

# FEAST OF THE SENSES

Christmas is a multi-sensory delight; the chill in the air, the fragrance of pine, the beautiful lights, the tempting treats, the lilting carols. We will come together to share our stories and experience Christmas through our senses.

## WEEK 1

Zechariah and Elizabeth

Luke 1:1-25

*While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John.*

## OPENING OURSELVES

Let us set aside the cares of our day and open our eyes to the wonder of God. With an attitude of empathy to the people of another time let us open our hearts and minds to God. Let us experience God's word to us through the presence of the Holy Spirit. (Taste and See – 13)

This begins the Advent season, what are some of the ways that you practice Advent in your life?  
What are the smells of Advent?

## ENTER THE STORY

- Smell the incense Frankincense would emit a fragrance of pine and lemon.
- See the angel – is the angel glowing, clothed in white?
- Hear the silence – how does silence affect you?
- Are there any other senses that are lifted up in the passage?
- How might God be speaking to me in this passage?
- What might God be inviting me to be or to know or understand?
- The angel's first words are "do not be afraid" is there an area in your life that God is instructing you not to be afraid?

Making an advent wreath – a means to remain centered on experiencing God's creative world during advent.

## ADVENT WREATH

Today you will make an advent wreath together – a means to remain centered on experiencing God’s creative world during advent.

### Supplies:

- Small Grapvine wreath
- Assorted winter herbs (lavender, rosemary, thyme) small dried flowers, garlic clove, dried peppers, (cut uniform size wrap small bunches with wire)
- Wire, small mason jar, ribbon

Add bunches to wreaths, hot glue or wire other items. Take time to smell and appreciate the aromas of the herbs. Included are short inspirational verses for each day of Advent. Print them off and place them in a small mason jar, a small box or bowl. Each day take one slip and read it.

**Tidbit:** Rosemary, a symbol of fidelity and remembrances once used in the holiest of Christian ceremonies.

During the week consider in the quiet moments – before bed, while doing a simple task. How might God be leading me through this passage? How is the noise in my life, especially the noise I make creating an obstacle to hearing God?

## CLOSING

God grant us the wisdom and courage this week to be opened to surprises

To taste and see your presence in new ways

To trust you will do good and joyful things in our lives and in the world.

Amen (T&S 19)

## WEEK 2

Gabriel Visit’s Mary

Luke 1:26-38

*God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, “Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you! What might God be inviting me to be or to know or understand?”*

### Opening Ourselves

God, who are the Most High Lord of all,  
you have a surprising preference  
for people who are small and humble  
and who expect everything from you.



You chose Mary, the unassuming virgin from Nazareth,  
to become the mother of your Son Jesus.

Through your Holy Spirit  
make us aware of the poverty of our hearts,  
that we may be open to you and welcome you,  
be ready, like Mary, to serve you and your plans,  
and expect everything from you.  
Come to us and give yourself to us  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

— from Liturgies Alive, Models of Celebration.

**Tidbit:** Christmas carols were a means to share the gospel stories in a time when most people did not read.

What are the sounds of Advent? What is a favorite Christmas or Advent song?

Listen to two Christmas hymns and consider how the different music styles bring you into the Christmas Story.

### **You may choose your own or use this suggestion**

Welcome to Our World: [https://youtu.be/F6livTQ\\_Coc](https://youtu.be/F6livTQ_Coc)

Discipleship Ministries offered some insight into the song here:

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-welcome-to-our-world>

### **Come Thou Long Expected Jesus**

Discipleship Ministries offered the history and theology of this beloved hymn by Charles Wesley:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1oy2aCXpRRA>

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-hymn-expresses-longing-for-arrival-of-our-savior>

How does the sweet simplicity of Welcome to Our World compare to the majestic powerful Come Long Expected Jesus?

### **ENTER THE STORY**

- Hear the voice of the angel.
- See the face of Mary. What is the expression on Mary's face when she hears the angel's greeting? What feeling accompanies this expression?
- What word or phrase raises up from this reading?

