



Advent Devotional for 2024  
Doylestown Presbyterian Church

Light of the World *Prince of Peace*  
**The** Son of Man Immanuel **Beloved**  
I Am **Names** The Incarnation  
King of Kings *of* Alpha and Omega  
Christ (Messiah) Bread of Life  
The Vine **Jesus**  
*Son of God*  
The Word Became Flesh **Lord of Lords**  
Deliverer *Resurrection and the Life*  
**The Way** Chosen One Redeemer  
Risen Lord Son of David *Lamb of God*

Preparation for Christmas is so much more than opening a little window revealing a morsel of chocolate. Although Advent calendars that count down to the day of Christmas filled with a treat of your preference is highly suggested. Preparing for Christmas is about the news sharing, life transforming, and sometimes messy reality of experiencing “God with us.” This time of preparation is called Advent. During this time, Christians share experiences of prayer and waiting that celebrates the arrival of Jesus. Jesus is revealed to us in scripture in so many ways and names, one might stand out to you more than another.

This year for each day of Advent, your elders have written a devotion that centers on the many names of Jesus. They have each chosen one to focus on. Follow along each day by reading the scripture, the devotion, and the prayer. You might consider doing this alone or with others. You might find lighting a candle helps. What names of Jesus have become or are becoming important to you?

—Rev. Becca Bateman

## November 30



Marty Starner  
*Christ the Messiah*

I can only begin to imagine what it was like to be standing in Simon’s shoes, as described in Matthew 16:16-18 when Christ reveals himself as the anointed one, the Messiah!

Not only does Christ reveal himself, he gives Simon a new identity, a new name—Peter. How would we react?

The good news is that like Peter, Christ invites all of us to become followers. To see the world through Christ’s eyes. To learn a new way of living as God would have us live.

Advent is a time to welcome Christ, the Messiah, into our hearts and homes, to grow in our faith with God as our guide.

**Prayer:** Help us, like Peter, to welcome God into our hearts this Advent season. Let us rejoice in the good news! Alleluia! The Messiah has come. Amen.

## December 1



Diane Alexanderson  
*Most Precious Gift*

A little lamb cuddled next to Mary and Jesus is part of my image of Christmas night. Later the shepherds arrive from the hills, perhaps with more sheep, after hearing the angels' declaration of the savior's birth in Bethlehem. As Jesus grew, he did not

become a shepherd like his ancestor David, but he declared himself the "Good Shepherd" who would lay down his life for his sheep.

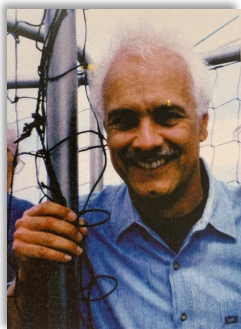
Jesus' first flock may have been his disciples, but his flock has grown to include people all over the world for more than two thousand years. And how like sheep we are! We follow others in our group, sometimes foolishly, lacking protection against any "wolves" that may attack us. The one who guides us and protects us is the Good Shepherd who knows us each by name, who welcomes us and forgives us no matter how we have strayed.

It amazes me that our humble shepherd never falters in his love for us. He loves and forgives no matter how old or stubborn or flawed we become because he sees the one who created us in his image.

Furthermore, he promises to embrace those of other flocks and love them too. Jesus said the Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep, and that was his ultimate gift for our salvation: he surrendered to death and returned to life. He went from a humble birth through suffering and death to a glorious resurrection which he shares with every one of us.

**Prayer:** "Savior like a shepherd lead us..." We are thankful for your love and protection no matter how often or far we may stray. Help us to trust you and to do your will in all things. Amen.

## December 2



David Buday  
*The Many Names of Jesus*

In one way or another all the names for Jesus seem perfect: Messiah, Christ, Lamb, King of Kings, Prince of Peace, The Way, God, Son of God, God on Earth, Lord, the Good Shepherd, et al. My father always called Jesus “The Good Lord,” just as he always called the Bible “The Good Book.” My mother, on the other hand, called Jesus “Jesus” and the Bible “The Bible.” My folks were working class and kept it plain and simple, nothing fancy or literary. Same with me, although, over time, having read or heard the 23rd Psalm many times, I’ve come to love the name and idea of a Good Shepherd looking over us always, protecting us, caring, and loving us. However, last year in DPC’s Bible class *The Word Among Us* led by Dick Cornelius, we read and studied John’s Book of Revelation. In Chapter 1, Verse 8, the Lord God is quoted saying “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty.”

