



*Advent Devotions*  
*2011*



# *Welcome*

As we thought about our 2011 Advent Devotion Booklet, we decided to share with you some of the devotions from the past. This booklet is entitled, “Revisiting the Future” because we remember wonderful stories and events from our past during this season of Advent.

We revisit the past and then we look forward to the future through the life of the Babe born in a manger.

Please enjoy these words from the past and may they move you towards a future of hope, peace, joy and love.

Blessings,

Commission on Worship and Spiritual Growth

Mr. Chris Anderson  
Pastor Debbie Keith  
Pastor Kitty Fisher  
Ms. Marge Collins  
Pastor Mary Ann Ward  
Rev. Owen Cayton

Rev. Christy Moore  
Pastor Eula Hledik  
Rev. LeAnn Sapp  
Pastor Marilynn Knott  
Ms. Mary Helen Buttman  
Ms. Sandra Skinner

Ms. Sarah Clark  
Rev. Ronnie Hopkins, Moderator  
Rev. Leslie Dotson, Regional Representative

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome	Page 2
Table of Contents	Page 3 Page 4
“Keep Awake”	Page 5
“Terasa”	Page 6
“God’s Present of Presence”	Page 7
“Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem”	Page 8
“Offering Compassion”	Page 9
“From Solitude Into Community”	Page 10
“Choices”	Page 11
“Is it Babel or is it Memorex?”	Page 12
“The Heavens and the Earth Celebrate”	Page 13
“Sing to the Lord!”	Page 14
“A Foundation of Justice”	Page 15
“The Journey”	Page 16
“Letting Go...”	Page 17
“Reaching the Love Within”	Page 18
“Following Jesus Means Turning the Other Cheek”	Page 19
“Revisiting”	Page 20

Table of Contents cont...

“Genuine Gifts”	Page 21
“The Rough Road to the Manger”	Page 22
“The Lord has done Great Things for Us”	Page 23
“Finding our Pathways”	Page 24
“Trusting God, Living Authentically”	Page 25
“God with Us”	Page 26
“Traveling to Bethlehem”	Page 27
“The Favored One of God”	Page 28
“Seeking our Spiritual Inheritance”	Page 29
“A Friend Indeed!”	Page 30
“The Dove of Peace”	Page 31
“Faith”	Page 32
“A Way to the Manger”	Page 33

These devotions have been reprinted with permission of the authors.

**November 27, 2011**

## **“Keep Awake”**

Scripture: Matthew 25:1-13

Fairly serious words from Jesus as recorded in Matthew’s gospel. Unless you are an insomniac, it is difficult for most of us to stay awake around the clock. Even though a pending wedding reception was at hand, and we all know that some of these have gone on into the wee hours, Jesus seems to point specifically to each of us in this parable: **“you** know neither the day nor the hour.”

Advent has always been seen as a time of waiting, of preparation. While preparation is something that I can get involved in, I have never been too keen on waiting. It always seems like such a waste of time. To wait. And to wait patiently is almost impossible for me. Long ago, I realized that I cannot and will never know everything I need to know. But waiting for something that will take place still seems such a challenge.

In many ways, Advent has some of the same challenges that come when we are expecting the birth of a child. We cannot know exactly all the changes that will take place, physically and emotionally to the expectant parents. We cannot know exactly how routines will change with the addition of a new life. We cannot know with absolute certainty the precise moment of birth. Through it all, we are enjoined to wait. The baby will arrive when it is ready!

So it is with the Advent of Jesus in our lives. We cannot know exactly how Jesus will appear to us. We cannot know exactly how we will experience Jesus presence. We cannot know with absolute certainty the precise moment when Jesus will appear. Rather, Matthew reminds us that Jesus *will* show up, there *will* be a feast, and those who were awake *will* be invited in.

Prayer: *Eternal God, help us stay awake this Advent. Keep us looking for Your Presence even in the most unlikely places. In the Name of the One who **will** appear. Amen.*



Rev. Thomas R. Jewell, Regional Pastor  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma  
December 3, 2006

**November 28, 2011**

## **“Terasa”**

Scripture: Luke 2:13, 14

The Highways in Kenya make the worst dirt roads in Oklahoma look like sleek superhighways. Potholes there have been known to swallow hippos whole.

While visiting my daughter in Kenya in December of 2006, we traveled by bus from Nairobi to Kisumu, a ten-hour trip that is surely similar in comfort to being stuck in a running dryer.

As we loaded, every seat on the bus was taken except for the one next to me, and I was looking forward to at least being able to stretch out. But then, at the last second, a Kenyan woman and her infant child boarded, taking my extra seat.

