



Sinai Lutheran Church • 950 E. 8<sup>th</sup> St. • Fremont, NE 68025

# Messenger

December 2020  
January 2021

## Pastor Al's Message

*"All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart." (Luke 2:18-19)*

This coming Sunday, the Gospel narrative tells of John the Baptist calling his audience to prepare the way in the wilderness. In this ongoing period of the pandemic, our assigned scriptures continue to take on new and powerful perspectives.

I hear that word, "wilderness," and I have to believe that many of us feel like we are in a wilderness right now. I have to imagine that many of us feel worn down, anxious, even angry at times. How do we not get bogged down in our own struggles? And I must say that in the big picture my struggles are minor compared to so many. So, how do we move beyond becoming focused on our self?

I am moved by these words from Luke's narrative of the Nativity. I believe they may hold inspiration as to how we can move forward well. I want to suggest that we look to Mary, Joseph and Jesus. They were truly facing dark and uncertain times. They are away from home. They are in a makeshift shelter; a stable. Jesus is in bands of cloth and laid in a manger. Soon they would have to flee as refugees to Egypt because of Herod's death threats. Let us look to the Holy Family, and especially Mary and her times of pondering.

"To possess a secret joy and to hold a marvelous mystery in mind and heart is to rise above the grind of daily life." I'm not sure where I heard this quote, but it often times guides me as it hangs on the bulletin board by my office desk. Centering the self on the things that are most precious, opens a space of serenity where one can truly be at rest. In that sacred space, we can ponder on God's surprises; there we can dare to know the heart of God and feel goodness and grace.

It is true that God comes not only in those serene moments, but just as Jesus came wrapped in the swaddling clothes, our experience of God, at times, comes in the midst of the struggles and sorrows of this world. I do hear this as good news in this moment. Our lives right now may not be filled with ease and comfort, but those things are fleeting anyway. We have the promise of something so much deeper and fulfilling.

Seeing God can be challenged by clatter and clamor, but when the truth of why Jesus has come resides deep within us, we can be the ones who can offer stillness right in the middle of chaos. We can be the ones who can ponder the possibilities that everyone else struggles to comprehend. When we have been touched by the truth of who God revealed Godself to be in Jesus, we can see the arrival of the Kingdom of God where it often is revealed; in the weak and the ordinary.



*Merry Christmas*

*continued on back page*

950 E. 8th St. | Fremont, NE 68025 | www.sinailutheran.com | www.facebook.com/Sinai Lutheran  
402.721.1665 | e-mail: sinailutheranfremontne@gmail.com  
Pastor Al Duminy - 402-332-6980 - rev\_al@hotmail.com  
Office Hours: M-T-Th-F 9 AM-noon and 1-3 PM Wed 9-noon  
Sunday Schedule: 8 & 10:30 AM worship with Holy Communion Education Hour 9:15 a.m.

*Sinai Lutheran Church welcomes, challenges, and nurtures disciples to serve the church and love God's world.*



At this time, Christmas Eve Worship services at Sinai will be held online and not in person. Look for a new format in a one-click service in your email. Additional musical offerings will be added and we hope that the format can continue from that time forward. Thanks for your patience as we continue to find ways that spiritually feed you in ways that make sense.

In addition, traditions like caroling/soup and the children's Christmas program will not be held this year.



Sinai's youth will hold their annual cookie walk fundraiser this year and need your support! It will be held as a prepackaged container as a

drive thru on **Sunday, December 13th from 8:30-10:30am** pre-ordered ideally. For a \$10 donation, you will receive a large clamshell that youth have packaged prior to this date. Youth families are asked to provide treats but it is never enough. If your gift is to bake, we need you! When you begin your holiday baking, consider baking a few extra dozen to bring to the cookie walk. Then preorder your cookies on with the order form to the right... to eat yourself or spread joy to a neighbor.



**SET AN ALARM TO REMEMBER! Zoom Coffee Hour** will be held weekly. Joining to connect with one another is even more important now that we are not worshipping on-site. *There is no specific host, so please feel free to*

*contact a friend to join you online!* Join with this zoom gathering each Sunday morning at **9:30am** with this recurring code: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86220388401?pwd=SWZGSFYrMFVUc3grL3Q2WHFXQTR5dz09>  
zoom.us Meeting ID: 862 2038 8401 Password: coffee  
Dial/enter ID [1.346.248.7799](https://www.zoom.us/join/13462487799)



Christmas just won't be the same when we can't worship on-site. Sinai's sanctuary will be

decorated for Christmas and you are invited to come **visit the space the few days before Christmas on December 21, 22, 23 from 6:00-8:00pm**. Prayer resources will be available for your Christmas reflection.