Mary's response to God's unimaginable request is "Here I am your servant"



How do you imagine Mary answering, with fear and trembling, quick and assures, quiet and meditative.

- What has God asked of me that God is waiting for our response?
- Music is a wonderful way – what song would you offer to God as a response to his calling?
- During the week, consider a song that expresses your deeper self. Listen to and sing this song each day? How is the song fostering the yes in your spirit?

## CLOSING

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.  
Go with us now into the world.  
We can begin again!  
Everything is about to change.  
So make everything new. Make us new.  
Reveal your glory in our lives and in the rhythms of our lives,  
so that nothing will get in the way of your coming. Amen.

April Yamasaki, and posted on the Emmanuel Mennonite Church blog. <http://www.emmanuelmennonite.com/>

## WEEK 3

Joseph and His Dreams  
Matthew 1:18-25

“When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife.”

Opening Ourselves  
O God of all seasons and senses,  
grant us the sense of your timing  
to submit gracefully and rejoice quietly in the turn of the seasons.

In this season of short days and long nights,  
of grey and white and cold,  
teach us the lessons of endings;  
children growing, friends leaving, loved ones dying,  
grieving over,  
grudges over,  
blaming over,  
excuses over.



O God, grant us a sense of your timing.  
In this season of short days and long nights,  
of grey and white and cold,  
teach us the lessons of beginnings;  
that such waitings and endings may be the starting place,  
a planting of seeds which bring to birth what is ready to be born—  
something right and just and different,  
a new song, a deeper relationship, a fuller love—  
in the fullness of your time.  
O God, grant us the sense of your timing.

~ written by Ted Loder, in Guerrillas of Grace.

**Tidbit:** Love Christmas lights? Combine the appreciation of the wonderful decorations in your community with a prayer. As you drive up and down the streets enjoying the sights pray for your neighbors.

What are the sights of advent?

### **ENTER THE STORY**

- How can I be more faithful in my calling, as Joseph was in his calling?
- How can I demonstrate more faith, as Joseph did in accepting Mary and Jesus and protecting them in the face of fear?

The Christmas story is full of episodes of fear. God comes into a world of chaos and fear with a clear message, do not be afraid, I am with you. Today we still have a need to hear this message from God, it comes to us in dreams and in miraculous ways. It also comes in times of prayer and study, in times of gathering together with those we trust.

What fear are you called to let go of this Christmas?

### **DURING THE WEEK**

How will I practice seeing my calling in life as being from the Lord and then treating them accordingly?

Closing

God of hope, who brought love into this world,  
be the love that dwells between us.

God of hope, who brought peace into this world,  
be the peace that dwells between us.

God of hope, who brought joy into this world,



be the joy that dwells between us.  
God of hope, the rock we stand upon,  
be the centre, the focus of our lives  
always, and particularly this Advent time.

[http://www.faithandworship.com/prayers\\_Advent.htm#ixzz4v2E6mE00](http://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Advent.htm#ixzz4v2E6mE00)

#### **WEEK 4**

Mary Gives Birth  
Luke 2:1-7

Opening ourselves  
In this season of expectation  
We prepare to welcome Christ Jesus, Messiah  
Into the bustle of our lives  
and the hard to find moments of solitude  
We prepare to welcome Christ Jesus, Messiah  
Into our homes and situations  
along with friends and families  
We prepare to welcome Christ Jesus, Messiah  
Into our hearts, and those often hidden parts of our lives  
We prepare to welcome Christ Jesus, Messiah  
For beneath the surface of your story  
is an inescapable fact  
You entered this world  
as vulnerable as any one of us  
in order to nail that vulnerability to the cross.  
Our fears, our insecurities and our sins  
all that can separate us from God  
exchanged by your Grace for Love.  
We cannot comprehend the reasoning  
only marvel that Salvation comes to us  
through a baby born in a stable,  
and reaches out to a world in need.