I was cursing my plight as we pulled out of the station, but soon learned the woman's name was Rose and her four-month-old daughter was Terasa.

Terasa was appropriately plump and wide-eyed, with beautiful brown eyes and skin and a cute dimple on her left cheek. A more contented child you could not find.

Despite the ride like a roller coaster, Terasa never whimpered. Even as she was fed and changed and passed around to Connie, Angela and me, she seemed absolutely satisfied.

The most mesmerized I was by her, though, was when she slept. As the bus bounced and jolted it way along, Terasa was the picture of serenity, much as I imagined the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

*Prayer: O God, to a world of chaos, you sent a baby to teach us of peace. May that peace so fill us that we become, like him, makers of peace even in the midst of warring and strife. Amen.*

Rev. Bill English, Pastor  
Disciples Christian Church, Bartlesville  
December 15, 2008

**November 29, 2011**

## **“God’s Present of Presence”**

Scripture: Genesis 4:1-16

On the surface, one might say the story of Cain and Abel is about jealousy, murder, gifts, or worship. However, there is a deeper message. It is a message about humanity’s brokenness and isolation from God and others. As New Testament people, we know the commandments given by Jesus are to love God and neighbor as thy self (Matthew 22:37-40). The struggles to follow these commands are at the root of humanity’s brokenness. Cain was isolated from God by his less than acceptable gift and he was isolated from Abel because of his jealousy. Even in the midst of Cain’s brokenness, God was gracious. While God exacted punishment on Cain, God also spared his life.

Like Cain, we too struggle with our brokenness. At times, we feel isolated from God and from others. God’s greatest desire is to be in relationship with us as individuals, and for us to be in loving relationship with each other as community. Even today, this is difficult for people to achieve. The glory of this story is that the Old Testament speaks of the promised one who will give us the opportunity to live in restored relationship not only with God, but also with our neighbor.

This advent season we are preparing for the promise. This promise came in the form of a baby, wrapped in cloth, lying in a manger. This baby’s name was, Immanuel. Even in our brokenness God is with us.

*Prayer: Ever present God, help me to recognize the brokenness in my relationship with you and with others. Forgive me for doing things that isolate me from You and others. Let me always feel your loving presence and help me to be healed and find wholeness in you. I thank you for the gift of your son, Jesus the Christ, an example and reminder that you are with me now and always. Amen.*

Rev. Devon McAnally  
Associate Regional Pastor for Healthcare Advocacy  
Christian Church in Oklahoma  
December 9, 2010

**November 30, 2011**

## **“Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem”**

Scripture: Psalm 122:1-9

Pain wracks Jerusalem these days. Surgical cuts divide neighborhoods and walls keep the wounds open. The people, the very heart of the city, cry out for relief from the sharp sting of suicide bombs, the constant throb of injustice, the ache over loss of loved ones, homes, livelihoods. And not just one group of people are in agony; all are – Palestinians, Jews, Christians, Muslims, adults, children, religious, secular – all cry out.

Though the pain seems recent, its beginnings lie in the city’s most ancient days. The pilgrims who first sang Psalm 122 sang not because they thought the city had enough peace, but because they knew how quickly the peace they prayed for evaporated. The ancient citizens of Judah to whom Isaiah spoke watched their city threatened by invading armies and their own neglect of God’s justice. The Christians who read Luke 21:20-28 saw its destruction by the Romans. Countless people ever since have known devastation, and wept, as Jesus once did, over this center of so many hopes.

Some Christians believe the current pain is yet another sign of God’s finality arriving sooner rather than later. They stand in a long tradition of Christians who have thought they could read divine meaning into the suffering of others. But I see the pain as a sign of our own failures to work toward peace among diverse peoples at home and in Jerusalem. As we wait for the birth of the Prince of Peace, let us join those Hebrew pilgrims and pray, fervently and deeply, for the peace of Jerusalem.

*Prayer: May the people of Jerusalem find peace, Holy One, and may those who love the city prosper within and outside its walls. Amen.*



Rev. Dr. Nancy Claire Pittman  
Phillips Theological Seminary  
December 11, 2006

**December 1, 2011**

## **“Offering Compassion”**

Scripture: Psalm 90

Advent is a time when we look forward to the coming of the Christ child. Though we are really reflecting on this ancient event, in many ways we are still looking ahead to the promises of God. We seek the light of God. We seek the message of the Messiah. We seek a new and better relationship with God’s son. In Psalm 90 we hear the prayer of one seeking a wise heart in a world full of conflict and confusion.

