

***2025 Advent Devotional***  
***Jesus is the Reason for the Season***



***written by:***  
***members of Marion Center Congregations***

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Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ!

In life, and especially during the holiday season, there is a temptation to go through the motions. Nostalgia is powerful; the momentum to do what we've always done is often the easiest and most comfortable option.

My sister, who is not a Christian, is always the first person to set up her Christmas tree. She decorates her entire house for Christmas; she even has a stocking for her boyfriend's dog! Sadly, she doesn't believe in the religious ideas behind the celebration.

She celebrates Christmas for nostalgia; she celebrates because the holiday traditions make her happy. However, I hope that a part of her celebration is a longing to return to the faith that she was raised in.

This time of the year is not about nostalgia, music, or decorations. I enjoy the music and the traditions, but I believe that the reason for this season isn't my preferences! Jesus is the reason for the season!

Advent is a call to return to the faith. We actually believe that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. We actually believe that Jesus will return. We believe that these ideas impact our lives now and in eternity.

During this busy season, don't get caught up in the momentum of tradition. Instead, prepare your heart to celebrate Jesus' birth and anticipate His return. Seek after God this Advent.

May God bless you,  
Rev. Kyle Eisenhuth  
First Methodist Church of Marion Center

## *Day 1 - November 30*

*This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: 2 In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. 3 Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths. "The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 4 He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. 5 Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.*

*Isaiah 2:1-5*

We find ourselves about to begin our journey in the season of Advent (the season of light). As we read through this section of scripture our minds may race through the daily news. Wars and fighting, peace off in the distance, daily worry and stress. We ask our creator for strength and encouragement to face each new day, new challenge. Here is one of God's messages of encouragement from Isaiah...a promise of peace with justice. An invitation to meet with God on the highest mountain with a rebuilt temple of Zion. There we will receive training on how God desires us to live. A way that will bring peace to the entire world. I for one have an ache in my heart for those in the Ukraine with the bombings and the Christians in Nigeria being slaughtered. But if our light is growing dim from things that seem out of our control, rest in God who directs us to Advent. During this season we must admit we find people return to a kinder side. They take time to look into the faces of those who are suffering and choose to help, realizing that the Prince of Peace and the Lord of Light is waiting for them in Bethlehem. Isaiah reminds us that Jesus' coming **makes great things possible**. As we light the first candle which gives off light, we can imagine a world without swords and spears; without missiles and tanks. Instead we look forward to the babe in a manger who comes to shine His light into our dark world. Let us follow the light up the mountain of the Lord together. There, may we learn God's ways together and may we walk together in the light of the Lord.

Glenda Mears, Firth Methodist Church of Marion Center

## *Day 2 - December 1*

*And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. 14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.*

*Romans 13:11-14*

Wake up, Sleepyhead!

Our grandson's alarm clock has a SpongeBob blaring foghorn sound to awaken him each morning. He can continue to sleep through it even though everyone in the house can hear it blaring. Paul's words ring like an alarm clock to a sleepy soul: "Wake up!" He's not talking about physical sleep, but spiritual drowsiness. It's easy to drift into routine faith being comfortable, complacent, and half-aware of God's presence. But Paul reminds us that time is moving, eternity is nearer, and we are called to live alert and ready. We would rather roll back over and keep going through life even though the scripture tells us, "It is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed."

The night, Paul says, is nearly over. The day, the full revealing of Christ's kingdom, is almost here. That means we're to cast off the "deeds of darkness" and put on the "armor of light." The world encourages us to "eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." Instead of living for temporary pleasures, we're to clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 14). Each day, do we spend the time in God's word and prayer or show Christlike qualities of compassion and courage.

This "waking up" isn't just about being morally upright; it's about being spiritually alive by being alert to God's voice, active in love, and ready for Christ's return. During Advent, we spend time preparing for the Christmas dinner, decorating our homes, wrapping the presents, but are we preparing for the second coming of Christ. How many of us continue to be spiritually asleep and not really alive in Christ? It is time to "wake up"!

Lorrie Gallo, Presbyterian Church of Marion

## *Day 3 - December 2*

*1 I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord." 2 Our feet are standing in your gates, Jerusalem. 3 Jerusalem is built like a city that is closely compacted together. 4 That is where the tribes go up— the tribes of the Lord—to praise the name of the Lord according to the statute given to Israel. 5 There stand the thrones for judgment, the thrones of the house of David. 6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May those who love you be secure. 7 May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels." 8 For the sake of my family and friends, I will say, "Peace be within you." 9 For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your prosperity.*

*Psalm 122*

The Psalmist is excited to worship together in God's house and asks for peace for Jerusalem. Our church family is important to us. In each other we can find strength and support. We seek good for one another. Everyone worshiping together is important. There we can lift up each other in prayer. Worship can bring peace to us that we can then share with other people. We take the peace we gain in worship out into the world. In our actions we show God's goodness. We should treat people the way Christ treats us – with love and compassion and grace. Our pastor tells us each week when we pass the peace in worship that when we let God use us to bless others that we are in turn blessed as well. Hopefully when people see God's peace in us that they want to have that same peace. We can then tell them that peace comes through the Christ child and His sacrifice for us. Our churches should be a place where people can come and find that peace. Peace be with all of you in this Christmas season.

