

Friday, Dec. 4

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

*from Rev. Sarah Webb, Wheeling, WV*

What is your heart's greatest longing? When we read this intimate letter that was exchanged between dear friends, we see their longing for each other. They find strength in one another. Encouragement. Together they share a deep well of love for their God, their anticipation of Christ's return, and their profound commitment to prepare. But there is a deeper current in which the hunger for our God becomes an ache.

*What is your heart's greatest longing? For what do you yearn?*

In the stillness of the Advent wait, when we move away from the hustle of things that distract -- the quiet finds us. Our hearts release and swell and we are bathed in bliss. It is the one communion that fills our deepest longing.

*Lord Jesus, clear the way for our hearts to open.*

Saturday, Dec. 5

Read Luke 3:1-6

*from Rev. Joshua Patty, Fairmont—Central Christian Church*

John the Baptist is always introduced the same way, with words from Isaiah. "A voice crying out... 'Prepare the way of the Lord.'" Valleys are raised, mountains flattened -- it's the ancient version of a massive interstate highway project.

Who is doing the preparation work? Is it John through his preaching? Though John's role is important, it seems that the task is too big for any one man.

Instead, the prophet's words ought to be seen as a prayer. God is raising up the valleys, leveling off the mountains, and smoothing the way. God prepares the way of the Lord.

God also prepares the Lord's way into each of our hearts. God smoothes our rough edges, straightens our crookedness, and raises us from our lowliness. May we join the prophet and pray for this.

*In my life, O God, prepare the way of the Lord.*

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# Advent Prayerscapes:



Created by The Order of Ministry of the  
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in West Virginia

## Week One: HOPE

Sunday, Nov. 29

Read Luke 21:25-36

*from Rev. Scott Thayer, Bethany—Memorial Church of Christ*

Happy New Year! No, I haven't lost my calendar. I realize that it's only November 29, not January 1, but followers of Jesus the world over know that the church marks the beginning of the Christian year on this day, the first Sunday of Advent. I rather like that. I like being part of an alternative rhythm that sees New Year's Day as a time of watching for signs of Christ's in-breaking reign, not just as an excuse for throwing yet one more party.

Today's lectionary Gospel passage from Luke reminds Christians that Advent is a time, not just to remember the first coming of Jesus, but to look forward to the second coming of the Savior. Now that is something to celebrate!

*O God, we look for signs that your realm is near,  
that your Word rules the world.*

Monday, Nov. 30

Read Isaiah 11:1-9

*from Rev. Del Parris, Clarksburg—Central Christian Church*

The wolf and the lamb, the calf and the lion, all lying down together in peace? Some fantasy! We cannot even have peace in this country, much less peace in the world.

So why would Isaiah provide his people with this vision when it seems so unrealistic? The word that comes to my mind here is “hope.” In spite of what seems to be an impossibility, Isaiah is challenging us to hope for peace. Hope is defined as: “desire accompanied by expectation of fulfillment.”

This Advent, I plan to pray a lot for peace in my heart and peace in the world.

*Lord, fill our hearts with hope that is based on our experience  
of your love, for with you all things are possible.*

Tuesday, Dec. 1

Read Isaiah 40:1-8

*from Dr. Kimberly Bentrrott, Port-au-Prince, Haiti*

*“A voice cries out: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord.’”*

John the Baptist is said to have uttered these words from the prophet Isaiah. In fact, it was John the Baptist whose job was to prepare the people of the Israel for the arrival of Jesus and his public ministry.

But who prepares the way of the Lord today? Who is charged with helping people receive Christ’s message of grace, compassion, and justice?

We may be tempted to think that this type of job is only for prophets like John the Baptist or for parish ministers. However the fact is that all of us that seek to follow the path of Jesus have been commissioned to work on his behalf.

We are a prophetic people and as such we are called to prepare our own hearts and minds, as well as those of others, to hear the message that Christ brings to his people.

*God who speaks to us still,  
help us to hear the voice of the prophet  
and prepare ourselves to meet and receive the Christ.*

Wednesday, Dec. 2

Read Isaiah 40:9-11

*from Rev. Patrick Bentrrott, Port-au-Prince, Haiti*

Every Sunday at church the Haitian people sing hymns of praise to God and give thanks for all that God has done for them. “Mesi Senye,” (thank you Lord) they yell out with their eyes closed and their arms lifted towards the sky.

Sometimes I wonder what they are thanking God for? Most of them live in tiny shacks and experience hunger on a daily basis. There is arguably no country on earth that has undergone the amount of oppression and persecution as Haiti. And yet there they are every Sunday celebrating life, giving thanks for all that they have, and patiently waiting for the day that God delivers his people.

During Advent we can be in solidarity with the Haitian people by following their lead and celebrating the gift of the life, the gift of the Son, and the hope that the future holds when one day justice is available to all people.

*O coming One,  
help me to remember that it is not for me alone  
that you have come to our world,  
but it is directly to me that you call  
for justice, for peace, for hope,  
even in the voice of those least heard  
and in the sight of those least seen.  
Help me to see, to hear, to do—all at your bidding.*

Thursday, Dec. 3

Read Malachi 3:1-4

*from Rev. Aaron Watkins, Bluefield—First Christian Church*

Every day I look in the mail for something good. I don’t want to see bills, although those do come on a regular basis. No, I want to find something personal - maybe a card or a letter from someone who cares about me - addressed to me.

Consider if you would, the postal carrier being messengers, bringing messages every day in some form or another. The final book of the Old Testament, Malachi, speaks of a messenger. In fact, the word Malachi itself means “messenger.” To many this messenger was Elijah, but in fact this messenger turned out to be John the Baptist. With passion and verve, he commanded the people—the religious leaders included—to repent and make themselves clean, for God was coming: God in the form of a baby boy.

*Lord, you bring us hope in uncommon packages.  
Help us to envision your promised new day as we hear your word.*