light the second candle)*

*We light this candle in joy!
(Light the third, pink if used, candle)*

Scripture

Hear God's invitation to joy from Psalm 100:1-2:
*Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.*

Reflect

What comes to mind when you hear the word "joy"? One might be Psalms 100 (above). Or maybe a favorite song, like *Joy to the World!*, brings joy to your heart. For many of us, music brings joy especially during Advent. In the apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians, he writes, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice!" (4:4) God provides us with great joy through the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. As we prepare and wait for Christ's coming, find what brings you joy, then repeat the sounding joy in every way you can!

Prayer

God of joy, into our darkness come! (individual prayers may be offered...) Amen.

May you experience God's joy this week.



Joy

Scripture

Isaiah 35:1-10

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Psalms 146:5-10

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever; who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the Lord!

Devotional

We hear a lot about Joy during Advent and Christmas. It's in the songs we sing..." Joy to the word..." "Repeat the sounding Joy" "Joyful all ye nations rise" "Comfort and Joy" to name a few. It's in the scripture we read "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy." We see joy on the faces of children opening gifts and joy in the heart of the giver. Joy in the adults as we relive the traditions of our childhood. Yet somehow in our busy, crazy lives... during December and all year long for that fact.... we can lose sight of that joy. The Third Sunday of Advent is often referred to as "Gaudete Sunday" or Joy Sunday. This is usually the time when we light the pink or rose-colored candle.

I know, speaking for myself that this is often overlooked. To me it often just means two weeks until Christmas...cantatas, concerts, parties are happening and will soon wrap up and I can look forward to that week of slumber between Christmas Day and New Year's Day! It's easy to get so caught up in the hustle and bustle that we forget to find the Joy and happiness in the season. Indeed, we have so many

things to be joyful about. I'm sure that we can all benefit by taking a few moments to "count our many blessings, one by one."

Joy can be found everywhere when we take time to notice it. It amazes me how when we look at each of the other Sundays in Advent, Hope, Peace, Love we can find joy in the midst of all of the anticipation of each. In our hope may we find Joy, in our peace, may we find joy, in our love, may we find joy. Mother Teresa once said "Joy is a net of love by which you can catch souls. A joyful heart is the inevitable result of a heart burning with love." In John 15:11 Jesus says:

"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete."

May we see the joy in this Advent season and all year long.

Prayer

Almighty and Holy God, You are worthy of all our praise. Our hearts overflow with gratitude for Your great love and grace. In this special time of Advent, keep us ever mindful of the greatest gift we have ever received. The “good tidings of great joy” that our Savior left heaven to come to earth for us. While things of this earth can cause us pain and heartache, they cannot steal the Joy of the Lord which is our strength. Happiness is but for a moment but the deep-down joy in knowing we are loved and redeemed is everlasting. Holy Spirit strengthen us and guide us to live and love like Jesus with joy that overflows to everyone we meet.

~ Martha Feil, The Net Band



Artwork by Mack C.

This week...Explore what God's Word says about Joy:

Nehemiah 8:10

Then he said to them, “Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

1 Thessalonians 1:6

And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit,

Luke 2:10

Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.

Luke 15:10

Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

John 15:9-12

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Romans 15:13

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

3 John 1:2-4

Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Love

Advent at Home: Liturgy for Lighting the Advent Wreath

Greeting

Watch and wait for Christ's coming! Light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, remembering the promises of God with prayer.

Lighting

We light this candle in hope.

(Light the first candle)

We light this candle for peace.

(Light the second candle)

We light this candle in joy!

(Light the third, pink if used, candle)

We light this candle with love!

(Light the fourth candle)

Scripture

Hear God's word of love from Zephaniah 3:17:

*The Lord, your God, will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love.*

Reflect

Love can be shown and experienced in the smallest of ways — like a smile to a stranger, a pair of socks for someone in need, or a note to say “hello” to someone who may be lonely. Think about how God's love renews us, and reflect on God's gift of love to us in Jesus. Jesus teaches us to love God and to love one another by sharing God's love for all. What are some ways you can share love this week?

Prayer

God of hope, into our darkness come! (individual prayers may be offered...) Amen.

May you experience God's love this week.