The more I thought about those particular words and all that our class discussed about it and its significance, the more I came to embrace Christ Jesus as the Alpha and the Omega. This name really says it all. More than a shepherd, Jesus is God and always was. I’m pretty certain some theologians claim Jesus existed *before* creation and will exist even *after* The End. Rather mind-blowing, and beyond imagination. Jesus is love and our salvation, of course, but just the notion that he is omnipresent is so comforting. I used to look for God in churches, in nature, in the eyes of impoverished children I met in Romania and India, but once I wrapped my mind around the concept of God being omnipresent, I need not look farther nor further than in my own heart. Now, Jesus is, in addition to being my shepherd, he is and always will be my Alpha and Omega.

**Prayer:** Dear God, our Alpha and Omega, eternal thanks for all of your blessings. In all of your beautiful names, Amen.

## December 3



Linda Cacossa  
*Light of the World*

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”

Almost ten years ago, DPC was grappling with the news that an amendment to the PC Constitution would mean that gender would no longer be a barrier to marriage in the Presbyterian Church USA. Some members of our congregation met this news with great joy, others were angered, and many were confused.

One encounter has stayed with me. I was attending a luncheon at the home of one of our longtime members who was serving as an Elder at that time. He was born and raised in the Midwest, recently retired following a distinguished career in corporate America and was proud of his conservative values which he enjoyed sharing with me any chance he had. He told me he decided he would cast his vote at the next Session meeting for love. He said that “I don’t quite get it, but I’ll let God be the judge – I’m voting on the side of love, because I do get that.”

I praised his decision-making process and we agreed that our lives are so much easier when we allow ourselves to follow Jesus, let him be our light and not pass our own judgment.

John 8:15: “You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one.”

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, grant us the wisdom to slow down, hear your words and feel your light. It will not be easy, but let us put our judgments aside and choose to follow your call to love one another. In your holy name we pray. Amen.

## December 4



Joanne Chaikin

### *Nicknames*

Everyone has their given name, the name that appears on all your official documents. These given names are not always the name that others refer to us by.... We have nicknames. It may be a shortened version of your given name, but it may be totally different. When others use these alternate names, they are terms of endearment.

In Mark 9:11, God calls Jesus his Beloved Son. Beloved is a nickname God has given to his son. Beloved means dearly loved, dear to the Heart. Beloved is a very good nickname for Jesus. Jesus has taught us to be kind, to love all people, to be compassionate. Jesus saved us.

There are times we need to step back, take a moment to feel Jesus in our hearts, in our minds, to follow him as best as we can. There are also times that we also need to remember we are beloved by God and Jesus. God sent Jesus to us because he beloved us to let us know that we are loved, and he has our back. We take those moments to feel closer to God and help guide us through our lives, the ups and the downs to trust and have faith so we know we can walk this world knowing we can turn to God at any time to be loved.

**Prayer:** Dear God, at this time of Advent and celebrating Jesus' birth, we are reminded of the wonderful gift of your Son. Your Beloved Son who was dear to your heart. The one who taught us to love all and know that we are loved. Help us to keep following his ways. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## December 5



Christo Claassens  
*The Incarnation*

Like all kids growing up with the Bible, I was enthralled by the great stories, the epic ones. We love the larger-than-life stories: Noah and the Ark, Moses leading the way, David crushing Goliath, Jesus turning water into wine. As my faith matured my focus changed.

I still see the actions of the great stories. I can still see God's hand in them. But I came to understand not to focus on the actions, but on the results of those actions. Moses leading is to fulfill a promise of an arrival in a land of their own.

Jesus' incarnation as God amongst us, brings an even richer dimension to these stories. Jesus' effect on those around him is noteworthy.

Looking at the loaves and fishes miracle and concluding that anything is possible for God misses the point. Jesus feeding people, changing their outcome, that is the point. Jesus waking the son of the widower from death, is more than power over death. Without her son, the mother faced incredible hardship.

Jesus, the human among us, changed it. How are we changing the outcomes for those in need, for those in **most** need?

**Prayer:** Guide us to focus not just on the miracles, but on the transformation they brought—the hope restored to the weary, the community fed, and the lives renewed. Inspire us to carry forward this legacy of change, to be Your hands and feet in the world, and to alter the outcomes for those in need. Amen.

