

Advent Devotional Guide 2025

Otterbein United Methodist Church



Advent Mission Focus:
Charterhouse School in Edinburg, VA



Charterhouse School in Edinburg, VA, is sponsored by United Methodist Family Services and is a place for students with special needs to get out of their comfort zones and start to get out into the world. They serve students ages 6 – 22 and are able to serve the needs of Autism, neurological differences, emotional, learning, intellectual, and development disabilities, as well other health impairments. If you would like to make a donation to the school, please make your check payable to Otterbein United Methodist Church and designate "UMFS – Charterhouse School" in the memo line.

Sunday, November 30

[Luke 21:5-19](#)

Lately, each morning and evening as I watch the day's news on TV, I think about this scripture. Jesus here is telling his disciples about the end times – wars and revolution, nation rising against nation, kingdom against kingdom, earthquakes, famine...fearful events. I see much of this happening in our country and world today and it makes me anxious! In fact, it makes me VERY anxious. My years left on earth are not a lot, but I think of my little 2-year-old great-granddaughter, Charlie, and wonder what kind of world she will grow up in. And I worry about that. However, I have to keep reminding myself that Jesus says to us, as He did the disciples, *"When you hear of wars and revolutions, DO NOT be frightened."* So I need to trust God more and worry less. Not easy to do as I see great unrest all over our world, but as the New Year approaches, I will remind myself of these words of Jesus and know that my life and the lives of all of us are in good hands – His hands.

Rosalie Bailey

Monday, December 1

[2 Peter 1:1-11](#)

Growing While We Wait

This past summer my oldest granddaughter enthusiastically shared some of her experiences of attending Vacation Bible School. She was particularly energetic as she sang and acted out the motions to a little song she had learned, "Fruit of The Spirit," based on Galatians 5:22. Reading Peter's words in today's featured scripture brought back memories of that summer day and four-year-old Opal's message through song (and dance!)

Advent is not just a season of passive waiting. It is a time of active preparation for the coming of Christ. We don't just remember Jesus' birth – we anticipate his return. In today's scripture, Peter reminds us that in Christ, we have graciously been given everything we need to grow in godliness while we wait.

While we often approach Advent with a longing for peace, hope, and light, Peter challenges us to pursue goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, and love. These are not just ideals – they are the fruit of a life that is truly preparing for Jesus.

When we don't put forth effort, we can drift spiritually. Peter warns that failing to grow makes us "nearsighted and blind." But those who continue to grow in Christ "will never stumble," and will be richly welcomed into the eternal kingdom.

Advent is not just about waiting for light to come into the world. It's about becoming people of light so that we are ready to welcome Christ when he comes again.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, as I wait for you this Advent, help me not to waste the waiting, but to pursue the kind of life that reflects your grace. Give me strength to grow in faith, love, and perseverance so I may be ready to meet you when you come. Amen.*

Carole Gaines

Tuesday, December 2

*For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
On God rests my deliverance and my honor;
my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.
Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us.
Psalm 62:5-8*

When I consider the season of Advent, there are some key words that speak to me. Two of those words are **waiting** and **silence**. Our world is full of noise and demands our attention claiming that each new “thing” will make us successful, intelligent, beautiful, powerful, etc. I find it very difficult to make/take time for quiet. Waiting for news, for other people to act, for the right time or place can seem endless and aggravating. The psalmist calls us to a different kind of silent waiting. Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes it this way: “The silence of the Christian is a listening silence, a humble silence that for the sake of humility can also be broken at any time. It is a silence in connection with the word.” In these Advent days of waiting, may we seek moments of silence, trusting in the God of refuge.

Prayer: *Holy Anticipation, that breathtaking space in-between what has been, what is, what is-to-come. Where winter dreams reveal secret longings and winged angels announce the coming of Love. You draw us to the edge of Advent possibility like the song of angels drawing shepherds—eyes wide and breath held-waiting, watching. Come settle into our living for a while and do not let us settle for too little. Amen. ~ Pamela C. Hawkins, Simply Wait*

Pat Wingert

Wednesday, December 3

[2 Peter 3:10](#)

The Day of the Lord

*The Lord is not slow to do what He has promised, as some think. Instead, He is patient with you, because He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants all to turn away from their sins. But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that Day the heavens will disappear with a shrill noise, the heavenly bodies will burn up and be destroyed, and the earth with everything in it will vanish.
2 Peter 3:9-10 (Good News Bible)*

People have lamented that we may be nearing the end of a world as we know it. The world is in turmoil with raging wildfires, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, volcanoes, and conflicts of war. We have a deeply

divided country, with discord in cities and among families, neighbors, and friends, and a government seemingly without boundaries or guardrails.

Old Testament prophets' prophecies warned of the Day of the Lord. The prophetic warnings were aimed at bringing the people to repentance, but like today, the warnings fell on deaf ears. We seem to want to take the "what feels good, do it" approach with little consequence. But God is watching!

According to the *Open Bible* article, "the Day of the Lord is a period at the end of human history when God's purpose for humankind will be fulfilled. The period will begin with the return of Christ and will end with the cleansing of the heavens and earth with fire (2 Peter 3:10-13, Revelation 21:1)."

