

A SEASON
OF ANTICIPATION



PERIMETER CHURCH
WEEKLY ADVENT
DEVOTIONAL 2019



**WORSHIP
HIM**



INTRODUCTION

M

Y little girls love stories. They want stories read to them, stories acted out before them, stories dreamed up on the spot by the less than creative storyteller who is their father. Stories enrapture them, even as they do us. We may grow up, but we don't outgrow our affection for stories. What changes is the shape, or nature, of those stories. We move from board books and fairy tales to movies

and newspapers, to stories of personal empowerment and romantic escape, stories that paint a picture of a life well lived and offer windows into the life we secretly want. Whether we realize it or not, we immerse ourselves in stories. And those stories, innocent as they may seem, are significant. In his book, *Imagining the Kingdom*, James K.A. Smith writes,

"Our action emerges from how we imagine the world. What we do is driven by who we are, by the kind of person we have become. And that shaping of our character is, to a great extent, the effect of stories that have captivated us, that have sunk into our bones—stories that 'picture' what we think life is about, what constitutes 'the good life.' We live into the stories we've absorbed; we become characters in the drama that has captivated us."

Stories shape us. They form our affections and forge the kind of person we will become. The question we should be asking is this: What kind of story has captured me? Advent is a bucket of cold water on the face of a drunken world that has lost sight of what is true. It's a call to return to reality. It is a rebuke to the false stories so many of us inhabit and an invitation to wake up to the true one in which we live and move and have our being. To become characters in the true drama of which we

"ADVENT IS A BUCKET OF COLD WATER ON THE FACE OF A DRUNKEN WORLD THAT HAS LOST SIGHT OF WHAT IS TRUE."

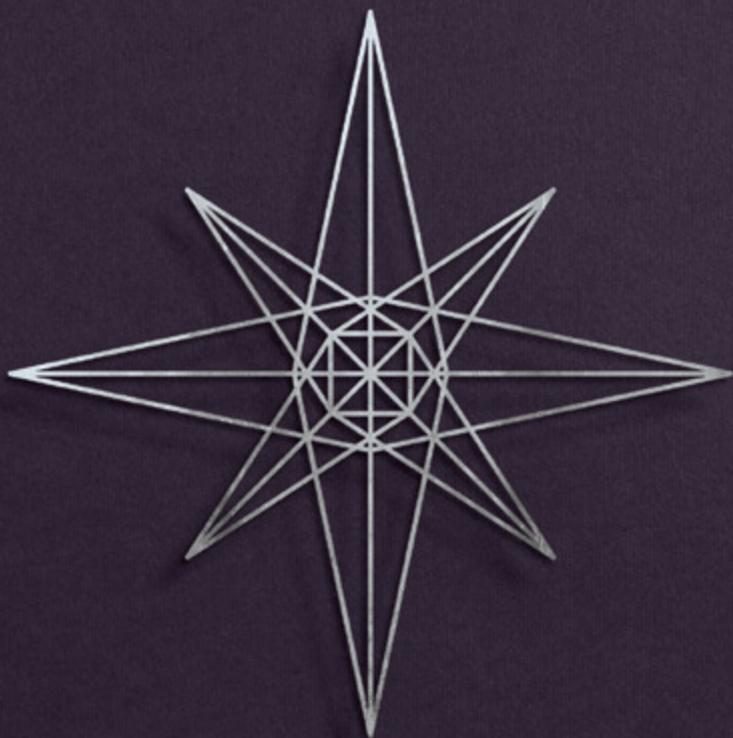
Everyone Has a Story

CALEB CLICK

are all a part whether we know it or not—the story of the King who has come and is coming again.

It's a call to the church to remember who she is—the bride of a King who has called her to prepare for the day of His return. To remember that she is an elect exile, a citizen of heaven caught between the finished work of Jesus in His first coming and the glory that awaits at His second. If we are in Christ, this is our story, and this is the story Advent beckons us to live in. To experience this present world through the lens of Christ's kingdom and to live as the redeemed of the Lord who await their final and certain redemption in Him. May Jesus capture our hearts with His story, and may we embrace it as the true one.