## December 6



DeeDee Cox  
*The Holy Vine*

“I am the Vine, you are the branches. Who ever remains in me and I in him, will bear much fruit, for you can do nothing without me.”

—John 15:5 (GNB)

A plant starts with a seed. When planted, a strong and healthy seed will create a strong plant. It will then send out branches that will bear and amazing crop. Without the care of the gardener the crop will wither and die.

“I am the real Vine and my Father the Gardener.” —John 15:1

The Holy Spirit planted a seed, that Mary carried and bore God’s Son, who in human form would go forth and tell the people of the good news of God his Father. His followers multiplied and shared his creation and the good news of God’s greatness and love.

Christmas is a time to celebrate the beginning. Reminding us of God’s great gift to us, The Holy Vine.

**Prayer:** Holy Vine, may we not forget the true meaning of Advent and Christmas—of God’s greatest Gift of all...YOU! Amen.



## December 7



Amy Edenson  
*Son of God*

“You of little faith,” he said. “Why did you doubt?” And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.” — Matthew 14:32-33

This name for Jesus resonates with me because this name reflects the earthly connection between Jesus, a mortal, and heaven, where God resides.

If we did not think of him as the Son of God, who died for our sins, and thought of him merely as a martyr, we perhaps would not have Christianity as a religion and we would not be inspired to carry on His work.

Also, in this passage, Jesus refers to the lack of faith in the mortal disciples and it is this lapse of faith in all of us that makes us human. If we had certainty, we would not need faith.

During Advent we focus on the birth of Christ as His presence brings joy to our lives. The name, Son of God, reminds us that the adult Jesus is the one who demonstrates miracles. Jesus was able to take the rough seas and make them calm. Don't we all have periods of rough seas? Don't we look for a way of calming those waves? Jesus can take a rough time in an individual's life and help see them through it. With prayer and meditation, Jesus provides the enlightenment for how to calm our individual rough seas and help others through their rough seas. Through him, we find renewed strength. He is the light when all we can see is darkness.

**Prayer:** Lord, this Advent season may we feel your presence around us so that we may reach out and help others who are less fortunate than ourselves. Amen.

## December 8



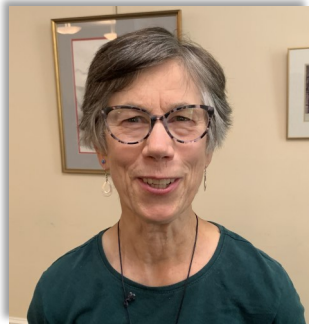
Sue Haldeman  
*Prince of Peace*

In the wake of the highly charged presidential election, I need to focus on Jesus as the Prince of Peace. It is hard to keep my sanity during this time. I concentrate on the road only when driving, trying to ignore the signs that blight the landscape.

Dr. Barreto reminded us that in Jesus's time, politics were also very strained. That fact helps immeasurably to keep this current, difficult time in perspective.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, in this season of Advent, of waiting and expectation and confidence in your love for us, help us to center ourselves on your word and your eternal power and to silence the voices that would take our focus off of you. Amen.

## December 9



Luray Gross  
*Jesus, the Beloved*

When I was an adolescent, our Lutheran church in Dublin moved to a new building with modern architecture. I was drawn to the brilliant stained-glass windows and the altar encircled by the communion rail, but what settled in my heart was the silvery figure of a dove that hung over the baptismal font. Of course, it symbolized the Spirit descending as

Jesus, just baptized by John, came out of the Jordan and heard, "You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased." I imagine that young man, Jesus, must have felt claimed and affirmed. Isn't that what every child, youth, every adult desires? A sign that they are not just liked or tolerated, but deeply loved?

We rightly speak of Jesus as the Light of the World, the Prince of Peace, the King of Kings; but for me, pondering Jesus as one who was and is beloved feels especially instructional. We are called to love, to serve, to heal, to witness, but what strengthens us to do so? Being beloved. Jesus must have been strengthened for the rigors of his ministry by the knowledge that he himself was loved.

He would need that fortitude. In the very next verse, Mark writes, "And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness." There, for forty days, Jesus is tempted by Satan and wild beasts, but he is not alone. Angels attend him. Mark gives no more details; instead he presses on to write of Jesus's ministry in Galilee.