John Gandolfi, Presbyterian Church of Plumville

## *Day 4 - December 3*

*The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. 3 You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. 4 For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. 5 Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. 6 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. 7 Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.*

*Isaiah 9:2-7*

The Bible says that God is light, and in him there is no darkness. Advent is the anticipation of a new light. The day after Thanksgiving I am always ready to decorate for Christmas, writing out Christmas cards, and making my gift-giving list. As each Advent week goes by the anticipation of Jesus gets stronger. I feel I have a deeper connection with Jesus because I'm focusing on the new light. But I wish after all the waiting not to give up hope all year long and that I will always focus my life on the light. After all Jesus is the light of the world and the way to eternal salvation. Seeing the great light can bring restoration, hope, goodness, and renewal.

In the Bible Jesus is given four names. He gives us the wisdom for those that need guidance. He is strong and powerful to take care of his people. He also brings us peace and a sense of well-being. This is why he will be called Wonderful counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

This world right now is in spiritual darkness. Just as Isaiah spoke in the Bible about peoples spiritual emptiness, and complete lack of repentance. Every year around the Advent season we all hope that the broken world will be fixed if we discover the light. This Advent season may we all be more opened to see Christ more clearly and renew our commitment to live in his light.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.

Stephanie Smith, Creekside Methodist Church

## *Day 5 – December 4*

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* *John 1:1-5*

At Christmas, we often picture the humble manger, the shining star, and the angels' song but John reminds us that the story of Jesus didn't begin in Bethlehem. It began "in the beginning." Before creation, before time itself, Jesus was already there. He is not just a part of the Christmas story; He is the Author of it.

When Jesus came into the world as a baby, He brought with Him the light that darkness could never extinguish. The world, broken and shadowed by sin, finally saw hope embodied in human form. The Creator stepped into His creation to bring life, grace, and truth.

Last year, we had several times of losing power after a storm. The house would get silent and dark, except for the faint glow of a few candles. Though the room was filled with darkness, that little light somehow brought comfort knowing it pushed back the shadows just enough to remind me we are never alone. As I watched the candle flicker, I thought about this passage from John. Jesus is the Light that shines in the darkness, not just the soft glow of comfort, but the radiant power that overcomes sin, fear, and despair. Just as that small flame changed the atmosphere of the room, Christ changes the atmosphere of our hearts. His light doesn't remove all the darkness around us, but it gives us direction, peace, and hope that nothing can extinguish.

This Christmas let's challenge ourselves to look beyond the gifts and lights around us and to focus the eternal Light within us. Let us carry His brightness into every place that needs hope and every life that needs love.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, thank you for sending Jesus, the eternal Word, into our world. We thank you that through Him, all things were made, and in Him, we find true life. As we celebrate His birth, please let the light of Jesus shine brightly in our hearts today. Help us trust that no matter how dark things seem, His light will always overcome the darkness. Shine through us so that others may see Your love and hope this Christmas. Amen.

Janice Brocious, New Life Lutheran Church

## *Day 6 – December 5*

*There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. 9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

*John 1:6-13*

One of the many things I enjoy about the Christmas season is the beauty of the lights, especially against the backdrop of snow. Lights in display windows, in people's yards, throughout stores, even the red and green traffic lights, and most especially the lights on the Christmas tree. It doesn't matter if they are one solid color, multicolored, or simply clear. They are just so festive and invite feelings of merriment and joy. I just can't help but smile at Christmas lights.

I remember, as a child, and then with my own children, driving through the neighborhoods at night to "go see the lights." It was so magical and an event I looked forward to as a tradition of the season. I miss that. The world has changed so much since my childhood.

But what hasn't changed is that Jesus Christ is still the Light of the world! (John 8:12) The Light that dispels the darkness! (1 Peter 2:9) And because of this, when we accept Him as our personal Savior, we become children of the Light. We no longer belong to the darkness of sin. (Eph 5:8)

As God's children, we are then to shine our light before men. (Matt 5:16) The light we shine is Jesus living through us by doing good deeds, living a righteous life, and spreading the hope of the gospel.

Darkness cannot exist in light. It has to flee. This light shines year-round, not just at Christmas. We don't "put it away" until next year. As the children's song says: "Hide it under a bushel, no! I'm gonna let it shine!" -Harry Dixon Loes, 1920s.

Where and how will you shine your light this Christmas season?

