



December 2024 | Volume 29, Issue 12

MONTHLY Newsletter

A PUBLICATION OF **OUR SAVIOR LUTHERAN CHURCH**

*The Mission of Our Savior:
That all may know Christ,
grow in Christ
and joyfully go with Christ.*

Adopted 11/1998

FROM OUR PASTOR...

Grace and peace from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-8

16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

It is hard to believe that a year has passed since we unloaded our moving truck in Wayne. Sara and I were reflecting on this past year and how quickly time has passed. A lot has transpired this last year, and I wanted to take a few moments to offer my thanks and gratitude to ALL of you.

As someone coming into this community from the outside, I knew there would be a time of transition; little did I know that time of transition would be short. Small communities tend to stick to themselves, not welcoming outsiders. Even before a call was extended to be your next pastor, I felt a sense of welcome flowing out of the congregation.

Sara commented that having people to sit with during worship is nice. Hearing the laughter from the pews during worship makes me happy. Hearing laughter warms my heart; you are rejoicing in your time together during worship and sharing your love for one another as a community.

The Call Committee met this past week for an evening retreat designed to get to know each other better. We shared our fears and excitements about the call process, which, by design, was meant to open us up and make us vulnerable and honest.

Regarding my turn, I shared enthusiasm when we were first introduced to Our Savior. My enthusiasm resulted from the rich and various ways you did outreach and ministry in the community. Being here for one full year, I have had the

pleasure of living through those ministries first-hand, and they did not disappoint.

Before my assignments started, I was asked what sort of congregation I would like. My response was one that I could fall in love with, and they could fall in love with me. I have fallen in love with OSLC and all the wonderful people who fill the pews and offer themselves to God, as well as the service of our church and one another.

My prayers this Thanksgiving are for all of you and the many beautiful ways you make the love of Christ known. I hope you will take time over this holiday season to reflect on your church experiences, invite the Holy Spirit to journey with you through this past year and show you where the love of Christ has touched you.

We are OSLC because you make up the body of Christ. We are commissioned to go into the world and spread Jesus's love by acting as his hands and feet, and doing this together with you brings me a sense of fulfillment.

Thank you for doing all you do, showing up week after week, serving on committees, helping to make decisions, and sharing your love with one another. No pastor can do this work alone, and I am proud to say this is my church home, and you are my ministry partners.

Thanksgiving for me this year is one of gratitude and humbleness because God has answered my prayers to find a congregation with whom to fall in love.

Warmest Blessings,
Pastor Chad



MUSIC FOR DECEMBER

- Nov 30 & Dec 1 Joyful Noise handbells (SUN)
Connie Webber, organist
- Dec 7 & 8 A Touch of Brass (SUN)
Connie Webber, organist
- Dec 14 & 15 Connie Webber, organist
- Dec 21 & 22 Joyful Noise handbells (SUN)
Connie Webber, organist
- Dec 28 & 29 Connie Webber, organist



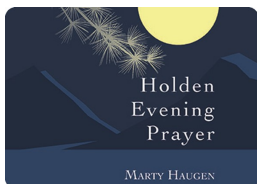
Mark your calendars for...

ADVENT SERVICES & SUPPERS!

— Dec. 4 & 11

Mid-week Advent services with **Holden Evening Prayer** will be held on **Wednesday evenings, December 4 & 11**. The services will begin at 7pm.

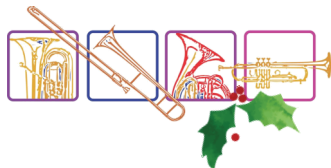
Suppers will precede the services from 5:45—6:45pm in the church Social Room. There is no charge for the meal, but a freewill offering is taken with proceeds going to the group or organization providing the meal.



A TOUCH OF BRASS

— Dec. 8

Our sanctuary will be filled with the glorious sound of **A Touch of Brass** as they lead us in singing carols and provide lots of special music of the season throughout our worship service on **Sunday, December 8**. Their presence is a holiday tradition for Our Savior, and a wonderful way to get our hearts ready for the coming nativity. *Please arrive at least 15 minutes early to hear their pre-service music!*



LADIES CHRISTMAS POTLUCK!