It could be a long period of time or an instantaneous event when Christ returns to earth to claim His faithful believers and to consign unbelievers to eternal judgement (Revelation 20:14-15). "The New Testament emphasized the suddenness of the Lord's coming, the certainty of His judgment on unbelief and the restoration of heaven on earth by fire. Christ will fulfill these prophecies on the day of the Lord as He judges all nations from the 'Throne of His glory' (Matthew 25:31)."

Like the prophets of old, our task is to take God's message of redemption to a lost world until the day of the Lord is fulfilled. From the manger to the Day of the Lord, Jesus is love.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, thank you for always being there for us. During Advent, help us to spread peace where there is discord and hope where there is fear. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Wilma Mitchell

Thursday, December 4

[Amos 4:6-13](#)

What harsh words God gave Amos to prophesy to the Israelites in this scripture passage! The Harper's Bible Commentary says the following about verses 6-11: "Yahweh has sent a series of punishments in the hope that these chastisements would induce repentance, but to no avail . . ." So in verse 12b, God declares through Amos, "*prepare to meet your God, O Israel.*" (NIV) The choice for Israel is given in Amos 5:4. "*This is what the Lord says to the house of Israel: Seek me and live.*" (NIV)

At the time I became a United Methodist, by re-profession of faith in 1999, Aldersgate UMC in Alexandria was teaching the Disciple Bible Study series. What a blessing for me to be able to delve immediately into studying God's word for us today!

In preparation for writing this devotional, I turned to Lesson 3 in the Disciple Study Manual for the Prophets and Letters of Paul, titled "Remember Who You Are." Amos was a shepherd and farmer from a small Judean village just six miles south of Bethlehem. And he was special, because God had chosen him to speak truth to power during the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel (786-746 B.C.). Except for occasional border disputes, there was relative peace at the time. But the ruling class had chosen decadent lifestyles, disregarded justice, were greedy, and did not take care of the poor and needy. To me, that sounds very much like the ruling class in the United States today.

So, what can we as a congregation do? It is heartening to me, a relative newcomer to the community, that Otterbein already does so much for our neighbors in need, including having our own soup kitchen and clothes closet on Mondays, working with Valley Interfaith Action (VIA), and providing space for the preschool.

In October, we brought cans of food each Sunday that were delivered to the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank. That's something even those of us who only come to church on Sundays can do.

At Otterbein, we partake of the Lord's supper every Sunday. Each week we repeat this confession:

"Merciful God,
We confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have failed to be an obedient church.
We have not done your will,
we have broken your law,
we have rebelled against your love,
we have not loved our neighbors,
and we have not heard the cry of the needy.
Forgive us, we pray.
Free us for joyful obedience,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Since we say this so often, it's a challenge to keep it from being just a rote exercise of religiosity.

May we continue to "work with each other, we will work side by side, and we'll guard human dignity and save human pride: And they'll know we are Christians by our love. . ." (Verse 3 and the chorus of #2223 in *The Faith We Sing*.) And this is my prayer: Dear Lord, in these dark days, when I see injustice so close to home and man's inhumanity to other human beings increasing exponentially, help me to show Christ's love to others by joyfully being obedient to you. In Jesus name, Amen.

Susan Young

Friday, December 5

[Amos 5:1-17](#)

*He who made the Pleiades and Orion, who turns midnight into dawn and darkens day into night,
who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land—the LORD is his name.*

Amos 5:8

It was not "a dark and stormy night." In fact, it was a clear and still and cold night in December. My neighbor was just going towards the grocery store as I was coming out. "Hi, how are you?" he asked. "Busy" I said as I smiled and hurried towards my car. "Merry Christmas" I yelled back to him, and he had just enough time to yell back "Merry Christmas!" I stopped at my car door and looked up and saw the many twinkling stars in the sky including the three obvious stars in the belt of Orion, the hunter. I prayed out loud "Thank you Lord for your beautiful creation!"

How seldom do I look up. I don't look up often at the beauty of creation, and I don't look up often enough to God, my creator. How seldom do I seek the Lord and how often do I seek other things? Especially in this advent season I find myself seeking ideas for presents for others or seeking the money to pay for them. But the prophet Amos tells us to seek the Lord and find life! And the amazing thing is that while we are seeking God, He is seeking us! That's the real meaning of Christmas – the real Christmas story: God loved the world so much that He sent Jesus to planet Earth to seek out people who were seeking God and to give them life – eternal life! Thanks be to God for His Christmas gift!

So please look up and see the stars of Orion (the hunter, the seeker) and the seven stars of the Pleiades. Thank God for that beautiful part of His creation. But don't stop there, thank Him for Jesus who was sent as a baby in the manger who grew up to be our Savior. Thank God for not leaving us clueless, helpless, and hopeless, but for providing the gospel, the map to get to heaven.

And don't stop there. Share the real Christmas story with friends and those you love and those you meet who may well be seeking God in this wonderful Advent season! Perhaps invite them to church for a Christmas celebration!