WEEK 1

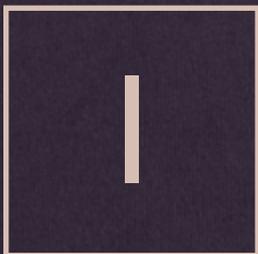


ANTICIPATE
THE DAY

O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him, born the King of angels;

O come, let us adore him; O come, let us adore him;
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!



n the beloved carol *O Come All Ye Faithful*, we are being called to come. The Latin version of this carol was known as ‘Adeste Fideles,’ and it was most likely written by John Francis Wade (1711-86), who fled England after the 1745 Jacobite rebellion to teach music in the school for British Roman Catholic exiles in Douai in France. Not much else is known about Wade, but the hymn has become a Christmas favorite.

You can see why. The words are rich with imagery of the church as joyful and triumphant, of angels exulting and of the Word of the Father now appearing. The melody while comforting also has a deep sense of calling. Though subtle it stirs us as a rally cry, calling us to action.

The key phrase in the text, repeated over and over, is “O come let us adore Him!” Come. Let us adore. Those are two actions. In the first part of this hymn, we are singing to one another. We are urging one another to come. As you sing it today, note that people around you are hearing you as you sing, “Come let us adore Him!” Now to come somewhere means to leave some “other” where. People’s heads and hearts are often out there somewhere. They are mentally occupied with being in spaces and places and situations. In this hymn we say, “Leave that and come into the communion of saints.” It is “us” coming together. We are calling one another to tune our hearts to Him.

Secondly, we are calling one another to adore Him. By definition that means we are asking one another to stop adoring other things. We are asking one another to fix our eyes on Him as the object of our affection. We are asking one another to worship Christ as the Lord. And by the way, as we speak to “them” we are reminding ourselves. I need to come. I need to adore. He is worthy of my undivided attention and worship. We come. We adore. In the third verse, we speak to our Lord. We greet Him. We say, “to You

“I NEED TO COME. I
NEED TO ADORE. HE
IS WORTHY OF MY
UNDIVIDED ATTENTION
AND WORSHIP.”

Look to the Day

RANDY SCHLICHTING

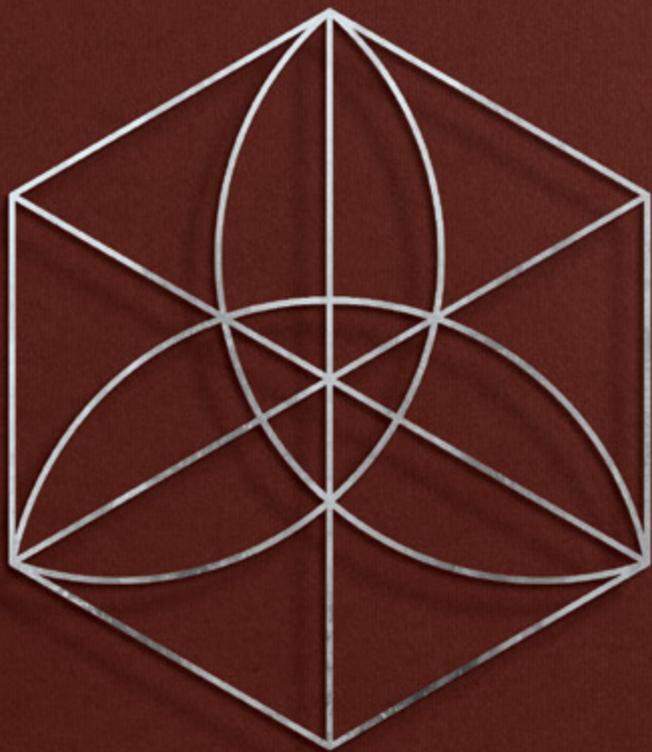
be glory given,” as it should. He is the Word made flesh. He was born of a woman.

Though the carol stops short of the life and ministry of Jesus, we know “the rest of the story.” He was slain for us and He conquered death for us. So, as we sing, we celebrate the full work of Christ on earth for us. Even more reason to come and adore Him! Lastly, we know we will worship Him face to face and worship Him in all of His glory. That is the best news of all. That is a day that we can look forward to.

Question for Reflection

As you enter into the Christmas season and you are up to your elbows in the hustle and bustle, what does it mean for you to adore Christ during this season?