— Dec. 11

On **Wednesday, December 11**, at **12:00 noon**, Our Savior's Women of the ELCA will be having their Annual Christmas Luncheon. All ladies of the congregation are invited to come and enjoy good food, fellowship and Christmas Fun! Please bring a side dish (salad or dessert) to go with the meal we have provided, and your own table service. *Come join in what promises to be a very enjoyable afternoon!*

Attention: Working ladies! Can't stay for the program? That's OK! We'd still love to have you join us for lunch!

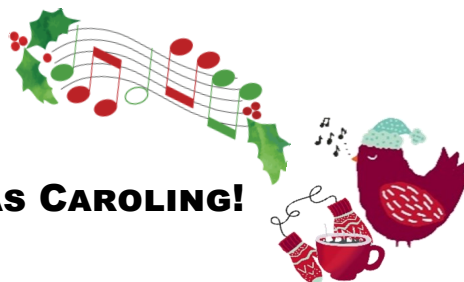


CHRISTMAS VISIT



— Dec. 17

The Outreach Ministry Team will be visiting the Northeast Nebraska Juvenile Services Center in Madison on **Tuesday afternoon, December 17**. This is a center that houses young boys and girls who are offenders, some major and some lesser. Following a short program, there will be an opportunity to visit with the young people and share refreshments with them. Adults of the congregation are welcome to participate in this event; **meet at the church at 12:45 and leave by 1pm.**



CHRISTMAS CAROLING!

— Dec. 18

Join us on **Wednesday, December 18**, as we go Christmas Caroling at Wayne Countryview, Kinship Pointe and the homes of several members of OSLC. Meet at the church at **6pm**. Afterwards, we'll reconvene back at the church to enjoy homemade soup, hot cocoa and coffee.

A sign-up sheet will be at the information desk if you'd like to help provide one of the following for supper: a pot of soup, a pan of bars or cookies, relishes or a tray of meat, cheese and crackers.)



CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP!

— Dec. 24

Christmas Eve candle light services with Holy Communion will be held on Tuesday, December 24, at **5 and 7pm**.

The 5pm service will be broadcast live on KCTY-The City (98.9 FM, 1590 AM and online at waynedailynews.com as well as the Wayne Radio app for iPhone or Android). The service will also be streamed live on our Facebook page.

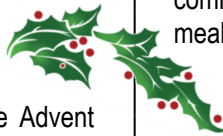


POINSETTIAS!

Anyone wishing to share a poinsettia to add to the beauty of the Christmas holiday is asked to bring it or have it delivered to the church. Please have the plant marked with your name.

Please contact the church office if your plant is given in honor or memory of someone.

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL BOOKS



Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN, provides a free Advent devotional for personal or congregational use. Copies of the 2024 Devotional book entitled, "Joy of Heaven, Here on Earth" are available at the table at the back of the sanctuary.

The Devotional is also available online at luthersem.edu/godpause/advent-devotional/. God Pause subscribers will receive "Joy of Heaven, Here on Earth" by email each day of Advent.

2024 PIES-4-YOU REPORT



The 2024 Pies-4-You event resulted in making 614 pies! The majority of those pies were pre-sold, but a few extra were made. Those extra pies are available for sale—apple, cherry, peach, rhubarb and strawberry-rhubarb! Please contact the church office to purchase pies; cost is \$15.

The continued success of this event wouldn't be possible without the help of **so many volunteers**...if you are one of them—**THANK YOU!!**

THANK YOU'S...



Thank you's received for donations made—

Lutheran Family Services: \$218

Lutheran Family Services: \$300

The **Fellowship Team** would like to extend a huge thank you to the Our Savior Lutheran Church Foundation Board for their generous donation for new Christmas decorations. We look forward to celebrating the Christmas season and the birth of Jesus!



Confirmation Students at OSLC would like to extend a **VERY BIG THANK YOU** for the generous donations made to our **Harvest of Hope** food pantry service project. Your contributions play a crucial role in combating hunger in our community, ensuring that families have access to nutritious meals and we are so grateful!





GREETINGS!

Hi Ladies!

I am hoping you have put Wednesday, December 11, on your calendar to attend the Women's Christmas Luncheon here at the church at noon. Remember to bring your own table service and a salad or dessert to go with the meal we have provided. You, working gals, can drop in on your lunch hour to eat also.