Gary Edlind, Sr.

Saturday, December 6

[Jude 17-25](#)

The world today is a very uncertain and confusing place. This was also true 2000 years ago in the 1st Century. This scripture is about our duty as Christians to fight for God's Truth.

In our world today it is so easy to follow the doubters and the false teachers who follow their own "ungodly desires." We can quickly lose sight of God's Truth, especially at Christmas. We can become overwhelmed with gifts, parties, celebrations, and all the visible trappings of the season.

This scripture passage can help us refocus our lives on what is truly important. We can "Keep Ourselves in God's Love." We can show others love, compassion, and mercy as Christ shows it to us. We can remember that Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus and the birth of the hope of eternal life in Christ. This is the ultimate gift from God! This is the Truth we must defend. This is the true meaning of the Christmas season and all the seasons of our lives.

Ron Cartee

Sunday, December 7

[Luke 1:57-68](#)

see also [Amos 6:1-14](#); [2 Thessalonians 1:5-12](#)

Advent invites us to wait; not with idle hands, but with hearts awake to God's quiet work in the world. As we light candles, we remember that courage and comfort are gifts of the same flame: God's steady light in an often uncomfortable world.

In December, we often see single candles placed in our neighbors' windows. These candles are lit at dusk and turned off just before bed. Why? Tradition tells us, "It helps people find their way home." The sight of that candle, flickering in the dark, is a sign of comfort and relief. The flame doesn't erase the night, it simply reminds us that the night doesn't win.

We saw that truth more vividly when Dave's younger brother, Jay, died in the line of duty. It was the kind of loss that doesn't just break your heart, it rearranges the structure of your life. Jay was a brother, and he was also a best friend. He was mathematically brilliant and, at 35, he traded a life in finance to become a firefighter because that was who he was: someone who loved others well.

In September of 2016, we got the call no family ever wants. There had been an arson fire. Two firefighters killed, one clinging to life. Jay was gone. The funeral was huge. Thousands of people, bagpipes, honor guards, flags lowered. For two long days we stood in a receiving line, and Dave kept saying the same

words everyone says when they don't know what else to say: "God doesn't make mistakes. He doesn't stick it to you. Something good will come from this. Just trust Him. Just wait."

But when we went back home, nothing felt good. Honors don't hug you in your kitchen. They don't answer the phone when you call. We didn't doubt God, but we were waiting, and mourning, and confused.

Then one day, in Bible study, a man broke down over the death of his niece. Through tears, he said the same words Dave had spoken at Jay's funeral: "God doesn't make mistakes. He doesn't stick it to you. Something good will come from this. Just trust Him. Just wait." With tears pouring down her face, she saw it. It wasn't the answer, and it wasn't the reason. It was the candle in the window; the flicker of faith that would never dim.

The words spoken in our deepest grief had become the lifeline for someone else. That was her God moment. That was when she found her voice. From that point on, she began speaking, teaching, encouraging, not from theory but from love and experience. We didn't get comfort first. We got waiting first. We got trust first. But in the waiting, God was shaping us for a testimony we did not yet know we would have.

Scripture

In Luke 1:57–68, Zechariah and Elizabeth's long wait ends with the birth of John. Zechariah, once silenced for his doubt, finds his voice again, not to boast or complain, but to bless. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," he declares, because God "has looked favorably on His people and redeemed them." His candle finally flickers after a long season of silence.

And yet, Zechariah's song doesn't celebrate ease or comfort alone. It's a song of courage and renewal, of God keeping promises even when the world seems asleep. It echoes the warnings of Amos 6, where comfort without compassion led to spiritual complacency, and the encouragement of 2 Thessalonians 1, where perseverance in faith brings glory to God even in hardship.

Biblical Insight and Application

Advent reminds us that God's promises often unfold slowly. Waiting can stretch our faith, but it also refines it. Like Zechariah, we may find ourselves silenced by disbelief or weariness, grief or uncertainty. We wonder if light will ever break through. Yet God still moves in the quiet. The birth of John prepared the way for Jesus, the Light of the world. Still today, God invites us to prepare room in our hearts, homes, and communities for Christ's redeeming light.

Our loss didn't become meaningful overnight; it became our testimony over years. God didn't skip the pain, He redeemed it. Just as Zechariah's silence became song, our waiting became witness. God grew courage in the waiting, and through it, we found comfort that endures.

A Gentle Invitation

This Advent, light a candle each evening as a moment of prayer. As the flame flickers, name one person or situation that needs God's comfort or courage. Ask God to help you be a small light in their life, a reminder that they are not forgotten.