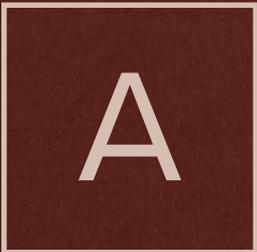
WEEK 2



PREPARE
THE WAY

COME THOU LONG
EXPECTED JESUS

Come, thou long expected Jesus,
Born to set thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us,
Let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
Hope of all the earth thou art;
Dear desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.



s almost everyone knows, suffering doesn't take a break just because it's Christmas. Ask my friend Kirk who is struggling through stage IV liver cancer. Or my friend Mary who has been unemployed for almost two years now, trying to figure out how to make ends meet. Life can be hard, and there's no reprieve just because it's Christmas.

A few Decembers ago, I was calling a handful of radio stations, which is something we song writers often do, to wish them and their listeners a merry Christmas. As I went down the list of joyful call after joyful call, I stumbled upon a station that immediately changed the tone of my entire morning. "I guess you heard about what happened here yesterday?", the radio host asked. I immediately looked down at my list of station and town names: San Bernardino, California. How could I not have noticed this sooner? Just 24 hours earlier, there had been a mass shooting at one of their government buildings, leaving 14 dead and 22 critically injured. Their community was reeling. And the voice on the other line asked me a very honest and tearful question: "What does Christmas have to do with any of this?"

It was a great question. And in and of myself, I had no answers. But thankfully, the scriptures do. In the day of the prophets, Isaiah spoke a similar word of hope to the people of Israel:

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shown." (Isaiah 9:2) Isaiah continues to proclaim the coming of Jesus, whose name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. But before he addresses the majesty and grandeur of the One who enters their story, he acknowledges the darkness. The Hebrew word used for darkness here is actually 'death-shadow,' describing a darkness so bleak that its hopelessness feels like death itself. But the focal point of this passage is not the darkness; it is the light!

When we consider the present day we live in, we cannot deny the darkness that exists, in our world and even in our personal stories.

Prepare the Way

LAURA STORY ELVINGTON

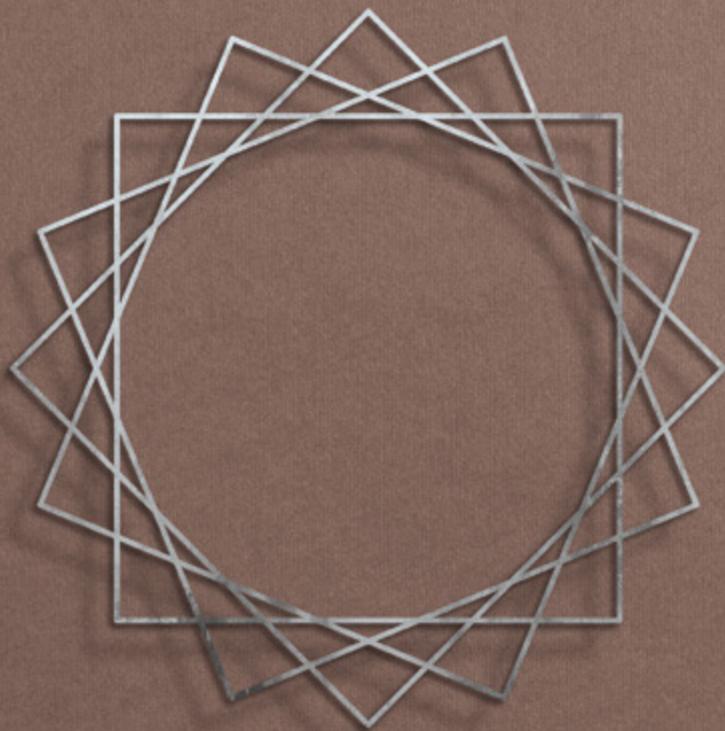
But celebrating Christmas isn't about ignoring the darkness; it's about celebrating the One who came to bring light! When the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, he became Emmanuel, "God with us." He is God with us in our cancer, God with us in our infertility, in our poverty, and in our strained relationships. He sees the darkness and rather than running and leaving us alone, He engaged and still engages! He is Emmanuel, God with us in the darkness.

