

The Weary World Rejoices

2021 Advent Toolkit from First Baptist Church

A sentiment I've repeatedly heard this year is, "I'm just so tired." Tired of the continual deluge of bad news. Tired of hearing about another forest fire, hurricane, death. Tired of COVID restrictions and decisions about what's worth the risk and what's not. Tired of making plans and then adapting or canceling them. Tired of shipping disruptions. Tired of racism. Tired of division. Tired of worshipping and meeting virtually. Tired of upheaval in our country and our world. We are tired of so many things – both trivial and enormous.

In many ways, as we prepare to come close to this Advent season, it hardly feels notable. One could argue we've been living in an anxious, subdued world for nearly two years now. We've grown accustomed to the tension and the waiting that Advent invites us to notice. And so I can hardly think of a more appropriate Advent theme for 2021 than the well-known line from "O Holy Night:" *The weary world rejoices.*

We are so very weary. We FEEL that phrase in a way we've, perhaps, never experienced before. And yet, here we are anyway, called to rejoice.

To be clear, I don't think rejoicing eradicates weariness. I don't think it infuses us with energy and makes our troubles go away. Rather, I believe we are invited to hold the two in tension: to be weary, and yet to rejoice.

And so our Advent devotional this year follows this theme, this deep awareness we have that the kingdom is coming but not yet fully here, that there is something worth celebrating but much to grieve, that God is near but the work is not finished. This year's devotional does not ask us to mute the news and deck the halls anyway. Rather, it suggests there is grace to be found in the tension: where there is despair, there is also hope. Where there's destruction, peace. Where there's fear, perhaps there is joy. And where there is indifference, there can also be love.

May this guide meet you where you are – whether you're weary or rejoicing or somewhere in between – and may it invite you to experience Advent in a way that draws you close to the mystery of Christmas and to the God who came to live among us.

Rev. Amanda Standiford,
FBC Associate Pastor of Spiritual Formation

*Find the Advent "How to"
guide on the back cover.*



Week 1, November 28 - December 4

(Despair and) Hope: The Prophets



Isaiah 2:1-5 and Luke 3:1-6 (words from a prophet urging people to put their trust in God rather than in kings and nations)



Given the context of this week's two passages, I wonder how they might speak to both DESPAIR and HOPE? I wonder where you see that echoed in our world today?



"There is a crack in everything. That is how the light gets in."
~Leonard Cohen



Every Valley

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain made low; and the crooked made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain made low, and the crooked straight, and the rough places plain, and all flesh shall see it together. For the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Amen.

Text: Isaiah 40:4,5 ©1976 Beckenhorst Press /CCLI#403620



Go on a "light" scavenger hunt. Draw or write down as many sources of light as you can find in your home and/or neighborhood.



Follow the directions in your art kit to create the dark sky.

Expand your Week 1 experience by taking advantage of FBC's digital devotional offerings:

-Find the PHRASE TO PONDER on FBC's Facebook page. The image can be downloaded and saved as your digital wallpaper. Each time you look at your device this week, you can take a moment to remember the phrase.

-Also on the Facebook page, you can hear the choir sing EVERY VALLEY. Listen to the recording and sing along or take time to reflect on the lyrics.

Week 2, December 5 - 11

(Destruction and) Peace: The Shepherds

As with Week 1, you can find a version of the **PHRASE TO PONDER** for download on the **FBC Facebook page**. Make sure to check that same page for the **FBC Sanctuary Choir's rendition of this week's SONG TO SING**.

Want to become a sheep or shepherd but feel you need a child in the photo? First of all, you don't need young kids to have fun with the children's activities! **BUT**, what a great way to involve grandchildren, nieces/nephews, or kids in your neighborhood! Extend invitations to other families and you can become a whole flock!



Isaiah 64:1-4 and Luke 2:8-15 (*words from a prophet in exile alongside the people of God, crying out for God to destroy, to make room for something new*)



Sometimes making peace looks like destructing and dismantling, but perhaps more often, it looks like creating a new way. What are you called to **DESTRUCT**? What are you called to **CREATE** or come alongside in its place?



"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord~You are speaking truth to power, you are laying down our swords~Replanting every vineyard 'til a brand new wine is poured~Your peace will make us one." ~Audrey Assad



While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks

While shepherds watched their flocks by night, all seated on the ground, the angel of the Lord came down, and glory shown around. "Fear not" said he, for mighty dread had seized their troubled mind; Glad tidings of great joy I bring to you and all mankind. "To you in David's town this day is born, of David's line, the Savior, who is Christ the Lord, and this shall be the sign: "The heav'nly Babe you there shall find to human view displayed, "All meanly wrapt in swathing bands and in a manger laid." "All glory be to God on high, and to the earth be peace: Good will henceforth from heav'n to earth begin and never cease.

-Nahum Tate



Become a sheep! Dress up like either a sheep or shepherd using things in our house. Send photos to Amanda!