How might these brief narratives relate to our own lives? As with all theological and daily life questions, there is much to ponder. We too face temptation, we too have opportunities to minister to others and are strengthened by the knowledge that we are the beloved children of God and thus empowered to show that love in our lives.

**Prayer:** Almighty Lord, grant that we may abide in your love and be nourished by its power to serve this world, to bring comfort to those whom no one seems to cherish, to care for our earthy home, and to share your love with grateful hearts. Amen.

## December 10



Honor Hamilton  
*Light of the World*

John 8:12 says, "Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"

It feels as though for my whole life, the world has been in turmoil for one reason or another—war, political agitation, school shootings, pandemics, and on and on. Every week, during the Prayers of the People, we are lifting up members of our community who have lost loved ones, who have fallen ill, who are working through the deepest grief imaginable while still trying to live their lives for the people who are counting on them. In these times, I find comfort in knowing that no matter who we are, or what we're going through or grappling with, that each and every one of us has the same Jesus—the same Light of the World—to carry us through, to walk by our side and envelop us in warmth and familiarity.

The time of Advent and Christmas, although the end of the calendar year and in the middle of winter, where the days are shortest, has always been to me a time for new life—particularly as we look towards the birth of Jesus, and a time for bringing light into the darkness. Literally, yes, as we light up Christmas trees and string decorations throughout our homes, but also metaphorically, as we embody the Light that Christ brings to the world. Matthew 5:14-16 says, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." Because Jesus is the Light of the World, he calls us to be lights in the world, to learn from his example and follow in his footsteps every day.

**Prayer:** Dear God, during the Advent and Christmas season, light us up from the inside out and help us to walk in your example. Help us to feel the warmth of your light in dark times, and may this warmth amplify the joy of happier times. We ask that our loved ones are surrounded by your light through us. We thank you for the light you continue to bring us every day. In your name we pray. Amen.

## December 11



Terry Herring  
*The Many Names of Jesus*

As a child growing up in South Carolina, I spent a lot of time on the farm with my grandmother. She often spoke of living a life as Jesus would want. She did not spend a lot of time on what he was called but more on how he lived and guided us to live. It is a constant reminder to me of that simple message and I carry it with me each day. People often say “What would Jesus do?” My grandmother would say: “What would Jesus have you do?”

Jesus is referred to by many names and many descriptions throughout the Bible. To me, this is such a wonderful aspect of my faith in that whether Jesus is called the Son Of God, The Son of Man or the Messiah, the connection both individually and collectively is uplifting and encouraging to my spirit as we navigate life.

Jesus is diverse, unlimited and all prevailing. His love is beyond understanding yet his guidance is simple, regardless of how we address him. Love one another. All this in the name of God the Father.

**Prayer:** Jesus, we ask you to guide us and lead us as we explore the wonderful ways in which you encourage us to be our better selves, to love one another and to provide a safe haven for all who may need comfort and support. In your name we pray. Amen.

## December 12



Kim Keller  
*Everlasting Father*

My father was always my hero and buddy (yes, I am a daddy's girl). We would always get into 'trouble' together – fishing in Piddles Puddle in town, picking the smallest puppy in the litter to bring home without asking my mother, picking blackberries along the railroad track behind our house and getting amazing berries and a raging case of poison ivy! We would wrestle, do homework together (Math), watch MASH, do yardwork and fix things around the house. He taught me to drive, encouraged me to pursue math and science, and charted a path toward an AF ROTC scholarship, and a career direction I would not have had without that push. Most recently, as I chose to retire after a 29 career at J&J and take a job with a non-profit org – I realized how his financial advice has given me the financial stability to make the switch with no concerns. He is still with me.

In high school, I sang in the church choir and my dad was always there for every concert, service, etc. While in the choir, I heard and became a major fan of Sandi Patty – an operatic soprano with wonderful songs of faith that still bring me peace and joy. One song that has always meant a lot to me is Sandi Patty's *Worship the King & Celebrate the Gift Medley* (1983). This song includes lyrics taken from Isaiah 9:6 – "For unto us a child is born; Unto us a Son is given; Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." The vision of Jesus, the blessed Son of God, as an Everlasting Father is such a comfort, as I know how safe and loved I felt in the arms of my father.