I received the following update from our NSWO northeast district representative, Lynette Krie, about the October 12 Autumn Renewal. She writes, "It was a great day at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Grand Island. The theme was Cultivating Love through Grace. Bible Verse: For by grace, you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing: it is the gift of God. (Ephesians 2:8) Our speaker was David Pinkston, Program Director of Nebraska Synod's Seeking the Spirit Within. He was amazing sharing ways we receive Grace and grow our Faith. Bishop Johnson also led us with a very interesting Bible Study on Grace."

The Quilt Block mystery has been solved! Marilyn found a bag of quilt blocks, which had been hand embroidered, in the supply room. We decided to ask Glenda Reinert if she would make them into quilts and she accepted the job. Glenda donated the quilt backs and Janet Sievers donated the filler. We wondered where these blocks came from, so after a couple phone calls, we found that Cheryl Henschke had indeed done the handiwork. These quilts will be used for the Pink Flamingo Nite Quilt Raffle and the Carol Joy Holling Camp Quilt Auction next year. A special "Thank You" goes out to Cheryl, Glenda & Janet for these beautiful quilts.

Phyllis had a Bible Study and a ThankOffering program for the November Joy Circle meeting. Her Bible Study was titled "Gratitude Goes Both Ways," based on Philippians 4:10-20. Following the program, Sue, served the group a delicious dessert.

Charity Circle sponsored the "Pies-4-You" event for their November meeting. Approximately 615 pies were made. Kim, Cynthia, Karma & Teri headed up this event. A special "Thank You" to them and everyone else who helped with it, in all the other ways.

Our Caring Cooks continue to serve our church families with meals and provided for 3 families in October.

Most of the trees have lost their leaves and now our thoughts wonder what Mother Nature's next move will be. Hopefully, she takes a long time to decide.

Hope to see you on December 11, at the Christmas Luncheon.

 Dorothy Wert,
WELCA President

CIRCLE & MINISTRY GROUP MEETINGS

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

- Tuesday, December 3, 10am

WELCA CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

- Wednesday, December 11, noon
Program: Christmas!
Leaders: Executive Board
Hostesses: Executive Board



CHARITY CIRCLE

- Wednesday, December 18, 6pm
Christmas Caroling & Soup Supper
Leaders: Lynette Lentz, Karma Magnuson, Kris Robinson

VISITATION MINISTRY GROUP

- No meeting in December

QUILT MINISTRY GROUP

- No Meetings until Spring

All women of the congregation are always welcome and invited to participate.

WELCA PURPOSE

As a community of women, created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society and the world.



ALTAR GUILD

Altar Guild workers for December: Sharon Fleer, Paula Gemelke, Peggy Hank, Melia Hefti, Madge Bruflat, Julie Grone, Julie/Jim Hansen, Cheryl Henschke, Mary Hansen, Teri Koenig, Marsha Roth, Janet Sievers, Lynette Lentz, Cynthia Miller. Please check the worship assistant schedule for the date and time.





PASTORAL ACTS

- † **Garrett Adams** and **Vanessa Vietor** were united in marriage on Saturday, November 9, 2024.
- † A funeral service was held Sunday, November 10, for **Chuck Rutenbeck**. Chuck died October 10, 2024.
- † A funeral service was held Tuesday, November 12, for **Roy Gramlich**. Roy died November 7, 2024.
- † A funeral service was held Wednesday, November 20, for **Verna Mae Rohde**. Verna Mae died November 14, 2024.
- † A funeral service was held Friday, November 22, for **Charles Peters**. Charles died November 18, 2024.



WORSHIP SERVICES— at Wayne Countryview & Kinship

Worship with Communion is offered on the first Tuesday of the month—**December 3**.

- Wayne Countryview at 2pm
- Kinship at 3:30pm.

Worship is also offered the third Tuesday of the month at Kinship at 3:30pm.

- **Tuesday, December 17**

WACAM Worship Services

- **December 30-January 3**—Radio Devotions

COMMUNION BREAD BAKERS NEEDED



Do you love to bake? One request Pastor Chad repeatedly receives is for homemade bread during communion.

