

Palestine Lutheran Church 2024

Advent Sundays – 9:30 a.m.

Blessing of Advent Wreath (Dec.1) - Make Wreath Kits
Blessing of the Nativity (Dec 1) – exploring the sacred ordinary
Blessing of Christmas Trees (Dec 8) – Make family ornaments.
Christmas Children’s Program (Dec 15) “ ”

The Word Made Flesh – Zoom Bible Study – Tues. @ 7pm
See e-news (Wed) for details and zoom invite

Christmas Celebrations

ROCK Christmas Extravaganza (Dec 7) – 9am-12pm
“Cookies to Go”

Senior Tea – Dec 8 after worship – Meal, children choir, Fellowship

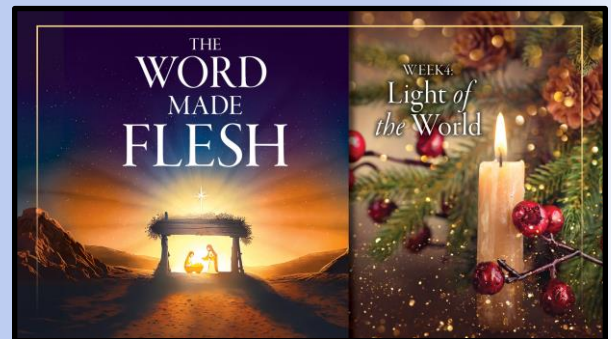
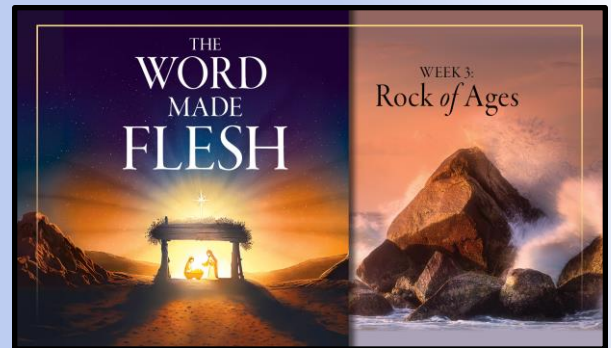
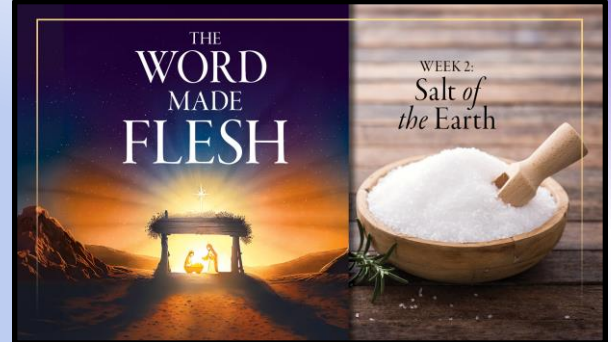
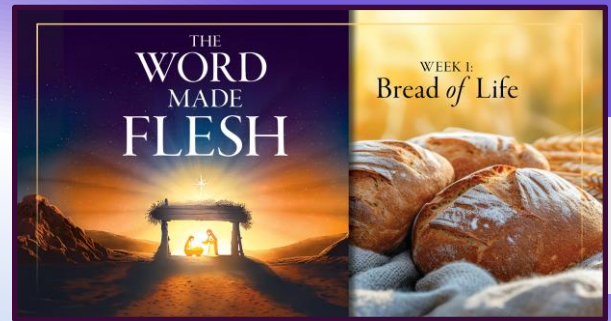
Blue Christmas (Longest Night) – Wed (Dec 18) @ 7pm

Christmas Program (Dec 15th) at 4:30pm – “ ”
Live & Streaming – Meal and fellowship fundraiser

Christmas Eve Family Service (Dec 24) – 4:00pm (Streaming) & 7:00pm (Acoustic worship)

Christmas Day (Dec 25) – Video message upload on Palestine website (www.plchuxley.com)

Epiphany Celebration Sunday (Jan 5) – 9:30
Star of Wonder Worship



Holiday Resources @ Palestine Lutheran

For Advent and Christmas Season



You can explore as a family the meaning, activities and prayers for the seasons of the spirit and soul



Most of us are accustomed to celebrating the New Year on January 1st. But the Christian church begins its New Year a little differently. For Christians, the church year begins four Sundays before Christmas (either on the last Sunday in November or the first Sunday in December). This year, December 1st happens to be the first day of the new Church year, and therefore, the first day of the Advent season.

It might surprise some to know that the Church has its own tradition of keeping time – it uses a separate calendar than the rest of the secular world. This tradition grew from the Christian need of a calendar that would reflect a chronological chain of events of Christianity. The Church calendar gives Christians a more logical way to remember God’s gifts (Christ’s birth before his death and resurrection) and serves as a convenient reminder of all that God gave in His son, Jesus Christ and all He has done through Christ.

Historically speaking, Easter was the first special day assigned to the Christian calendar. Next, came Epiphany (which marks the baptism of Jesus and the coming of the Wise Men). Sometime later, December 25th was selected as the “official” birth date of Jesus. Eventually, Christians began to observe a special time of preparation for Easter, known as *Lent*. Before too long, a similar custom of preparing for Christmas evolved and was named *Advent*.