Prayer: *Lord of light and promise, when our faith grows dim, remind us that Your dawn is near. Kindle in us a steady flame of hope, so that our lives may shine with Your love until all find their way home to You. Amen.*

Donna & Dave Fickes

Monday, December 8

[Matthew 22:23-33](#)

When I saw that this passage was one of my options to write about, it was just shortly after my dad, Adam, had preached a sermon on this verse. During his sermon he made the point of people asking silly questions and I could not help but think of my students. As a second-grade teacher, if you can imagine, I get silly questions every second of every day. "Ms. Blagg, why do we have to come to school?" "Ms. Blagg, why do we have to learn about time?" "Ms. Blagg, why can't we go outside when it rains?" and on and on. Now, I cannot quite respond to my students the way that Jesus responded to his disciples, but I know the value of patience and what it might feel like to be Jesus in that moment. When Jesus replied to the disciples he did not scorn or mock them. He simply replied with the facts, maybe not directly answering their question in the way that they would want, but an answer nonetheless. This was a reminder for me to have patience, for my students and their seemingly silly questions. But more than that I think it is a reminder to everyone of the grace of God and the love that he has for us, despite our silly questions that we should know the answers to, our doubts, or fears. God is ever-present and will be in this life and our life eternal. There is a comfort in knowing that despite our mistakes and short falls. It does not matter to God; we are all his children and will be forever.

Prayer: *Dear God, thank you for being ever present in our lives. Help us to show your love and grace to others in our life. Help us to remember your scriptures and take that with us through all our days. Amen.*

Kira Blagg

Tuesday, December 9

[Matthew 22:34-46](#)

In this Bible passage, Jesus is asked about the greatest commandment. His response encapsulates the essence of our faith: to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. This powerful teaching invites us to reflect deeply on our priorities and relationships.

Loving God wholly means immersing ourselves in His presence, seeking His guidance through prayer, and finding joy in His Word. It's an invitation to cultivate a heart that praises and worships Him in every moment. When we prioritize our relationship with God, our lives naturally overflow with His love.

Equally significant is the call to love our neighbors. This involves more than just kind words; it calls for intentional action. Each person we encounter is made in the image of God, deserving of love, respect, and compassion. Jesus teaches us that our love for others is a reflection of our love for Him.

As we embrace this dual commandment, we find a beautiful balance in our lives, embodying the essence of true discipleship. Let us strive to live in love - toward God and each other - bringing light and hope to a world in need. This is where we find our purpose and fulfillment.

Prayer: *Dear God, help us to treat our neighbors as we would like to be treated. Let our love for you shine in all that we do. Amen.*

Susan Pollard

Wednesday, December 10

[Matthew 23:1-12](#)

*So, you must be careful to do everything they (Scribes and Pharisees) tell you.
But, do not do what they (Scribes and Pharisees) do, for they (Scribes and Pharisees) preach.*

Matthew 23:3

As I read Matthew 23:1-12, I said to myself, I could sum up this scripture in one sentence: If you “talk the talk,” you must “walk the walk.” Otherwise, you are not true to yourself or to others. I would like to share the following from Henry H. Halley’s *Halley’s Bible Handbook*, c. 1927:

Chapter 23 – Woe to Scribes and Pharisees

“Pharisees were the most numerous and influential of the religious sects of Jesus’ day. They were strict legalists. They stood for the right observance of the letter and forms of the law, and also for the traditions. There were some good men among them, but in the main, they were known for their covetousness, self-righteousness, and hypocrisy.

Scribes were copyist of the Scriptures. Because of their minute acquaintance with the law, they became recognized authorities. They were sometimes called lawyers. Scribes and Pharisees were the religious leaders of the nation.”

The words of Jesus constitute the most of the bitter denunciation ever to fall from his lips. Jesus never talked that way to sinners, publicans, and the common people. Jesus himself was the most religious man that ever lived. But how his soul loathed religious pretense...”

Marylee Huffman

Thursday, December 11

[Matthew 23:13-26](#)

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, then the outside also will be clean.

Matthew 23:25-26

This passage begins with the Pharisees shutting the door to the kingdom of heaven by not accepting Jesus. They had been waiting for a king, but not this humbl one that shared meals with the poor and meek. They acted all holy and followed all the rules so they would look good on the outside. They proudly thought of themselves as bearers of light, but they were completely in the dark. Jesus criticized them for cleaning the outside of the cup and dish but neglecting the inside. It’s easy to put on a good front but what comes from the heart is what truly matters.

How many people and churches do you know that are like this today? So many in the Christian evangelical world display these same tendencies where they do lots of ministry, but show very little love. They carry around their bibles and ignore the verses about grace. They don’t resemble the Jesus of the Bible at all.

Today, we are called to examine our own hearts. God is more interested in our hearts than our appearances. Is there any area where we are “polishing the outside,” but ignoring the inside? Are we missing opportunities to help others and our community? As we enter this season, may we allow God to transform our hearts to let our actions naturally follow.

Prayer: *Lord, search my heart today. Reveal any areas where I may be focusing on the external rather than the internal. Cleanse me from the inside out, so that my actions reflect your love, grace, and truth. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Kathy Billhimer

Friday, December 12

[Matthew 23:27-39](#)

As usual, I was provided three scriptures from which to choose in preparing my devotional. As I read through them, my first thought was that fussing at people was not very related to Advent. But after mulling things for a while, I realized that there was a deeper meaning for me in there! All three discuss the wicked ways of the people to whom the letter/lecture was aimed. In the various scriptures, people were focused on worldly possessions rather than the church (Haggai and Matthew), or Jezebel rather than salvation (Revelations) and in all of them, the message was – stay like you are and suffer or change.

