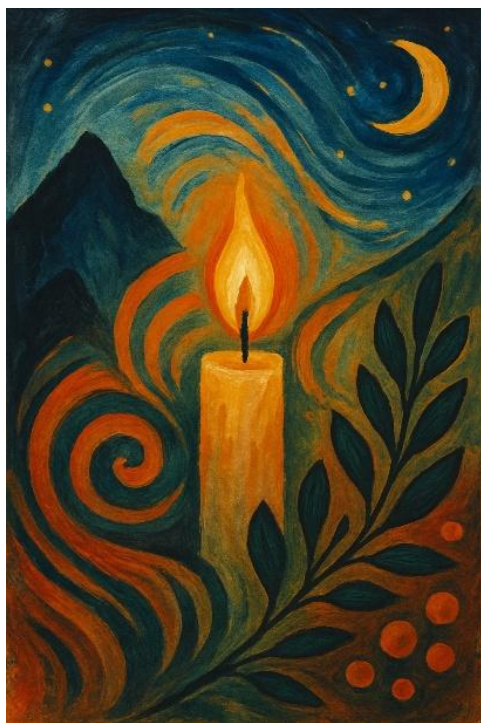


PRAY AND REFLECT



ADVENT 2026

A SERVICE BASED ON THE ADVENT THEMES OF HOPE, PEACE, JOY, LOVE



INTRODUCTION

Advent asks us to be open to how Christ comes to us,
not only in our ardent seeking but also in our resting, our sleeping,
our dreaming, our creating, our playing
—in whatever practices and habits enable a sacred gap in our attention:
a space that leaves room for Christ to enter in.

© **Jan Richardson** from *Illuminating the Threshold*
a Retreat for Women's Christmas 2015

You are welcome to take this leaflet home with you to use for private prayer



WE LIGHT THE FIRST ADVENT CANDLE FOR THE GIFT OF HOPE

An Advent candle is lit on the altar as the congregation sing the refrain:

The light of Christ has come into the world

The light of Christ has come into the world.

REFLECTION

Light the first candle and listen to its quiet crackle. It whispers about beginnings and the courage to wait. We stand in the soft dawn of something that's not clear yet, of half seen promises, of prayers not wasted. Hope doesn't show up ready-made. It stretches, claws, climbs. It learns to breathe in the cold. It stands up when everything falls apart. Hope is more than a gentle word. It holds the broken edges. It refuses the lie that darkness wins. It speaks into silence and calls the world beloved. And sometimes happiness can be found even in the darkest times if we remember to turn on the light.

©Eleanor Hamilton *Whispers of Grace*, Advent 2025

pause for silent prayer and reflection

A READING FROM ST PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge — even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you — so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gentle music is played

PRAYER

We begin, with trembling hands and stubborn faith. We light a single flame against every fear and every night. May we dare to believe again that Christ is coming, that love is near, that heaven's already leaning toward earth.

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WE LIGHT THE SECOND ADVENT CANDLE FOR THE GIFT OF PEACE

An Advent candle is lit on the altar as the congregation sing the refrain:

The light of Christ has come into the world

The light of Christ has come into the world

REFLECTION

Advent invites new hope for a world in despair, light for a world in darkness, and peace for a world at war. It calls us to prepare anew for the coming of the God of peace and God's reign of peace on earth.

May this holy season give us new hope and inspire us to show ourselves to be "children of God," seeking to make peace in the workplace, in our community, in our homes, and in the world.

Heather Kiernan *Advent Reflection, 2023*

pause for silent prayer and reflection

A READING FROM PSALM 84

I will hear what the Lord God has to say; a voice that speaks of peace, peace for his people. His help is near for those who fear him and his glory will dwell in our land. Mercy and faithfulness have met, justice and peace have embraced. Faithfulness shall spring from the earth and justice look down from heaven.

Gentle music is played

PRAYER

To all that is chaotic in you, let there come silence. Let there be a calming of the clamouring, a stilling of the voices that have laid their claim on you, that have made their home in you, that will not let you rest, will not let you hear your life with wholeness or feel the grace that fashioned you.

Let what distracts you cease. Let there be an opening into the quiet that lies beneath the chaos, where you find the peace you did not think possible and see what shimmers within the storm.

