

# Advent



2020   
HOLY TRINITY  
LUTHERAN CHURCH



# Introduction



This year we had to wait. We had to wait to re-enter our lives after quarantine. Wait for election results. Wait for COVID-19 test results. Wait for a sense of normal to return.

No doubt, waiting invokes a visceral reaction. It takes self-discipline and almost a sense of stubborn persistence to choose delayed gratification over immediate relief. Waiting feels like loss. "Why wait?" we ask.

Enter advent. Advent means 'coming' in Latin. Advent is the season of the church that practices the art of waiting. If there were ever a year where we have a personal understanding of waiting, it is 2020.

Sometimes Advent seems to disappear behind the countdown to Christmas. It gets lost in the hustle and bustle, panicked anxiety of the holiday season. But if you find yourself saying, "I can't wait to return to normal," before you rush back to reclaim December as the stressful season you feel like it needs to be, we'd like you to take the opportunity to consider advent.

Advent is more than an invitation to wait patiently to unwrap your Christmas presents. It's an intentional effort to pause. Reflect. Pray. And learn how to wait with good courage. Advent invites us to enter into the season of waiting as an exploration of spiritual depth. We wait not out of fear, but out of faith. We experience the joy of anticipation, and relish the excitement of what's to come. Joan Chittester, liturgical scholar, writes, "It is waiting that attunes us to the invisible in a highly material world."

Here's a neat historical piece about advent. The advent wreath can be traced to the Romans' ancient rite of waiting in the darkness for the return of the sun.

In the darkness of winter, the ancient Romans took a wheel off their wagons and fastened torches to it to help them see. Because they knew the days were getting shorter and hope seemed to diminish, they brought in branches from evergreens (the only plant seemingly alive in the winter), and tied them around the wagon wheel. To those huddled inside the darkness, it was a sign of a promise that life will return to green again.

What if this year we took the time to stop, hang up our "wagon wheels," and accept this season of waiting as a gift? If we can't do it this year, will we ever do it?

This year at Holy Trinity, we are intentionally reducing the busyness of advent at church. We are not doing children's programming or confirmation on Wednesday nights. Are we just being a grumpy scrooge? No. We are taking this year to reclaim the Christian tradition of advent.

This publication gives you a daily devotion. In addition to weekly worship services, we invite you to make plans to set aside time every day for your faith. Whether you live alone or with others, consider making a routine. Light a candle, read your Bible, and pray. Decide on a time such as morning, evening, or mealtime. Decide on a place like your favorite chair, the dinner table, or the fireplace. After the Scripture reading each day, take time to think about or discuss the passage. Together we prepare our hearts, minds, and souls for the hope found in the manger.

God's blessings to you as we advent together! - Pastor Ben Hilding

## *Cultivating Sacred Space for Your Family During Advent*



It can be easy to just go through the motions or rush through this season. I challenge us all to instead dedicate intention, time, and sacred space to this season of preparation. Allow this time to be a sweet reminder of whom we are preparing our hearts for. I encourage you to designate sacred space in your home for participating in these Advent devotionals and activities as a family. On Wednesday nights we will not be continuing with our typical faith formation programming, but will instead be encouraging you to spend time together as a

family in your sacred space preparing your hearts for the coming of our Lord. If you have younger ones, you can incorporate some fun themes to engage them during your family devotional time. An example could be "Advent in Narnia." Create your own Narnia and "venture through the wardrobe" each night during this Advent season. Be creative, make it your own, and reflect on what this season is about. -Casey Fremstad



# Stories of Online Worshipping

## Hidden Blessing of Online Worship During COVID

by Rose M. Fife, Communications Specialist

Barb Warner knows her favorite service (so far). "I loved the confirmation videos! We got to see each kid and got to know them more than if we'd been in church," she said. "And the kids can keep those videos forever."

A few days before Sunday, March 15, Pastors Alicia and Ben made the announcement: We were switching to virtual worship for a few weeks until the coronavirus settled down and we could return to normal. That Sunday, Pastor Ben spoke to an oddly still sanctuary, the musicians played for a congregation on the other side of the screen, and Ministry Coordinator Karen Taylor streamed it on her phone, using a music stand to keep it steady. The global pandemic that was about to upend all of our lives had arrived in Minnesota.