The name *Advent* simply means, “coming”, but there is nothing simple about this time of Preparation. Not only are we getting ready for the coming of the Christ Child as anticipated by the prophets, but also the coming of Jesus into our lives today, tomorrow and always, remembering that he will come again to judge and rule the world.

The Advent season is a time of getting ready to enter into the mystery of Christmas. This mystery is so great that it takes four weeks to get ready to enter. These treasured weeks are reserved for preparing us to grow closer to Christ through the glory of Christmas.

In a sense, Advent allows us an opportunity to become modern day innkeepers. We choose to make room for the Holy Family and journey with them again as they prepare for the arrival of Christ the King.

Let us use these four weeks of Advent wisely so that our hearts and minds will be worthily prepared to joyfully celebrate the birth of our Lord.

Colors of Advent

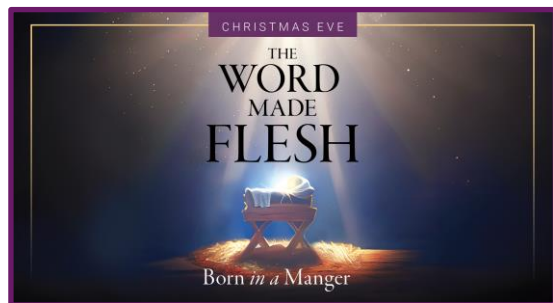
The primary color of Advent is Purple. Purple is a color that was reserved for royalty during Christ's lifetime. It was the color Kings and Queens. Another color associated with Advent is Blue. Blue is the color of repentance and hope. The color blue matches the color of the sky from where our Lord will come in the clouds on the Day of the Lord.

Jesus was a King, not the kind of King that people had ever met before. He didn't have an army – or, at least not the kind of army that people could understand. Nor did he have a great or majestic home – at least, not while he was on earth. And, as for riches, well, his riches were in the form of parable and miracles. They were a sort of treasure that no other King had ever possessed.

Yes, Jesus was a King who was coming then, is still coming today. And that is the mystery of Christmas. During the season of Advent, the Altar linens and vestments reflect the color purple to help us focus our attention on the special nature of Christ as King.

When we prepare for the coming of Christ, as Light of the World, we remember that through him God showed us His extraordinary presence. And as we prepare to enter the mystery of Christmas, we can also remember that the color purple represents another aspect of Christ's life. The color purple is used during Lent and Holy Week to symbolize both Christ's kingship and his suffering.

In remembering Christ's life, we cannot separate his birth from his death; the Nativity from the Atonement. Christ, God's Perfect Gift, was sacrificed for us, as Perfect Sacrifice, to take away the sins of the world. And because of this, in the early days of Christian worship, Advent, Christmas and Lent were seen as somber times. But over time, the focus of Advent and Christmas shifted to one of joyful anticipation.



Not all Christian churches use the color purple during Advent. Some churches choose to use the color blue to symbolize the Coming of Christ. Blue is associated with the Mother Mary and also with quiet, yet joyful anticipation. Royal blue may be used to represent royalty. Bright blue may be used to symbolize the night sky, in anticipation of the announcement of the coming of the King or to represent the waters of Genesis 1, the beginning of a new creation.



“The Glory of Lebanon shall come unto you, the fir tree, the pine tree and the box together, to beautify the place of your sanctuary.” Isaiah 60:13

During the season of Advent, it is traditional for churches to engage in an event called “the hanging of the greens”. This is a time when churches decorate their sanctuaries with evergreens as a symbol of God’s ever presence and the everlasting life he has promised through Jesus Christ.

Evergreens are ancient symbols of immortality, life and growth. Ancient Romans considered evergreens a symbol of peace, joy and victory. Early Christians used evergreens a symbol of their faith, placing them in their windows to indicate that Christ was ever present.

Firs, cedar, juniper, holly, laurel, bayberry, ivy and pine are some of the greenery hung and are considered “*evergreens*” because they are ever, and always, green and full of life. Their color never, ever changes, not even during the winter months.

Holly has many symbolic meanings: the burning bush, the Mother Mary (who is said to glow with the Holy Spirit), and Jesus’ crown of thorns. The red holly berries are also symbolic of the blood of Jesus. Ivy reminds us of the human spirit clinging to God’s strength. Juniper and cedar represent life and hope. Laurel symbolizes triumph and victory.

Evergreens have long been symbolic of Christmas time and many people refer to the hanging of the greens as “*Bringing home Christmas!*” In addition to the evergreens, another familiar plant, the Christmas Poinsettia, is usually used during the season of Advent and Christmas as a symbolic representation of the star of Bethlehem (it resembles a flaming star) and is called the “*Flower of the Holy Night*”. This tradition includes the placing of evergreen trees (Christmas Trees) in worship and fellowship areas with chrismon decorations.

The Advent Wreath



2024 Advent Wreath Kits will be available at Palestine from Dec 1 to assemble.

The Advent Wreath, rich in symbolism, is a powerful visual aid used in moving through the four Sundays of Advent while remembering the reason for the season: Jesus Christ.