Follow the directions in your art kit to add the hills and city of Bethlehem.

Week 3, December 12 - 18

(Fear and) Joy: The Holy Family



Luke 1:26-28 and Luke 1:47-55 (*the story of a young woman discovering that her whole life is about to be thrown off course*)



I wonder what it was like for Mary to hold both FEAR and JOY in tension? I wonder what that looks like in your own life?



"This is the night
when you can trust
that any direction
you go,
you will be walking
toward the dawn."

~Jan Richardson
from *The Cure for Sorrow*



Blessed Is the Lord (Benedictus)

Benedictus, Benedictus, Blessed is our Lord. Benedictus,
Benedictus, welcome His Incarnate Word.

Chosen first among the priests to serve within the temple walls, Zacharias stood in awe when he heard the angel call. Benedictus, Benedictus, Blessed is our Lord. Benedictus, Benedictus, welcome His Incarnate Word.

"Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, will come to raise salvation's horn. God incarnate, Word made flesh to a virgin shall be born."
Benedictus, Benedictus, Blessed is our Lord. Benedictus, Benedictus, welcome His Incarnate Word.

Christ brings light to sin's dark night: Our Dayspring from on high, saints and angels sing God's praise. All the earth and Heav'ns reply: Benedictus, Benedictus, Blessed is our Lord. Benedictus, Benedictus, welcome His Incarnate Word.

-R.C. Sproul



Go for a walk around your neighborhood. Figure out how far you've traveled. See how many times you would have to walk around your neighborhood to equal Mary and Joseph's 70 mile trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem.



Follow the directions in your art kit to add Mary and Joseph.

The beginning of week 3, JOY, marks the half-way point in this Advent season of waiting.

Keep your study fresh by remembering to download this week's PHRASE TO PONDER and listen to the Sanctuary Choir's SONG TO SING.

Invite someone to church with you this week, and help be the JOY in what might can be a FEARful time of year for so many.

The time of waiting is almost finished.

This week, in addition to finding the PHRASE TO PONDER and SONG TO SING, you will have an additional song to listen to on the FBC Facebook page:

THE WORK OF CHRISTMAS

When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with their flock, the work of Christmas begins: To find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the pris'ner, to rebuild the nations; to bring peace among brothers, to make music from the heart.

-Howard Thurman

Join us for our Christmas Eve service, Dec. 24 at 5:00 pm, in person and live on Facebook.



Week 4, December 19 - 24

(Indifference and) Love: The Magi



Genesis 18:1-8 and Matthew 2:1-12 (the story of a couple who offered food and drink to strangers who came out from the desert)



Both Abraham and Sarah and magi had the opportunity to choose between INDIFFERENCE and LOVE. Where can you make the conscious choice to show love, even when it's tempting to pretend not to see?



"Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world." ~Desmond Tutu



Star in the East

Hail the blest morn, see the great Mediator, Down from the regions of glory descend! Shepherd, go worship the Babe in the Manger; Lo, for his guard the bright angels attend. Shepherds, worship, Lo, angels attend.

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning! Dawn on our darkness, and lend us Thine aid. Star in the east, the horizon adorning, Guide where our Infant Redeemer was laid.

Say, shall we yield him, in costly devotion, Odours of Eden and offerings divine, Gems, from the mountain, and pearls from the ocean, Myrrh from the forest and gold from the mine.

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning! Dawn on our darkness, and lend us Thine aid; Star in the east, the horizon adorning, Guide where our Infant Redeemer was laid.

Vainly we offer each ample oblation, Vainly with gold we His favour secure, Richer by far is the heart's adoration: Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning! Dawn on our darkness, and lend us Thine aid; Star in the East, the horizon adorning, Guide where our Infant Redeemer was laid, Guide where our Infant Redeemer was laid.

-Southern Folk Hymn

Play a game like Chutes and Ladders, Candyland, Sorry, or Trouble. Wonder about what might have made the magi's journey to see Jesus long and difficult. What might have made it worthwhile?

Follow the directions in your art kit to add stars for the magi.

THE BRIDGE

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How to Use FBC's Advent Toolkit

Follow the symbols and directions for each week. Below is a description of each symbol. You can do all the activities at once or spread them throughout the week. If you have any questions, please reach out to Amanda Standiford at 502.227.4528 or astandiford@fbcfrankfort.church.



A STORY TO SHARE - Each week you'll read two scriptures, silently or aloud, alone or with others.



A QUESTION TO CONSIDER - Questions invite you to reflect and connect with the week's scripture.



A PHRASE TO PONDER - Phrases will also be available for download from FBC's Facebook page to use as wallpaper on your device throughout the week.



A SONG TO SING - Choir recordings of each song will be available on FBC's Facebook page during the corresponding week.



AN ACTIVITY TO DO - Although the activity is geared toward children to assist in their Advent journey, adults are welcome to complete the activity also.



AN ART PROJECT STEP - If you did not sign up for an art project kit but would like one, additional kits are available in the church office.