Cindy Rummell, GAP Ministries



## *Day 7 - December 6*

*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. 15 (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") 16 Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.*

*John 1:14-18*

After all the preparations, anticipation, and celebrations of Jesus' Birth, what happened next in His life. Of course, He went through the process of childhood: growth spurts, schooling, developing social skills and friendships plus more. Luke 2: 52 sums up this time: "Jesus continued to learn more and more and to grow physically. People liked Him, and He pleased God."

At thirty Jesus began His ministry. His cousin, John the Baptist, revealed Jesus as "the One" and "the Light" that was coming into the world as God in the flesh who would reveal what God is like. After His baptism and encounter with Satan, Jesus exploded into the Hebrew world, teaching, challenging, healing, confronting the Jewish hierarchy, drawing to Him the lost, the lonely, the forgotten with His grace and truth. Relentless, full of God's glory, Jesus never faltered; He never failed. He changed the world.

Remembering Jesus' ministry is just as important as Christmas and Easter. Celebrate it everyday.

Jane Smith

Firth Methodist Church of Marion Center

## *Day 8 - December 7*

*In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." 3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" 4 John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. 5 People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. 6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. Matthew 3:1-6*

I must admit the season of Advent can be a little overwhelming. I'm preparing for Christmas, the most wonderful time of the year according to the Christmas carol. But I'm not sure my list with twenty-five things to do from Thanksgiving to Christmas day is the preparation I'm supposed to be most focused on. The prophet Isaiah shared of the need to repent from our sins and ready ourselves to meet God. Similarly, in the New Testament, John the Baptist's message was on the importance of repenting. John was also preparing us to meet Jesus. He shared that he baptized with water, but the one more powerful than he would baptize with the Holy Spirit and Fire. We might wonder why this passage of scripture is included as a Christmas scripture. John knew that to reach heaven, you must repent and accept Jesus. The birth of Jesus is His first coming, and yes, it is a special day to prepare for and celebrate, after all it is a day of new birth and a new chance for us to recommit to a life with Jesus as our savior. But John emphasized that most importantly the day we need to prepare for the most is Jesus' second coming when he comes and takes us to live in heaven.

Now you might wonder as we read this scripture, why did John have to be so different? He purposely dressed differently, lived differently and ate differently. People saw he was different and came to see why. This opened the door for John to share about Jesus. We don't need to wear camel-haired clothes or eat locusts, but how do people see you? Do they see the love of Christ in you? How we look and how we act can open the door for us to share about Jesus.

In this season of Advent let's prepare a little different this year. Spend more time in God's Word, lend an ear to someone struggling, help those in need this season and let's spread God's love to all those we have an opportunity to share it with. We can celebrate Jesus' birthday with a birthday cake, but let's prepare for the day we can eat cake in heaven with our Lord and Savior.

Beth Turner, Presbyterian Church of Marion

## *Day 9 – December 8*

*But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 10 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”* *Matthew 3:7-12*

Wow! What a scripture for an Advent Devotional!

There is no peace on earth or good will toward men from this reading, or beautiful angels flitting about plucking soothing tunes from golden harps, and no expensive gifts from wealthy foreign wise men.

There is no “Silent Night” or decking the halls with boughs of holly.

This scripture reminds me that Christ was born into a very violent world, and that things have not changed much since. The peace He brings to us is apparently not world peace, but peace in our souls. Violence, like the killing of all the first born sons by Herod, has been replicated in multiple ways throughout the ages, and still we wait for that time when the threshing floor will be cleared and all the chaff eliminated. The One who will accomplish this has already been here with us once, and has promised to return. Let us celebrate His birth, the birth of hope in a violent world, while doing all we can to share with those around us, the hope Christ offers us in His promised return.

To quote from Henry W. Longfellow’s famous Christmas hymn:

*I Heard The Bells On Christmas Day:*

*And in despair I bowed my head:*

*“There is no peace on earth,” I said,*

*“For hate is strong, and mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good will to men.”*

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:*

*“God is not dead nor doth he sleep;*

*The wrong shall fail, the right prevail*

*With peace on earth, good will to men.”*

Casey Moore, Presbyterian Church of Plumville

## *Day 10 – December 9*

*Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness. 2 May he judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice. 3 May the mountains bring prosperity to the people, the hills the fruit of righteousness. 4 May he defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; may he crush the oppressor. 5 May he endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon, through all generations. 6 May he be like rain falling on a mown field, like showers watering the earth. 7 In his days may the righteous flourish and prosperity abound till the moon is no more.*

*Psalms 72:1-7*

Justice is a key word in this scripture reference. Jesus is seen as the advocate for the weak and unfairly treated. In 2025, Justice has become an emotionally charged word. To receive government regulated supports people must meet eligibility requirements. Are they needy and worthy? We are cautious who is designated as needy and what we will give them for relief.

Jesus set the example of freely giving to all who asked. Justice means willingness to surrender our wants so that others might receive what they need. We are not meant to hoard, but allow God's grace to flow through our stewardship of blessings. Jesus will provide. Do we help or hinder that provision? How do our actions impact our community?