At the time, most of us thought we would be back to "normal" soon. But we have a new normal now: an online worship that began with a small, humbled team has grown to many more. And that new normal has revealed many hidden blessings.

Watching the online services on our Facebook page on Sunday mornings, Barb says, "I love to see the comments as the service happens. It's really nice to know someone else is watching with you," she says. "I live alone; it's just my dog and me and this online service connects me."

A retired special education teacher, Barb wanted to get more involved, despite the pandemic. She now teaches the 1st-4th graders Children's Ministry on Zoom Wednesday nights. "Doing things like this really helps."

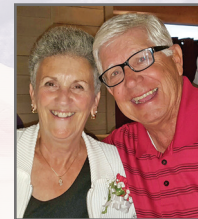
The true benefit of online services, according to Barb, is the inclusivity. "I like that you can still be included even if you're sick or traveling. When I was sick before, I just missed the service. Now, I'm still connected. I'm grateful for this church and how accepting it is."



New parents Allie and Frank Wergin find watching online an easier option with their 6 month old baby, Jack.

"There are a lot of positives about watching the service online, but especially with having a little baby," Allie says. "He can be fussy at 9 a.m., so it would be a challenge to be there in person. Sometimes we are still in our jammies if the baby had a bad night. The flexibility is helpful."

The Wergins joined Holy Trinity in August. As many people join churches to be a part of a larger community of faith, I asked Allie if they were feeling connected. "We are a new family, so not having that face-to-face interaction makes it a challenge. But we're getting to know some of the members by watching the online worship," she said.



Barb and Bob Gullickson keep to tradition and also tune in on Sunday mornings. "We watch every week. I still think, 'It's Sunday, we have worship. 'Now, of course, I can cuddle with my dog, but I like keeping this part the same,'" says Barb.

"Of course we miss everyone, but we like watching the commentary [on Facebook] and the creativity the staff has come up with to pique our interest," says Barb. The music is fabulous! Having a blended style is great because something speaks to everyone that way. "

Bob appreciates the Pastors' sermons. "Without the services on the screen, we wouldn't be able to hear the sermons. Especially during these tough times, it's important," he said. "They are so relevant, the positive aspects of diversity in the church... you hear these messages and they make you think."

Barb also appreciates how new leaders of the church are coming forward to share their gifts. "I love that Pastor Diane is more a part of our church and we love to see everyone's faces! Especially the new, talented people who have been hiding."

Actively involved in the retired group The Amazing Grays, the Gullicksons mentioned the need to get connected and stay positive. "Not all churches are able to provide online services, so we try to look for the positive things."



# Week 1: The Gift of Hope

In the first week of Advent, we are reminded of our need for God to restore and save us. During a time when we can so easily be overwhelmed, we pause to reflect on the gentle whisper of hope. We also join in the quiet work of hope, as we heal the broken, befriend the lonely, and share the good news of the Gospel.

## Light 1 Candle

### Read

Sunday, November 29: Mark 13:24-37

Monday, November 30: Psalm 80:1-7

Tuesday, December 1: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Wednesday, December 2: Isaiah 64:1-9

Thursday, December 3: Philippians 3:12-16

Friday, December 4: Jeremiah 1:4-10

Saturday, December 5: Ezekiel 36:24-28

### Reflect

Spend time reflecting on the Scripture passage.

### Pray

Savior of the nations, come! As we await your coming, we pray that we would be encouraged by hope. May our ears be open and our hearts ready to receive the gift of hope embodied in the Word made flesh. Be gracious to us as we wait for you. O Lord our God, come to us, that the earth may behold your glory. Amen.

## St. Nicholas of Myra (Dec. 6)

Eastern and Northern Europeans celebrate St. Nicholas of Myra on December 6. Saint Nick is an early Christian bishop of Greek descent who served in what is now Turkey during the time of the Roman empire. He is the true Santa Claus. Legends surround him, including one famous story where he gave bags of gold to the three daughters of a father who was going to sell them into prostitution. He died around 342, and is now one of the church's most beloved saints, although little is known about his life. Nicholas has become a symbol of anonymous gift giving, and a practice that continues on his feast day today is for people to put coins in the shoes of those who left them out for him. But even moreso, his legacy invites us to consider being generous, even to those who can never give us a gift back.

