

How Great Our Joy!

2025 Advent Devotional



Hayes Barton
Baptist Church

Faith, Hope, Love. And You.

Once again, the Advent and Christmas season is upon us as we prepare for the birth of the Savior of the world. In a time of year that only seems to get busier and busier, we want to offer this resource as a devotional guide during Advent. Our 2025 Advent theme is titled “How Great Our Joy!”, which will encourage us to explore the many ways to seek out and experience joy in our daily lives.

Within this booklet, you will find Scriptures, songs, prayers, and responses that will guide you and your family to prepare for the coming Christ child. Each week, you are invited to incorporate the devotion into a daily or weekly rhythm on your own, with family members, or another small group. You will notice the correlation to our Sunday morning worship services.

It is our prayer that you experience the hope, peace, joy, love, and light that Jesus offers each of us during this season and that this devotional guides you to a closer connection with the baby that changed the world.

- HBBC Ministry Staff

During the season of Advent, we light candles to remind ourselves that light always finds a way. We remember that Jesus is the light of the world, shining in the darkness, and no matter how dark things may seem, darkness will not overcome the light.

As you use this guide, you may wish to light candles each week as a way to help your family mark the passing of time. You may choose to use a traditional Advent wreath. You can buy a wreath or make your own from simple supplies. Traditionally, three of the candles are purple (for hope, peace, and love), one is pink (for joy), and a white candle—the Christ candle—sits in the center. We have a limited number of Advent candles available for you to pick up and use. These will be available in the Welcome Center and outside the church office.

You may also choose to light just one candle each week, perhaps one that has some significance for your family. Families with children may enjoy using a simple coloring sheet. Each week, invite your child(ren) to color in the candle for the week using the traditional color. Together, notice as the page begins to fill more and more with color as we get closer to the celebration of Christmas. There is a coloring sheet at the back of this devotional.

As we move through the season, may we declare together to the world around us, “How Great Our Joy!”

Week 1 - The Prophecy Candle - *Hope*

Reflecting on the first Sunday of Advent, we light the Prophecy Candle and meditate on the hope that is ours in Christ.

Read: Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between the nations
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation;
neither shall they learn war any more.
- Isaiah 2:3b-4, NRSV

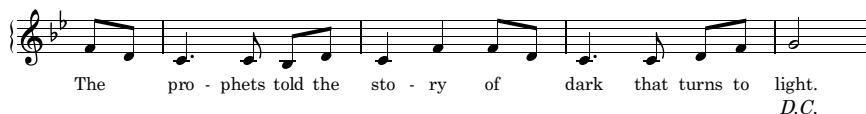
Sing:

We Light the Candle *Hope*

Unison



Fine



Pray: Dear God, as we light this candle and begin this new Advent season, teach us to walk in your ways so that we may share your hope with a world in need. Amen.

Reflect: “I hope we get a win tonight!”
“I hope I can make it to the concert ...”
“I hope they don’t run out of dessert again!”

Have you said anything like this before? Have you expressed hope for a specific outcome, experience, or request? This is certainly a normal part of our vernacular in today’s world, especially in a lifestyle where we are able to receive what we order within 2 days from Amazon, or even the same day if you have Amazon Prime! Instead of being hopeful due to preferences or desires, what if we understood hope as being in communion with God’s will for the world?

The prophet Isaiah encourages us to “walk in his ways” while we prepare for the birth of Jesus. Let’s not limit ourselves to hoping for the mundane, but instead expand our understanding of hope to be a divine and eternal collaboration with our Creator and Savior. Think of the transformational nature of the Christmas story. How can we hope for this impact to still be relevant and meaningful in our world today? We can still look forward to the simple joys in life, but don’t hesitate to pray and live with the purposeful and holy hope that our world so desperately needs.

Respond:

It doesn't have to be a big thing to offer hope to others around us. Who are some of the people that you come in contact with on a regular basis? A neighbor you pass as you walk your dog or drive down the street, a school teacher, a family member, a friend, a coach, or a person who gives you your order at the drive-thru? Take time this week to be an encouragement to one of these people. You can offer them a smile or a kind word. Maybe write a note of thanks or say a simple prayer for them. Stop and listen to how they are doing. Maybe tell them a joke to make them smile.

