



A Weary World

A THRILL
OF HOPE

Rejoices

ADVENT GUIDE 2024





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OF HOPE

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The Park Community Church

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Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted,
are from The NASB 1995 Bible



**“THE PEOPLE WALKING IN
DARKNESS HAVE SEEN A GREAT
LIGHT; ON THOSE LIVING IN
THE LAND OF DEEP DARKNESS
A LIGHT HAS DAWNED.”**

ISAIAH 9:2

Advent, a season of anticipation, comes from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “coming” or “visit.” It is a sacred time when we prepare our hearts and lives for the coming of Christ. We look back in wonder at His first coming—the birth of our Savior in a humble stable in Bethlehem. We also look forward with hope and longing to His promised second coming, when He will make all things new.

In this tension between the “already” and the “not yet,” we find ourselves living in a weary world. A world weighed down by brokenness, injustice, and the ache of unmet desires. Yet, even in the midst of this weariness, we rejoice. Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

This Advent season, we invite you to embrace the hope, peace, joy, and love that Jesus offers and to reflect on how you might live out these virtues in a world consumed by personal ambition and fleeting fulfillment. As distractions abound and demands on your time grow, we pray this guide serves as a sacred pause—a resource to help you focus on the true meaning of the season and to let Jesus be your peace.

Each week of Advent includes a candle-lighting scripture and prayer that we will share as a congregation on Sundays, along with a devotional and discussion questions for your personal study or community gatherings. Together, let us prepare Him room and celebrate the light that has come to dispel darkness.

Church family, let’s lean into these weekly rhythms and practices. As we journey through Advent, may our weary hearts rejoice in the One who has come to dwell with us and will one day reign forever.



THANKSGIVING TABLE LITURGY



Welcome to the table. Beautiful holy things can happen when family and friends gather around the table. May this short liturgy help you open up space for gratitude, prayer, and deep connection with God and each other.

Leader:

May the peace of Christ be with us as we gather in his name and give thanks.

WBefore we begin our meal together, lets read some scripture and pray together.

Join me by reading the bold text.

Psalm 67:4-6

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon the earth.

Let all the peoples praise you.

let all the peoples praise you.

The earth has brought forth its increase;
God, our God, has blessed us.

Let all the peoples praise you, O God;

let all the peoples praise you.

James 1:17-18

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.

Let's pray for our world.

Father, we come together now on behalf of our broken, beautiful, hurting world. Shine your light into the heart of every person who is lonely and feels disconnected. Touch the sick with your healing hand and relieve their pain and suffering. We pray for the hungry, that you would provide food for their bodies and nourishment for their souls. For those who have no home in which to gather and give thanks, make your presence known. Show us how to bless our enemies and welcome the foreigner in our midst.

Let's take a moment of silence. {pause}

Let's pray this together now

Lord, may your peace reign over all the earth.

May all our thanks be to you alone. Amen.

Sing: *Come Thou Fount*

Prayer: Father in heaven, we give you thanks for life
and for all of the experiences that life brings us.
We give you thanks for joy, hope, peace, and answered prayers,
but we also give you thanks in our trials, sorrows, and pain.

**Praise be to you, Father of the heavenly lights,
who gives and gives and gives.**

We give thanks for our land,
for the beauty of the landscape,
for the riches it provides for our living,
for the people and cultures among us.

**Praise be to you, Father of the heavenly lights,
who gives and gives and gives.**

Above all things, we give thanks for our hope in Christ,
the life and freedom that will ultimately be ours.

Teach us to cherish all your gifts.

Teach us also to use all these resources

for the good of society and for glory to you.

Praise be to you, Father of the heavenly lights,



Mealtime Discussion Questions:

- ◆ What are three things you are most thankful for today?
How have these things impacted you this year?
- ◆ How do you sense God calling you this year to share what he has
given you with those who have less or are struggling?
- ◆ Invite each person around the table to share why they are thankful
for one other person around the table.

Closing Prayer (after the meal):

May God the Creator fill you with gratitude for your creation.

May God the Savior fill you with gratitude for your salvation.

May God the Comforter fill you with gratitude for your new life.