Are you willing to help bake the unleavened bread? Whether you've done it in the past or are willing to give it a try for the first time, we would love to hear from you! If you are willing to make unleavened bread to be used for communion, please call or text Liz Hagmann at 402-369-3313.

Right now we just want to know how many bakers we can count on. Details about a recipe, how much to make at one time, how often you will be asked to bake, and how to store or freeze the bread will come at a later date once we know how many bakers there are.

Thank you for considering helping out by baking bread.



IN OUR PRAYERS

We remember in prayer those who were hospitalized in the last month: Cheryl Roberts, Pr. Bill Koeber



OWL'S BIBLE STUDY

The OWL's Bible Study meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month. This study led by Mary Mohl is using a resource from Augsburg Fortress entitled *Songs of the Faithful: Psalms*. Join them on **December 6 & 20, at 10am** in the multipurpose room. You do not need to be an Older Wiser Lutheran to join us—just come, no matter your age! Everyone is welcome!

KINSHIP BIBLE STUDY

Bible Study at Kinship meets on the 2nd & 4th Thursdays, at 3:30pm. This study led by Sharon Garvin uses Lectionary Bible readings and a resource from the ELCA entitled, *Daily Discipleship*. Join them on **Thursdays, December 12 & 26**. Everyone is welcome.



SLEEPING MAT MINISTRY

Sleeping mats are made from plastic shopping bags. This is a great way to recycle all those plastic grocery bags! (A basket is available in the narthex to collect CLEAN bags.) There are several steps to preparing the bags before the mats can be crocheted...so there are opportunities for all to participate! Join us on **Thursday, December 5, and Monday, December 16, from 9–11am**.

Consider being a part of this wonderful ministry; both the VA in Omaha and Orphan Grain Train look forward to receiving the mats!



- 1 Alex Wieland
- 3 Karen Hansen, Mackenzie Nissen
- 5 Peg Kay-Erwin
- 6 Leslie Calhoun, Brayden Woehler, Ron Wriedt
- 7 Rhonda Blecke, Hugh Jager, Easton Juhl, Teri Koenig
- 8 Sara Hank
- 9 Kevin Erwin, Lauren Pick
- 10 Sharon Fleer, Sandra Lutt, Kristi Magnuson
- 13 Marion Arneson, Becky Rogers
- 14 Brett Johnson
- 15 Danielle Eskens, Alex Phelps
- 17 Doris Gilliland
- 18 Mary Hansen, Brad Hoskins, Reece Wilson-Jaqua
- 19 Victor Kniesche, Julie Reeg
- 21 Paul Dean, Rod Greve, Vicki Kniesche
- 22 Victoria Kniesche
- 26 Louis Lutt
- 27 Aden Greve, Amelia Scheffler
- 28 Lyleigh Becker, Marilyn Carhart
- 29 Dave Broders, Paula Gemelke
- 30 Adel Bohlken, Isabella Bondhus, Jackson Rutenbeck,
- 31 Phillip Anderson



- 8 Bill & Elaine Lueders (61)
- 9 Ronnie & Sheryl Doring (57)
- 10 David & Joyce Sievers (52)
- 22 Verdel & Virginia Backstrom (58)
- 27 Tim & Rita Keller (49)
John & Kristi Magnuson (21)
- 30 Huck & Chris Jager (40)

If we have missed your birthday or anniversary, please accept our apology and let the church office know.

THRIVENT CHOICE DOLLARS

If you're an eligible Thrivent Financial member and have Choice Dollars® available to direct, please consider designating your available funds to Our Savior. For more info or to direct Choice Dollars, call 800-847-4836 and say "Thrivent Choice." Or go to: <http://thrivent.com>.



In preparation for our annual meeting in January...*all Ministry Team chairpersons are reminded to turn in their year-end report by the end of December.*

YOU'RE INVITED... TO COFFEE with Council



Coffee with Council is an opportunity to meet with members of the church council for coffee, refreshments and discussion. Join them prior to worship, 9am, **Sunday morning, December 9**, in the church narthex.

ELECTION RESULTS

A congregational meeting was held **Sunday, November 17, 2024**. The purpose of this meeting was to present the proposed 2025 budget and to vote for church leadership positions.