Letting someone know that you care can make a huge difference in their life and in yours. Be that person of hope!

Week 2 - The Bethlehem Candle - *Peace*

Reflecting on the second Sunday of Advent, we light the Bethlehem Candle and remember the one who was born in the city of David, Jesus Christ, the son of Mary, the Prince of Peace, our Savior and Lord.

Read: *But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.*

*And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord
... and he shall be the one of peace.
- Micah 5:2, 4, NRSV*

Sing:

We Light the Candle *Peace*

Unison

We come this day to sing God's praise and cel - e - brate Christ's birth.

We light the can - dle of peace to share with all the earth.

That eve, the fam - ily set - tled where ox and don - key feast.

The ti - ny lit - tle Christ - child was born to give us peace.

Pray:

Lord, as we light this candle,
remind us of our call to be peacemakers
in a world of strife. And may the
peace of God, which surpasses all
understanding, guard our hearts
and minds in Christ Jesus,
the Prince of Peace,
now and forevermore. Amen.

Reflect:

It all began in Bethlehem. Literally. “The hinge of history,” as Ralph Sockman so memorably put it, “is on the door of a Bethlehem stable.”

Surprisingly, it was hardly a great city. Scholars estimate that at the time of Jesus’ birth, it was a village of about 600 souls. Phillips Brooks, who authored the text of the carol that goes by its name, was right when he called it a “little town.” Yet, it was in that little town that God chose to change history forever. Not in Rome. Not in Athens. Not even Jerusalem. But in Bethlehem.

Bethlehem means “house of bread.” Which is what Jesus told us to pray for ... “Give us this day our daily bread.” In this regard, Bethlehem calls us back to basics. It calls us home to family, to church, and above all, to prayer.

O Holy Child of Bethlehem!
Descend to us, we pray,
Cast out our sin, and enter in,
Be born in us today;
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel!

May we find peace and make peace in this season of Advent as we journey yet again to Bethlehem.

Respond:

Who do you consider to be a peacemaker? Write a letter to them to thank them for their work. This could be a community leader whose work you admire, an artist whose work inspires unity and builds bridges, or a friend or neighbor you know personally who advocates for and actively works toward peace in his or her family, workplace, or church. For younger children, consider having them draw or color a picture to include with the letter. You may want to dream together about images that look like peace for them to include.

As you celebrate the peacemaking work others are doing, consider how peace within your own heart helps to create peace in the whole world. Reflect on how you can grow peace in your heart this Advent.

Week 3 - The Shepherds' Candle - *Joy*

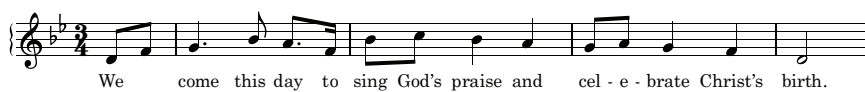
Reflecting on the third Sunday of Advent, we light the Shepherds' Candle. The shepherds were the first in a long line of people who joyfully shared the good news of the Savior's birth. May our souls rejoice with the shepherds and all the Communion of Saints as we worship today!

Read: The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly
and rejoice with joy and shouting.
And the ransomed of the Lord shall return
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.
- Isaiah 35:1, 10, NRSV

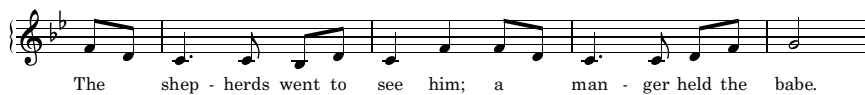
Sing:

We Light the Candle *Joy*

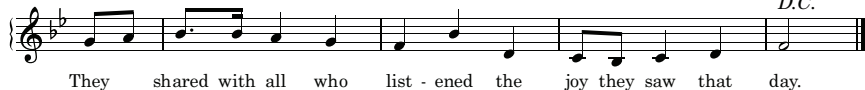
Unison



Fine



D.C.