**Fear Not! A Midweek Advent service recording, service bulletin and weekly scriptures** will be emailed each Wednesday during Advent and a copy of the service bulletin has been mailed home to those without email. If you would like a hard copy of the service, contact the office.

**DRIVE THRU YOUTH COOKIE WALK: SUNDAY DEC 13th 8:30 AM-10:30 AM parking lot**

\_\_\_ I am willing to make \_\_\_ (#) dozen cookies/treats for the Youth Cookie Walk and will bring them to church no later than 3:00pm on Friday, December 11.  
\_\_\_ I could use a little assistance to purchase baking product and understand a Thrivent Action Team Grant may be able to help (I can provide a shopping list and understand I will be given bakery staples.)



**Pre-orders for the cookie walk** will be taken until **Friday, Dec 11<sup>th</sup>**. Include quantity ordered (1 pkg, 2 pkgs, etc) and **contact information**.

A suggested donation is \$10 per package and you may order more than one ☺ The selection will be a variety and there will not be any option to swap the specific cookies in the package unless you have a true allergy. All proceeds will go to the Sinai Senior High youth group in preparation for the 2021 Mission Trip. Cash or checks made payable to Sinai (memo: cookie walk) will be accepted. If you wish to make a donation and cannot attend the cookie walk drive thru, donations may be sent to the church. If you are just not able to be there, but would like to support the youth and would like a package of cookies, a delivery could be made that morning.

\_\_\_ I will be able to pick up on Sunday, December 13. \_\_\_ I would prefer to have mine delivered.

\_\_\_ I will make a donation and forgo the cookies this time.

THE YOUTH OF SINAI THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!

**This information in a page format is available in each weekly bulletin online and in print thru the 6th.**

*The Messenger is available on our website: [www.sinailutheran.com](http://www.sinailutheran.com) Photos are posted on our Facebook page.*



**Circles will not be meeting in person until at which time we resume on-site worship and programming.**

Gather magazine's 2020 Advent devotional, written by the Rev. Jordan Miller-Stubbendick, focuses on a liminal story: Mary's journey as she follows God's call into motherhood. While exploring Mary's story, we think about the liminal days in her life, and how she might have traveled spiritually and emotionally during her own uncertainty. As we embark on our own emotional and spiritual journeys this Advent, we'll explore four practices that can help to ground and steady us: gratitude, movement, song and honest conversation.

The monthly devotions that many Sinai women's Circles receive will continue to be **emailed out as a link if there is a recording** by the devotion's author. If you did not receive an email in November and would like to be on the mailing list for that devotion,

**Sunday school families** -a video with an opening will be shared on youtube channel--Sinai Lutheran or Al Duminy-- every other week (Dec 6, 20, Jan 3, 17, 31) and emailed to families and posted in the emailed bulletin resources.

We are in the Season of Advent. **Daily Devotions from Luther Seminary** are available for pickup, drop off or to be mailed. An electronic copy will be in the resource section of online worship each week of Advent as well. Let the office know if you would like a hard copy.

~As the Health Department risk dial is updated from week to week on Wednesdays, please know that executive council will make a determination when we can worship on site based on HD guidance. Communicating that to you will happen via an email and Facebook or if no email available, a phone call or text. If you have any question whether we are worshiping on-site, please check those communication methods.

~We invite you to visit Sinai's Sanctuary on weekdays during office hours. There will be prayer/worship resources available. **Please contact the office prior to your arrival** so that we can be sure there is not a practice, video recording or others in the space at one given time.

**The Children's library** in the fellowship hall has fabric bags and a children's books in which your family can choose to take home and return when you are done over the holiday break! Stop by during office hours or set up a time with Emily when it works for you.

**NOTICE: the Annual Meeting is scheduled for January 24, 2021 after the 10:30am worship service. If we are not meeting in person, other options will be available.**

Individuals **NOMINATED** for Council, Synod Voting or Nominating Committee—please submit a bio to the office by **December 28.** Also, please plan to have your photo taken on either **Sunday, January 3rd or 10th or email a head shot to the office.**

## Deepest Sympathy

*We pray for the family and friends of:*

**Florence Ostransky**  
sister in law to Jan and Leroy Ostransky died November 6, 2020

**Bob Scherbarth**  
cousin's family to Gail Barth died November 11, 2020

**Betty Winterfeld**  
mother to Mike Winterfeld died November 21, 2020

**Judith M. Miles**  
sister to Jim Neill died November 23, 2020

**Bob Petersen**  
friend to Winterfelds died November 26, 2020

**Gene Gnuse**  
friend to the Neills died November 30, 2020

*"So you have pain now: but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you"*  
*John 16:22*



### Congratulations

to Savannah Neill on the birth of a healthy baby girl. **Harley Jade Appleby** was born on Friday, October 28<sup>th</sup>. She is welcomed home by Grandma Shelly Strunk and great grandparents Jim & Yolanda Neill.