Election results are as follows:

CHURCH COUNCIL:

(3-YEAR TERM)	(1-YEAR TERM)
Kim Dunklau	Paula Gemelke
Tim Hansen	Amber Labenz
	Chris McGuire

FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS: (5 YEAR TERM)

Karma Magnuson

NOMINATING COMMITTEE: (1 YEAR TERM)

Cole Koenig Reagan McGuire
Chele Meisenbach Jessica Wieland



You can give electronically to OSLC—just download the Vanco Mobile app OR go to our website at <https://oslcwayne.org/give/>

GENERAL FUND FINANCIAL REPORT

	As of November 15, 2024	Year-to-Date
Beginning balance, 10/15/2024	\$44,706.59	\$26,252.03
Add: Income	37,555.45	365,458.53
Less: Expenses	-34,680.00	-344,128.52
Ending balance, 11/15/2024	\$47,582.04	\$47,582.04

If you have any questions about this report or other church finance matters, please contact Tom Hansen (402-518-0640) or Paula Gemelke (402-369-2176).

COUNCIL CORNER

—Monday, November 11, 2024 Meeting

- The Worship and Music Committee is working on having homemade bread for communion beginning in January.
- Council agreed that the Temple Talks about the Ministry Teams and various activities going on has helped the congregation become better informed on everything going on throughout church.
- Council discussed the upcoming Advent services and suppers. The Council will serve supper on Wednesday December 4; they will provide a Taco Bar. The Outreach Ministry Team serve the supper on Wednesday, December 11. Christmas Caroling will be held on Wednesday, December 18, with a soup supper to follow.
- Two Christmas Eve services will be held on Tuesday, December 24, at 5pm and 7pm.

The next meeting of the Church Council will be **Monday, December 9, 2024.**

DOLLAR DOOR OFFERING —SALVATION ARMY FUND

Each month our Dollar Door Offering (offering plate in center of the Narthex) goes to support the efforts of a different ministry. The December Dollar Door Offering recipient will be the Salvation Army Fund. (*Monies raised stay in Wayne and are used locally.*)

CALENDAR ITEMS



Reminder...please contact the church office regarding any meetings or gatherings scheduled; especially those held after office hours, so that they can be added to the master calendar. If no evening activities are listed, the church building is locked at approx. 5pm.

PUBLICATION DEADLINES

For the Weekend Bulletin: by 11am each Thursday.

For the Monthly Newsletter: 20th of the month.

RESOURCES

- Wayne County Family Coalition (402-375-2200)
- Wayne Food Pantry & Backpack Program (402-375-2669 – fpcwayne.org/food-pantry) In order to use the Wayne Food Pantry, please call or email in advance if you need assistance. All inquiries are confidential.
- Wayne Food Truck – Saturday, December 21, at Journey Christian Church



This newsletter is published monthly as an update on the life and activities of

Our Savior Lutheran Church

421 N Pearl Street
(located at the corner of 5th & Main Street)
Wayne, Nebraska 68787
402/375-2899

***A congregation of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America***

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kris@oslcwayne.org

Website:

www.oslcwayne.org

Weekly Worship Opportunities:

Saturday Evening: 5:30pm

Sunday Morning: 10am

(streamed live and posted to our Facebook page:
Our Savior Lutheran Church, Wayne NE (ELCA)
and broadcast live on AM 1590 and FM 98.9)

Sunday School: (N-5th)

Sundays—10am; Fall/Winter/Spring

Confirmation: (6th-8th)

Wednesdays—6pm; Fall/Winter/Spring

- Staff -

Rev. Chad Rademacher
Pastor

Connie Webber
Director of Music

Bridget Vaith
Coordinator of Youth & Family Ministry

Virginia Kniesche
Coordinator of Children's Ministry

Kris Robinson
Administrative Assistant

- Church Council -

Kelly Grone *Interim President*

Larry Lueders *Vice President*

Paula Gemelke *Treasurer*

Jessica Wieland *Secretary*

Marion Arneson **Ron Carnes**

Kim Dunklau **Jim Hansen**

Mary Mohl

Our Savior Lutheran Church

5th & Main Street | Wayne, Nebraska 68787
402/375-2899



DECEMBER 2024



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Wayne NE 68787

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Giving Thanks For:

December 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1</p>  <p>9:00am Fellowship Hour 10:00am Worship 6:00pm Confirmation</p>	<p>2</p> <p>10:30am Staff Meeting 5:30pm Property Team Meeting 5:45pm Executive Committee 6:30pm Fellowship Team Mtg</p>	<p>3</p> <p>10:00am Cluster Text Study 10:00am WELCA Executive Board</p>  <p>2:00pm Communion @ Wayne Countryview 3:30pm Communion @ Kinship Pointe</p>	<p>4</p> <p>10:00am OWL's Bible Study</p>  <p>5:45pm Advent Supper 6:00pm Joyful Noise 7:00pm Advent Worship</p>	<p>5</p> <p>9:00am Sleeping Mat Ministry 6:00pm Women Who Love to Talk-end Eat</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p> <p>5:30pm Worship</p>
<p>8</p>  <p>9:00am Coffee with Council 10:00am Sunday School</p>  <p>10:00am Worship w/ATOB 6:00pm Confirmation</p>	<p>9</p> <p>10:30am Staff Meeting 6:00pm Christian Ed Meeting 7:00pm Church Council</p>	<p>10</p> <p>10:00am Cluster Text Study</p>	<p>11</p>  <p>12:00pm WELCA Christmas Luncheon</p>  <p>5:45pm Advent Supper 6:00pm Joyful Noise 7:00pm Advent Worship</p>	<p>12</p> <p>3:30pm Bible Study @ Kinship</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p> <p>5:30pm Worship</p>
<p>15</p>  <p>9:00am Fellowship Hour 10:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship 6:00pm Confirmation</p>	<p>16</p> <p>9:00am Sleeping Mat Ministry 10:30am Staff Meeting 5:00pm Worship & Music Ministry Team</p>	<p>17</p> <p>10:00am Cluster Text Study</p>  <p>JSC Christmas Visit 3:30pm Worship @ Kinship Pointe 7:00pm Cell Committee Mtg</p>	<p>18</p> <p>10:00am OWL's Bible Study</p>  <p>6:00pm Christmas Caroling & Soup Supper</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Newsletter DEADLINE</p>	<p>21</p>  <p>9:00am Wayne Food Truck @ Journey Christian Church 5:30pm Worship</p>
<p>22</p>  <p>9:00am Fellowship Hour 10:00am Worship</p>	<p>23</p> <p>10:30am Staff Meeting</p>	<p>24</p>  <p>5:00pm Christmas Eve Worship 7:00pm Christmas Eve Worship</p>	<p>25</p> 	<p>26</p> <p>Office Closed 3:30pm Bible Study @ Kinship</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p> <p>5:30pm Worship</p>
<p>29</p> <p>9:00am Fellowship Hour 10:00am Worship</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Radio Devotions 10:30am Staff Meeting</p>	<p>31</p>  <p>Radio Devotions 10:00am Cluster Text Study</p>				

PRAYER Time

Advent – A Time of Waiting

Writings and devotions adapted from *The Weary World Rejoices* - an Advent Devotion from Everything Happens with Kate Bowler

The season of Advent, the days leading up to Christmas, is a promise that is coming. A promise of a return – a restoration of all things to their true being, a goodness which was conceived from the beginning of time, a realized hope we've been longing for. "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will fulfill the good promise." The promise is of truth, compassion, restoration, and justice. Everything wrong will be made right, everything bad will be made good, everything empty and devoid of love will be filled.

We don't cruise into Christmas with certainty that all is well. We begin by waiting – patiently waiting. Waiting with patience is about keeping a positive, hopeful attitude during our waiting. It's trusting that good things are coming, even when we can't see them yet. True patience is a quiet strength, the grace to be at peace with the unknown and to find joy in the present. When we learn to embrace patience, we open ourselves up to life's surprises, knowing that every season has its purpose.

While we patiently wait for the birth of Jesus, we can spend time in reflection and prayer. Below is a four part devotion for the four weeks of Advent. You may choose to read, reflect, and pray one day out of the week or each day of the week, reflecting on a different question each day. This Advent, may we all join together to look for God's promises already being fulfilled.

Week 1: The Promise of Truth: This week we will take a closer look at what it means to hope for a future we can only glimpse, what it feels like to live in the already – but not yet, and how lament might be our best response.