This week, we anticipate the coming of Christ by preparing the way. As you consider your life, are there areas in which you need to acknowledge that Christ came to be Emmanuel, God with you? Are there situations in which you are trying to power through on your own, rather than radically depending on the strength, grace and presence provided by Jesus? And how might the trials you face right now conjure greater expectation for His second coming? Because even though suffering takes no break because it's Christmas, we have hope. We have Emmanuel, God with us. Let the words of this hymn stir your heart toward prayer.

Question for Reflection

Is there darkness in your life into which you need to invite Christ, the light of the World? As you encounter others in darkness, what might you do to bring them the hope of light available in Christ?

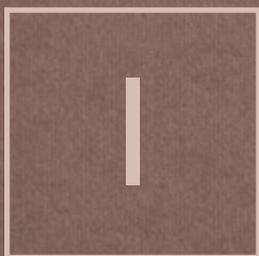
WEEK 3



REJOICE
TODAY

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song, for He has done marvelous things! His right hand and His holy arm have worked salvation for Him. The LORD has made known His salvation; He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.

Psalm 98:1-2



There are few songs that can so quickly stir up the Christmas spirit like “Joy to the World.” It seems to be on every other Christmas album, it’s played over the intercom as you shop, and the handwritten script of the title is a popular design options for family Christmas cards. It’s ubiquitous. So much so, that perhaps, you’ve grown as cold to its message as I have. In fact, “joy” may not be how you would describe your

attitude about this song. But you know what? Even though I tend toward being a modern-day Ebenezer Scrooge, when I stop to reflect on the lyrics, this song reforms my Christmas spirit faster than Martin Luther could hammer those *95 Theses* to the Wittenberg church door.

In our house we listen to “Joy to the World” year-round. We have one of these smart home assistants in our living room, and it’s great for setting alarms, weather reports, and spontaneous dance parties. My son has somehow worked “Joy to the World” onto his Spotify playlist. What makes me chuckle is that the only version he wants to listen to is by the ‘70s Euro-disco group Boney M. (Do you know the song, Rasputin? Yeah, that group). Sandwiched between “What Does the Fox Say?” and “A Million Dreams” is “Joy to the World” (By the way, my favorite rendition is by Aretha Franklin. You’re welcome).

He will scream ... I mean, proclaim the song at the top of his lungs with a smile as large as his volume. And so, with eight

“ WE TOO EASILY FORGET
THE WONDER OF GOD’S
LOVE. ”

Rejoice Today

JIMMY KIM

times as many Christmases under my belt, it is my kindergartner that reminds me every night (and every dance party) to wonder, marvel, and rejoice the coming of a King. We all need that reminder because we too easily forget the wonder of God's love.

Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room, and heav'n and nature sing ...

Let men their songs employ ... repeat the sounding joy ...

He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found ...

[He] makes the nations prove ... the wonders of His love ...

I hope that my son's love for this song becomes a love for Whom this song proclaims. And not just for him, but for all of us this Advent season.

Question for Reflection

When was the last time you experienced great joy? How can you be a messenger of joy to the people around you?