It is often the conflict and confusion of the world that urges us to seek God. We see the pain around us, and in us, and we want to feel the comforting hand of God resting on our tired shoulders. It is no wonder that we pray to God to ease our burdens. But as we pray for an end to the conflicts that drive us apart, do we also pray for God to work in our hearts so that our attitudes and perspectives may grow?

It is so much easier to ask God to change the external factors that bring us suffering, but many times the only thing that will bring us greater peace is praying to God for a wise heart. By asking our Creator to bring us understanding and compassion, we begin to see the world in a new light. We also open ourselves to the possibilities that lie ahead in a new life with Christ.

Prayer: *O God of possibility, I come seeking clarity of heart and mind so that you may work through me, bringing peace and compassion to your world. Amen.*

Rev. Rebecca Highfield  
formerly, Harvard Avenue Christian Church, Tulsa  
December 9, 2006

**December 2, 2011**

## **“From Solitude Into Community”**

Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

Advent, a time of anticipation, is observed through community and solitude. We participate in community by gathering with family, friends, and church groups. We practice positive solitude through prayer and meditation. However, often we experience pressures, loneliness, and sadness during any holiday which may result in negative solitude. When we lose the yearning to be with community we must find new enthusiasm and receive God’s blessings by wholeheartedly seeking to help someone else.

It’s not easy, but we can share God’s blessings with another person by spending our most valuable asset, our time. Reach out for Christ and into community, feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty and provide shelter for the homeless.

Releasing our fears, step out in faith, turning outward and doing unto Jesus by giving strength and support to those who are needy is releasing negative solitude and accepting positive actions. Pray for all of God’s creations. The side effect of doing for others is we also receive inner peace.

Prayer: *Dear God, show us the way to give to Jesus by giving to those who are the least of us. In the name of your beloved Son we pray. Amen.*

Rev. Peggy Farris,  
formerly, Memorial Christian Church, Oklahoma City  
December 22, 2007

**December 3, 2011**

## **“Choices”**

Scripture: John 1:1-5

Have you ever made a mistake? Have you ever made a poor decision or taken some sort of action that you later regretted? All of us have. That is part of being human. With any luck at all, most of our mistakes will result in minor problems with no long term consequences. Unfortunately, there are times when a decision we make or a regrettable action that we take results in negative consequences that are long term in nature and possibly even permanent. These are the difficult ones to deal with.

Maybe you or someone you know is struggling with this type of issue today. Maybe a past mistake was made and this person continues to carry a burden of guilt with them each day. Either consciously or subconsciously this person may have accepted the fact that their life can never be the same and that they are not worthy of total happiness.

The good news is that this does not have to be the case. At this time of the year, we celebrate the birth of our savior. As today's scripture indicated, Jesus did come to live among us and was God's word in the flesh. He paid for our sins so we can be forgiven. God forgives. Can we learn to forgive ourselves?

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, we come to you this day admitting that we make mistakes. We regret that they happen and are truly sorry for the harm that is caused by them. We pray that you will help us use these experiences to make us wiser. We are thankful that you are a forgiving God and we pray that you will help us forgive ourselves. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*

Mr. Jeff Henricks  
First Christian Church, Duncan  
December 23, 2009

**December 4, 2011**

## **“Is it Babel or is it Memorex?”**

Scripture: Genesis 11:1-9

What is your relationship to Christ? Is he a part of your everyday life or do you believe that you can accomplish anything by yourself.

I was once asked that question. My answer came from the fair. You know the machines that have the little claw on them and you reach down and pick up a treasure. I once got a heart necklace that was broken in half: one half for yourself and the other half for your beloved. When put together the halves made a whole.

The scripture tells us that the people felt they could accomplish anything by themselves. The question is what was the quality of that life? Mixed in with their successes was it filled with fears, frustration, maybe even anger with a promise for a better life...a half heart life.

With Christ in your life you still have a life with success, trials, and struggles, but with a promise to go along with it. A promise that he will walk beside you and in the end make you and your life better because of it. Your quality of life is enhanced. A whole heart life!

We look forward to this time of year to **celebrate** that very Promise: His promise of love, guidance, and reassurance that he will always be there, even in the form of a small child.

*Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to grow in the daily ups and downs of life with the knowledge that you are always there, if only we ask. Guide us to your ultimate plan for our life. Amen.*



Ms. Laura Townsley, Administrative Assistant  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma  
December 21, 2010

**December 5, 2011**

## **“The Heavens and the Earth Celebrate”**

Scripture: Isaiah 1:1-3

As Isaiah begins his prophecies, the heavens and the earth are called upon to witness to the covenants of God and his people. Likewise, in our celebrations of Christmas, we too, call upon the heavens and the earth in hymns and carols, in celebrations of our Savior’s birth.