PRAYER OF EXAMEN

Examen means examination of the conscience and was first written about as a spiritual practice by Ignatius of Loyala in 1548. This practice helps us with daily reflections where we review our past to find God and God's blessings. During Advent try to set aside 15 minutes every day for this practice. Review the last 24 hours using the prayer of examen.

INVITE THE HOLY SPIRIT'S GUIDANCE.

Position your body in a posture of attentiveness, but not rigidity – feet flat on the floor, sitting up straight so you can breathe freely. Take three deep breaths, breathing in God's blessing and breathing out all that is not of God (your fear, your anxiety, your anger). Pray this simple prayer, *"In your grace, Lord, I want to see the truth of my life through your eyes. Please reveal it to me."* Breathe in God's blessing and breathe out all that is not of God.

REVIEW THE DAY WITH THANKSGIVING.

Once you have invited the Holy Spirit's guidance, name the blessings for which you are thankful in the last day. As you do this, remember, this is not a time to "count your blessings," but rather a time to savor your blessings. As you savor your blessings, picture Jesus before you, smiling and delighting in you.

REVIEW THE FEELINGS THAT SURFACE.

Now ask yourself what feelings surfaced throughout the day. Did you feel frustrated? Ashamed? Disappointed? Excited? Joyful? Pained? Name the negative and positive feelings.

CHOOSE ONE OR TWO FEELINGS AND PRAY FROM IT.

Choose a negative feeling and a positive feeling and simply talk to God about those feelings. Then listen to him. As you do this, go ahead and let God surprise you. Behold Jesus beholding you as you present your feelings to him.

LOOK FORWARD TO TOMORROW.

Now, look forward. Tomorrow is a new day and God's mercies are new each morning. Ask yourself what you learned today in your prayer of examen and then end your time by asking God for the grace you need to move forward tomorrow.



FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 1ST - 7TH

- 2 The people who walk in darkness
Will see a great light;
Those who live in a dark land,
The light will shine on them.
- 3 You shall multiply the nation,
You shall increase their gladness;
They will be glad in Your presence
As with the gladness of harvest,
As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.
- 4 For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the
staff on their shoulders,
The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian.
- 5 For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult,
And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire.
- 6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:2-6





CANDLE OF HOPE

Today is the First Sunday in Advent. To help us celebrate, we will be lighting the candles of the Advent wreath. The candles signify that Jesus is the Light of the World. The evergreens remind us that He is life and brings life to us. All these are arranged in a circle because life in Christ has no end. On this First Sunday of Advent, we light the Candle of Hope. It signifies the hope of a coming promised Savior.

"The days are coming, 'declares the LORD, 'when I will fulfil the good promise I made to the people of Israel and Judah. In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior.'"

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Candle Lighting | Light an Advent candle; as you light the candle say:

Today, we light the candle of expectation and hope. May it remind each and everyone one of us of God's great promise to us. He is our hope, He is our Redeemer, and He is Savior.

Prayer: Father, during the Advent season may we be reminded of your promises to us and your fulfillment of them. Help us to prepare our lives for His Advent within us. In the precious name of Jesus we pray.

Amen.

RESISTING DESPAIR IN A CULTURE OF INSTANT GRATIFICATION

The flicker of a candle in a dark room feels fragile, doesn't it? Yet that small light is enough to dispel the shadows. Advent begins with the simple yet profound declaration that Christ, the light of the world, has come—and that He is coming again.

In a world dominated by instant gratification, hope often feels out of place. Every commercial tells us our happiness is just one purchase away, that we can solve our deepest longings with a click or swipe. But the truth is, no material possession can satisfy the hunger of a soul waiting for redemption. Advent calls us to resist this lie. It invites us to embrace hope—not a fleeting, shallow optimism, but a deep, abiding trust in God's promises.

Think of Mary and Joseph. Their journey to Bethlehem wasn't filled with luxuries or ease. Yet they clung to the hope that God was fulfilling His promise through the child Mary carried. They waited, they trusted, and in the end, they witnessed the dawn of salvation.

This Advent, let's resist the despair that comes from trying to fill our hearts with what the world offers. Instead, let us wait with hope, trusting that Christ's light will shine in every dark corner of our lives and our world.

PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

Set aside a day this week to fast from unnecessary spending. Instead, use that time and energy to reflect on what you are hoping for in Christ. Journal your thoughts and pray for His light to bring hope to areas of darkness in your life and community.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ How does the culture of consumerism challenge your ability to hope in Christ?
- ◆ What holiday ads or commercials have you seen this season that are attempting to give you hope in them?
- ◆ How does remembering God's faithfulness in the past help you hold onto hope?
- ◆ How can you be a bearer of hope to others this week?

SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT DECEMBER 8TH-14TH

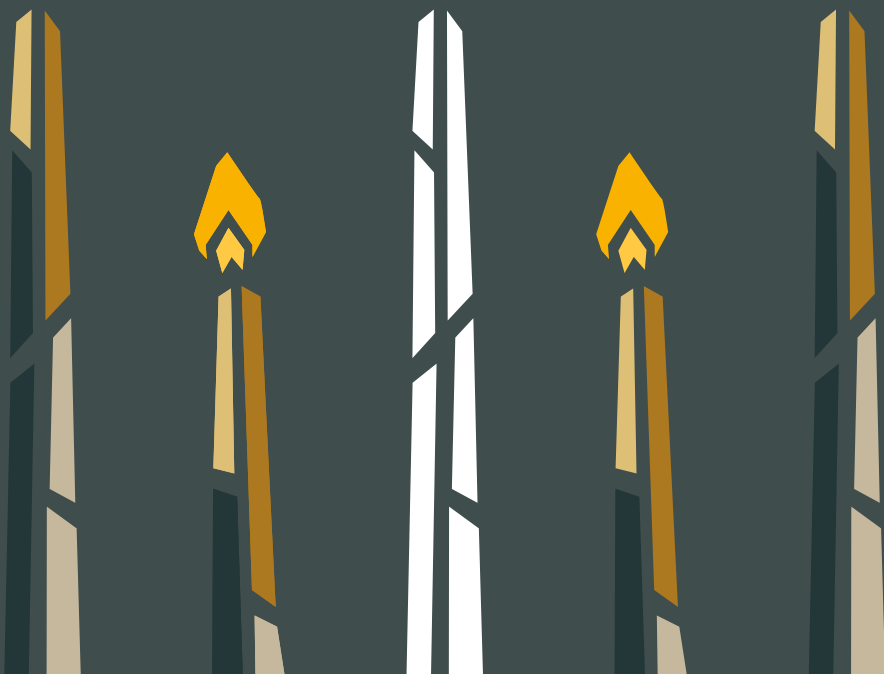
A voice is calling,

"Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness;
Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.

4 "Let every valley be lifted up,
And every mountain and hill be made low;
And let the rough ground become a plain,
And the rugged terrain a broad valley;

5 Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed,
And all flesh will see it together;
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Isaiah 40:3-5



CANDLE OF PEACE

Today is the Second Sunday in Advent. To help us celebrate, we will be lighting the candles of the Advent wreath. The candles signify that Jesus is the Light of the World. The evergreens remind us that He is life and brings life to us. All these are arranged in a circle because life in Christ has no end. On this Second Sunday of Advent, we light the Candle of Peace. It signifies that true peace and wholeness are only found in Christ.

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.*

Isaiah 9:6-7

Candle Lighting | Relight first candle. Then, light a second Advent candle; as you light the candle say:

Today, we light the candle of Peace. May we be instruments of peace in the world because of the true peace we have in Christ.

Prayer: Father, we know true peace because we are made whole in Christ. Thank you for sending the Prince of Peace to us so that we may be your ambassadors in the world. Help us to be reconcilers in a world of division. In Christ's name we pray.

Amen.



REBELLING AGAINST ANXIETY IN A WORLD OF ENDLESS NOISE

The world is loud, isn't it? Notifications ping constantly, advertisements shout at us, and the pressure to perform is unrelenting. It's no wonder peace feels elusive. Yet Advent whispers to us, "Prepare the way for the Lord." In the quiet, we find Him.

During Advent, we resist the anxiety fueled by busyness and consumerism. The culture says, "Do more. Buy more. Be more." But the Prince of Peace invites us to be still and know that He is God.

Consider the shepherds on that night long ago. They weren't powerful or influential. They were ordinary people, sitting in the stillness of the fields. And it was to them that the angels appeared, proclaiming peace on earth. Their response wasn't hurried or anxious. They left their flocks to see Jesus and went away glorifying God.