### Annual Report



**Committee Members...** your annual report is due in to the church office by **Monday, December 28.** This report should be a recap/summary of the year.





Remaining Fair Trade SERRV items for the holidays are available in which you can make an offer. Photos are below or you may stop by to take a look and make an offer.



Habitat for Humanity Faith Build work day—December 10-12 to lay drain tile. All volunteers would be outside and spaced out. If you are interested and can help with this of Sinai's commitment to partner with HfH and Thrivent Faith Build, please contact Marin Lefarla at Habitat. She will share any details of time and location. 402-721-8771, [marin@fremonthehabit.org](mailto:marin@fremonthehabit.org)

# Thank You

I want to express my thanks for all the prayers and concerns of my Sinai family during my recent bout with Covid. I am grateful for all of you and grateful for God who stood by me and supported me during this time. Be safe, be careful and God be with you always.

**Paul Peterson**

Thanks for a wonderful response for the Thrivent food match for the LifeHouse food bank locally and also for ELCA World Hunger. All of your donations will be matched and will go twice as far!

Thank you to Social Ministry for organizing the LifeHouse meals (3) for November. Mark and Shannon Ostransky family will organize the two meals for December! This is such a great ministry and thanks to all who have helped serve this year!

Thanks to council members for bringing pie, serving it up and offering it for Thanksgiving Eve drive through this year! It was an enjoyable way to connect when we couldn't continue with this tradition this year.

The Messenger is available on our website: [www.sinailutheran.com](http://www.sinailutheran.com) Photos are posted on our Facebook page.

**Concert** The National Lutheran Choir Christmas Festival comes to audiences FREE in a virtual, multi-media format on December 11. *The Incarnation: For the Healing of the World* brings music from around the globe announcing the birth of Christ with messages of peace and joy that nothing— not even a pandemic—can take away. **Friday, December 11, 2020 8pm FREE at NLCA.com**

**Gifts of Hope** Alternative Gift Market. Each December, First Lutheran, Lincoln hold their annual gift market. This year it will take place online using an interactive digital catalog. Among the agencies and organizations featured are ELCA World Hunger Good Gifts, Cedars Home for Children, I've Gotta Be Me!, AAMPARA, Center for Legal Immigration Assistance, Mission Market Place, Matt Talbot Homlessness outreach and Diversion, Mosaic, Health programs in Liberia and Fair Trade Coffee, Tee and Chocolate Sales. **Join them for your holiday gifts that "give twice" December 5-6.** Check it out at <https://online.flipbuilder.com/zbfu/razx/>

**Carol Joy Holling** Advent is a season of expectation and waiting. Spend time away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life making memories together as a family. Spend a day, a weekend or more at Carol Joy Holling Camp on a Thursday-Sunday between November 28-December 20. You will be staying in the comfort of the Swanson Retreat Center. \$150 per night for 1-3 people to include meals. Email Dana at [djahn@nlom.org](mailto:djahn@nlom.org) or check out their website at [chjcenter.org/familygetaway](http://chjcenter.org/familygetaway)

## Calendar for December 2020

Dates to note:  
 December 8, Columbarium, 10:30am  
 December 9, 22, LifeHouse meal  
 December 11, drop off cookies  
 December 12, pack cookies, 10-noon  
 December 13, pick up cookies 8:30-10:30  
 December 16, Committee reports due  
 December 21, 22, 23, Sanctuary open 6-8pm  
 December 22, Council Meeting, 7pm  
 Dec 24, noon, Dec 25, Office Closed



**Office Closed**  
 Sinai's office will be **CLOSED** Thursday, Dec 24 at noon, & Friday, Dec. 25th and Jan. 1st. Hours between Christmas and New Years will be relaxed.