Not everyone is blessed with an amazing father – in the case of my daughter, she has no father in her life but was blessed to know and have the love of her grandfather. My hope is that for others knowing Jesus is our Everlasting Father will provide the love of a father they may not have experienced with an earthly father. We all need a father's love, and with Jesus as our Everlasting Father, we have it always.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank you for fathers, and for your son, our everlasting father. Be with us in this time of Advent – waiting for your love, your son, and our savior. Merry Christmas and love. Amen.

## December 13



Bob Maxwell  
*The Bread of Life*

Like many others during COVID, I started a sourdough starter. The King Arthur Baking website showed me how to encourage natural yeast floating in the air to mix with flour and water. Once the starter got going after a few weeks, I used the starter to make sourdough bread, chocolate cake, waffles, bread for egg sandwiches, and crackers. I fed the starter twice a day – taking equal parts starter, water, and flour (113 grams each). That starter is still going today and I am still making bread!

Like a starter that needs regular feeding, we all need sustenance to survive. Jesus said, “I am the bread of life.” Commuting for over thirty years into Philadelphia, I walk to my office each day, passing the same homeless people asking for money. We’re taught not to give them money, because they will use it for drugs. In this season of Advent, instead of giving money, we can help those in need by donating food to a scout food drive, or help serve a meal at a place like Broad Street Ministries.

On one occasion many years ago, I was walking to my office holding a breakfast sandwich. A young person (not one of the regular homeless people I would see) came up to me and asked if I would share my sandwich. I was so taken aback. I was used to the same people asking for money. I had never been asked for food before. I’m embarrassed to say that I walked back to my office and ate my sandwich. As I reflected on this later: Was this someone truly in need since they directly asked for food? Should I have handed over my sandwich?

They asked him “When did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?” He answered, “Whatever you did for the least of my brothers and sisters, you did for me.”

**Prayer:** In this season of Advent, I pray that each of us be sustained with God’s bread. I pray that we give that bread to those of our society that truly need it. I pray that the next time I am asked to share that bread, that I pause, stop, and break off a piece of breakfast sandwich for my fellow man. Amen.

## December 14



Julie McCormack  
*Prince of Peace*

“For unto us a child is born, for unto us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And his name shall be called, wonderful, counselor, mighty God the everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”  
—Isaiah 9:6

We hear the name Jesus many times, however I can remember a time when I truly felt the name of Jesus. In high school and college, I was in a choir that performed Handel’s *Messiah*, and I have always enjoyed performing it. In college we did a very traditional performance with an orchestra. The talent of the choir and the orchestra was moving in itself. As we performed *For Unto Us a Child Is Born*, I became so moved by the description of Jesus right out of Isaiah 9:6.

The music builds throughout the singing of Scripture words and when it arrives at the end where choir sings Prince of Peace I always felt a sense of relief and comfort. This Prince of Peace is our wonderful counselor. Many voices, many instruments all building the Scripture with their God given talent and landing in the safe arms of the Prince of Peace. I was so moved I could not even sing myself. I love listening to Handel’s *Messiah* during Advent. I still find it to be such a power performance of the word. If you drive by my house and hear Handel’s *Messiah* blaring from my kitchen, please know there is pure joy and comfort inside. If you don’t believe me, just take a listen for yourself.

**Prayer:** Dear Prince of Peace, help us all feel and hear your wonderful, mighty and everlasting counseling and the glow of your peace today and throughout the Advent season. Amen and Amen.



## December 15



Scott Nichols  
*Teacher*

I heard once that Christ was called “Teacher” in the gospels more than any other name. Too lazy for painstaking research, I Googled it, and the sources basically agree - of the 90 times Christ was directly addressed in the Gospels, in 60 He was called “Teacher.”

To me it is important to be seen not just as a feel-good religion, but more importantly as a do-good religion. And the key to the former is the latter. Belief is the motivator so that we “take seriously what Christ took seriously” (Father Greg Boyle). His teachings must be the centerpiece of our appeal to non-members to join our community of faith and love. To grow, we must ask what messaging and emphasis in this time and place will appeal best to the wider community. Beyond being believers, who are we and what do we stand for? The word I hear too often from “Nones” (no religious affiliation) is “hypocrisy.” Not a good look! We must be unapologetic disciples of His teachings as witnessed by what we do in the world.

At the last Supper He said “A new command I give unto you, to love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all will know you are my disciples.” As our teacher, He set the example and asked us to “Go and do likewise.”