This week, let's choose to rebel against the noise. Let's prepare Him room by creating space for His peace to enter our hearts and transform our lives.

PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

Each evening, turn off all devices for 30 minutes. Use this time to sit in silence, read scripture, or pray. Let the quietness be a reminder of the peace Christ brings.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ How does the noise of the world compete with your ability to experience peace?
- ◆ What steps can you take to create space for stillness during Advent?
- ◆ How can the peace of Christ transform your response to stress and busyness?
- ◆ Who in your life needs to experience the peace of Christ, and how can you share it?

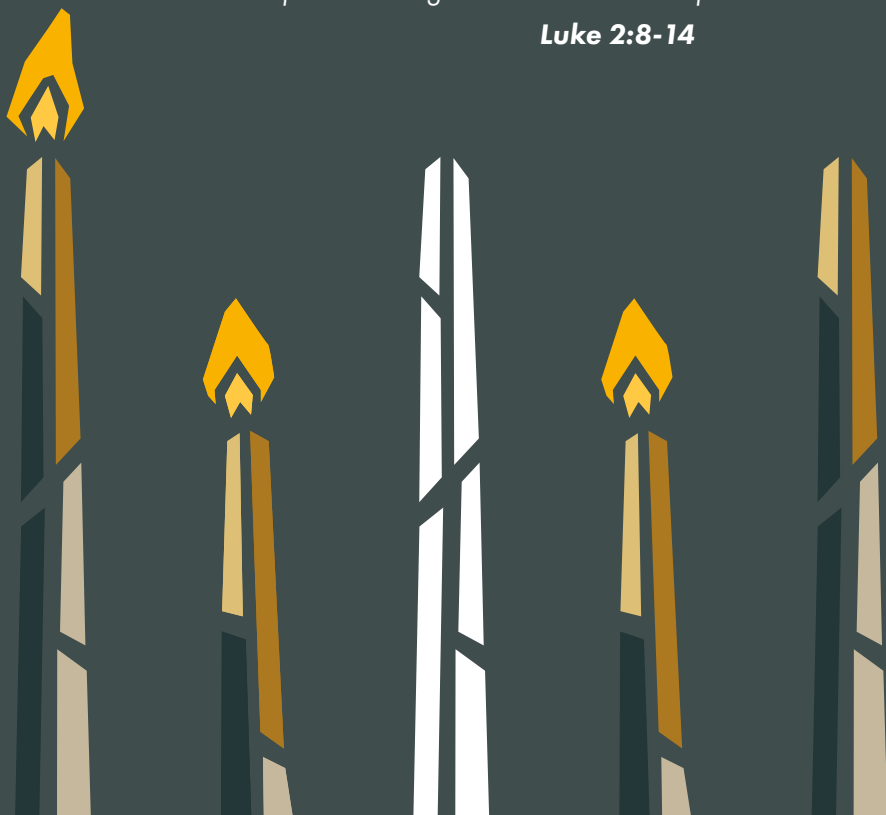
THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 15TH-21ST

In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

*"Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."*

Luke 2:8-14





CANDLE OF JOY

Today is the Third Sunday in Advent. To help us celebrate, we will be lighting the candles of the Advent wreath. The candles signify that Jesus is the Light of the World. The evergreens remind us that He is life and brings life to us. All these are arranged in a circle because life in Christ has no end. On this third Sunday of Advent, we light the Candle of Joy. It signifies the joy we have because of Christ coming.

And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!

Luke 2:10-14

Candle Lighting | Relight the first and second candles. Then light the third candle; as the candles are being relit say:

As we light the candle of Joy. May our hearts be forever filled with the joy of His coming.

Prayer | Father, we are filled with joy because we have hope and peace that you have sent your son for all that believe. Help us to be the voices that proclaim grace and truth. In Christ name we pray.

Amen.

FINDING JOY BEYOND THE TEMPORARY

The world's version of joy is fleeting—a Black Friday deal, a perfectly curated holiday party, or a pile of presents under the tree. But if you've ever stood amidst the chaos of wrapping paper and credit card bills, you know how quickly that joy fades.