Love

Scripture

Isaiah 7:10-16

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test. Then Isaiah said: "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us! Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved. O LORD God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers? You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure. You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves. Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself. Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name. Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Devotional

Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. - Colossians 3:14

Colossians 3:12-17 is one of my favorite Bible verses to read at a wedding is. This portion of Paul's letter to the Church in Colossae, a church dealing with issues of conflict, points the way to love in Christ. I see three movements for us to follow this week as we contemplate God's love for us expressed through Jesus Christ and share thoughts or ideas as to how we might express that love to others. Paul writes:

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Our first step is to pause and reflect on how God, who loves us the most, surrounds us with *compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and yes, patience.* Let us use that same clothing in our relationship with ourselves and one another.

Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.

Secondly, amid the hurry and rush of daily life, we sometimes forget to intentionally give thanks to God for what we have been given. Be thankful for the life God has given you, be thankful for what you have and not have resentment for what you don't. There are times in all our lives when it will be hard to give thanks, prayerfully and faithfully strive to rise above it, learn from Christ, and reach for the clothing of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and yes, patience... and *be thankful.*

¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Devotional Continued

Lastly, all we do should bring honor and glory to what Christ is already doing in us. The best way we can do that is to LOVE others the way God loves us.

Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 3:14

~ Rev. Bart Edwards, Associate Pastor for Missions

Prayer

Gracious God,

As we gather in pews to worship, over bountiful tables for fellowship, and in streets or courtyards to sing carols, stir our hearts and minds. Help us set aside fears, hesitations, old quarrels, and harsh judgements so we might practice in our daily lives the same extravagant, unconditional love for ALL your people that you showed us in the gift of your only son, born a small babe in a lowly manger, who in a final act of unselfish, unfathomable love, died on a cross for us.

Amen.

~ Pam Spivey, Adult Faith Formation



This week...Explore what God's Word says about Love:

John 4:7-9

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

Romans 13:8

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.

Proverbs 3: 3-4

Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.

Song of Solomon 8: 6-7

Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away. If one were to give all the wealth of one's house for love, it would be utterly scorned.

Ephesians 4: 2-3

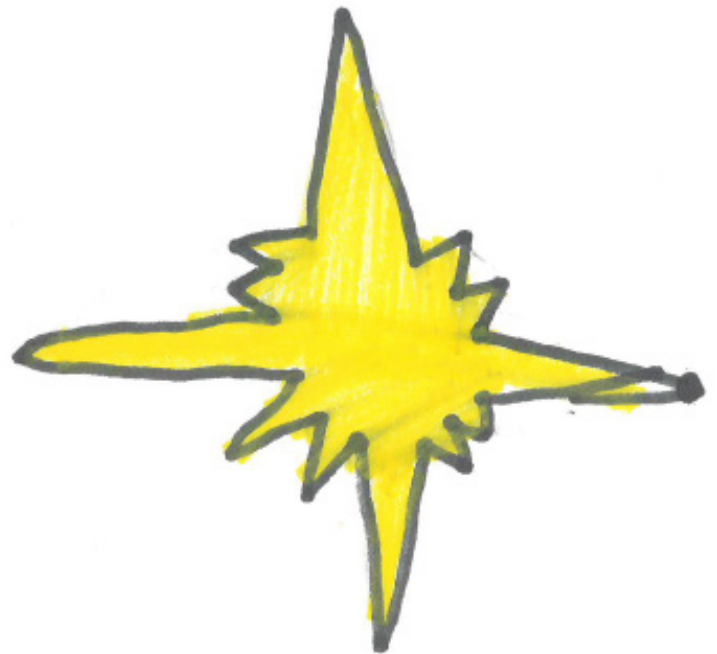
Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Psalms 86:15

But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

Romans 5:5

And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.



December 25

Christmas Day

Advent at Home: Liturgy for Lighting the Advent Wreath

Greeting

We have watched and we have waited...

Lighting

... *in hope*. (Light the first candle)

... *for peace*. (Light the second candle)

... *in joy!* (Light the third, pink if used, candle)

... *with love*. (Light the fourth candle)

Now our redemption is near! (Light the (center white) Christ candle)

Scripture

Hear the Word of the Lord from Zechariah 2:10-13:

Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion! For lo, I will come and dwell in your midst, says the Lord. Many nations shall join themselves to the Lord on that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in your midst. And you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you. The Lord will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem. Be silent, all people, before the Lord; for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.

Response

*Glory to God in the highest!
Alleluia! Amen.*





Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church

302 Hibben Street
Mount Pleasant, SC 29464

Engaging

Engaging every
member in ministry.

Equipping

Equipping our
church family.

Following

Following God's call into the
world; To transform Mount
Pleasant into a Christ-like
community.