The Salvation Army is expecting a 155% increase in nationwide demand for holiday services. So this year, every minute of your volunteer

time means more. Now more than ever, your community needs you and you can help ring bells at their iconic red kettles. To sign up or learn more, go to [registertoring.com](http://registertoring.com)

## Dec Birthdays

- 1 Jessa Seely
- 2 Cindy German
- 3 Sue Roesch
- 3 Kay Exstrom
- 4 Carol Wiseman
- 4 Shannon Ostransky
- 5 Juliet Focken
- 5 Yolanda Neill
- 5 Kristen Brokenicky
- 6 Joyce Myers
- 9 Jan Ostransky
- 10 Kimberly Kronberg
- 10 Courtney Kavan
- 12 Cindi Lamprecht
- 12 Cory Reimnitz
- 13 James Melang
- 16 David Simmons
- 17 Jen Layton
- 17 Hannah Korman
- 17 Sammy Korman
- 17 Layna Reimnitz
- 19 Bryce Exstrom
- 19 Barry Sieh
- 19 Jody Horner
- 20 Annette Holtam
- 20 Melanie Leetsch
- 21 Marcy Gay
- 22 Nicholas Leetsch
- 25 Caitlyn Vyhldal
- 28 Aaron Wulf
- 31 Rebecca Winterfeld

## Dec Anniversaries

- 6 Aaron & Jennifer Wulf
- 19 Kevin & Julie Kavan
- 22 Claire Bushong & David Schack



*Sinai Lutheran Church welcomes, challenges, and nurtures disciples to serve the church and love God's world.*

## Support Methodist Fremont Health's Clothing Closet.

When patients are discharged from the hospital, sometimes they have little to wear. Some are indigent. Some were ill prepared for an inpatient stay or came as a result of an assault. Others are trauma patients who have had their clothes cut away in the emergency room.

The Clothing Closet is a new program designed to provide appropriate clothing for patients who are discharged from the hospital. We are in need of donations of the following items:

- Underwear
- T-shirts
- Sweatpants (no strings)
- Sweatshirts
- Sports bras
- Socks

All items must be new.

Clothing can be dropped off to the Fremont Health Foundation on weekdays between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., located within Methodist Fremont Health hospital.

For more information, contact Shawn Shanahan at 402-727-3566 or at [shawn.shanahan@nmhs.org](mailto:shawn.shanahan@nmhs.org).



**FREMONT HEALTH  
FOUNDATION**

The Nebraska Synod's Growing God's Generous Generations (4G) Network is excited to launch a new website where you can check out timely resources, find a series of FAITH5 videos that have been produced for households and other groups to use, and more! Feel free to check it out at [timothy331.wixsite.com/4gnetwork](http://timothy331.wixsite.com/4gnetwork)



**The Flower Chart 2021** is posted on the North bulletin board and ready to fill in your name for the Sunday altar flowers. Cost will be **\$40.00** each Sunday for two bouquets with no flowers during Lent or Advent which will give you the option to donate a monetary gift to a charity of your choice. You may call and Emily will add to the chart.

There will be an exciting update coming soon to the Sinai website! At the top of the website page at [www.sinailutheran.com](http://www.sinailutheran.com) is a tab that says, "**COLUMBARIUM**". Our team has been working to expand the information that can be accessed from that site. Clicking on this tab will take you to information about the Columbarium itself, photos, policies, and forms that can be downloaded to make a niche reservation. But the most exciting component will be what is called the "Book of Remembrance." This will be a collection of photos and a written presentation, documenting the lives of the people who have been inurned at Sinai. It actually will look like a beautiful book, with pages that "turn" as you advance through it. In the background you will hear an original musical arrangement of the hymn, "Children of the Heavenly Father." This has been specifically composed by David Schack for this purpose and will be played and recorded on the Sinai organ by Claire Bushong. Look for this project to be completed in early 2021. Columbarium Board Members are also listed on this site. Please contact any of us for further information about Sinai's Columbarium or to make a niche reservation.

Cheri Anderson, President of Sinai Columbarium Board

The Messenger is available on our website: [www.sinailutheran.com](http://www.sinailutheran.com) Photos are posted on our Facebook page.

# Calendar for January 2021

# January Birthdays

Dates to note (many additional weekly events will be added dependent on if we are resuming in person worship):

- January 1, Office Closed for Holiday
- January 10, Anniversary of Baptism  
Worship & Music  
Forum on Budget
- January 13, LifeHouse meal
- January 19, Council meeting (early)
- January 24, Annual Meeting



~February 20, 2021~  
Nebraska Synod's annual Seeking the Spirit Within Retreat that will be held online. Look for registration details soon.

