

The Advent Disciple

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HOPE

Listen to the prophet Isaiah:

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!

The poet George Herbert once wrote: "He that believes in hope dances without music." This is a good picture for a life of faith. To hope in God's grace is to move to a rhythm that other people may not hear. It is to act out a drama others cannot imagine. It is to glide through life guided by a tune that plays only in your own heart.



“The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope.”

Romans 15:12

The hopes of our faith make no sense from the outside. It's a rough world, with forces that try to dominate our lives. But we hope in a God of truth and justice to have the final word. In a world where violence and force always seem to win the day, we hope in a force of love that is the supreme power. In a world where wealth and status seem to have the upper hand over desperate, needy people, we hope that poverty and innocence have God's special blessing.

Having hope means constantly expecting a different kind of future, even when history seems to confirm our fears. Hope is for those who feel the pain of the world. Hope is for those who agonize at human cruelty. Hope is for those who hear the cries of homeless and hungry children, and cry along with them.

In a world where hope seems so far away, we are a people of hope. We listen for the voice of angels in the wind. We stretch to see the first light of a new day on the horizon. We long for a new birth of grace in every human heart. We wait. We listen. We hope.

Let us pray:

Christ we sit in darkness, but you are our light.

We long for your coming into our hearts, into our lives and into our world.

You are the One for whom all the peoples of the earth wait.

Our world has been shaken by fire and earthquake and storm;

Our security has been shaken by bombings and wars and uncertainty.

We wait in anticipation expecting God's light to penetrate our darkness and radiate within us.

In the midst of our doubts and our insecurities we are reminded that you are never shaken. Your faithfulness reaches to the ends of the earth.

We watch and wait expecting new light to shine as the season of joy approaches.

You are our rock and our refuge, an ever present help in trouble.

Come down, come in, walk with us so that we trust in you and not be shaken.

We wait in hope attentive to all the signs of Christ's coming.

***Provided by Rev. Thad Allen, regional minister in the Northeastern, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia regions*

Introduction to the LCC Advent Newsletters*

There's so much in a name. Ask an expectant parent choosing names for their unborn child. This Advent, we invite you and your family will join us in some holy name calling – the names we give Jesus and the names he gives to us.

Names matter, especially the ones we claim (or earn!) for ourselves. For Christians, nobody has more names and titles than Jesus, and during the season of Advent, we use as many of them as we can. We call them out in the middle of the night, like a child calling for their parent after a dream. By every name we can think of – some tender, some silly, some confusing, some magnificent – we invoke God's love made flesh and invite that love more fully into the world.

And then, on Christmas, Jesus comes bearing gifts: new names for us, the ones who so longed for him that we went searching with a whole litany of names on our lips.

For each of the four weeks of Advent (from the Latin for “coming” or “arrival”), This page will give you a practice to try, inspired by scripture and based on some of the names people have given to – or discovered for – Jesus over the years. Then we'll offer a few small things you might do together throughout the week to bring a little more meaning and mystery to your Christmas preparations and celebrations.

*Much of the content will be taken from the Advent Family Friendly devotional “Naming Jesus” from the saltproject.org. Purchased and used with permission.

HOLYNAME CALLING

THE “O ANTIPHONS”

Heaven knows there are lots of Christmassy songs playing on the radio, in the grocery store, and rolling around in your head right now! One that you won't hear too many places except church is “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.” Each verse calls Jesus by a different name. They come from the seven great “O Antiphons,” a series of responses sung in the days leading up to Christmas in the early church.

One way or another, they're all names for the salvation that the most vulnerable people of Jesus' day hoped for; giving these titles to Jesus makes clear that he's the fulfillment of all those hopes. So, sing a song of hope fulfilled this Advent. Find a copy of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” and try singing every single verse, quiet at the beginning, and at the top of your lungs by the end.

The “O Antiphons,” in Latin, are:

O SAPIENTIA

O ADONAI

O RADIX JESSE

O CLAVIS DAVID

O ORIENS

O REGENTUM

O EMMANUEL

Get out your “Googler” and do a little research. Find the meaning of each Latin word and find the Bible passage they come from. From what you know and believe, are these good names for Jesus? Why or why not?

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MATTERS!**

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Advent Calendar

(Actions, Questions, Things to Ponder that will help you experience the Hope, Peace, Joy and Love of the Season)

<p><u>December 1</u></p> <p>Make “I love you” cards and send them out</p>	<p><u>December 2</u></p> <p>Say a prayer today for a specific group of people in need.</p>	<p><u>December 3</u></p> <p>What three things make you feel loved?</p>
<p><u>December 4</u></p> <p>What’s your favorite Christmas Carol and why?</p>	<p><u>December 5</u></p> <p>Set up a nativity</p>	<p><u>December 6</u></p> <p>Plan some non-stuff presents this Christmas.</p>

The first week of Advent is all about hope. Think about hope as you hear Lamentations 3: 21-24:

“But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:
The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
God’s mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul,
“therefore I will hope in the Lord.”

One purple candle is lit.

Gracious God, As the Advent season begins, we cry out to you. We come to you looking for hope. When everything else we rely on fails us, our only hope is in you. When we do not understand what has happened, we hope in you. We can hope for better days because we trust you. We know you and we know you are here with us no matter what we are facing. Some of us see only darkness this time of year. Some of us find life overwhelming. Some of us are filled with Advent joy. Whenever we find ourselves today, Loving God, remind us that our hope is in you. Be with us on this journey. Amen.

by Rev. Susannah DeBenedetto



— FIRST SUNDAY OF —
ADVENT