**Prayer:** Lord, hear our prayer! In this often broken and suffering world of eight billion souls, we face many challenges. Give us the wisdom to learn from the words of your servant Abraham Lincoln: “If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher.” Success in the future is on us. Through our belief in your son Jesus Christ, and his loving guidance, give us the faith and strength to go forward determined to build a world of peace and justice, with “malice toward none and charity for all.” By this we walk in his steps, be his disciples, and ensure that thy will be done! Amen and Amen!

## December 16



Jeannie Quist  
*Immanuel—God is with Us*

I chose “Immanuel” for my name of Jesus from the scripture Matthew 1:23—“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him “Immanuel,” which means, God is with us.”

At this time in my life I often feel anxiety, uncertainty, and fearfulness. There are changes in our world as well as in our church right now which might cause these feelings in us. Then I think of Emmanuel who is there for us. Knowing this gives me comfort. If I turn to him all things can be made right. My anxiety can turn to hope, my uncertainty can turn to clarity, and my fearfulness can be alleviated by faith.

One of my favorite hymns during Advent is “Old Little Town of Bethlehem.” In the hymn the lines that speak to me most are “Yet in the dark streets shineth the everlasting light; the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.” The last line ends with a powerful message, “O come to us; abide with us, our Lord Immanuel!” I think these lines are important to us, especially now.

**Prayer:** Dear Immanuel, we are all going through challenging times not knowing what is going to happen. We know everything is a part of your plan, even if we can't see it. We ask for your comfort and help as we wait. When doubt and fear take over, please remind us that you are in control. We trust you and seek your will above all else. In your name we pray. Amen.

## December 17



Caroline Roland  
*Light in Darkness*

“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” —John 8:12

For as long as I can remember, I have gone to the five o’clock service on Christmas Eve, and although there are many meaningful parts of the service, my favorite is the candle lighting at the end, accompanied by the singing of *Silent Night*. Sometimes around Christmas, we get so caught up in the festivities -- buying loved ones gifts, decorating the house, and wrapping our presents -- that we forget to focus on the true meaning of Christmas. On Christmas Eve, when the church goes dark and one by one every candle is illuminated, it grounds me. It reminds me of why we celebrate Christmas and the role of Jesus in our lives.

Jesus’ words of reassurance bring comfort through belief that whoever follows him will always have the light of life, even in the darkest of times: an uncertain future, troubled relationships, or when facing life’s challenges. Focusing on Jesus can guide us through our struggles, just as the Star of Bethlehem did the wisemen.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank you for being a light that guides us through a world that can seem very dark. During this busy season, let us take time to honor your presence in our lives. Amen.

## December 18



Kristen Roland  
*Lamb of God*

“John saw Jesus coming toward him and said ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’” —John 1:29

In one of my favorite Christmas songs -- *Mary, Did You Know?* -- the singer asks Mary, mother of Jesus, if she understood the impact that his life would have when she gave birth to the Savior more than two thousand years ago. The lyrics list miracles that are likely familiar: walking on water, calming storms, and healing the sick, and the image of Jesus as an innocent lamb is painted twice.

It is this lamb-like purity to which I am drawn, perhaps because I am a mother and remember looking into the faces of our newborn babies, marveling at the miracle of their innocence, and wondering who they would become. I feel similarly when a baby is baptized at DPC, or when I hear the sounds of a toddler during the church service, or when I watch the youngest children listen in the sanctuary to a message prepared especially for them.

The lyrics of the song continue, asking Mary if, when she kisses her little baby, she realizes that she is kissing the face of God. We are given glimpses of God through the lamb-like innocence of the children at DPC; let us watch for these opportunities to see God as we live in the season of Advent.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Lord, thank you for sending your Son to us through Mary. Help us to recognize you in the children of our church as we again anticipate the birth of your son, Jesus, the Lamb of God. Amen.

## December 19



Melissa Shaw  
*Prince of Peace*

During this Advent season we prepare our hearts and minds for Christmas. I think of Jesus' name "Prince of Peace." This name captures the gentle humility and sovereign strength of our Savior. When I think of "Prince of Peace," I picture the powerful image of the Lion and the Lamb,

symbolizing how Jesus embodies both majesty and meekness, strength and surrender.