- 1 Christine Seely
- 1 Kaitlyn Slider
- 4 Reggie Gay
- 5 Katelyn Marx
- 6 Lyndi Prickett
- 6 Max Lamprecht
- 8 Sam Wulf
- 11 Earl Echtenkamp
- 11 Mary Von Seggern
- 14 Zac Duminy
- 23 Dayton Schwaninger
- 23 Jayden Lippold
- 24 Jeff Helget
- 25 Nancy Baughman
- 26 Carolyn Nordstrom
- 26 Milo Anderson
- 27 Lisa Kramme
- 28 Geraldine Lund
- 29 Gary Overfield
- 30 Ruth Vyhldal
- 31 Delaney Huberty

**~January 2021 Serving in Worship~**  
**Servers will be contacted as soon as we know when we begin in person worship.**



Sinai has a new addition to the office help... Meet our Betta Fish "Sushi" and Snail Ann-chovie. The fish is red (not the large one in the corner with beady eyes and a large mouth—even though that is where Ann is hanging out lately!) Stop in to say 'HI' next time you are at church!

On Baptism of our Lord Sunday, January 10th, parents, sponsors and congregation will renew baptismal promises in worship with our newly baptized members of the calendar year 2020. We will recognize the anniversary of baptism for Eloise Navarrette, Kohen Baughman and Carter & Beckett Kohmetscher.



# Anniversaries

- 3 Ron & Diane Harpster
- 8 Nick and Nicki Petersen
- 29 Bill & Shirley Calta



# Prayer of Intercession

HEAVENLY FATHER, We come to you in Jesus' name on behalf of your precious servants who are leading your flocks. We pray that you protect and provide during these challenging times we are in. Remove all fear and doubt. Fill continually with the Holy Spirit. Direct every thought and step. May all pain and hurts be healed. May God's grace abound in you and your heart be encouraged. We thank you for the many blessings that you continue to give each day. We praise and honor you as Lord and King. AMEN



**SINAI LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
950 E. 8<sup>th</sup> St. • Fremont, NE 68025

*Address Service Requested*

Sinai Lutheran Church  
950 E 8th Street  
Fremont NE 68025

## Lives Under Construction....

*Pastor's Message*

*continued from front page*

So in this Christmas season, may we all step into the stillness, look deeply into the mystery of what God has revealed to us in the birth of Jesus (Matthew, chapters 1-2 and Luke chapters 1-2) – how it happened, where it happened, why it happened - and how these truths can change the way we see and interact with the world this day and every day.

And then, as we move into this New Year, let's strive to continue to follow Mary's lead. Let us keep the story of Christmas in our hearts and minds. As we travel into each new day, may it truly be a time that we continue to treasure this story and ponder what Jesus' coming means for our lives and how he is continuing to come each day.

May we see that our peace and even joy will come as we are willing to step right into the wilderness and the challenges of those who are truly suffering. It's here that we will be set free from getting bogged down in our own discomfort; as we allow our lives to be spent following this one; who is light born into darkness.

God's Peace,

*Pastor Al*







# taking faith home

## The 2020 Advent Challenge: Three Easy Steps

1

Share Mountain  
Highs and/or Valley  
Lows

2

Read Scripture

3

Pray & Bless

---

During 2020 we have been observing restrictions. We wear masks, social distance, and wash our hands often. Most of us no longer leave our homes to go to work, to go to school, and to go to church. Thanks to the pandemic, we are now setting up special areas in our homes where we work and have school lessons.

How many of us have set up a special area, designated a space, or even set aside time in our homes during these times for sharing highs and lows, reading scripture, and prayer?

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 tells us:

*Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

In what ways have we encouraged or challenged one another to actually talk about and reflect on God's word when we are at home or when we are away from home?

Given our new normal, it is a good time to help all ages engage in faith practices in our homes.

- What affect would it have on our relationships to engage in three simple faith practices a day?
- What affect would it have on the future of our congregations if we were intentional about our conversations, Bible reading, and prayer?
- How can just four weeks during Advent challenge us to gain an understanding of the essential role the home has—and always has had—in the life of the church?

# The 2020 Advent Challenge: Three Easy Steps

**Taking Faith Home is an effective resource to help all ages take the challenge!**

Whether your congregation is new to *Taking Faith Home* or has used it for years, Advent is a good time to take a look at this resource more closely and use it.

Launch the challenge on November 29th, the first Sunday of Advent. Consider making Advent wreaths and provide candles. Use the wreath as a centerpiece to gather around in homes during Advent.