With no beginning and no end, the circular nature of the wreath testifies to God himself. His eternity, and endless love and mercy for humanity have no beginning or end.

The wreath is primarily green and speaks to the hope of eternal life, recalling that our faith, hope and lives are always alive when they spring from God and his Son. Although the wreath is typically constructed of evergreens, many alternate media may be used to create an Advent Wreath. There are many “how to” ideas on the internet.

Four candles surround the Advent wreath; one for each week of Advent. These four candles symbolized the four centuries of waiting between the prophet Malachi’s telling of the coming day of the Lord and the birth of the Christ Child. The lighting of these candles symbolizes the light of God coming into the world through the birth of his son, Jesus, Light of the World.

The colors of the candles vary with different traditions. We use three blue or purple candles, corresponding to the sanctuary colors of Advent, and one white (pink) candle. Beginning with the first Sunday of Advent, one blue or purple candle is lit. This candle is lit again each remaining Sunday of Advent. On the second Sunday of Advent, a second blue or purple candle is lit as well. This candle continues to be lit throughout Advent. The third and fourth candles follow suit, except that the white (pink) candle is lit on the third Sunday (symbolizing joy). A center candle is often used to denote the birth of Christ and is appropriately called the “*Christ Candle*”. It is lit either on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning.

Each candle symbolizes various aspects of our waiting period during Advent. A theme or focus is usually assigned to each week and its associated candle. Traditionally, the first candle is the candle of Hope, Expectation or Prophecy, drawing our attention to the anticipation of the coming of the King of Kings. The other three candles may be associated with many different aspects of the Advent story. Themes are varied and yet the traditional message of the third candle is one of joy for the coming of Christ. Regardless of the stories, scripture reading or prayers used with the lighting of each candle, the common theme is the story of redemption through God’s grace in the Incarnation.

The Advent Calendar



Another way to mark the passing of days during Advent is to use a traditional Advent calendar. Remember though that the number of days in Advent will vary from year to year. Most commercial Advent calendars typically consist of 24 to 25 panels or doors, one for each of the 24 days in December that proceeds Christmas Day. Sometimes a 25th panel will be included, representing Christmas Day. The idea being that behind each panel, there is a message revealing a piece of the Nativity story. Advent calendars can be very helpful in keeping children focused on the reason for the season. The calendars provide daily involvement through the season of Advent, and sometime through Epiphany. There are many variations to the traditional Advent Calendar and the Internet provides a host of information on them. Here are just a few suggestions:

Encourage daily reflection and prayer by handing out adult Advent calendars.

Bring the season home to your families in this convenient and attractive calendar. Scripture verses provide the basis for a brief spiritual reflection for every day of Advent. The blank back is ideal for adding a special message or the dates and times of Advent and Christmas services. This calendar brightens any bulletin board or refrigerator door!

2024 Adult Advent Calendar

Picked up at church office & Fellowship Hall



Jesse Tree

This activity is centered on Isaiah 11, which suggest that: "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots".

Everyone has a family tree, including Jesus. He was a descendant of King David whose father was Jesse. The idea of the Jesse Tree is to show Jesus' family tree back to his ancestor, Jesse. Place a tree branch in a stable container, safely anchored with rocks or dirt, and decorate it with symbols of the various members of Jesus' family. As an Advent Calendar, one ornament can be added each day of Advent with a related scripture reference read.

Chrismon Tree



The word Chrismon comes from two words, “Christ” and Monogram”. Chrismon trees are decorated with symbols for Jesus. Making these symbolic ornaments and learning about their meaning can be a special Advent project. The ornaments can be added one day at a time (serving as an Advent calendar or all at once on Christmas Eve. They are elaborate ornaments of white and gold; often 3-dimensional beaded creations. Glitter and glue can work too if beading is not an option.

The Advent Chain



A variation of the Advent calendar is the Advent chain. These can be constructed at home by simply cutting strips of colorful construction paper and placing a special Advent reading, good deed or message on each strip. Each day, a strip is added and glued or taped into the link formation.

This variation of the Advent calendar allows for the complete coverage of all three seasons: Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. The links of the chain can even be color coordinated to the week of the season.

The Blessing Box



You will need a box to serve as a bank for this Advent activity. Decorate and place the box on the kitchen table for 36-38 days (from Advent through Epiphany). Each day, place a daily offering in the box, counting your own blessings and remembering those less fortunate. Explain to children that the money being banked will be given to someone who will be able to use it to provide themselves with the blessings they are in need of (socks, food, shelter, clothes, etc.). On Epiphany Sunday, give the box away to someone in need.

Recycled Christmas Cards

Using last year’s Christmas cards, create an Advent calendar of your own. Use your imagination. Hang them from a line, post them on a board or make them 3-dimensional. The options are endless

An Activity A Day

Figure out how many days are in Advent for that year and create a simple list of family activities that can be performed on each day. Look for the example located at the back of this booklet!

Ornament A-Day

Christmas Balls Using round Christmas balls to remind us that God’s power and love has no beginning or end, hang one round Christmas ball for each day of Advent. As each ball is hung, scripture can be recited that corresponds to the Advent lessons of that week. Choose Advent colors for the balls or create a color system that applies to a theme of your choice.