The peace Jesus brings is more than a feeling, it's the reconciliation of all things in Him. Like the Lion, He reigns with authority, overcoming sin and death, yet He also embraces us with the tenderness of the Lamb, sacrificing Himself for our redemption. This peace isn't just the absence of conflict, it's the presence of His perfect, unbreakable love. Through Him, we find a lasting peace that transcends circumstances and speaks to our deepest need for rest and restoration.

As we reflect on Jesus as the Prince of Peace, let's remember that He invites us into this peace each day. In the busyness of the season, may we find moments of stillness to marvel at His powerful love and gentle mercy. Let us carry this peace to others, showing the world the hope and unity that comes through our Prince of Peace.

**Prayer:** As we journey through this Advent season, we reflect on Your Son, the Prince of Peace. May His presence calm our hearts and unite us in love. Help us to embody the spirit of the Lion and the Lamb, fierce yet gentle, strong yet compassionate. In moments of turmoil, remind us of Your promise of peace. Guide us to be examples of Your love, spreading hope and reconciliation in our world. We await the coming of Christ with joy and anticipation. Amen.

## December 20



George Segelken  
*Light of the World*

In John 8: 12-30, Jesus is teaching at the Temple. The Pharisees arrive and are testing Jesus. He responds to them: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

In 1 Peter 2:5-9 believers are called upon to be "...a holy priesthood..." and in 1 John 3:18, John says, "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth." And let's not forget Matthew 24:40: "...Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."

What does this mean for me? As a member of the holy priesthood, I need to radiate Jesus' light into the world and the best way to do this is through my actions. I saw a statement attributed to Cory Booker that captures this in layman's terms: "Before you speak to me about your religion, first show it to me in how you treat other people. Before you tell me how much you love your God, show me how much you love all His children. Before you preach to me of your passion for your faith, teach me about it through your compassion for your neighbors. In the end, I'm not interested in what you have to tell or sell as in how you choose to live and give."

The hymn I think best reflects this is "This Little Light of Mine." My two favorite versions of this are from Bruce Springsteen and Sam Cooke. In this season of Advent let's reflect on what we need to do to make "this little light of mine" shine more brightly.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me radiate Jesus' light through my thoughts, words and deeds. Amen.

## December 21



Lindsay Shull  
*King of Kings*

At this stage of my life, many of the words on repeat in my mind are related in some way to my children. Perhaps new words they're learning and reciting on repeat, or words from stories we must read not just once but three times each night. And then sometimes it's words that my boys are singing that get stuck in my head, such as the words of their recent song in

Sunshine Singers choir with Ms. Geri: "He is the King of Kings, He is the Lord or Lords, His name is Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Oh he is the Lord!"

It's easy to hum along to this catchy tune with the voices of the precious little choir members in my head, but if I pause to ponder them a moment more, I realize there is much more to these words than a simple children's song. "King of Kings." And from Psalm 47:7 "King of all the earth."

Wow, these words are truly awe-inspiring and filled with grandeur in defining who our Jesus is. But I must wonder, am I opening my heart and living my life in a way that reflects that Jesus Christ is indeed the King of Kings? For a king is a ruler, one who abides over all else. In my life and in all of our lives, I think we grant all sorts of things 'king' status—maybe it's other people, money, possessions, or ideals such as security, fitting in, perfection, status. But what if we really full heartedly allowed Jesus to take up that throne in the very center of our lives as the King over all other 'kings.' How might we live differently? How might we fix our eyes in new directions when Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, is sitting on the throne of our hearts?

**Prayer:** Almighty God, in this season of Advent, help us to remove piece by piece all the things that might keep us from seeing and hearing You more clearly. Help us to live in response to the hope and the joy and the love of Jesus Christ who was born into this world as the King of Kings. Amen.

## December 22



Mark Strasburg  
*Bread of Life*

In John 6:35, Jesus declares, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." By doing this, we will feel His love and assurances of spiritual vitality. This statement is part of a larger discourse in which Jesus contrasts the physical sustenance provided by bread with the spiritual nourishment that only He can offer. The people had followed Him after witnessing the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000, but Jesus points out that physical food can only temporarily satisfy their hunger. He reveals that He is the true "bread of life" that satisfies not just the body but the soul. This bread represents the spiritual life and eternal fulfillment that come from a relationship with Him, emphasizing that belief in Him is the key to lasting satisfaction.

Jesus' words in this verse also underscore the intimate connection between faith in Him and spiritual satisfaction. Just as bread is essential for physical life, Jesus is essential for spiritual life. The invitation to "come to me" and "believe in me" highlights the personal and active response required from those seeking true fulfillment.