The underlying theme in all three is that there is a way to escape the wrath of the Lord. Those who change their ways and focus on the word of the Lord as provided by the prophets and through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit will have better lives and an assured future. This, to me, is part of what Advent is about. How we act as Christians in our everyday life to live out the scriptures is important! As we prepare for the birth of Christ and the second coming of Christ, preparing ourselves by faith and action is necessary. This is a perfect time to consider or reconsider what we value, what we feel is most important to us. Is it the worldly goods we accumulate? Is it the number of “likes” we get on social media posts? Is it the value we place on being liked by other people? Or is it our faith and how we live out our faith in the world?

I chose the reading from Matthew because I felt it had the most relevant ending:

*“Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill prophets and stone those sent to you,
how often have I longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings,
but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate.
For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.””*

Matthew 23:37-39

Let us be willing to say that during this Advent season.

Prayer: *Dear Heavenly Father, help us to focus on what is important in life – your word and the coming of your Son, especially during this busy time of year when it is SO easy to get distracted by the glitz and glamour of the holiday season. Amen.*

Janet Gloeckner

Saturday, December 13

[Haggai 2:1-9](#); [Revelation 3:1-6](#); [Matthew 24:1-14](#)

Advent leads up to Christmas through a season of heart preparation. As post-Enlightenment people trapped in a technology overrun society, it's easy for us to get in a "list" mindset. All we need for the Christmas season is to buy the right gifts, have the right traditional meal, and see the right people and we had a good Christmas. But what of our heart state? Is it full of joy or stress, forced enjoyment because we're exhausted maybe? Or sorrow because of those no longer with us and so everything has a bittersweet flavor? In Revelation 3, Jesus has a pretty hard talk with the Church of Sardis about outside works and shows versus inside heart states. They appear alive in the faith but are really dead inside, much like the white-washed tombs He chided as He pronounced woes on the Pharisees. Are we so caught up in knowing when He comes back like the disciples in Matthew 24 because we are nervous and need reassurance or figure we'll just get ourselves put together enough and then finish cleaning it all up right before that eleventh hour? As long as we appear put together and stay away from the big "no-no's," surely we have time to weed out those "little" sins, forgetting that God does not rank sin like we try, after all. The world is an ugly mess right now, but has been many times before, and probably will be many more times after. It's not our concern when He "*comes like a thief in the night*" (Rev. 3:3), but that we are ready when He does, in heart, mind, and soul. We can think about all the Scripture and prayers we want but if we harbor unforgiveness, pride, or excuses, then He cares less what Scripture we've memorized and more about how aligned our hearts are with His. The "invincible" Sardians are gone, the magnificent Temple as well (twice), but the "*greater temple of the latter days*" (Haggai 2:9) will never change or break because Jesus is Eternal.

Prayer: *Dear Daddy, help us to remember things, buildings, and even traditions pass away, often broken into pieces, but You and Our Savior will never fade. Keep our hearts focused on "the Desire of All Nations" (Haggai 2:7) not the American Dream so that we can be ready when you come again. Purify our thoughts as well and keep them focused on what You will for us, not minutiae details such as when Jesus specifically comes back, however that will happen, but the current needs of our neighbors and anything that will help bring all Your Children to You before You bring down the New Heavens and New Earth. In Jesus Most Holy Name, Amen.*

Tara Eckenroad

Sunday, December 14

[2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, 13-17](#)

And now, what about the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being together to meet him?

2Thessalonians 2:1-3

Advent offers us the anticipation of hope and joy in seeing and contributing to the goodness of the human race. Our hearts receive peace and love as the season progresses.

The bible reading tells us Jesus will come again in human form. However, Advent is the time to share the message that God sent His only son for everyone. He comes to us as a baby, welcomed by shepherds, wise men, and angels.

Advent is the time to share and experience the knowledge that Jesus is already present in our lives as Christians. What a gift we receive everyday knowing whatever comes He will be with us. Each day we have the opportunity to reach out to others and share the comfort Advent brings as we travel the days to Christmas. Starting the first week with hope, second week with peace, the third week with joy, the fourth week with love leading to Christmas day.

We at Otterbein are very fortunate to have a strong leader in Adam, an inspiring music program that fills our hearts and souls, a congregation that speaks of community, outreach, service, and caring for each other. Advent offers us an opportunity to have a new experience that deepens our closeness to Jesus and God, our father too!!

Yes, one day Christ will come again and hopefully the peace, joy, and love of this season will be lived on this beautiful earth that God created for us to care for and call heaven on earth.

Prayer: *Dear heavenly Father, thank you for the gifts of Advent. May they be used by us to meet others each day. Amen.*

Anna Steele

Monday, December 15

[Matthew 24:15-31](#)

I chose to reflect on the selection from the book of Matthew. The text is somewhat daunting to read, and a bit foreboding, leaving a dreadful feeling in my stomach. Jesus is speaking of the coming desolation and destruction that will be brought unto the world in the end of times – he makes analogies that describe how no one is able to return home and grab extra supplies for this event. There will be no escape, and it will be all-encompassing. This bleak tone is off-putting, yet cautious. I feel that it's important to recognize the underlying current of hope in these messages, amidst the dark imagery. By believing in Jesus and being of the elect, one is safe from these harrowing experiences of worldwide desolation.