Pray:

God of salvation, may we,
like the shepherds, be in awe of the
message of the angels who brought
good news of great joy.

In this season of Advent, as we
await your coming, fill our hearts
with a renewed desire to be living
witnesses of joy to those around us,
for the joy of the Lord is our strength. Amen.

Reflect:

Will you allow scripture to “read” your life as you read Isaiah 35:1-10? Wow, the revealing of God’s plans. With brushstrokes of lush words, a painted picture of joy and restoration emerges as a barren desert and wilderness transform into a magnificent landscape of blooms and growth. A world of healing is visualized for the oppressed, those in physical or mental pain, and others suffering from disabilities. Yes, all the weak will be strengthened. Moreover, humankind will be filled with singing, gladness, joy, and rejoicing.

The shepherds got it right. When they heard the good news of Christ’s birth, they did not hesitate to express their feelings. The shepherds acted on the joy of Jesus.

Are you willing to echo the journey and literal path to the manger as the shepherds did? Choose to respond to God’s invitation of deep abiding joy. Journeying along this spiritual path reveals to others God’s breaking into the world to bring healing, renewal, and salvation. What a promise! What a joy!

What life experiences have brought you deep joy? Be specific. Call, send a card, or email someone who created or was a part of that joyful experience.

Respond:

Listen, look, and locate people in a “desert place” this week. Do you know someone who just had a baby? Do you have a friend who is preparing for the first Christmas without a loved one? Is there someone you know for whom the holiday season will bring heavy financial or familial burdens? How can you encourage and remind them that God’s joy is near and real?

Consider how you can reach out to them with an encouraging word, helping hand, or act of kindness. Make a plan to follow through with that action. It might be the reminder they need that with God joy can be found even in the desert places of our lives.

Week 4 - The Angels' Candle - Love

Reflecting on the fourth Sunday of Advent, we light the Angels' Candle, remembering that it was the Angel of the Lord who came to Joseph in a dream and said, "Fear not."

Read: In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.
- 1 John 4:10-12, 18, NRSV

Sing:

We Light the Candle *Love*

Unison

The musical score is written for a single voice part in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of four staves of music. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff ends with a double bar line. The second staff begins with a double bar line and ends with a double bar line. The third staff ends with a double bar line. The fourth staff begins with a double bar line and ends with a double bar line. The lyrics are: 'We come this day to sing God's praise and cel - e - brate Christ's birth. We light the can - dle of love to share with all the earth. The an - gels in the night sky came down from heav'n a - bove. They sang a - bout the sav - ior, who fills the earth with love.'

We come this day to sing God's praise and cel - e - brate Christ's birth.

We light the can - dle of love to share with all the earth.

The an - gels in the night sky came down from heav'n a - bove.

They sang a - bout the sav - ior, who fills the earth with love.

Pray: Lord Jesus, help us to love one another, as you have loved us. Remind us that love is from God, and everyone who loves is born of God, and knows God. And whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. Amen.

Reflect:

God is love, and love shows up.

In thinking of a present, holy love, I'm reminded of the song, "Do You Hear What I Hear?", written in 1962 during the Cold War by Noel Regney. The song tells the story of Jesus' nativity birth and follows the perspectives of those who began the trek to see the infant babe. To conclude the song, Regney writes, "He (Jesus) will bring us goodness and light."

Sometimes, it's difficult to trace the loud voices and noises of our Advent season back to goodness and light. In the echoes of weighty expectations, holiday extravaganzas, and endless, yet exciting to-dos, we may find ourselves searching for a love that still shows up.

Today, you may find yourself searching for that still, small voice of our Savior. For the souls that are flourishing, frantic, and fearful, there is a God that is present. There is a God who casts out darkness with life-giving love and hope.