Christmas is a special time to me, a time to honor the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. One of the most memorable times was at my folk’s house in Holliday, Texas in 1995 when all of our family was together to celebrate Christmas. We sang carols, played games, talked about times when my folks were growing up, and the kind of Christmases they had. Everyone went out to cut our tree and decorate it with strings of colored popcorn and homemade decorations made by the grandchildren. What a great time with 45 members of our family together. Looking back, it was very special that year because we lost our father, February 7, 1996.

All Christmases are special to me when I can have all my children and family together. What better time and what better season, what greater occasion, or more wonderful reason to kneel down in prayer and lift our hands high to the God of all Creation. So at this season when joy is everywhere, let us meet our Redeemer at the altar of prayer. Merry Christmas to all.

Prayer: *Hear, O People of God, the Good News of Jesus Christ during this noisy and clattering Advent Season. Amen.*

Ms. Ann Willits  
Central Christian Church, Fairview  
November 30, 2009

**December 6, 2011**

## **“Sing to the Lord!”**

Scripture: Psalm 96

Israel returns from captivity. They rejoice! Psalm 96 is an “outburst of over-flowing praise, free, and spontaneous”. (Abingdon Bible Commentary, pg 571) Even before the angels sang “Gloria” while the shepherds watched their flocks, God’s children sang “Great is the Lord”. It reminds me of the joyous singing that accompanies Advent and Christmas. We’ve known these songs since we were knee high. In high school I learned Handel’s Messiah and it reverberates to the heart of my soul every time I hear it. Then I start to sing.

I love the songs of Advent. I love the Christmas carols. We give ourselves permission to sing out with the voices of children, and sing we do. We gather in groups and echo our voices down the corridors of hospitals and nursing homes. Tired wrinkled eyes open wide, a smile curves through the chiseled face and the eyes begin to twinkle with “Joy to the World”. A tear trickles down a tired cheek with “Silent Night”. A foot taps and hands clap even with the secular, “Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer”.

*O sing to the Lord...tell of his salvation from day to day...*

*Sing to the Lord all the earth.*

Don’t hold back singing this season.

Prayer: *Thank you, Great and Loving God, you place a song in our hearts with the gift of every single day. May our lips shout and sing of your salvation. In Jesus’ precious name, Amen.*

Rev. Pat Sutherlin  
Christian Church of the Covenant, Enid  
December 11, 2007

**December 7, 2011**

## **“A Foundation of Justice”**

Scripture: Isaiah 28:9-22

During this special time of Advent, of waiting for the arrival of the Light of the World, I think of the example Jesus brings to us through his life. Justice is one of the most important things Jesus teaches. For as far back as I can remember, I have been concerned about justice – for all.

In Isaiah, God reminds us that the foundation should be justice, and we can be sure we grow right by using honesty as our plumb line. The picture I have with this scripture verse is that the foundation will reach far and wide because we are grounded in justice. And we will be able to reach up because honesty will keep us going straight.

Hymns and songs are a big part of my theology. As I think of justice I remember the words of a song by Jim Strathdee. It is found in the book, Pieces...of our lives. The song speaks of troubled times and ends with, “So send your love, fill us with justice, send your spirit, fill our hearts with peace. Send your dream to free us from our bondage, send your light to lead us home!” This is my prayer song for today.

Prayer: *Gracious God, help us make justice and honesty a part of our being, in all that we do, so we are never separated from them. Amen.*



Ms. Sandra Skinner  
Disciples Christian Church, Bartlesville  
December 20, 2006

**December 8, 2011**

## **“The Journey”**

Scripture: Luke 2:1-5

I know, I know this text is such a familiar one, but when I read it I still get chills! With these words begins a journey not only for Joseph and Mary, but for Jesus.

The birth story is one I read every Christmas Eve to my sons, Jeremy and Justin, when they were little. They crawled up into my lap with giggles of anticipation. For them it was like a sign that Christmas morning was near and the journey to excitement and fun was just a few hours away.

For parents the journey to Christmas begins as early as the day after Christmas and ends as the store doors are closing on the next Christmas Eve. We would have faced full parking lots, long lines and crowded stores where patience was tested and tempers flared.

We often get so weary and stressed out on the journey to Christmas that we may have often read the Christmas story as if it was a sign that it is ALMOST OVER, THANK GOD!