## Wednesday Evening Activity "HOPE" – Holiday Paper Chain

As a family, create a holiday paper chain. Cut colored paper into strips. Write something that brings you hope on each strip of paper. Once you are finished writing, begin making your chain. To start your chain, staple or tape one strip of paper together so that it forms a loop. Take another strip of paper and feed it through the circle that you just made, fastening it in a loop with another staple or piece of tape. Continue this process until you have used all of your strips of paper. Once you are finished, use your holiday paper chain to adorn your sacred space. Use other decorations to decorate your sacred space and make it special.

"O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer;

O Sun of justice, now draw near.

Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,

and death's dark shadow put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!"

O come, O Come, Emmanuel ELW 257



## *Week 2: The Gift of Peace*

In the second week of Advent, we lean into God's perfect peace even within our imperfect-world. In a world that abounds with hostility, Christ speaks to us, "Peace, be still."

### *Light 2 Candles*

#### *Read*

Sunday, December 6: Mark 1:1-8

Monday, December 7: Isaiah 40:1-11

Tuesday, December 8: Psalm 27

Wednesday, December 9: Luke 1:5-17

Thursday, December 10: Habakkuk 2:1-4

Friday, December 11: John 1:6-8, 19-28

Saturday, December 12: Isaiah 35

#### *Reflect*

Spend time reflecting on the Scripture passage.

#### *Pray*

Savior of the nations, come! As we await your coming, give us your gift of peace that surpasses all understanding. You alone are the Prince of Peace, and we pray that you may inspire us to be agents of peace to those around us. O Lord our God, come to us, that the earth may behold your glory. Amen.

### *Mary, the Virgin of Guadalupe (Dec. 12)*

This day commemorates the vision of a girl who appeared to peasant Juan Diego on a hill outside of Mexico City with instructions to build a church on the site. When he delivered the message, the local bishop at first did not believe him. But when Juan Diego came back another time, roses fell from Diego's cloak and an image of the Virgin Mary appeared. Today the shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe is the most visited Catholic pilgrimage destination in the world. On celebrations to honor the Virgin of Guadalupe, worshippers leave roses at the altar, and sing songs to Mary, while enjoying sweetbread and a rice drink (and sometimes even a mariachi band). Often the celebration falls on the third Sunday of Advent (fitting for the Isaiah 35 reading regarding flowers blooming in the desert).

### *Wednesday Evening Activity "PEACE" – Evening Walk*

Bundle up and take your family on an evening walk. Make it an adventure. Encourage one another to notice things on your walk. Where do you see God's peace in creation? What do you hear? What do you see? How do you feel? When you return home from your evening walk, move to your sacred space and share with one another the ways in which you observed God's peace. How can you slow down this week to take in God's peace in other areas of your life?

"Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art,  
dear desire of ev'ry nation, joy of ev'ry longing heart."  
Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus ELW 254





## *Week 3: The Gift of Love*

In the third week of Advent, we remember that it was out of God's love for this world that God sent Jesus Christ to dwell among us. The Word becomes flesh because of love, so that God's love can fill our hearts, ignite our souls, and change our lives.

### *Light 3 Candles*

#### *Read*

Sunday, December 13: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Monday, December 14: Isaiah 11:1-9

Tuesday, December 15: Isaiah 2:1-5

Wednesday, December 16: Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

Thursday, December 17: Jeremiah 33:14-16

Friday, December 18: Zephaniah 3:14-20

Saturday, December 19: John 1:1-14

#### *Reflect*

Spend time reflecting on the Scripture passage.

#### *Pray*

Savior of the nations, come! As we continue our Advent journey, we pray that we may be rooted in your love. Open our ears to the words of your prophets, and help us to grasp how wide, how long, how high, and how deep is the love of Christ. O Lord our God, come to us, that the earth may behold your glory. Amen.

### *Saint Lucia*

On Dec. 13th, Scandinavians celebrate Lucia of Syracuse (283-304), also called Saint Lucia or Lucy (Lucia means "light"). Lucy was a young Christian of Sicily who was born to wealthy parents, but chose to give her possessions to the poor. She was martyred during the persecutions under Emperor Diocletian, because she brought food to persecuted Christians in Rome, entering caves with candles on her head. In Scandinavian countries, they originally marked this festival on the shortest day of the year, by bringing light into the darkness of winter. Today, they choose a young girl as a "Lucy" to wear a white dress and red sash (symbol of martyrdom) as well as a crown of candles. Traditionally, St. Lucia is also celebrated in homes, with the eldest daughter bringing coffee and saffron rolls to the family in the morning, and wearing a crown of candles to usher in the season of light.