Unlike temporary earthly provisions, Jesus promises a lasting, eternal satisfaction. So instead of searching for fleeting pleasures and shallow material items we need to constantly work on finding a deeper connection with Jesus. By doing this we will feel his love and assurances of spiritual vitality.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, I am so thankful for the nourishment to our faith you provide. I will strive to follow your teachings and will work to come to you every day. Amen.



## December 23



Marilyn Weichman  
*Prince of Peace*

The name of Jesus as the Prince of Peace has always resonated with me and remains foundational to my faith. I believe that God loves me and can be present in my daily life if I endeavor to remain faithful, prayerful, reflective and open to his will. One of my favorite Christmas hymns is *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*, with its message from the angels of “Peace on Earth, good will to men from heaven’s all gracious King.” The lyrics for this hymn were written by Edmund Sears, a Massachusetts pastor, in 1849. It was at a time in his life when he was seriously depressed by the violent revolutions in Europe and the Mexican-American War. Pastor Sears’ message was not about Jesus’ birth, but rather about God’s promise that he was sending Jesus to live on this earth to teach us how to love one another and live in peace and harmony with all of his creation. The original lyrics reference the time, foretold by the prophets in Isaiah, “when Christ shall come and all shall own The Prince of Peace, their King.”

The lyrics of *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear* also describe “the angels coming with peaceful wings, their heavenly music floating over a weary world.” As we prepare for Advent 2024, we again find ourselves in a weary world, struggling to make sense of the anger, divisiveness, hatred and violence that surrounds us. I am striving to manage the anxiety and sadness this evokes by seeking out The Prince of Peace each day in all the places I can find him in our world. In the midst of this busy season, I am committed to taking time to quiet my mind, silence the distractions, and patiently listen for his voice. If by doing this, I can replenish a reservoir of peace within myself, I believe I will be better able to reflect this peace toward others.

**Prayer:** Gracious God, as we celebrate the birth of your Son, the Prince of Peace, help us to know in our hearts that your love dwells within us and is your gift of peace to us. May we continually seek ways to share this peace and love with others, being respectful of our differences and always remembering that we are all your children. We ask this in Jesus’ name, who is our abiding source of true peace. Amen.

## December 24



Frank Fabian  
*Jesus*

I'm old school. I love Jesus and I know he loves me. I recognize his other names - Prince of Peace, Immanuel, Son of God, Son of Man, but it is the name of Jesus to whom I pray.

Joseph was told that he would name his son Jesus. And on that first Christmas Day when Jesus was born I can only imagine the delight and honor that Joseph had in fulfilling the scriptures.

The first song I remember learning in Sunday school was "Jesus loves me," and I truly believe he does.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, may the love and peace that is Jesus surround the world, and may God bless us all in the Advent season. Amen.

## December 25



Mac Schafer

*"You Are Not Alone"*

The Word became Flesh (The Incarnation)

During COVID, at the last church I served, the Welcoming Team was in charge of what banners we put out above our church sign on the main street people drove past. That team decided to create a banner that simply said: "You Are Not Alone." This banner got more positive feedback than any other banner the church had ever put up. When I'd meet new people in Raleigh and we'd get around to the topic of where I worked, they'd say, *"Oh, your church had that wonderful banner during COVID that said, You Are Not Alone. Thank you so much for putting that up. I drove by it every day to work and it gave me such comfort."*

As I have gotten older and had more life experience, John 1:14 has become very important to me: *"And the Word became flesh and lived among us."* In the mystery of how the God of the universe took on human form, the incarnation is a reminder that God intimately understands what we experience as humans. It is comforting to know that Jesus, God in the flesh, knew joy, suffering, laughter, loss, exhaustion, friendship, challenges and more. God could have used power in such different ways with creation, but chose to come in the form of a vulnerable human. This amazes me. To affirm the incarnation of Jesus Christ is to affirm that we are not alone in our suffering and in our joy. God experienced it all in the form of Jesus Christ.

**Prayer:** God, in my adoption, you were there. In the suicide of a parent, you were there. In the transition of my daughter, you were there. In my wife's battle with cancer, you were there. In the belly laugh of my grandfather, you were there. In reuniting with my birth mother, you were there. In the discovery of who I am at the core of my being, you are there. Amen.



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