NOVEMBER 29, 2020  
FIRST SUNDAY  
OF ADVENT

taking faith home

Stay awake, for God is coming with power.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Mark 13:24-37	The day and hour unknown
Monday	Isaiah 64:1-9	A communal prayer for help
Tuesday	1 Corinthians 1:3-9	God is faithful
Wednesday	Revelation 22:12-21	Jesus is coming soon
Thursday	Micah 4:1-5	Peace and prosperity
Friday	1 Thessalonians 5:1-11	Children of light
Saturday	Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19	Prayer for Israel's restoration
Sunday	Mark 1:1-8	The beginning of the good news

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. Mark 13:26 (NRSV)

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:  
Father in heaven, bring us back to you, for you have shown us that we may be saved through Christ our Lord. Amen. Psalm 88:1, 7, and 12.

Midweek Prayer:  
Dear God, we thank you for this food, may it strengthen us that we may await your coming with power and glory through Jesus our Savior and Lord. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:  
May you be blessed with hope and peace through our Lord Jesus Christ.

NOVEMBER 29, 2020

HYMN OF THE WEEK  
Awake, Awake, and Give  
the Stars

WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment each week to share a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflection:

- What have you had a challenging or scary experience?
- What are some temptations or alarming situations we face in our world today?
- Sometimes it seems easier to deny the danger we face and pretend they are not really a problem. How does faith in Jesus give us hope and help to see the way forward?

DEVOTIONS

Psalm 124:1-8

Advent begins with an awareness of the frailty of life. We may come apart, darkness may be falling, winter, storms, and flood. There is always the challenge of the unknown. Some that we find ourselves with devotions, when the whole world seems to be being blown around as in the 12th century, no generation escapes these trials and sufferings. It happened to the people who returned from Babylonian captivity. Isaiah 40:1, it happened to the first Christians as related in chapter 10, 14, it happened to around the world today. What we need is the God who promises to show up and be the difference maker. This Advent we are reminded to be alert to this God who shows up in small circumstances. In times we have hope because we have the one in whom the truth of his words will never pass away, and we will never let go. We will stand with courage, with hope, and stay awake, keep alert, don't give up (in 12, 18, and 17). How does public worship, reading the Bible and prayer help you stay awake to meet coming into our lives?

Try: Aloudly and lovingly, give us hope and confidence to await your coming into our lives with faith in your blessing and wonderful grace through Christ our Lord Jesus.

SERVICE

Advent is a time to recall the basic needs of life: a living and gracious God and justice and mercy that all may have enough to live. In what ways can you "be awake" this advent season by caring for the needs of others and providing needed resources for the homeless?

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

The church year begins on the first Sunday in Advent. This coming year, the church readings will be from Luke. To launch the new church year, gather together at the Bible in your home. If you have an advent wreath, place the Bible near the wreath. As you light the first candle, the candle of hope, use the prayer of blessing alongside God, we thank you for the Bible, and especially for the good news about Jesus our Savior. Give us hope as we read, listen to, and think about what the Bible says to us in this new church year. Make us into people who are strong in our faith and full of love. Amen.

© 2020 Milestones Ministry, Inc. All rights reserved.

In addition to Taking Faith Home, Milestones Ministry offers you a daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to [www.milestonesministry.org](http://www.milestonesministry.org)

Mountain High/  
Valley Low 1

2 Scripture

3 Pray & Bless

## Three Easy Steps in Less Than 10 Minutes!

1. Share a Mountain High and/or Valley Low
2. Read Scripture
3. Pray & Bless

Do this in your home during Advent. If you live alone, connect with someone online or with a phone call. *Taking Faith Home* provides a wonderful guide and outline that include scripture reading, prayer and blessing to use each week. We have included a one-page take home sheet (page 3) to copy and send home with your members.

## The 2020 Advent Challenge Follow-Up

After Christmas, gather together online or face to face to share stories about what happened during Advent in your home. The prize?

Well, that may be the surprise if you take the challenge!





DECEMBER 6, 2020  
SECOND SUNDAY  
OF ADVENT



*God has good news for all people.*

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Mark 1:1-8</b>	<b>The beginning of the good news</b>
<b>Monday</b>	<b>Isaiah 40:1-11</b>	<b>Comfort my people</b>
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>2 Peter 3:8-15a</b>	<b>Promise of the Lord's coming</b>
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Malachi 4:1-6</b>	<b>The great day of the Lord</b>
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Matthew 3:1-10</b>	<b>The preaching of John the Baptist</b>
<b>Friday</b>	<b>1 Timothy 1:12-17</b>	<b>Gratitude for God's mercy</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Psalms 85:1-2, 8-13</b>	<b>A prayer for God's peace</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>John 1:6-8, 19-28</b>	<b>John's witness to the light</b>

### SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

*"[T]he voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" Mark 1:3 (NRSV)*

### PRAYERS AND BLESSING

#### **A Prayer for the Week:**

Eternal God, we thank you that through your Son, Jesus Christ, love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Amen. (Psalm 85:10)

#### **Mealtime Prayer:**

Generous God, may this gift of food strengthen us to walk in your way of comfort, hope, and peace through the good news of Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### **A Blessing to Give:**

May the Lord God feed you like a shepherd and keep you safe. (Isaiah 40:11)



© 2020 Milestones Ministry, LLC. All rights reserved.