Teach us, God, to let justice roll down like water and righteousness like an ever flowing stream. In Christ, Amen.

Sue Good, Tanoma Methodist Church

## *Day 11 – December 10*

*When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them.” The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Restore our fortunes, Lord, like streams in the Negev. Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.*

*Romans 15:4-13*

Martin Luther once wrote that the book of Romans is “really the chief part of the New Testament, and is truly the purest gospel.”

Today's text from Romans is a portion of a letter that Paul wrote to believers in the capital city of the Roman Empire.

As I read the text, I noticed that the word “Hope” is used four times. The word Hope’s definition in a biblical sense is “a confident, sure expectation of God’s future promises, not mere wishful thinking.” Paul is reminding them and us that the Root of Jesse will spring up and rule over the nations. We need to be hopeful and confident of this.

For me the two verses that stand out, and are so appropriate for this community as we come together to publish this devotional are verse 6 and verse 13.

6 “So that with ONE MIND and ONE VOICE you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

13 “ May the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

God bless this community of faith as we accept one another, just as Christ accepted us, to bring praise to God.

Blessings,

Rebecca Rougeaux, New Life Lutheran Church

## *Day 12 - December 11*

*A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. 2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—3 and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; 4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. 5 Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. 6 The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. 7 The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. 8 The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. 9 They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. 10 In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious.*

*Isaiah 11:1-10*

In this world of instant gratification and many, many choices, we become overwhelmed. They keep telling us that it's a better life but I beg to differ. Illnesses, mental and physical, are skyrocketing. Spiritual health is suffering, as well. We need to be conscious of what is building our root system in our lives. I read this scripture and think about where are our roots. In plants and trees roots go deep and sustain life and produce more life. That life produces fruit which feeds and produces more life.

Jesus Christ is the “shoot” (branch) that grows from the “stump” (lineage) of Jesse, and the “root” from which all other branches draw their life and nourishment. Jesus Christ is the only root that we want to build our life around.

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What are you being rooted in these days? Our everyday choices that lead to bigger choices are what we are allowing to become the roots of our life. Jesus has God's spirit the Holy Spirit. When we receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we also have the Holy Spirit. This then gives us all that we read here --- The Spirit of wisdom and understanding; counsel and strength; knowledge and fear. We see that Jesus does not make decisions by what He sees with His eyes or hears with His ears. If we follow His example, not relying on what we see or hear with our natural senses, but watching and listening for the Holy Spirit to lead us in our hearts, we will also understand what we would otherwise not learn in a lifetime.

This Christmas season I suggest that we take inventory of our lives and be sure that we are filled with all of these good things from the Spirit. This is what we want to build our root system in so that we can grow and produce fruit. How have you experienced the Holy Spirit's ministry in each of these ways? If you have not, ask God to give you experiences with His Spirit.

Rev. Jackie Greene, GAP Ministries

## *Day 13 - December 12*

*In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. 4 So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.*

*Hebrews 1:1-4*

The Old Testament prophets had long predicted the coming of the Messiah. That night 2000 years ago arrived with the birth of Jesus. He grew up and spent 33 years in Israel. The last three years of his life he taught about knowing God and his role as the Messiah. He died for our sins and rose from the dead and lives forevermore. The Jews, who became Christians, struggled to continue to be followers of Jesus as time went by. They faced ridicule, doubt, the familiarity of the Jewish traditions and even death.

Today's scripture is from the book of Hebrews. The author of this book is unknown. It was written to reassure the Christians at that time, and all Christians through the centuries, that God was no longer speaking through the prophets. The author then gives reasons for Christians to continue in their faith. He writes that God has now spoken through His Son, who is divine. God's Son was with him when they formed the universe, and that His Son reflects God's glory. His Son is greater than the prophets, the angels, and the Jewish priests. Finally, when His Son sat down at the right hand of God, God's plan for the salvation of mankind was completed. Jesus is God's Son and our Savior. He is the forgiver of our sins and our hope for eternal life when we choose to follow him. (Just a reminder: Christianity is the only religion that has a risen Savior.)

This is the season of gift giving. God and His Son has given us the best gift of all, salvation and eternal life. Don't doubt, don't hesitate! Now is the time to give God a special gift: YOURSELF!

Margaret Smith, Firth Methodist Church of Marion Center



## *Day 14 – December 13*

*For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father”? Or again, “I will be his Father, and he will be my Son”? 6 And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.” 7 In speaking of the angels he says, “He makes his angels spirits, and his servants flames of fire.” 8 But about the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.” 10 He also says, “In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. 11 They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. 12 You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.” 13 To which of the angels did God ever say, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”? 14 Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?*

*Hebrews 1:5-14*

The writer of Hebrews and the words of Isaiah make it clear that angels are “ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation”—salvation made possible by the suffering and sacrifice on the Cross by the Holy Son of God.

