



Join us as we prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of the Christ Child. Each Sunday of Advent, read the featured verse, question, and reflection from a United Methodist Higher Education Foundation trustee. Throughout each week, we invite you to reflect on the question and the suggested daily readings. We pray this special gift will be a blessing to you and guide you through the season..

NOVEMBER 30: *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

Is it hope or wishful thinking?

Bible translator and clergyman J. B. Phillips writes, "It only becomes genuine hope when it rests upon God. That is why I don't think you will find a single instance of the word 'hope' being used in the New Testament unless it is connected with faith in God." According to Phillips, "Hope, real Hope, springs from the goodness and the love of God, which is why Paul calls God 'the God of Hope.' (Romans 15:13) Faith and hope seem closely linked together. Christian hope is based on God's promises, God's Spirit, not on our own wishful thinking.

Sherron Shuffield

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Monday: Jeremiah 29:10-14

Tuesday: Romans 15:5-13

Wednesday: Romans 12:12

Thursday: Colossians 3:14

Friday: Hebrews 11:1-3

ADVENT ACTIVITY

Each week, as you read through these Advent reflections, "light" the corresponding candle by coloring it in. With each candle, we arrive closer to the manger where we welcome the Christ Child and remember the greatest gift.

READINGS CONTINUE >>



DECEMBER 7: *Peace*

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

What is peace for you?

Peace comes to us threaded into the ragged seams of our restless earth. Its touch is revealed when mercy bends toward the broken, when justice takes shape in our hands, when grace and action meet in streets, kitchens and classrooms. It is the peace the angels proclaimed loudly and boldly in the coming of God in Jesus. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. reminds, "True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice." In our scrappy daily labors in service to God's peace, we are held, and we rise together toward kingdom community.

Rev. Cara Stultz Costello

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Monday: Amos 5:23-24

Tuesday: Isaiah 9:2-7

Wednesday: Isaiah 11:6-9

Thursday: Matthew 5:3-12

Friday: Matthew 5:13-17

DECEMBER 21: *Love*

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. John 3:16

What does love have to do with it?

Tina Turner's iconic 1984 hit song, "What Does Love Have to Do with It?" asks the quintessential Advent question. What does God offering his Son to the world have to do with it? The answer: everything! God knows we can't fully understand God's extravagant, unconditional love, or how to fully love others, unless love has a name. So, God gave love a name: Jesus. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us: "God does not love some ideal person, but rather human beings just as we are." And, when we, likewise, love others like Jesus loves us, we gain a whole (abundant) and lasting (eternal) life. What does love have to do with it? Everything!

Bishop Bruce Ough

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Monday: Matthew 22:36-40

Tuesday: I Corinthians 13:4-7

Wednesday: Ephesians 5:1-2

Thursday: Colossians 3:14

Friday: I John 4:7-8

DECEMBER 14: *Joy*

The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people." Luke 2:10

Is Advent a season of joy for you?

The good news of the Messiah's birth was announced by an angel, bringing joy to those who heard it. For some, however, Advent can be a fearful, painful, or lonely time. For others, it is a happy time, a time of celebration and anticipation. The world goes on even as we feel an assortment of emotions. As believers, we understand that our joy comes from knowing that the Messiah's birth announced by the angel continues to be with us. We know that joy is a fruit of the spirit and we rejoice in the Lord, regardless of circumstances. The Messiah's joy is in us that our joy may be full. The joy of the Lord is our strength.

Rev. Joe Harris

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Monday: Psalm 100

Tuesday: 1 Thessalonians 5:15-18

Wednesday: Psalm 16:8-11

Thursday: Philippians 4:4-7

Friday: Psalm 118:24-29

CHRISTMAS EVE

Read Luke 2:1-20, from which this passage comes:

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

FINAL ACTIVITY: Color in the Christ candle as we celebrate the birth of Jesus—our ultimate hope, peace, joy, and love.

Merry Christmas!