### *Wednesday Evening Activity "LOVE" – Love Letters*

It can be easy to feel alone, underappreciated, and unnoticed during this time of social isolation. This week, write a love letter to someone in your life that needs to hear how truly loved and valued they are. This can be someone in your family, a friend, or neighbor, etc. Let them know how much you care and appreciate them. Complete this activity in your sacred space and put on some worship music in the background as you write your letters. Be specific and intentional with your words. When you are finished with your letter, give (or mail) it to the person you wrote it to.

"Love caused your incarnation; love brought you down to me.  
Your thirst for my salvation procured my liberty.  
Oh, love beyond all telling, that let you to embrace  
In love, all love excelling, our lost and fallen race."  
O Lord, How Shall I Meet You ELW 241



## *Week 4: The Gift of Joy*

In the fourth week of Advent, we declare that God turns our mourning into dancing. Just as Mary proclaims through the Magnificat, we rejoice in the Good News of God's presence among us. Our joy comes as a gift from the One who invites us to, "Come follow me, for I have come that you might have life and have it to the fullest measure!"

### *Light 4 Candles*

#### *Read*

Sunday, December 20: Luke 1:26-38

Monday, December 21: Luke 1:39-45

Tuesday, December 22: Luke 1:46-55

Wednesday, December 23: Luke 1:57-80

Thursday, December 24: Luke 2:1-20

#### *Reflect*

Spend time reflecting on the Scripture passage.

#### *Pray*

Savior of the nations, come! In a world where the message is "be happy," we are reminded that only you grant the gift of true joy. Prepare our hearts to rejoice in your glorious advent, as we hear again with joyful hearts and proclaim with elated voices the wondrous refrain of your presence with us. O Lord our God, come to us, that the earth may behold your glory. Amen.

### *Las Posadas*

On the last days of Advent, Latinos celebrate Las Posadas (Spanish for "lodging"), reenacting the search for an inn for Mary and Joseph. This celebration has been a Mexican tradition for over 400 years. Over a period of 9 days (9 representing the 9 months of Mary's pregnancy), a holy family procession goes to a new home ("inn") each evening as they make their way to the stable. Two people lead the processional dressed up like Mary and Joseph, sometimes Mary even rides a real donkey, and people join the parade as angels and shepherds. At the end of the night, carols are sung, children break open star-shaped piñatas, and everyone sits for a feast. The message is profound, as all are invited to ask, "how do we refuse to shelter the poor? Would we have allowed Christ into our homes?"

### *Wednesday Evening Activity "JOY" – Hot Cocoa Night*

This is a night for rejoicing! We invite you to get into your coziest pajamas and have a Hot Cocoa Party with your family. Play your favorite Christmas songs, make hot cocoa (feel free to add some fun additions to your hot cocoa such as candy cane pieces, whipped cream, and marshmallows), and spend time together in your sacred space. Go around and share with one another something/someone that has brought joy to your life recently. Continue your night with games and/or your favorite Christmas movie. Be joyful with one another.

"Rejoice, then you sad-hearted, who sit in deepest gloom,  
who mourn your joys departed and tremble at your doom.  
All hail the Lord's appearing! O glorious Sun, now come,  
send forth your beams so cheering and guide us safely home"  
O Lord, How Shall I Meet You ELW 241





# Christmas Worship

# Staff



*He Came To Us*

On behalf of the staff  
of Holy Trinity, we want to  
wish you and your loved  
ones a blessed Advent and  
Merry Christmas!  
*We thank God for you!*







NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
NEW PRAGUE, MN 56071  
PERMIT #51

## *Holy Trinity Lutheran Church*

1300 Main Street East  
New Prague, MN 56071  
P: 952.758.3513 | E: [office@holytrinityonline.org](mailto:office@holytrinityonline.org)

## *Office Hours*

Mon – Thurs 8:30am – 4:30pm  
Friday 8am – 12pm

*©2020 Holy Trinity Lutheran Church*