God is calling. Can you hear? Do you hear what I hear? In the mundane moments that point us to the glistening of street lights on a cold, winter night, in the stressful moments that point us to the small, unsteady footsteps of a child, and in the joyful moments that point us to a previous memory of Christmas pasts, God's love wraps us tight.

Love is in the whispering, reminding, and recognizing that in these small moments of our Advent season, we are transformed by God into people who notice, into people who love bigger and broader.

Respond:

If we want to hear God's still, small voice amidst the noise of this season, we have to listen. Listening is no passive goal easily accomplished; real listening requires intentional action. This week, how can you take time to press "pause" on the busyness of life and be still, listening for what God might want to say?

Maybe you could go for a walk without earbuds, paying attention to the beauty of creation around you. Perhaps your family can sit by the fireplace or around the kitchen table, turning off the television or other distractions and turning attention toward one another. You might drive without the radio on, spend time in the evening with phones put away, or play with your children without interruption.

In these moments of listening, what do you hear? Where is God's love trying to break through? Share these findings with your family or with trusted friends, and remember that God speaks to us throughout the entire year, not just at Christmas. For those who have ears to listen, let us hear.

Week 5 - The Christ Candle - *Light*

On this Christmas Eve we light the Christ Candle as a symbol of Christ's birth.

Read: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.
- John 1:1-5

Sing:

We Light the Candle *Christ*

Unison

The musical score is written for a single voice part in G major (one flat) and 3/4 time. It consists of four lines of music. The first line ends with a period, the second with a 'Fine' marking, and the fourth with a 'D.C.' (Da Capo) marking. The lyrics are written below the notes.

We come this day to sing God's praise and cel - e - brate Christ's birth.

We light the can - dle of Christ to share with all the earth.

The light of all cre - a - tion was__ born and laid so still.

When Ma - ry held the ba - by, God's pro - mise was ful - filled.

Pray: Lord Jesus, on this silent and holy night we thank you for stepping down from glory and becoming flesh in order to bring your light into our darkened world. We confess that we have sinned and need you to be our Savior. Tonight, we welcome you with open arms and open hearts. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Reflect:

“In the beginning was the Word.” So begins the story of Jesus in the Gospel according to John. The disciple whom Jesus loved introduces his story with a word that spoke in the beginning and speaks to us still. It was and is the eternal word.

Contrary to what many assume, the Gospel was not an innovation. It was not a turning point in the mind or heart of God. Some people see a great divide between the God depicted in the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament. The difference, however, resides in our perspective, not God’s. The good news of God’s grace and mercy has been in existence since the beginning of time. In fact, the Gospel was in the heart and mind of God when he created the world. But we didn’t see it until we saw Jesus. He provided the light.