Stars Jesus is called the “*Bright Morning Star*”. For each day of Advent (and perhaps continuing through Epiphany), decorate star-shaped cutouts, placing a scripture message around its edges. Then, place the stars on a poster board or wall. Remember that the wild star, which the Magi followed, was a five-pointed star.

Mustard Seeds Jesus taught that if you have the faith the size of a mustard seed then you can move mountains, or uproot trees from the ground and cast them into the sea. During Advent we prepare with great anticipation for Jesus to come and forever change the world, and it begins with the little faith each of us has to act together to be a part of those changes and witness to those changes a little bit at a time.

Paper Clips The Holy Spirit calls, gathers and hold us together as a community of faith like a paper clip holds together paper. More pages can be added or shuffled as needed with a paper clip as the God adds and changes His community to teach and serve in the world. Paper clips represent the power of the Spirit to enlighten us in new and innovative ways to best communicate the love of God in Christ Jesus – right now there are over 400 ways to use a simple paper clip to accomplish tasks beyond its intended use.

Stocking Stuffers We hang stockings over the fire to dry them after our daily journeys in and about the world. The Bible tells us that beautiful are the feet that bear good news. We have an opportunity to bear good news over the season of Christmas that “God is with us.” Remember when you put on your stockings (socks) and go out the door that God goes with you to bring “joy, peace, faith and love” to others. Write down on a piece of paper the name of someone who is that “good news” bearer to you, and write the name of someone who you pray the Spirit will help you bring “good news” to.

The Gifts of Advent We give gift to people out of love. Some gifts are wrapped in boxes just waiting to be opened on Christmas morning with both joy and surprise. However, some gifts don’t come in a box. During Advent we recognize the gifts that keep on giving and have true meaning throughout our lives, such as time, family, shared interests, listening, patience, hope, trust, etc. Write down what gifts you want to share with your family that are not “things” which show how much you love them (*Don’t look at what each wrote*). Place the notes in your family box, seal the box and put a ribbon around it. Hang it on your tree, or put it in a stocking, or place it by your manger scene and open it on Christmas day.

God With Us: Our Story We read in the newspapers, hear in the media and see in our communities the events of the day and wonder what is God up to? And why does God allow bad things to happen? Advent and Christmas celebrates God’s promise to be with us in the world no matter what is happening? We may not understand the “why?” but we can trust in the “who” – God who comes to be with us because of God’s love for each person. God redeems and reconciles the world in Jesus Christ.

Gazing Ornament The “gazing globe” are ornaments in gardens which would help servants see if their master was in trouble without looking directly at them. They could use the ‘gazing globe” to see who was coming and going around the garden; thus providing a greater awareness of their surroundings. Our gazing globe helps us to be aware of the wonder around us, and remind us of God helping us when we might not always see God directly. Jesus is the gazing globe into which we see the very presence of God with us all the time!

Family Ornament During this year of uncertainty and physical separation due to the pandemic we thank God for the gifts that keep us and sustain us like that of family and friends. Each family represents the network of love and support that God provides whether in person or virtually. This Advent will honor the gift of family and the importance of connection with God and one another.

Hourglass Ornament During this Advent season we are called to wait on the Lord for his presence to be revealed to us on Christmas. As we make this ornament and hang it on our tree, or place it in our prayer space, we are invited to take 2 minutes to pray, listen and prepare ourselves for how God comes to us now in this moment as God did in Jesus at Christmas. We can use this ornament all year long.

Born in Us Bells_ During this Advent season we pray for Christ to be born in us with blessing, renewal, guidance, and power for our journey into life each day. We will receive a different color bell to add to our ornament each Sunday of Advent to remind us of Christ’s living promises and then together on Christmas ring them to announce His birth in us and into the world.

God is With Us! Through Us - During the Advent season, we experience God’s presence in the people who bear His Light of grace inside them. Each character of the Christmas story reflects the light of Grace around them as we do every day together.

The Word Made Flesh – Each day of Advent, we encounter the holy in everyday ways. Just as Jesus is the Word, so we might connect God’s Word to ordinary things and experiences. Take the journey with Mary and Joseph in this season and look at the ordinary in extra-ordinary ways.



A Nativity Scene



St. Francis Assisi popularized the nativity when he created one using real people and animals with the backdrop of a cave. In doing so, he emphasized the significance of devotion to the Christ Child during the waiting period of Advent.

A nativity scene, also called a “*Crèche*”, can be very useful in preparing for the coming of Christmas. The nativity can be set out whole or can be introduced piece by piece, or group by group, during the four weeks of Advent. You may choose to present the figures in chronological order or in some other sequential order. For instance, present the empty manger scene for week one, the animals for week two, the Holy Family for week three, the shepherds on week four, the Christ Child on Christmas Eve and the three Kings on Epiphany.

Some nativity scenes depict a cave as Christ’s birthplace, while others show a stable or shed. Regardless, it is this humble beginning of our Savior’s life that is a mystery of God’s wisdom. We may not know why God chose such humble surroundings, but we do know that He reached out to all people. God reached out to the rich and poor, the rejected and accepted, the simple and wise, the powerful and powerless. And he continues to reach out to all. During Advent, we gather around the manger with the animals, the Shepherds, the Holy Family and the Wise Men. And, we bow down as we remember God’s expression of love through his son, Jesus Christ.