Jesus, the Christ, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. This familiar declaration, part of our Affirmation of Faith, tells us of the authority of the Son of God, a shout out to the superiority of the Christ over God’s angels.

“God speaks of his angels as messengers swift as the wind and servants made of flaming fire but of his Son he says, Your kingdom, O God, will last for ever and ever” (The Living Bible, Hebrews 1: 7b and 8a.)

“When his first born came to earth –God said: ‘Let all the angels of God worship him.’ ” (The Living Bible, Hebrews 1:6.)

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Surely, we have all encountered angels sent by God to help us on our way:

A young married couple noticed a toddler wandering, alone, near the edge of a rural highway at a state park. They stopped their car, fearing for the safety of the little boy. The husband stayed with the child while his wife searched for the campsite located over rough terrain to inquire if a child was missing. The grandpa who was visiting other campers thought the child was sleeping. The married couple had acted as God's angels that day directing the grateful grandfather to his "missing" charge.

When aging parents traveling in southern Virginia knew the location via cell phone of family members having major car failure but did not know how to get to the location of their family in distress, they pulled into a parking lot at a small mall. A man, sitting nearby in a pickup truck, responded to their question with directions for the elderly parents to locate and aid the family of four stranded in a disabled vehicle.

With gas leaking from a worn-out oven, a utility responder who looked as large as the angel at the tomb appeared at our door. After declaring the oven dangerous to operate, the "angel unaware" casually mentioned that his father had satisfactorily purchased an item at a place that possibly carried a replacement stove to meet our specifications. Less than two hours after the gasman left our home, we were standing in a business thirty miles away purchasing a much-needed stove at an appliance store we had never known existed. In less than 18 hours, the new stove was in our kitchen.

I believe that God also temporarily assigns humans to serve as angels answering our prayers. Angels are everywhere: at our doors, along the highway, in parking lots, and especially in hospitals and at sick beds, serving as messengers of God, ministering to our needs. Thanks be to God for our Savior, for his Love for us, for the Holy Spirit, and for the angels who worship and serve Him. Amen

Nancy Laird, Presbyterian Church of Marion

## *Day 15 – December 14*

*The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, 2 it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God. 3 Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; 4 say to those with fearful hearts, “Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.” 5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. 6 Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. 7 The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow. 8 And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way. The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not go about on it. 9 No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, 10 and those the Lord has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. Isaiah 35:1-10*

Advent is odd, there are Christmas lights and treats and little ones watching for Santa. But as Christians, it is also a ‘not yet’ time as we celebrate something that has happened, God’s Son who came to earth to save us, died for us and told us that he will return. So, as Christians, we celebrate what has happened and what will happen again.

Isaiah’s words paint a picture of the desert, a hostile environment that would not easily support life. There is a lack of water, vegetation and shelter. It is an area of great extremes, intense heat during the day and cold at night. This wilderness area will see a drastic change; a miracle will take place. There will be colorful vegetation with blooms, and even grasses and reeds will grow. Where once there was parched dry land, there will be bubbling springs of water. The desert place once avoided because of the danger will become a highway, for the Redeemed of Christ’s to travel filled with joy and gladness as they go to Zion.

C.S. Lewis, wrote that joy would be serious business in heaven. Isaiah’s description of this highway, or the Way of Holiness seems in line with Lewis’ description of the seriousness of joy in heaven. Despite being in this desert area, the redeemed will walk with joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing will be gone. This Way of Holiness will be surrounded by the wilderness and the challenges that all encounter during life, but once they travel to His Home, all that has gone away. No more sorrow and no more sighing, only the joy of the Lord and a heart of gladness. And so, we wait as the Redeemed of Christ’s for that day with joy.

Pastor Colleen McFarland, Presbyterian Church of Plumville

## *Day 16 – December 15*

*And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, 49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. 50 His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. 51 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. 52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. 54 He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful 55 to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.”*

*Luke 1:46-55*

This section of scripture has come to be known as Mary's Magnificat. That word means to lift up or make something great. These verses were Mary's psalm of praise and exaltation to God. This shows an outpouring of Mary's soul as she worshipped her Lord and trusted Him for all that was to come. God favored Mary for the important task of giving birth to His Son Jesus.

How frightening this would have been for any young girl. But, Mary served as a model of how each of us should be willing to serve and trust God for control in our lives. In these verses, Mary referred to several Old Testament prophets' words and through these scriptures showed respect and honor to God. May each of us reflect on our lives and honestly be able to say “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”

Sandy Murphy, Tanoma Methodist Church

## *Day 17 – December 16*

*Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, my soul. 2 I will praise the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. 3 Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save. 4 When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing. 5 Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God. 6 He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them— he remains faithful forever. 7 He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, 8 the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous. 9 The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked. 10 The Lord reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the Lord.*

*Psalms 146:1-10*

When I studied this Psalm, I discovered that it is a Praise Psalm and it was written as a hymn and was composed for community worship. The song praises God and teaches that only God is worthy of our ultimate trust and faith.