DECEMBER 6, 2020

### HYMN OF THE WEEK

*There's a Voice in the  
Wilderness*



### WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

### CARING CONVERSATIONS



Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- What is some good news you have heard recently?
- What events in the news do people consider to be positive news or good news?
- The word gospel means good news. How is the coming of Christ into our world good news for you?

### DEVOTIONS



*Read:* Mark 1:1-8.

The beginning of a book helps set up what the book is about and where the story is going. This is true of the Gospel of Mark as well. Mark 1:1-8 is part of Mark's prologue (vv. 1-13) and was used in ancient writings with this very purpose in mind: to give information that helps people follow the story as it unfolds. Mark's point is that good news ("good tidings" in Isaiah 40:9), the gospel, is beginning to happen through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This good news is linked to John the baptizer who is himself reminiscent of Elijah. When Elijah comes again, God's people will encounter God's promised deliverance (Malachi 4:5). That future time is now present through John and through Jesus. John's message of repentance (v. 4) will be continued by Jesus when he says, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:14). Where do you see the good news of Jesus happening today?

*Pray:* **Merciful God, we thank you for fulfilling your promise of hope and peace through the good news of Jesus Christ. Amen.**

### SERVICE



Good news has a positive effect on people. Isaiah 40 gives prophetic comfort to God's people. What word of comfort or encouragement can you give to someone this week?

### RITUALS AND TRADITIONS



Set up a Christmas nativity set in your home. Place the wise men further away from the set for now. Wait to place Jesus in the manger until Christmas Eve. On your Advent wreath, light the first candle of hope and the second one of peace. Pause for a moment to sit in silence and look upon the nativity set and think about the coming of Jesus.

*Say this Bible verse:* **Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people.** (Psalm 85:8a)

*Pray:* **Lord, help us to prepare the way of the Lord. Give us peace and hope. Amen.**



In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: [www.milestonesministry.org](http://www.milestonesministry.org)



DECEMBER 13, 2020  
THIRD SUNDAY  
OF ADVENT



*Jesus brings good news.*

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

<b>Sunday</b>	<b>John 1:6-8, 19-28</b>	<b>John's witness to the light</b>
<b>Monday</b>	<b>Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11</b>	<b>Good news of deliverance</b>
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>1 Thessalonians 5:16-24</b>	<b>A call to rejoice</b>
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Romans 10:14-17</b>	<b>Those who bring good news</b>
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>1 Thessalonians 3:6-13</b>	<b>Timothy's encouraging report</b>
<b>Friday</b>	<b>Genesis 18:1-18</b>	<b>A son for Abraham and Sarah</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Psalm 126</b>	<b>A people who dream</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Luke 1:26-38</b>	<b>The birth of Jesus foretold</b>

### SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

*The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners. **Isaiah 61:1 (NRSV)***

### PRAYERS AND BLESSING

#### **A Prayer for the Week:**

God of power and might, help us to be aware of the needs of people and be prepared to bring joy and good news to people through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

#### **Mealttime Prayer:**

May this gift of food fill our hearts with laughter and make us shout with joy. Amen.

#### **A Blessing to Give:**

May the God of peace make you holy in spirit and soul and body. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)



© 2020 Milestones Ministry, LLC. All rights reserved.

DECEMBER 13, 2020

### HYMN OF THE WEEK

*Joy to the World*



### WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

### CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- Think or talk about a time when you felt sad or brokenhearted.
- When you feel discouraged, who do you talk to or what do you do to feel better?
- Jesus comes to change our lives. How does Jesus make a difference for your life and the lives of others?

### DEVOTIONS

*Read:* Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11.

An American emailed his friend in Zimbabwe and asked if he was well. The response was "I am well if you are well." That response comes with a communal understanding of wellness. We can't be well on our own. Neither can we truly feel okay about ourselves if we feel safe and protected while our neighbor does not feel okay. Isaiah 61:1-2 brings good news for all, including—and especially—the oppressed, the brokenhearted, captives, prisoners, those who mourn and those who owe debts (The year of the Lord's favor was a time to forgive debts). God's work of justice and mercy that brings joy will be seen in all the nations (v. 11) and is for all, not just a select and privileged few. How do you see the wellbeing of others as important to your own wellbeing?