Build your own nativity scene. Say a prayer of blessing as you set the scene up.

Advent Table – Blessing materials

Build your own Nativity Scenes

❖ Christmas Program Sunday, December 15th -

Christmas Program Rehearsal schedule:

- Sunday, Dec. 1st 6:00 p.m.
- Sunday, Dec. 8th 6:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, Dec. 11th 5:30 meal – 6:00 p.m. starts
- Sunday, Dec. 15th final practice after worship until 12:15 p.m.

An Advent Liturgy

The First Week in Advent



Each day of this week, light the first candle and say together:

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life". Our King and Savior now draw near; Come let us adore him.

Let the first candle remind us of the prophets who hoped the Messiah would come and bring peace and love to the world.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, our world is in darkness. We need the light of peace and love to shine in our work. Help us to prepare our lives and our homes to receive the One who said, I am the light of the world. We pray this in Christ's name. AMEN*

The Second Week in Advent



Each day of this week, light the first and second candles and say together:

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life". Our King and Savior now draw near; Come let us adore him.

This week, let the first candle remind us of the prophets who hoped the Messiah would come and bring peace and love to the world. And, let the second candle remind us of John the Baptist, the great prophet, who pointed the way for the Messiah. "In the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our Lord." Isaiah 40:3

Prayer: *Dear Lord, as we remember the message of John the Baptist, help us to wait patiently for the good things you have prepared for us, and help us to prepare our hearts for the gift of your Son. AMEN*

The Third Week in Advent



Each day of this week, light the first, second and third candles and say together:

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life". Our King and Savior now draw near; Come let us adore him.

This week, let the first candle remind us of the prophets who hoped the Messiah would come and bring peace and love to the world. And, let the second candle remind us of John the Baptist, the great prophet, who pointed the way for the Messiah. The third candle reminds us of the Shepherds; let us also remember the Angels who were messengers of God; delivering the message to Mary and Joseph that they would give birth to Jesus, and to the Shepherds in the fields announcing Jesus' birth.

Prayer: Mary, for you this time before Jesus' birth was a quiet time, a growing time. As we wait, we prepare our hearts to receive the Christ Child. Lord, help us to be good Shepherds of your word. Come, Lord Jesus, the whole world is waiting for you. AMEN

The Fourth Week in Advent



Each day of this week, light all four candles and say together:

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life". Our King and Savior now draw near; Come let us adore him.

This week, let the first candle remind us of the prophets who hoped the Messiah would come and bring peace and love to the world. And, let the second candle remind us of John the Baptist, the great prophet, who pointed the way for the Messiah. And, let the third candle remind us of the Shepherds, who with Mary and Joseph were the first to hear the Good News of the birth of Jesus. And as we are reminded of the Shepherds, let us also remember the Angels who were messengers of God; delivering the message to Mary and Joseph that they would give birth to Jesus, and to the Shepherds in the fields announcing Jesus' birth. The fourth candle reminds us of God's love and glory through his Son, Jesus.

Prayer: Mary, for you this time before Jesus' birth was a quiet time, a growing time. As we wait, we prepare our hearts to receive the Christ Child. Lord, help us to be good Shepherds of your word. Come, Lord Jesus, the whole world is waiting for you. AMEN

An Activity A Day

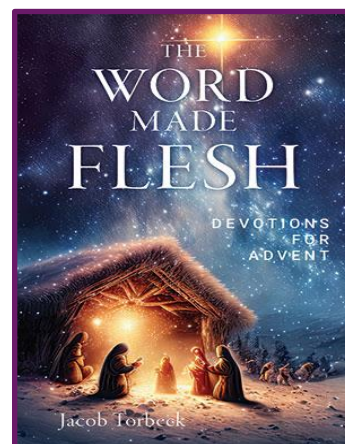
(You can alter this list to fit your situation)

December 1	Prepare an advent wreath and light the first candle
December 2	Write a Christmas card and send it to a friend
December 3	Read the Christmas story from Luke 2:1-20.
December 4	Visit a shut-in friend
December 5	Read John 3:19-21 and John 8:12 by candlelight.
December 6	Watch a Christmas movie.
December 7	Make a birthday card for Jesus.
December 8	Make Christmas cookies to take to church tomorrow.
December 9	Read a favorite Christmas book.
December 10	Reflect on how Jesus is the Light of the World.
December 11	Take an evening walk.
December 12	Make an ornament for the tree.
December 13	Make Christmas cookies.
December 14	Purchase gifts for a needy family.
December 15	Watch a Christmas movie.
December 16	After church, take a walk and admire the decorations
December 17	Visit a friend.
December 18	Read the Christmas story from Matthew 1:18-2:11.
December 19	Mom and dad read stories for one hour.
December 20	Invite friends over for hot chocolate and wassail.
December 21	Put out food for the birds.
December 22	Take an evening drive to see Christmas lights and talk about the lessons at church.
December 23	Read the Christmas story from Luke 1:26-38, 2-1:14.
December 24	Go to church on Christmas Eve.