©**Jan Richardson** *Blessing in the Chaos, The Painted Prayerbook, 2012*

WE LIGHT THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE FOR THE GIFT OF JOY

An Advent candle is lit on the altar as the congregation sing the refrain:

The light of Christ has come into the world

The light of Christ has come into the world

REFLECTION

Joy comes as a strange grace that enables us to stand in the midst of sorrow or pain or chaos, to acknowledge and name them while refusing to let them have the final word. Joy asks us to trust that something is at work in a way we cannot clearly see but in which we are asked to participate, that we might be part of how it arrives. Practicing joy involves praying to be open to it so we can recognize it when it appears.

©Jan Richardson from *How Joy works – A Blessing*, 2022

pause for silent prayer and reflection

A READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

Gentle music is played

PRAYER

As we prepare to welcome the Christ child we are challenged to reflect on the truth Jesus brings and to consider our response, inspired Mary’s unconditional ‘Yes’ to God’s plan. May we too say ‘Yes’ to his message and respond to his call with joyful and willing hearts.

WE LIGHT THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE FOR THE GIFT OF LOVE

An Advent candle is lit on the altar as the congregation sing the refrain:

The light of Christ has come into the world

The light of Christ has come into the world

REFLECTION

Advent reminds us that belonging is God's plan. Not something we earn. Not something we qualify for. A gift given before we knew to ask. We're gathered in not because we're all the same but because we're all loved. Different stories. Different scars. Different names and journeys. All held together by grace.

In Christ, we're claimed. Adopted. A family wider than blood, stronger than background, held together by love that refuses to divide. This is the family Advent points us toward. No insiders or outsiders. No better or worse. No earning our keep. Just people wrapped in mercy, learning how to belong to one another because we belong to God. This is the family we never knew we needed. Called together in Christ. Kept together by love. Waiting together for the One who brings us home.

©Eleanor Hamilton *Whispers of Grace*, Advent 2025

pause for silent prayer and reflection

A READING FROM PSALM 88

I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations. For I said, "Steadfast love will be built up forever; in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness."

You have said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: 'I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.'"

Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones!

Gentle music is played

A LITANY FOR ADVENT

Reader: Holy God, this is earth's quiet season, the season of waiting.

All: We rest in the shelter of your love.

Reader: This is the season of darkness, when we seek stars to guide us.

All: We trust in the light of your promise.

Reader: This is the season of solitude, when we listen for our own heart's rhythm.

All: We find warmth in the signs of your presence.

Reader: This is our season to make room, a time to make ready.

All: For we shall join in the angels' chorus.

Reader: Peace on earth, goodwill to all.

All: Peace on earth, goodwill to all.

©Keri Wehlander *Shine on, Star of Bethlehem*, an anthology, 2002

AN ADVENT BLESSING

Hold your light out to the world and let people of all nations feel the warmth of God's love as they encounter the Word made Flesh through Christ our Lord.

Follow, where the Spirit of Hope leads us.

Listen, as the Child of Peace cries for us.

Rejoice, as the Love of God embraces us

and let us go with Hope, Peace and Love in our hearts

and the blessing of Creator, Child and Spirit for ever within us

©Richard Becher

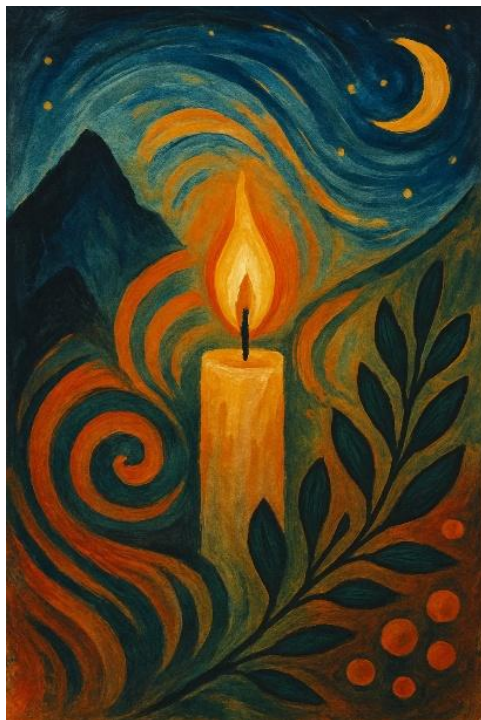
A PRAYER FOR OUR PARISH (*said together*)

Father, pour out your Holy Spirit on our parish that we may grow ever closer to you, showing your loving kindness to others.

May our parish be a place of welcome for all, offering companionship to the lonely, shelter to the stranger and comfort to the broken.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Saviour. Amen.

©Anne O'Connor, 2023



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