A quite incredible line from this passage is verse 28: "*Where there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.*" This depicts how there will be false prophets in these unfortunate times, all claiming to usurp the power of Jesus and consolidate a following upon themselves. In the end of times, among the panic and fear of the populace, many will be unsure of who to turn to. Many will be seeking guidance from those with my power and authority, thus causing some to turn to heretical influences. However, Jesus makes it clear that the return of the Son of Man will be so grand and impactful that none can deny it. This passage speaks of the importance of faith in Christ, and as a warning not to be tempted by false prophets and leaders; to be ready for His return.

Dan Curtis

Tuesday, December 16

[Revelation 3:14-21](#)

Am I Lukewarm?

To the church in Laodicea:

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you "are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

Revelation 3:14-17

Laodicea was a wealthy city, and the church was also wealthy. Wealth and luxury had made them feel confident, satisfied and complacent; lacking a vital relationship with Christ. Jesus sees them as being spiritually "lukewarm", meaning they were neither fully committed to God, "hot", nor completely rejecting Him, "cold". Instead, they were complacent, self-sufficient, and indifferent. He warns that this state of indifference is worse than being one or the other. Could we also be spiritually "lukewarm"?

- Do I attend church and donate money, but neglect prayer, Bible study, and other spiritual disciplines or do them out of obligation rather than passion?
- Do I only think of God when I am troubled?
- Do I tend to choose popular or easy options over what is right because I want to fit both inside and outside the church?
- Do I sacrifice to help others or just occasionally give some money and my leftovers, not my first and best?
- Do I believe I'm doing enough and fail to recognize my spiritual shortcomings?

We all struggle with times where we are "lukewarm", where we are striving to maintain a commitment to Christ, but where we falter.

I saw this quote, "There is nothing more disgusting than a half-hearted, in-name-only Christian who is self-sufficient." At first, I took this as being a little strongly worded, but I guess it's telling it like it is! Thank goodness God is patient and persistent in trying to get through to us "knocking at the door." We can decide whether or not to open our lives wholeheartedly to him.

Betty Redmond

Wednesday, December 17

[Matthew 24:45-51](#)

Faithfully Waiting

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord has made rule over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

Matthew 24:45-46

Advent is a season of waiting – not idle waiting, but faithful and watchful waiting. In Matthew verses 24 and 25, Jesus teaches us about the end of the age and the coming of the son of man. He closes his teaching with a question: Who then is the faithful and wise servant?

We should be asking ourselves: Are we faithfully waiting for our savior Jesus Christ to return and how are we waiting?

The faithful servant doesn't simply mark time until the master returns. He cares for others and fulfills his duties with diligence and love. His faithfulness isn't driven by fear of inspection, but by devotion to his master. He knows the master could return at any moment, and he wants to be found ready.

We wait for the celebration of Christ's first coming this December, but also for his promised return in glory. Faithful waiting means living today in the light of that coming reality. It means showing mercy and feeding others, both physically and spiritually. Keeping our hearts awake to God's presence. What would it look like to be found faithful and wise today?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, in this advent season of waiting, teach me to wait faithfully, help me to be a wise steward of what you've trusted to me and to live each day ready for your coming. Amen.*

CF Williams

Thursday, December 18

[Matthew 25: 1-13](#)

Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten young women took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise...Keep awake, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

Matthew 25:1-2, 13

The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Bridesmaids has always been puzzling to me. I tended to shrug my shoulders and just take the last verse as the "moral" of the story - be prepared! However, I recently read an article from author Diana Butler Bass who has a slightly different perspective. She says perhaps we shouldn't take it so seriously! If we look at it as more of a proverb than a parable, it is meant to be funny. After all, this doesn't sound like a very fun wedding! The groom was so late everyone fell asleep. There is no word on the whereabouts of the bride. You are woken in the middle of the night, and then half of the bridesmaids are shut out of the party! This is a big difference from the wedding party earlier in Matthew

(Chapter 22) where the King gives a wedding banquet and ends up sending his servants out into the streets to invite everyone to come.

Perhaps those “wise” common sense, do-what-you’re-supposed-to-do bridesmaids got pulled into the wrong party. Those “foolish” bridesmaids, who were locked out, may now be ready for an invitation to the party of the King!

Bass says, “The words at the end of Jesus’ wisdom story-proverb now sound less like a threat and more like an invitation — not “be prepared” or you are going to Hell, but “be discerning” so you end up at the right party. Understand the difference between the “wisdom of this world” and the divine wisdom of God: *Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.* The best banquet awaits...