Palestine Lutheran Church **Advent & Christmas Daily** **Devotions 2024**

The Word Made Flesh

Devotions for Advent



In this daily devotional for Advent, we are reminded that Jesus came to us on Christmas as the Word Made Flesh and revealed his divine nature to us in the physical substances we experience on earth. Join theology professor Jacob Torbeck in exploring the identity of Jesus, highlighted in unique ways through the attributes of *Bread, Salt, Rock* and *Light*.

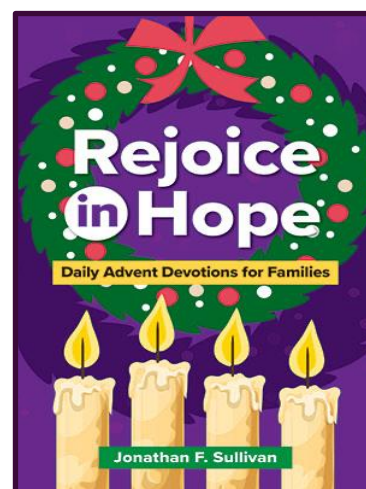
Also available as a digital download from:



Pick Up at Church with Calendars and Wreath Kit

Rejoice in Hope

Devotions for Families



A dedicated husband and father of 10, author Jonathan F. Sullivan brings a father's perspective to the season of Advent with a strong dose of hope. This Scripture-focused, page-a-day Advent devotional for families is immensely doable with its four weeks of moving reflections, graceful prayers and approachable intergenerational activities and conversation starters for parents and children.

Also available as a digital download from:





SPECIAL OFFERING FOR ADVENT & CHRISTMAS 2024
Addressing local food insecurity over the Holidays
The Huxley "Cupboard" Food Pantry

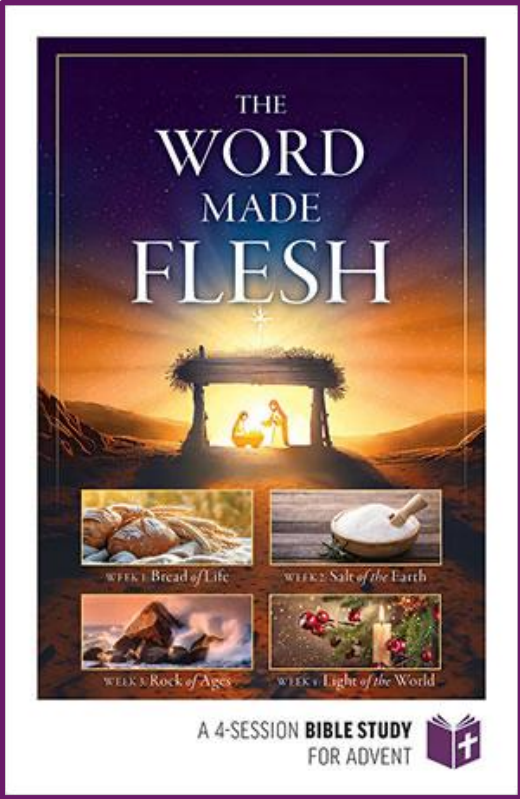
The Huxley Food Pantry is open each Wednesday from 6 – 7 pm and Thursday from 10-11am available to residents of Huxley and Kelley. The pantry is located at 503 E. 1st Street (behind the south Casey's). Interested individuals can use the service once a month. The Food Pantry offers food as well as personal care items, paper products and cleaning supplies. Food and a voucher are provided once each month. The voucher is good at Huxley Fareway and Slater's Town and Country grocery store. Donations of food items, or financial are welcome and can be made to the **Palestine Lutheran Church (designate Huxley Food Pantry)** or dropped off in the North Hall.

Food Needs: *Canned fruit, SpaghettiOs, Ravioli, Canned meat, Spaghetti sauce, Chunk soups, Helper Meals, Jelly, Peanut butter, Juice (fruit & veggie), Kraft Mac n Cheese, Mashed potatoes, Knorr sides, Deodorant, Shampoo/body wash, General cleaners, Toilet paper, Detergent pacs/pods*

Donated items may be dropped off during regular hours or dropped in the North Hall at Palestine Lutheran Church.

Advent Zoom Bible Study
Tuesdays in Advent @
7:00pm (*per calendar*)

In this Bible study for Advent, participants focus on the concept of Jesus as the Word Made Flesh. Study and discussion questions, prayers and reflections highlight the earthly substances of bread, salt, rock and light in relation to the qualities of Christ.





In this worship series for Advent, we are reminded that Jesus came to us in the flesh and revealed his divine nature to us in physical substances we experience on earth. The Scripture-based theme for the entire series is “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

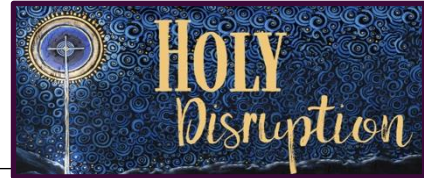
Week 1 (December 1): Bread of Life: Jesus is born in Bethlehem, the House of Bread, to nourish and strengthen us in our faith and feed us with his Word of truth to fill our lives.

Week 2 (December 8): Salt of the Earth: Jesus calls us to flavor the earth and to savor the good things that come from him through his birth.