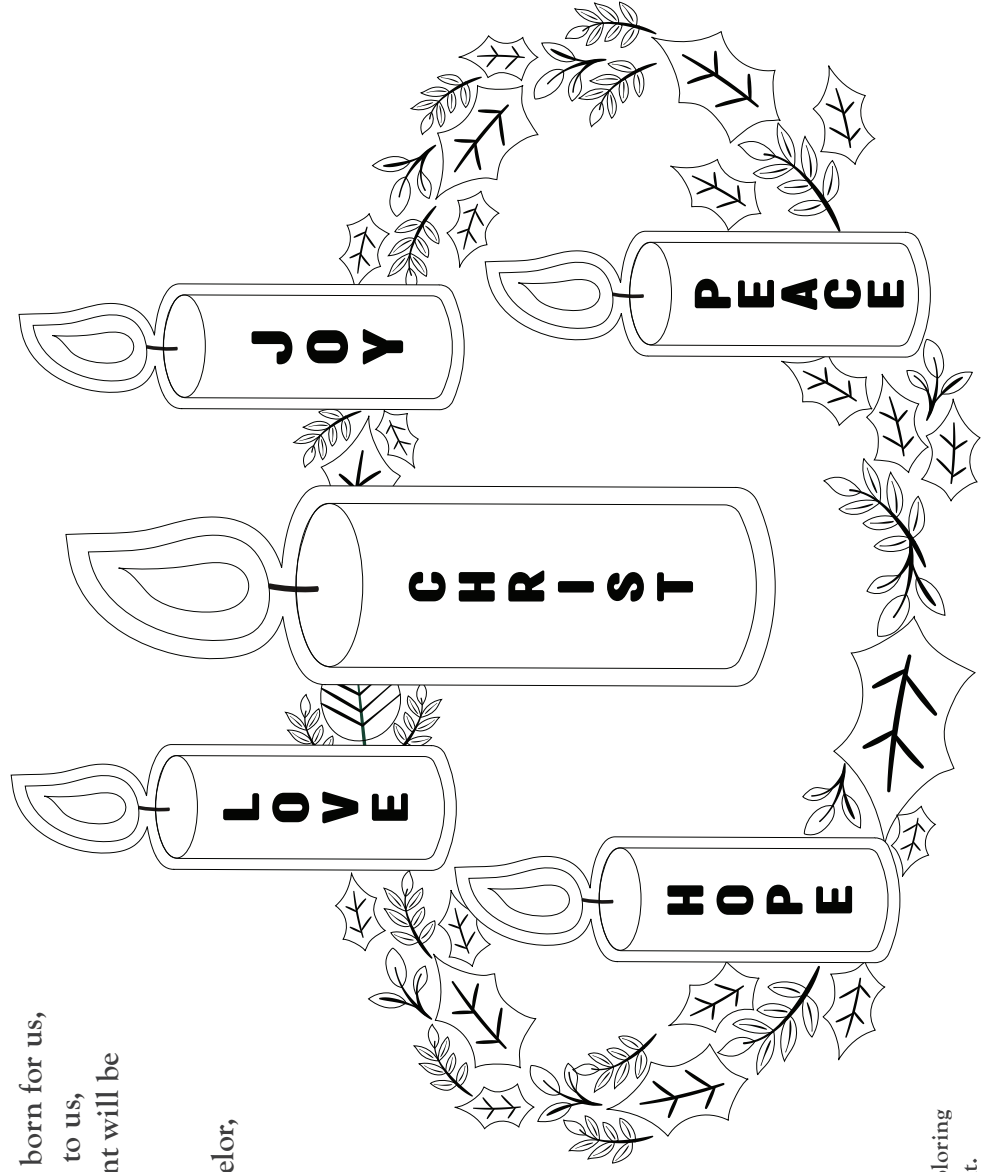
And now, he calls us to go out into our world and shine his light. “You are the light of the world,” Jesus said. “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

May the light of Christ shine in you and through you today and every day.

Respond:

Invite each person in your family to share one way they’ve experienced God’s light this Advent—maybe through kindness, laughter, or helping someone in need—and one way they can help that light shine even brighter this week. You may choose to write your ideas down or even wrap them up and place them back under your tree as a birthday gift for Jesus. As you do, consider how the love and light we choose to share is an offering to God, who gave us the best gift the world has ever known—Jesus. End your time by singing “Joy to the World” together (loud and joyful, not perfect!) as a reminder that God’s light has come and the world will never be the same.

For a child will be born for us,
a son will be given to us,
and the government will be
on his shoulders.
He will be named
Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God,
Eternal Father,
Prince of Peace.
- Isaiah 9:6



Advent Schedule

Hanging Of The Greens

Sunday, December 7 at 5:00 PM in the Sanctuary
Cookie fellowship to follow.

Intergenerational Missions Night

Wednesday, December 10 at 6:00 PM in Hailey Hall

HBBC Christmas Presentation with Choir and Orchestra

Sunday, December 14 at 11:00 AM in the Sanctuary

Service Of Remembrance

Wednesday, December 17 at 6:00 PM in the Chapel

Living Nativity

December 22-24 from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Christmas Eve Services and Private Communion

Wednesday, December 24 in the Sanctuary

- Family worship service at 4:00 PM
- Communion worship service at 6:00 PM
- Private communion from 7:00-9:00 PM



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