When has a door been closed in your face, only for you to discover that something better was just around the corner? I can think of a number of times when I expected one thing, was excluded from or failed at it, and that “closed door” opened to a new, unexpected possibility that I’d never considered before. Sometimes being shut out can be an injustice. At other times, the closed door is actually a gift. It can be hard to tell the difference when it happens, but easier to see in the longer term.” (Diana Butler Bass, Substack - Sunday Musings, November 12, 2023)

This Advent, may we keep in mind that “*the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*” (1 Cor 3:19) so that we may be awake to God’s invitation - which might not look at all like what the world thinks is wise, or even what we might wish for ourselves!

Christy Blagg

Friday, December 19

[Matthew 25:14-30](#)

We Will Not Fear!

So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.

Mathew 25:25

It surprised me to realize the first thing that stood out for me in reading the Matthew scripture for today was the key verse listed, about how the “worthless” servant reacted in fear to the task assigned. Because of fear, this servant decided to hide the bag of gold received and do nothing. How many times do we also react to new tasks in fear? Perhaps we sometimes “bury the task” and do not use our skills to solve problems, due in part to fear. Maybe the task seems too hard and/or we feel inadequate.

One of my favorite anthems that our choir sings is *God Is Our Refuge* based upon Psalm 46. The anthem begins by asserting “God is our refuge and strength, a present help in time of trouble” and ends by declaring “We will not fear.” That confident, reassuring statement is repeated in the text several times. Repetitions are used for emphasis, and a way to say “pay attention, this is important.”

Psalm 46 also has a repeat in verses 7 and 11: “*The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.*” These verses and the declaration about fear can help us anytime we are facing difficulties. And this repeated verse connects us to Advent: God is indeed with us in Jesus, the Immanuel, as affirmed in Matthew 1:23 - “*The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel*” (which means “*God with us*”). Therefore, We Will Not Fear!

Judy Richardson

Saturday, December 20

[Matthew 25:31-46](#)

The parable of "the sheep and the lambs" describes how Jesus chooses who he will save when he returns to the earth. *"Then the King will say to those on his right (the sheep), 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared before you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.'"* Jesus teaches the importance of kindness and care for our fellow man and how our rewards will be great for our generosity.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, help me be ever mindful of the needs of others. Help me to open my heart and my home to the needy and live a life where love reigns over fear. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.*

Julie Clough

Sunday, December 21

[Genesis 3:8-15](#), [Revelation 12:1-10](#), [John 3:16-21](#)

Scripture selections for us to meditate on are: Genesis 3:8-15 John 3:16,21 and Revelation 12:1 - 10. In trying to tie these three scriptures together, I came up with three questions: 1. Why did God create us? 2. What does he expect of us? And 3. How do we show it?

When God had created all the rest of creation, he said it was very good. Then he formed Adam, but said it was not good for him to be alone. Perhaps God wanted companionship also, for in heaven all created creatures did his bidding, so he created Adam and Eve. Well, we know how that turned out. Satan made his way into human history very quickly.

Has Satan won? No, only for the moment. Over and over God's people would sin, ask for forgiveness and God forgave them. We recall stories like Noah and the great flood, Moses leading the Jewish people out of Egypt and many more. Then God gave them the 10 Commandments so that they would know right from wrong. Later Micah would remind the Jewish nation that they had been given what they needed to please God. *"He has shown you, O man, what is good and what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."* (Micah.6:8)

And our heavenly father has forgiven his children over and over, and now in the New Testament we see just how much he loves us. *"For God, so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."* (John 3:16). He wants us to live in heaven with him and walk and talk with him in the new Jerusalem and garden of Eden.

Until that time arrives, God has certain expectations beyond the 10 Commandments. Jesus, when asked replied, *"love God and love others as thy self."* How do we do that? Look around, for there are many ways to show the love of God. It may be helping devastated communities, or it may be as close to home as listening to someone share their brokenness.

The Bible talks about hard times in the last days, but we have been assured that Jesus will return. He will defeat Satan and his angels. In Revelation we read *"a Voice from heaven says 'know now have come the salvation, the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ.'"*

God has not forgotten you, nor me, nor any of his children. His love is greater than we can imagine. Ephesians 3:20-21: *"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to*

his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever, and ever!" Amen!

As we celebrate the birth of God's son, let us remember that it was a gift of love and still is for those who will accept it.

Carolyn Green

Monday, December 22

[Titus 1:1-16](#)

The Hope Promised Before Time Began

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that is in accordance with godliness, in the hope of eternal life that God, who never lies, promised before the ages began.

Titus 1:1-2

During this season of Advent, we turn our hearts toward hope—a hope older than the world itself. In Titus 1, Paul opens his letter by anchoring everything he does in a hope that began before time itself. Before the first sunrise, before the fall of man, before Bethlehem's manger, God had already promised eternal life. This is not a fleeting wish or a seasonal sentiment. Paul calls it the hope of a God who does not lie. In a world that feels uncertain, where promises often go unkept and truth can feel slippery, Advent reminds us that God's promises are as steady as His character.

The birth of Christ is not the beginning of God's plan—it is the unveiling of a promise that existed forever. Jesus' coming is proof that the eternal word of God became flesh, dwelling among us to bring truth, godliness, and grace.