Week 3 (December 15): Rock of Ages: Jesus is our rock, a solid foundation on which to build a life of joy.

Week 4 (December 20): Light of the World: Jesus brightens our lives through his birth, dispelling the darkness of sin to bring forgiveness to light.

Make Ready for Holy Disruption *Advent Candle Blessing Themes*



Overview

Advent carries two simultaneous visions of our expectations: we await yet again the birth of the babe in the manger, and we also await Christ's coming again to fulfill all things. We often prepare for Advent by "getting ready": planning, organizing, and ordering supplies for various gatherings and worship services. Yet preparing for the coming of Christ is not a matter of having everything under control. Christ's arrival disrupts—disrupts injustice, sin, and brokenness in a society in which we are deeply embedded. A prayer for Christ to come to us is a prayer for a holy disruption of our lives that we cannot control and that we might struggle to accept.

This candle blessing is built around four steps to help us recognize our resistance to God's inbreaking and prepare for God's holy disruption: breathing, releasing, receiving, and rejoicing. Each week's candle blessing will focus on one step. Although worshipers can benefit from each service individually, each step builds upon the ones preceding. Together they form a spiritual discipline that reminds us (as does the liturgical year itself) that discipleship is always a process requiring intentional practice. Advent, the first season of the church year, reminds us to return to our sense of longing for and expectation of God's coming into our world. In this worship series we pay attention to opening ourselves to the holy disruption of God's inbreaking promise.

Candle of the Spirit (Genesis 2:4b-7, Psalm 40:3-7)

- The Hebrew word *ruach* means spirit, breath, and wind. The interconnectedness of these images is clear throughout scripture. In Genesis the Spirit/wind of God blows over the waters at creation, and God breathes into the created human to give life/spirit. Who we are created to be is centered in our breathing, which connects us to the one who created us.
- Research is clear that deep, slow breathing contributes significantly to a sense of calm and a reduction of stress. The effectiveness of this seems to be even more pronounced

when we practice breathing with a brief pause after both inhaling and exhaling. This space can provide a sense of deep connection with God as everything else is momentarily paused.

Candle of Releasing (Psalm 146:5-10, 2 Peter 3:11-18, Luke 3:1-18)

- Many people struggle with the concept of letting go, especially in cultures where accrual is seen as a sign of success and a guarantee of peace. The recent rise in blogs, books, and lifestyle coaches to help people reduce clutter caused by too many possessions is an indication of the stress created by our inability to let go. Worshipers may want to focus on whether they need to release material goods or a tendency to find comfort in acquiring possessions. Alternately, it may be the clutter of too many accrued holiday traditions that worshipers need to let go of.
- Letting go of emotional “baggage” is equally challenging. The mental energy taken by chronic or even habitual negative thoughts can sap a tremendous amount of our reserves, making it difficult for us to receive the new things that arrive with God’s Promised One. Mindfulness of the need to release things that block our receptivity to God can become a healing spiritual practice. *(You may wish to note that for some emotional pain, this process is best accomplished with professional support, and what people might need to begin with is releasing fear of or resistance to that support.)*

Candle of Receiving (Psalm 42:1-8, Galatians 4:4-7, John 1:1-23)

- We often miss the presence of God because we look for the wrong things. Whether hoping for easy miracles or wearing ourselves out working for transformation in a broken world, we may miss the signs that God is coming and has, indeed, already come. We might think our encounter with God must come as a profound emotional experience, and we spend our energy seeking such an experience more than we seek God’s own self.
- To prepare ourselves to receive the Savior—and the disruption the Savior’s coming brings—we lay down our own agendas and expectations and learn to open ourselves to what God brings rather than focusing on what we want or expect. God’s coming into the world never fulfills human expectation; it fulfills God’s expectation.

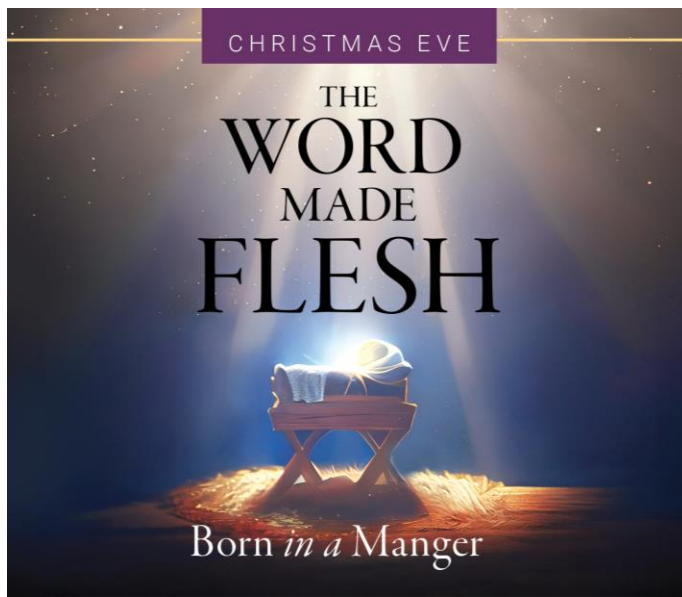
Candle of Rejoicing (Isaiah 9:2b-7, Luke 1:46b-55, Matthew 1:1-17)

- C. S. Lewis called joy “the serious business of heaven.” The call to rejoice isn’t simply an invitation to enjoyment, but a spiritual practice of shaping our perspective and our witness. By centering ourselves in thanksgiving for what God has done and reflecting on the promise of hope even during struggle, we make ourselves ready to welcome Jesus.