Verses 6 and 7 state that God is the maker of all creation and executes justice for all the oppressed. God does not work the way we might expect. It is God's nature to work by turning the ways of this world upside down, for example, by setting the prisoners free.

My study Bible states that during this holiday season: "we must run directly to the manger and the mother's womb, embrace this infant and Virgin's child in our arms, and look at Him- born, being nursed, growing up, going about in human society, teaching, dying, rising again, ascending above all the heavens, and having authority over all things."

One way God works to establish justice is by building communities of faith based on God's Word.

I believe the question we must ask ourselves is "How is our community of faith sharing in this mission?"

May you all have a blessed, happy and healthy Holiday Season.

Mary Frye, New Life Lutheran Church

## *Day 18 – December 17*

*Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. 9 Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! 10 Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.*

*James 5:7-10*

Relational discord, a favorite trap set by Satan and his cohorts, ensnares us too often. When we fall for the bait, we lose our strength and effectiveness in our work with God.

Opportunities for strife surround us and poke at us daily: Go ahead, react! How we respond determines the outcome. God made ample provision for us to neutralize the sting of hurt, anger, and strife and its persuasion to sin against one another.

We can overcome when we stay true to the heart of God, adopt the disciplines of Jesus, and live from the wisdom and power of the Spirit of God.

Jesus, our greatest example, proclaimed and fully carried out the heart of God on earth. Through His completed work, we can live in God's love, mercy, forgiveness, and favor.

His disciplines kept Him on course. He lived in communion with the Father; He countered evil with God's Word and doing good; He spoke Truth in love to the unlovely. He performed miraculous works in the power of His Holy Spirit anointing.

Now it's our turn. Before Jesus returned to the Father, He commissioned His disciples—in all time periods—to do God-works in His name (Matthew 28, Mark 16). All these things we can do in union with God's Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 12:1 (TPT) says, "As for us, we have all of these great witnesses who encircle us like clouds. So we must let go of every wound that has pierced us and the sin we so easily fall into. Then we will be able to run life's marathon race with passion and determination, for the path has been already marked out for us."

The Lord's return is near; therefore, we must take up our God-mission. In our weakness, His grace is abundant: in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Valerie Brown, G.A.P. Ministries

## *Day 19 – December 18*

*When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples 3 to ask him, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?” 4 Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: 5 The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy[a] are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. 6 Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.” 7 As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 8 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings’ palaces. 9 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.” 11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*

*Matthew 11:2-11*

We all have experienced that feeling of doubt in our lives and here in these verses John the Baptist experiences that same feeling of doubt as a prisoner. He heard the stories of what Christ was doing, and the political and religious situation remained unchanged. Worse yet, John was still imprisoned. He asks a painstaking, desperate question,

“Are you the one...or should we expect someone else?”

He doubts that Jesus is who he exclaims to be; John expected a fierce, conquering king. Instead, he hears of a man healing the sick, friendly with sinners, and preaching good news to the poor. This moment of doubt is deeply human, and its relevance is striking in this season of Advent. John expected the Messiah to be a mighty King who would quickly bring change and purge the wicked. Advent is a season of waiting. When we wait for God to act—to bring healing, justice, or change—and the situation remains stubbornly difficult, we can easily fall into John’s trap of doubt. We expect our problems and difficulties to be solved ASAP, but God often works through quiet grace and is working in our lives even when we have doubts that he in. These verses remind us to be steadfast and patient on God.

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Jesus' response to John's inquiry is that of praising the one who questioned his holiness. Jesus declares him the greatest prophet born of women. John was uncompromising and a prophet. Then comes the incredible statement:

"Yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

We are greater not because of our character or deeds, but because we are introduced to the Kingdom of Christ at our birth. We have the Spirit, the forgiveness of sins, and direct access to God—privileges John could only anticipate. Our worth is not found in being like the "man dressed in fine clothes" or even in being a great prophet, like John the Baptist. Our value comes from belonging to Jesus. This Advent, let this truth fuel your joy: You are a member of the one true Kingdom- the Kingdom of God- a position more privileged than the greatest prophet who ever lived.

Joey Semetkoskey, Firth Methodist Church of Marion Center



## *Day 20 - December 19*

*Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, 11 “Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.” 12 But Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test.” 13 Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*

*Isaiah 7:10-14*

King Ahaz, King of Judah, was worried sick about the kings of Syria and Israel joining forces and coming to take over Judah. But the Lord sent a vision to Isaiah to tell King Ahaz not to worry. The Lord went to Ahaz and told him to ask for a sign but Ahaz defiantly refused to ask for a sign. It was then that the Lord presented His own sign to King Ahaz and announced the coming of Jesus. “Look! The virgin will conceive a child. She will give birth to a son and will call him, Immanuel.”