But Paul's letter to Titus is not just about hope in the abstract—it's also about how that hope transforms us. He urges believers to live godly lives in a culture of deception and corruption. Just as the early Christians in Crete were called to adorn the gospel with integrity and good works, we too are invited during Advent to live lives that make the hope of Christ visible in a weary world.

The message of Advent is not only "Christ is coming," but also "Christ has come to make us His own." Our waiting is not empty—it's filled with purpose, purity, and perseverance as we await His return.

Prayer: *Father of Truth and Promise, before time began, You planned our redemption and promised life through Your Son. As we wait for the celebration of His birth, fill our hearts with the hope that never fails. Teach us to live in a way that reflects Your truth and grace to the world around us. Make us people whose lives shine with the promise of eternal life, secured in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Bill Pollard

Tuesday, December 23

[1 Samuel 2:1b-10](#)

These verses are about the birth of the great priest and judge, Samuel, to Hannah and Elkanah. First, some background. For years Hannah had been barren and in those days that caused her great shame and feelings of worthlessness. Elkanah's other wife Peninnah had given him many sons and daughters and she kept taunting Hannah because she could not bear a child. Of course this intensified Hannah's great anxiety. She prayed earnestly to God to bless her with a son.

On one of the sacrificial feasts, Elkanah had the family with him at Shiloh and they were celebrating the feast with the priest, Eli. Eli saw Hannah weeping and praying silently and asked her about her great distress. She explained her barrenness and Eli blessed her to receive God's blessing of a son. When they returned home, she did become pregnant, had a son, and named him Samuel. Now, we are to chapter two of 1st Samuel.

After she bore Samuel, she praised God for His answer to her prayers. This poetic prayer read in today's highlighted verses shows her confidence in God's great power and thankfulness for all the things He had done for her. Mary, the mother of Jesus, patterned her great praise song, the *Magnificat*, (Luke 1:46-55), after Hannah's prayer. Hannah, and later Mary, were confident of God's ultimate control of the circumstances of their lives.

As we approach Christmas morning, this prayer of praise should inspire us, as it did Jesus' mother, Mary, to have confidence in God's greatest gift, His ultimate control of our fractured, painful world, and knowledge that our prayers for love, care, justice, and kindness will be fulfilled by God as promised by the birth, life, death, and resurrection of His son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer: *Gracious, loving, Father, we praise You and thank You for Your ultimate control of our lives and the blessings You bestow on us all and for the hope You bless us with through the promise of Your Son, Jesus. Amen!*

Mike Earman

Wednesday, December 24

[Matthew 1:18-25](#)

We have had a variety of different nativity scenes in our life together. It is always a delight tinged with reverence as we unwrap and place the figurines in their places each Advent season. The placement of the figurines – the shepherds, the magi, various animals, the hovering angel – varies from season to season, but Mary and Jesus in the manger are the centerpiece. Joseph is placed behind them. As I reread the story in Matthew's account of the birth, I asked myself, "Why is Joseph in the back?" According to Matthew he is the focus of the message from God's angel. He is the one who acts according to God's direction. He is *righteous* which means he pays attention and follows through on God's direction and not necessarily on what is customary, easy, or even prudent according to the culture of the time. Now I picture Joseph, strong carpenter that he is, beside Mary, or even in front as a guardian questioning shepherds and Magi who come calling. It is Joseph who hears and heeds God's call to flee from danger and make the perilous journey to Egypt. No doubt Joseph protected and provided for his family in accordance with God's provision for them. Sometimes it is the

unheralded and overlooked who are the heroes we do not notice. In God's story of salvation and renewal the ones chosen to carry on with the story are often the most unlikely people, regular people, young, old, in-between, of all races, genders, economic status (though rarely the rich and powerful), you know – people like us. People like you and me. People who are attentive to God, who stop, look, listen, and dream, are the very ones God taps on the shoulder and says, "I have a mission for you." In the hubbub of the season pause, dream a little and let Joseph be a guide.

Jim Wingert

Thursday, December 25

[Zechariah 2:10-13; 1 John 4:7-16](#)

The prophet Zechariah paints a joyful picture of the coming Messiah. He declares, *"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst."* The prophet hears the promise of God's presence arriving not just for Israel, but for "many nations." Zechariah was telling his people to be prepared for the arrival of the Almighty into their daily lives. While we celebrate the historical Christ child born long ago, Christmas is a personal invitation for Him to be born anew in our hearts. We clear a space within the stable of our busy lives so that Immanuel—God with us—can be welcomed in a fresh way.

The fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy is more profound than a single event in history. It is the living, breathing reality that God wants to dwell within us. The Apostle John reminds us that *"God is love"* and He *"sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."* This is the very essence of Christmas. It is the ultimate expression of love from God to us. And as we receive this divine love, we are transformed. The love that came down to Earth in the form of a baby is the same love that seeks to fill us and flow through us to others. As we embrace this divine love, God's love is made complete in us.

This Christmas, let us become living testaments to the miracle of God's presence. As we celebrate the birth of Christ, let us also celebrate His birth in our own lives, overflowing with the same unconditional love He so freely gave us.

Dan Brown