In this season of anticipation  
We prepare to welcome Christ Jesus, Messiah

[http://www.faithandworship.com/prayers\\_Advent.htm#ixzz4v2DuB6tT](http://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Advent.htm#ixzz4v2DuB6tT)

What are the sensations (touch) of Advent?



Imagine all Mary and Joseph encountered in this scripture.

- How does the manger scene enliven your senses?
- Do you have a special connection to a manger in your home or church?

### ENTER THE STORY

My faith journey in part was formed by the Moravians. One of my most treasured experiences was the Christmas Love feast, it is a sensory delight. The candles are made of beeswax which creates a sweet aroma when burning, singing the carols of Christmas is integral to the event. Coffee and buns are passed among the participants, traditionally in white porcelain mugs. The buns are made with citron and orange peel with a line of sweet vanilla icing. However, there are no rules, I have served Christmas Cookies and lemonade – the idea is to engage all the senses in worship.

**Tidbit:** Beeswax candles that are used at a Moravian Christmas service not only emit a beautiful sweet smell, they also are naturally driplless.

The glow of the candles, the aroma of baked goods, the warmth of the coffee cup, the taste of the special treats, the sound of the music. This is a feast of the senses.

Discipleship Ministries offers a Love Feast Order of Worship I have used on the Sunday after Christmas or when Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday, this is a good morning service. A Love Feast unlike Holy Communion does not require a clergy person to preside. <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/the-love-feast>

If you would like to experience the traditional buns they are available here online.  
[https://shop.oldsalem.org/product/452/fresh\\_baked\\_items](https://shop.oldsalem.org/product/452/fresh_baked_items)

### DURING THE WEEK

In the busyness of Christmas it is easy to be distracted. Consider some practice that is draining on your time and energy you can let go of to better serve Jesus?

### CLOSING

May all wonder find a place in your soul  
and dance with you unexpected steps;

May all joy be at home within your heart  
and weave a sacred rhythm throughout this life and all to come;

May unsolved mysteries make your life an adventure  
and pull you towards unknown places waiting for you since the very beginning;



May blessing be your forever-companion  
and cradle you, strengthen you and love you always;

May all stillness coorie (snuggle) into your soul  
forging a peace that gives to all things a place;

May the ebb and flow of life be a daily gift  
offering times of pain and celebration and healing;

and may God let you see what others miss:  
promise cradled in every wonder,  
the flow of life shaping a sacred story  
where love, and you, dance together daily.

And when eyes that have seen all living  
draw into focus salvation's intent,  
may they recognise at days end  
a promise, a deed, a gift  
fresh born in the world.

~ written by Roddy Hamilton, and posted on Mucky Paws.



# ADVENT SCRIPTURE

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.” - [Ephesians 2:8-9](#)

“And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.” - [Luke 2:40](#)

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” - [John 1:14](#)

“and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name’s sake. And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.” - [Romans 1:4-6](#)

“But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.” - [Hebrews 2:9](#)

“who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.”  
- [1 Peter 1:2](#)

“Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.” - [Lamentations 3:22](#)

“Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” - [Mark 10:21](#)

“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](#)

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” - [John 13:34](#)

“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” - [John 15:13](#)

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” - [Romans 5:8](#)

“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](#)



“You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.” - [Isaiah 26:3](#)

“Lord, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us.” - [Isaiah 26:12](#)

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.” - [Isaiah 53:5](#)

“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” - [Luke 2:14](#)

“For He himself is our peace...” - [Ephesians 2:14](#)

“Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.” - [Matthew 10:39](#)

“just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”  
- [Matthew 20:28](#)

“In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.” - [John 1:4](#)

“so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.” - [John 3:14](#)

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.” - [John 3:36](#)

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” - [John 6:51](#)

**With the Advent season upon us, we eagerly await the arrival of the Newborn King. We can eagerly await, with hope and assurance, the promise of a Savior who will one day return for us yet again!**

“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.” - [Isaiah 61:1-3](#)