*Pray:* **God of justice, we give you thanks that your goodness and mercy is for us and for all the world through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Isaiah 61:11)**

### SERVICE

There is a theme of joy in our readings this week. This joy includes God's promise to overcome pain, disappointment, and fear. Think of someone currently experiencing difficulties. How can you be the hands and voice of God's good news to that person this week?

### RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

Place the wise men further away from the nativity set for now. Wait to place Jesus in the manger until Christmas Eve. On your Advent wreath, light the first candle of hope, the second one of peace, and the third one of joy. Pause for a moment to sit in silence and look upon the nativity set and think about the good news and joy the coming of Jesus brings us.

*Say this Bible verse:* **Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.** (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

*Pray:* **Lord God, thank you for being with us in times of sadness and times of joy. Give us hope, peace and joy as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Amen.**



In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: [www.milestonesministry.org](http://www.milestonesministry.org)

DECEMBER 20, 2020  
FOURTH SUNDAY  
OF ADVENT



*God favors the peasant girl Mary.*

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Luke 1:26-38</b>	<b>The birth of Jesus foretold</b>
<b>Monday</b>	<b>2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16</b>	<b>The Lord's message to David</b>
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Romans 16:25-27</b>	<b>Paul's closing prayer</b>
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Luke 1:46b-55</b>	<b>Mary's song of praise</b>
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Luke 2:1-20</b>	<b>The birth of Jesus</b>
<b>Friday</b>	<b>John 3:11-16</b>	<b>For God so loved the world</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26</b>	<b>God's promise to David</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Luke 2:22-40</b>	<b>Jesus presented in the temple</b>

### SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

*The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus." Luke 1:30-31 (NRSV)*

### PRAYERS AND BLESSING

#### **A Prayer for the Week:**

Lord God, just as you favored your servant Mary, grant all of us faith and trust in your power to bring salvation to all through Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### **Mealtime Prayer:**

With this food we receive your steadfast love, O Lord; with our mouths we proclaim your faithfulness to all generations through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Psalm 89:1)

#### **A Blessing to Give:**

May the love of God bless you with the good news of Jesus' birth.



© 2020 Milestones Ministry, LLC. All rights reserved.

DECEMBER 20, 2020

### HYMN OF THE WEEK

*Wait for the Lord*



### WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

### CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- When have you received special attention from friends or family?
- Think of someone you have valued as a friend. In what ways do you value them?
- The angel Gabriel describes Mary as favored. What does it mean to you that God has given the world our Savior and Lord Jesus through Mary, a young peasant girl?

### DEVOTIONS

*Read:* Luke 1:26-38.

In verses 28 and 30 the angel Gabriel says that Mary is favored, that is, Mary experiences the undeserved kindness of God. In Luke 2:40 and 52 the child Jesus is also described as favored. Divine attention comes to a young virgin to deliver Jesus, the Son of the Most High. The beginning of the Gospel of Luke tells of Elizabeth, a barren woman who gives birth, Mary, a peasant girl who gives birth to the future king in the lineage of David, and of shepherds in the field who will be the first evangelists of the good news of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:18). The message is clear: with God all things are possible, and as with Mary, our faithful response is, "let it be with me according to your word" (v. 38). Mary is the model of the life of faith that acknowledges that God has done great things for her. As we prepare to enter the season of Jesus' birth, we are met with God's favor and blessings for us as well. How has God come to you with divine favor?

*Pray:* **God of undeserved kindness, give us faith to trust that with you all things are possible through Christ Jesus our Lord, Son of the Most High God. Amen.**

### SERVICE

During this Advent season think of those who are not favored in our society. For example, the homeless are poor, hungry, and in need. In what ways can you show God's love to them through an act of kindness?

### RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

From your nativity set, hold each piece in silence for a moment. Then place the pieces back in the scene. Have Mary and Joseph arrive first, followed by the shepherds and then the wise men. Wait to place Jesus in the manger until Christmas Eve. On your Advent wreath, light the first candle of hope, the second one of peace, the third one of joy, and the fourth one of love. *Say this Bible verse:* **For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.** (John 3:16)

*Pray:* **Lord God, thank you for showing us love even when we are afraid like Mary, the mother of Jesus. Give us hope, peace, joy, and love as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Amen.**



In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: [www.milestonesministry.org](http://www.milestonesministry.org)