True joy, the kind Advent offers, isn't tied to what we have or what we achieve. It's rooted in the presence of Christ. The shepherds' joy came not from wealth or status but from hearing and seeing the good news: "A Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord." Their joy was so profound that they couldn't help but share it with others.

Think of a child opening a simple gift—something small but deeply meaningful. Their joy isn't about the size or cost but about the love behind the gift. Advent invites us to reclaim that childlike wonder, to find joy not in what we buy but in the immeasurable gift of Christ's presence.

PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

Choose one gift to make or give this week that reflects the joy of Christ. It could be a handwritten note, an act of service, or a thoughtful conversation. Focus on the love behind the gift, not its monetary value.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ How does the world's definition of joy differ from the joy we find in Christ?
- ◆ What are simple, meaningful ways you can experience and share joy this week?
- ◆ How can gratitude help you resist the consumerism of the season?
- ◆ How does the good news of Jesus' birth bring you lasting joy?

FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 22ND - 24TH

Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also 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 so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:9-13



CANDLE OF LOVE

Today is the Fourth Sunday in Advent. To help us celebrate we will be lighting the candles of the Advent wreath. The candles signify that Jesus is the Light of the World. The evergreens remind us that He is life and brings life to us. All these are arranged in a circle because life in Christ has no end. On this Fourth Sunday of Advent, we light the Candle of Love. It signifies the love that God poured out on us in sending his son Jesus to us as an act of love.

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

1 John 4:9-11

Candle Lighting | Relight three candles. Then light the fourth candle. As the candles are being relit say:

As we relight the candle of Hope we recall God's promise to send a Savior. As we relight the candle of Peace we ask that we will be instruments of peace in the world because of the true peace we have in Christ. As we relight the candle of Joy may our hearts be forever filled with the joy of His coming. As we light the candle of Love we are reminded that God sent his Son to earth to save us, because He loves us.

Prayer | In this Advent season of waiting on the Lord, we trust in the Lord's goodness. We rely on his mercy. We find shelter in his steadfast love. In this Advent season of waiting on the Lord, we walk in the Lord's way. We follow his example of love. We keep our covenant promises. In this Advent season of waiting, Lord, forget our sins. Remember your love. Remember each one of us. Remember your people everywhere. In this Advent season of waiting, Lord, we wait for your salvation. We wait for your leading. We wait for your coming. **Amen.**



DEFYING SELFISHNESS WITH SACRIFICIAL LOVE

Love in the Advent season is countercultural. The world tempts us to make the season about our wants, our comfort, and our happiness. But Advent reminds us that love is sacrificial. Mary's story shows us this. She said "yes" to God's plan, knowing it would cost her greatly. Her love for God and her trust in His promises allowed her to carry the Savior into the world.

Consumerism thrives on selfishness. It tells us that we deserve more, that we should focus on what we can get. But the love of Christ turns this on its head. It calls us to serve, to give, and to lay down our lives for others. Imagine how the world might change if we loved with the same selflessness that Christ showed us through His birth, His life, and ultimately, His sacrifice on the cross.

This week, let's rebel against selfishness by choosing love. Let's see others not as competitors in the shopping lines but as fellow image-bearers of God. Let's let His love overflow from our hearts into the lives of those around us.

PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

Identify someone in need this week and find a tangible way to show them love. This could be a neighbor, a coworker, or someone in your community. Offer your time, resources, or presence as an expression of Christ's love.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ How does Mary's response to God's call challenge your understanding of love?
- ◆ In what ways does the culture of consumerism pull your focus away from selfless love?
- ◆ Who in your life is God calling you to love more intentionally this week?
- ◆ How can acts of love during Advent point others to Christ?

CHRISTMAS DAY
DECEMBER 25TH

Read aloud
Luke 2:1-20





CHRIST CANDLE

The Advent wreath is a circle with no beginning and no end. It is a symbol of God's unending love and faithfulness.

Jesus Christ is the brightest revelation of God's love. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

—based on John 1:14; Philippians 2:5-7; Colossians 1:15

Candle Lighting | Light the center Christ Candle. Use it to relight the candles of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. As you relight them say:

Today, we light the Christ candle, celebrating the birth of Jesus, the light of the world. From Him flows the hope, peace, joy, and love we have reflected on throughout this season. As we relight each of these candles from the Christ candle, we remember that all of these gifts are found ultimately and perfectly in Him.