- Joy may be expressed in laughter, exuberance, and resounding music. It can also be a deep and still experience so profound that only the dark silence of the cosmos can encompass it. In whatever ways it is expressed, joy is the character of our discipleship that draws others to Christ.

Christmas Eve Worship 2024

Candlelight Vigil & Holy Communion



On Christmas Eve,
join us as we celebrate
and ponder the
humble birth of Jesus
as he rests in a
manger of straw,
though he is the Son
of God. Jesus is the
Word Made Flesh who
is God With Us.
Life will never be the

Date: Tuesday, Dec. 24th

Time: 4:00 PM (family worship) & 7:00 PM (acoustic worship)

Place: Palestine Lutheran Church

Blue Christmas Worship
Prayer of Lament & Hope

Special Candle lighting Service for those
 Struggling with Grief & Loss this Season

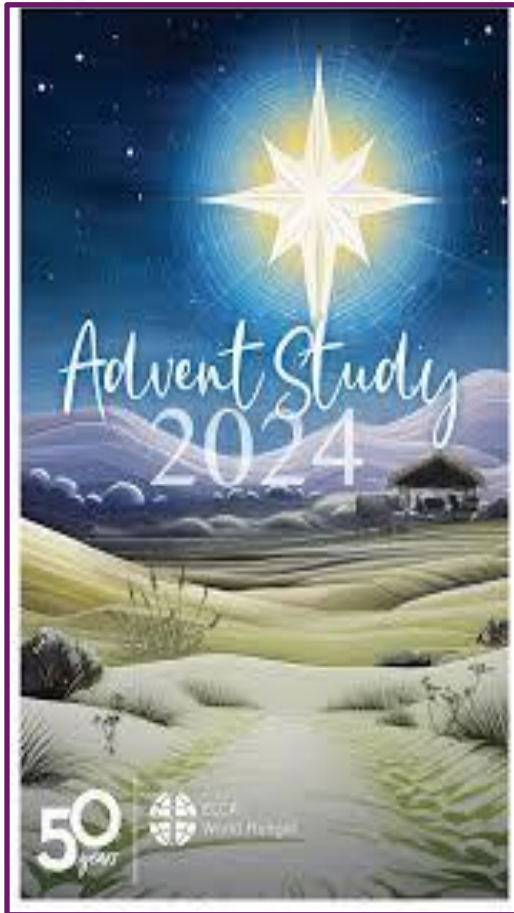
Wednesday, December 18th @ 7:00pm
 Palestine Lutheran Church

While Advent is a season of hope and Christmas is a season of joy, not everyone feels hopeful or like celebrating. Grief, illness, aging, depression, loneliness, unemployment, and loss are magnified. Even those who are not struggling with losses may feel the stress of preparations and expectations around Christmas time. A Longest Night/Blue Christmas service may provide a time and place of solace during the often frenetic days surrounding the celebration of Christmas. We come together seeking healing and room to share grief, sadness, loneliness, or confusion when these emotions often feel out of place during the holidays.

Christmas Day

**@ PALESTINE LUTHERAN
 ON-LINE MESSAGE**

Uploaded on www.plchuxley.com
 after 12 midnight Christmas Eve



ELCA World Hunger Relief Presents: 2024 Advent Devotion

In the Advent season we invite God to share Godself in Christ, awaiting a revelation of God’s authentic story in human form.

As we prepare for the openness of God’s vulnerability on Christmas Day, the Advent study invites you to hear the vulnerability in your neighbor’s stories and open yourself to the challenge of sharing your own story. When you are confronted with another person’s vulnerability, we ask that you respond as the crowds following John did: ‘What, then, should we do?’ (Luke 3:10)

In this study you will read passages from the Gospel of Luke alongside stories from the ELCA World Hunger partners who have demonstrated what community action can look like when people tell their stories with openness to an unknown and uncertain future.

The King Is Coming

It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way."
Mark 1:2 (NIV)

Based on Mark 1:1-8 (NIV)



V J P O I V S T C O N F E S S
E A A M C L H M P R O P H E T
Z K T G A G N R M X J R G C C
S W H D I A L T E L T E F J H
J X N A D R R C S O R A S V C
R A T R S E Q H S C E C A U E
S S O U S V J O E U P H P M S
B J C E C O B N N S E I I T N
U I D A Z L A E G T N N K C K
J B T K L Z P Y E S T G Q H C
O H Z E A L T Y R V A K F R A
H V O I C E I Y E W N I I I N
N S L L B T Z N T L C L S S R
L I N B H K E A G V E H P T B
C N G O S P E L W R I V E R R

LOCUSTS	PATH	GOSPEL	VOICE	PROPHET
CALLING	HONEY	STRAIGHT	CHRIST	JOHN
REPENTANCE	PREACHING	RIVER	JESUS	DESERT
JORDAN	SANDALS	BAPTIZE	MESSENGER	CONFESS

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