I do not know if King Ahaz stopped worrying, but it was the Assyrians who took over Judah until the Lord of Heaven’s armies saved Judah. However, the birth of Jesus was foretold by Isaiah years before His birth. The Lord works in ways that are difficult for us to understand. As I listen annually to the words of the “Messiah”, I am mystified by Isaiah’s visions predicting Jesus’ birth. We can now look back, accept the mystery, and be thankful to be one of His children.

We celebrate Jesus’ birth with a myriad of traditions. However humble and sometimes insignificant are our efforts, yet He clearly loves us and wants our devotion. Our traditions seem feeble when we remember His sacrifice. Yet, we are thankful that Jesus came to save us from our sins.

God hears and desires the quiet prayers spoken from our hearts. Let us pause now in our meditation and thank God that He has accepted us as one of His children. . . We thank you Lord for your presence in our own lives and for giving us the ability to seek and speak to You directly...

The virgin did conceive and bear a child. To us, He is Immanuel, God with us!

David Laird, Presbyterian Church of Marion

## *Day 21 – December 20*

*For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

*Titus 2:11-14*

In a world where there are so many distractions and temptations, it is sometimes hard to follow Christ wholeheartedly. For example, as we prepare for the birth of Christ, it is easy to become overwhelmed by our busy holiday schedules and to-do lists. Over the past several years I have tried to complete all of my shopping early and eliminate many of the unnecessary preparations that follow. In doing so, I have found that it has allowed me to better understand the significance that Christmas has in our lives on a much deeper level. God’s grace is always present, helping us to get back on track from the worldly distractions and temptations that we experience not only on the holidays but every day.

We are all called to know God and to make Him known to others. As Christians, we must continue to spread His word and prepare our hearts as we eagerly await the return of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Lori Gradwell  
Presbyterian Church of Plumville

## *Day 22 – December 21*

*Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— 2 the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures 3 regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, 4 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. 5 Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. 6 And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. 7 To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* *Romans 1:1-7*

Grace and peace to you...

Paul begins his letter by reminding us that Jesus' coming was not sudden or accidental—it was the fulfillment of God's long-promised plan. Christ entered the world so that all people might be invited into grace, faith, and belonging. God's salvation is not limited; it is offered to everyone.

Paul's own life shows the power of that grace. Before he met Christ, he was Saul—a Pharisee trained in the strictest Jewish traditions, known for persecuting the church and attempting to destroy the very message he would one day proclaim. He was not at peace with God; he was at war with Him.

Yet grace met him on the road to Damascus. Jesus spoke his name, opened his eyes, and transformed his life. Saul repented, believed, was baptized, and stepped into a new identity in Christ as Paul. The man who once opposed Christ became His apostle. That is what grace can do—it changes us completely.

**Have you received that grace?** There is no neutral ground with God. We are either with Him or against Him, at peace with Him or resisting Him. It reminds me of my Environmental Science teacher who would say, "Are you with us or against us?" Advent invites us to reflect on where we stand.

The good news is that God's grace has already been offered. Christ has already come. Salvation is already available to all who will receive it.

**So grace and peace to you—from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This Advent, may His grace find you, transform you, and bring you into the belonging only He can give.**

Lori Marshall, Creekside Methodist Church

## *Day 23 – December 22*

*But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.* Titus 3:4-7

Water has always carried deep meaning in Scripture — cleansing, refreshing, life-giving. When Paul writes that God saved us through “the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,” he reminds us that salvation is not just a change in status, but a cleansing of the soul.

This renewal isn’t a one-time rinse; it’s a continual flow of grace and mercy. Each day, the Spirit washes away what clings from the world — fear, bitterness, pride — all of our sin. He refreshes us with the purity of Christ’s presence. Just as we wouldn’t go long without washing our hands or bathing, our hearts also need that daily renewal that only God can give.

The beauty of this washing is that it’s His work, not ours. We don’t purify ourselves by trying harder; we open our hearts to the Spirit who renews from the inside out. The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead now breathes new life into weary hearts, restoring what sin once stained.

**Reflection question:** What areas of your heart feel dry or weighed down today — and how might the Holy Spirit be inviting you to be washed anew?

### **Prayer:**

*Holy Spirit, thank You for Your cleansing presence in my life. Wash away the things that dull my love for You, and renew my heart with Your peace and power. Let me walk today in the freshness of Your grace. Amen.*

Becca Martin, New Life Lutheran Church

## *Day 24 - December 23*

*This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. 20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). 24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.*

*Matthew 1:18-25*

WOW, what an experience that would be! Your whole life turned upside down in a moment. Everything that you thought that you knew was different and didn't align with what you believed was right. What happens now? God speaks. God told Joseph how to feel (do not be afraid); what the next steps were (take Mary home as your wife); God even gave Him why it happened (because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit); and the reason (because he will save the world); and told Him what the name was (Jesus/Immanuel).