Prayer | Father, we ask that as we walk in the world that seems so full of darkness that we remember the hope that you have for us. We know that in Jesus you have brought light into our hearts. May we be a people who walk in the light of your hope. Amen.

CHRIST HAS COME

On this day, we celebrate the culmination of Advent's waiting and longing. Christ has come! In the stillness of that holy night in Bethlehem, hope, peace, joy, and love took on flesh and entered our world. The birth of Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promises—the light shining in the darkness, the Prince of Peace bringing reconciliation, the source of eternal joy, and the perfect embodiment of love.

Consider the shepherds once more, ordinary people chosen to witness an extraordinary event. They were tending their flocks in the quiet night when heaven broke into earth with the angel's proclamation: *"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."* The shepherds didn't merely hear this message; they responded. They left their sheep, hurried to Bethlehem, and found the baby lying in a manger. In that moment, their weary hearts rejoiced.

Today, we are invited to respond like those shepherds—to let the good news of Christ's birth fill our lives with hope, peace, joy, and love. The hope that Jesus brings dispels the despair of a broken world. His peace stills the anxieties of our hearts. His joy transcends our circumstances, and His love transforms us from the inside out.

PRACTICE FOR TODAY

Take time today to read Luke 2:1-20 aloud, either on your own or with family and friends. Light all the Advent candles and reflect on how Christ's birth brings hope, peace, joy, and love to your life. Offer a prayer of gratitude for His coming and anticipation of His return.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ How does the birth of Jesus fulfill the promises of hope, peace, joy, and love?
- ◆ Which of these four—hope, peace, joy, or love—feels most meaningful to you this Christmas? Why?
- ◆ How does the celebration of Christ's first coming encourage you to live in anticipation of His return?
- ◆ In what ways can you share the light of Christ with others beyond the Christmas season?

ADVENT SCHEDULE

- Dec 8** **Christmas Singalong**
7-9pm at Beacon House,
- Dec 15** **Jingle Jam**
8:45am
- Dec 22** **Family Sunday Service**
10 am, elementary in service
- Dec 24** **Christmas Eve Service**
5pm, all kids in service
- Dec 29** **No Sunday Service**

CHRISTMAS SINGALONG

On December 8th join us at Beacon House for a Christmas sing-along! There will be treats, drinks, and of course, hot chocolate. This event will run from 7 – 9 PM and we'll have a grand ole time! You're sure to feel the love in the room from the floor to the ceiling. Kick off the week before Christmas in the best way possible!

JINGLE JAM

Hey Park Families! You are going to want to save the date for Jingle Jam 2025 happening in the sanctuary on Sunday, Dec 15th at 8:45am. Everyone is invited to dress up in their best Christmas festive outfit! We will have a light breakfast and a Christmas party for the entire family.

FAMILY SERVICE

On December 22nd we will have a family service! That means that elementary kids (K-5) and youth (6-8) will be in the full worship service alongside their families. Our preschoolers will be singing us a few Christmas songs to kick off the service before heading to their classrooms. We will continue worship together with music, communion, and a message.

CHRISTMAS EVE

Join us for our candlelight Christmas Eve service at the Christian School at Castle Hills. We will have a time of singing Christmas carols, a short engaging message, and one of our favorite moments where we light our candles and sing Silent Night to close our service. Children of all ages will be in service with their families.

DECEMBER 29th

Since beginning the Park 15 years ago, we have chosen to take the one Sunday after Christmas Day off. We encourage you to gather with a small group, with your family or your neighbors on this Sunday morning. Maybe you read scripture and pray together. Maybe you find a way to serve others during this time. We love you church family and look forward to seeing you the first Sunday in January!

BLUEPRINT MINISTRIES

Blueprint ministries is one of our oldest partners at The Park Community Church and they are committed to restoring homes and hope to low income individuals families in San Antonio. In addition to sending youth to help renovate homes with Blueprint's partners, we also partner with their holiday gift efforts to be a blessing of presents and presence. This year we are being given the opportunity to adopt 22 families that they have worked with including two families which were renovated by our very own youth group. If you're interested, please [click here](#) and also know that gift selection has been simplified with an Amazon wishlist for reference.

**Scan this QR Code
for sign-ups or more info**