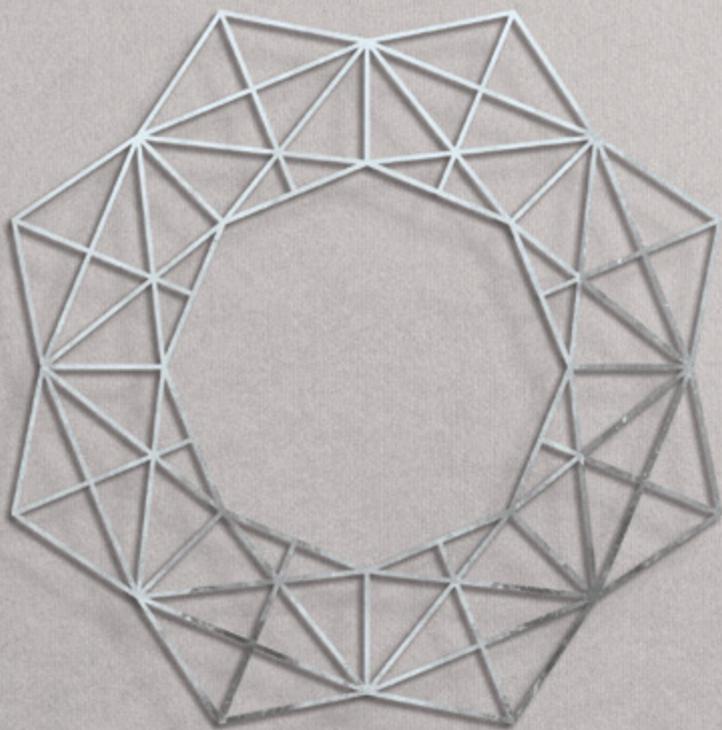


JOY TO THE WORLD
(OH WHAT JOY)

Perimeter Worship

Listen via iTunes, Spotify, or other streaming platforms and worship Him well this season.

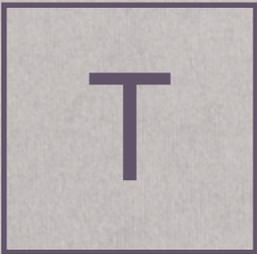
WEEK 4



EMBRACE
THE WAY

O C O M E , O C O M E E M M A N U E L

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

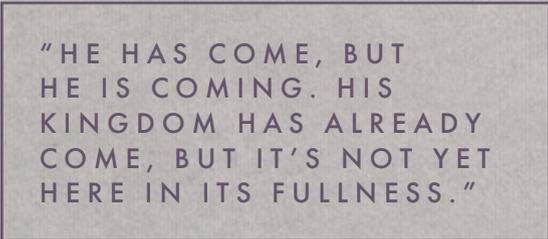


his song has been precious to God's people throughout history. The lyrics and melody communicate a longing which stirs the heart for many followers of Jesus around the world. Have you ever wondered why? Hasn't Jesus come already? Why does this sentiment resonate so deeply within us?

Perhaps it is the remembrance of the incomprehensible reality that the Eternal One, who spoke creation into being, incarnated as a helpless baby. We ponder the profound truth that one who is utterly righteous and absolutely holy, would love so much, and give Himself for sinful people who have spent our lives pursuing everything other than Him!

Though our hearts are focused on and moved by those truths in this season, there is more. The overwhelming wonder of Advent is not merely that Christ was born, but that He came to pay the penalty for all of our sin on the cross! Not only that, but He arose, breaking the power of sin and death for all who are in Him. Not only that, but He ascended to a throne, a seat of authority, from which He rules all things.

He has come, but He is coming. His kingdom has already come, but it's not yet here in its fullness.



"HE HAS COME, BUT HE IS COMING. HIS KINGDOM HAS ALREADY COME, BUT IT'S NOT YET HERE IN ITS FULLNESS."

Emmanuel, "God with us," is not finished! We do not see it yet, but Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth, right now. The Scriptures promise that one day every knee will bow before Him, and every tongue will confess His kingship. The kingdom will be consummated, it will come in its fullness, and the people of God will rejoice as never before in the new heavens and earth.

The ransom of God's covenant people, from every tongue, tribe, and nation, who mourned in lonely exile as the nation of Israel in Babylon,

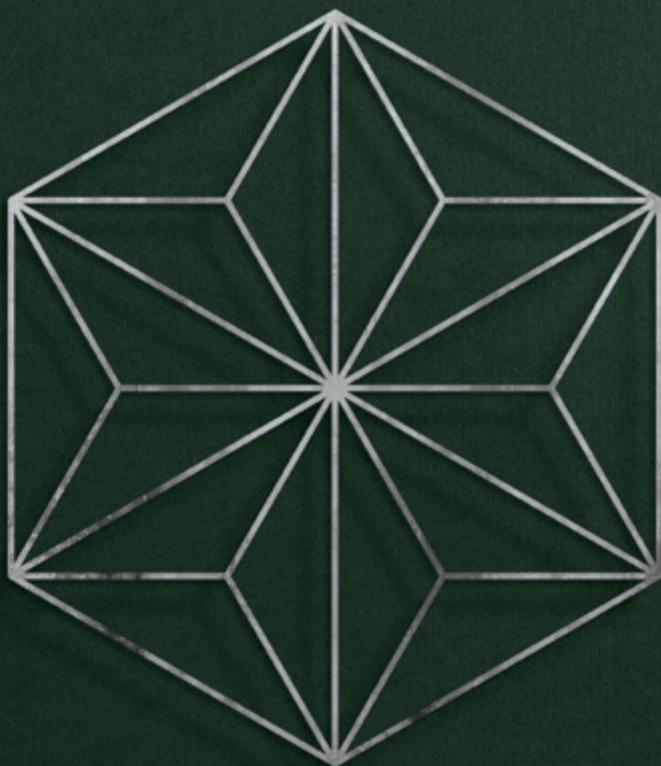
will be complete when the Son of God and Man appears finally. He will free the creation once and for all from the tyranny of the enemy. He will disperse the presence of the clouds and dark shadows of sin, death, depression, addiction, broken relationships, and idolatries forever and ever.