You can experience God's guidance and direction in your life too just like Joseph did. Having a personal relationship with Jesus and allowing the Holy Spirit to speak to us and guide us is key to how God does that for you. Seeking and listening to Him by reading His word in the Bible, praying, listening to Christian music and fellowshiping with other Christians are all ways to cultivate that relationship. Obedience to what you hear from God though unlocks the continual flow of the Holy Spirit in your life and keeps you in alignment with His plan for you. I know that I want to hear from God the way to feel, the why things are happening, the next steps and how to handle it. Do you? In this Christmas season, what are you going to actively do to better position yourself to hear from God and allow Him to guide and direct your life?

Rev. Jackie Greene, GAP Ministries

## *Day 25 – December 24*

*In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register. 4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.* *Luke 2:1-7*

At the time Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph were on their way to Bethlehem because a decree had gone out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. Even though the journey was long and difficult especially for Mary, who was expecting a child they obeyed and trusted that God would guide their steps. While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to give birth. This wasn't Mary's plan or Joseph's plan, but it was God's plan, perfectly arranged from the very beginning. There was no room for them in the inn, yet God provided a humble stable, and there Mary gave birth to her firstborn son, wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger.

Just as God had every detail of Jesus' birth planned with purpose, He has a plan for everything and everyone including you. You must trust in the Lord, for He is good all the time. There will be moments when you may feel as if God is not guiding you, or perhaps guiding you in a direction you do not understand, but remember: He sees the full story even when you can only see one page. God's timing is perfect, and when He knows you are ready, He will place both challenges and blessings in your life to shape you into who He created you to be.

So be patient. Live your life the way God desires, walking in faith even when the path feels uncertain. Trust in Him because He is your Creator. There will be ups and downs, just as Mary and Joseph faced hardship on their journey, but God was with them and He will be with you, too. He knows how much you can handle, He knows your strengths and weaknesses, and He always knows what is best. No matter what you face, trust in the Lord and know that He is on your side.

Clare Lydic, First Methodist Church of Marion Center

## *Day 26 – December 25*

*And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” 13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” 15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” 16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.*

*Luke 2:8-20*

Sitting outside by a fire on a clear night and looking at the stars can be so calm and relaxing. Imagine the shock and the fear the shepherds had when the angels suddenly appeared, lighting up the sky. The first people to hear the announcement of Jesus’ birth were not kings, priests, or influential leaders; instead, they were shepherds. They were doing what they always did: working through the night, unnoticed, uncelebrated, and perhaps weary. Yet right there, in their ordinary routine, heaven broke in.

The angel declared “good news of great joy” which would change the world but also their lives personally. The Savior had come, not distant or unreachable, but nearby, wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. The shepherds didn’t just hear the message; they responded. They went immediately and witnessed Jesus for themselves. and afterward they couldn’t help but share what they had seen. Their joy overflowed into worship and testimony.

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We can learn a lot from the shepherds. They didn't have to clean themselves up or become more important. God's glory found them in the field. In the same way, Christ meets us in our ordinary routines, our hidden places, and even our weariness. God meets us where we are. Furthermore, the angel said the good news was for "all people." No one is too lowly, too broken, or too forgotten. Jesus' birth is a declaration that every life matters to God. Then, the shepherds didn't stay in the field. Encountering the angels led them to go, to see, to tell. We need to tell others about this wonderful gift we have been given. Finally, after seeing Jesus, the shepherds returned "glorifying and praising God." Worship wasn't an obligation; it was the reaction of hearts. May we, too, worship the living Lord with praise in our hearts and minds.

Jan Gallo, Presbyterian Church of Marion





## About this collection...

In 2014, several congregations of the Marion Center Area Ministerium created a collection of devotions for the season of Advent to share voices and perspectives as we all prepare for the coming of Christ. The collection was so well received over the past few years that we wanted to come together again to make available a new collection of voices from our brothers and sisters in Christ across the Marion Center area, all helping us to turn our focus onto the coming of Christ, both as we celebrate Christmas, and as we look ahead to the coming of Jesus in victory and the new creation.

The passages in these devotions are quite likely ones you will be hearing on Sunday mornings throughout the season of Advent. They are taken from what is known as the Revised Common Lectionary, a pattern for selecting Scripture readings through the church year in a cycle of three years. So you will see in these pages a variety of kinds of biblical books—prophets and psalms, epistles and stories. And hopefully they will fit with the Good News being shared on Sunday mornings across our community as well.

We pray that this season and these devotions are a blessing for your own faith and your own faith journey. And we give thanks to all who have offered their voices to this collection.

Devotions for this booklet have come from  
voices in these congregations:

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*Creekside Methodist Church*

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*First Methodist Church of Marion Center*

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*GAP Ministries - Rev. Jackie Greene*

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*New Life Lutheran Church*

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*Presbyterian Church of Marion*

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*Presbyterian Church of Plumville*

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*Tanoma Methodist Church*

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*For unto you is born this day  
in the city of David a*  
SAVIOR  
*which is*  
CHRIST  
THE LORD.

*Luke 2:11*



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