Read: JEREMIAH 33:14-16

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

Reflect:

1. What word or phrase stands out to you from this passage?
2. The people of Jerusalem lived in the aftermath of war and fire. Imagine listening to Jeremiah as you stand in the ashes and rubble of all you hold dear. How would you react to his words of hope and promise?
3. We live in the already – but not yet. This means we have hope for a future of peace, safety, joy, and restoration, but may not experience it currently. Does this feel true in your own life? How so?
4. Living between the already – but not yet means we need to make space to *lament*. Lament is a biblical practice that invites you to express your sorrow, pain, or confusion. It is the act of grieving with God. What is there to lament in your life, your community, or your world today?
5. If you were to pick one big hope for the world, what would it be? For your community? For your family?

Pray: God of truth, Could this be the year when we see the goodness that is coming? Could this be the Advent when we notice the inbreaking of your coming promises? Promises full of blessing, truth so clear that every shadowy lie must flee away, compassion so deep, that everyone is encircled in its embrace, restoration so complete that there is gladness everywhere, and justice so satisfying that all will be well. May this Advent be the new beginning, as we learn to live by the light of your coming promises. Amen

Week 2: The Promise of Compassion: Jesus is God with us so he could be God's compassion *for us*, in word and deed. When Jesus saw someone suffering, he wept with them, and came to their aid. There was no one whose illness or status rendered them unapproachable. This is the kind of compassion that says, I am not just helping you, *I am with you*.

Read: LUKE 1:68-79

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his child David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness in his presence all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. Because of the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to shine upon those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

PRAYER *Time*

Advent – A Time of Waiting (continued)

Reflect:

1. What surprised you about this passage?
2. What reason does Zechariah give that God will fulfill God's promises? (re-read verse 78)
3. How have you experienced or witnessed the tenderness of God in your life?
4. How can you join in the work of God by sharing tenderness or compassion with someone this week?

Pray: Compassionate God, bless us with open arms to welcome you this Advent, willing to invite its promises into the center of our longing. May we find a corner of our heart where hope can stay protected, a place from which we can nurture a little gratitude, and a little compassion for you, for ourselves, and for the next person we meet. Amen

Week 3: The Promise of Restoration: The Christmas story speaks of "peace on earth and goodwill for all people." This is a world where fear and death will be no more. There will be no loneliness, no illness, and no shame. It is a declaration of the restoration that has already happened, is happening, and will one day be complete.

Read: ZEPHANIAH 3: 14 -20

"Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth."

Reflect:

1. What word or phrase stood out to you in this passage? What brings you hope? What is hard to believe?
2. What stands out to you about God's character and intention from Zephaniah's words? Does this feel true in your own experience?
3. What gets in the way of God's restoration of the world? What about the restoration God offers for your life?
4. God's promised restoration has begun, is happening, and will one day be complete. We can participate with the work God is doing in the world. How can you join God in the work of restoration in your life? In the world?

Pray: God who makes all things new, thank you that we are not separated into lives of loneliness but joined together as those who were loved into being. We are made for meaning and a purpose that only our days can breathe into action. Pull us closer to the bigger story that reminds us that our ordinary lives are the stuff of eternity. We are a story of extraordinary love. Amen.

Week 4: The Promise of Justice: Jesus is coming to bring justice to the world. God chose to enter our world at Christmas so God could be the difference we didn't know we needed. This week we will look at what it means to be surprised by the ways God works in the world.

Read: LUKE 1:46-55

"And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant. Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name; indeed, 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 imagination of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. He has come to the aid of his child Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.'"

Reflect:

1. What surprises you or brings you hope from this text?
2. How do you define *justice*? What is your understanding of Jesus' definition of justice?
3. How does Jesus show strength and power to the world? How does this compare to how today's leaders show strength and power?
4. Mary sings of justice and mercy in the present tense. Where do you see glimpses of God's justice (the one rooted in mercy and grace) already happening in the world?

Pray: Merciful God, blessed are we, starting to see the height and depth and breadth of your love, that includes all of us, even the not-so-perfect. Blessed is Mary, for saying yes to the risk of being God's dwelling place. And, blessed are we, breathing in the truth that we belong, along with everybody else. Thank you, O God, for loving us so much that you sent your son into the world at Christmas time to one day make all things right. Amen.