Christ's kingdom is not only on its way, it is coming through us, His people! Because He has ascended to His throne, His Holy Spirit is poured out, unleashed into the lives of each of His followers! We are to bring His kingdom in our relationships, our work, conversations, community, family, and world, telling this incredible story, and making more and more followers of Jesus. And behold, the Lord of might will be with us, applying the authority of His ascension and the power of His resurrection to us every step of the way, as we trust the good news and share it freely with those who desperately need God with them.

Question of Reflection

What three things could you do this Advent season that would extend "Kingdom Kindness" to someone within your circle of influence?

MERRY
CHRISTMAS



CELEBRATE
THE DAY

JOYFUL, JOYFUL
WE ADORE THEE

Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee,
God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee,
Opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;
Drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness,
Fill us with the light of day!

MERRY CHRISTMAS



When I was a kid, my sister and I would wait with giddy anticipation for my dad to get home from work. He got home every day around 5:30. Starting around 5 o'clock, we would begin incessantly asking my mom when dad was going to get home. We would run back and forth between the front windows of the house to the den or the kitchen and ask my mom again and again how much longer. Finally, we

would see his car coming down the street. Quickly we would dart back to the kitchen and hide behind the wall just inside the entrance to the house from the garage. We would crouch low, giggling with anticipation. We would be so excited. To this day I can remember how my heart would thump in my chest.

Anticipation would build as we heard his car door close. Carefully listening, we knew precisely where he was as the concrete floor revealed each step. Then, the doorknob would turn, and our hearts would nearly burst, knowing that it was only a matter of seconds before he would come around the corner. As he rounded the corner, we would leap onto his legs, my sister on one leg, myself on the other, and we would hug with all our might while yelling, "Daddy!"

Anticipation can be one of the greatest of human emotions. It

is what God's people felt for hundreds and thousands of years as they waited on the long-expected and long-promised Messiah to come. God had promised as early as the very beginning (Genesis 3:15) that there would be a Savior who would come to rescue His people from the curse of sin.

"MAY WE BE A PEOPLE
WHO LOOK BACK AND
LOOK FORWARD THIS
CHRISTMAS."

The problem was that in waiting for so long, God's people got distracted and confused. They were habitually distracted by the allurements of the world, and they were increasingly confused about the nature and

purposes of the Savior who would come. So much so that by the time that He did come, they barely recognized him.

Now here we are 2000 years after Christ the Savior came to deliver His people from their sins. Yet, we face the same challenges that God's people did those many years ago. We too are allured and tempted by the distractions of the world. We are prone to confusion about the nature and the purposes of the Savior. So much so that we can struggle to recognize Him in all His glory.

In our efforts to see Him more clearly, may we be a people who look back and look forward this Christmas. May we look back with joy inexpressible that Jesus our Savior came to deliver us from the curse of sin. And may we, like little kids at the front window, also look forward with giddy anticipation for His glorious return ... a return that will deliver us from the presence of sin and usher us into the eternal embrace of our Abba (Daddy!) Father.

Question for Reflection

What sights, sounds, smells or relationships do you anticipate the most during the Advent season? Are there new traditions for your family that would fuel family anticipation?

PRAYER NOTES



CHRISTMAS EVE

Candlelight Services

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24

1 PM, 3 PM, 5 PM AND 9 PM

PERIMETER CHURCH MAIN SANCTUARY





Perimeter
CHURCH

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