I know that there are those who may scoff at the birth narrative in Luke, but I still get chills as I contemplate the journey that Jesus took from being a child to the cross. As we struggle in our journey to Christmas trying to find that one gift let us be reminded along the way we have already received the ‘perfect’ gift -- God’s unconditional love through Jesus Christ!

*Prayer: Oh God, be with us as we journey during this Advent season. Help us to remember your ‘perfect’ gift. Amen.*

Rev. Shane Hickey  
Fellowship Christian Church, Broken Arrow  
December 17, 2008

**December 9, 2011**

## **“Letting Go...”**

Scripture: Matthew 5:21-26

Many of us carry burdens of anger. There are times we have hurt a friend with what we said or didn't say. As I read this scripture, a broken friendship came to mind. I ended the relationship with no words of why I was angry. As my anger subsided, I forgot to tend to the relationship. The thought of approaching my friend filled my stomach with knots. She continued to send me Christmas cards and I lived in fear of running into her, not knowing what I should say. These words of scripture sting, “Anyone who is so much as angry with a brother or sister is guilty of murder.” (The Message) Letting go of anger will free up room for love. Letting go of anger will allow more room for God to reside.

As we prepare for the promise we need to let go of the grudges and ugly words in our heart. We need to make room to receive the promise of God's love found in the baby to be born in Bethlehem. Letting go is hard, even when it is for our own good. I began to let go when I wrote to my friend asking for forgiveness.

What is weighing down your heart? Are there grudges or angry words that need to be released? When our hearts are free then a way for Christ is open to enter.

*Prayer: God of forgiveness, we come to you this day seeking your help in letting go of all that is keeping us from being ready to receive your love. We open our hearts to your presence. We anticipate the promise found in the birth of your son. Amen.*

Rev. LeAnn Sapp  
First Christian Church, Stillwater  
December 13, 2010

**December 10, 2011**

## **“Reaching the Love Within”**

Scripture: Matthew 5:47-48

Jill tried many times to start the conversation off right. “Good morning.” “What’s so good about it?” “How are you doing?” “None of your business.” “Did you have a nice weekend?” “Yeah, I wasn’t around you.” There was no cracking that hard shell. Jill only ended up being frustrated or angry. Everyone in the office felt the same way. They all tried to be a friend to Clara but to no avail. So they steered clear of her unless they absolutely needed to talk. It was an ideal work group except for her. Weeks and months of trying gave way to years. Clara did her work and they just left her alone.

A new person, Tammy, came to work one day and everyone noticed she and Clara were talking. They even went out to lunch together. Tammy was the kind of person with whom everyone got along. She was the opposite of Clara. One felt good just being around Tammy. After a few months, Jill was close to asking Tammy what her secret was with Clara. She never got the opportunity to ask her because Tammy was hospitalized and very suddenly died.

At Tammy’s funeral they were standing in one group, Clara in the other. It was a very awkward situation. Clara’s face was filled with sorrow. She had lost maybe her only friend. Jill mustered the courage, and walked over to Clara. “I know it must be hard losing your best friend,” Jill said haltingly. “It was,” Clara answered in a barely audible tone. “You see, she was the only Christ I had ever known.”

There was an immense silence. They had thought of themselves as good Christians until that moment. What was Tammy’s secret that they had all missed? When Jill asked Clara, all she said was, “Tammy saw beneath my skin. She never let me push her away.” Jill and her friends had the opportunity to view Clara in a new light thanks to an extraordinary person named Tammy. Are there persons in our own lives like Clara? Is there a Tammy within us?

*Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to look beyond the outer shell to the spirit of Christ within each person. May we reach out with that spirit in us to find what is good, what is perfect in all of God’s children. Give us the courage to get beyond the scorn and anger of others to reach the love within. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.*

Mr. John Russell  
Edmond Trinity Christian Church  
December 8, 2008

**December 11, 2011**

## **“Following Jesus Means Turning the Other Cheek”**

Scripture: Matthew 5:38-42

Turn the other cheek...go the extra mile...give to the one who asks you...don't turn away when someone wants to borrow from you...these are hard biblical truths that we are called to follow in today's scripture passage. I admit that I have a difficult time doing these things. Whenever someone does me evil or even offends me, my immediate response is to get back at them instead of turning the other cheek. Just how do we, as Christians, respond when we are dealt an offense?

Jesus gives us the answer in today's scripture reading. He tells us that it is better for us to be offended twice than to allow ourselves to exact revenge on the other person. And if we still have difficulty with responding in this manner, we have only to remember the example set by Jesus. Jesus was betrayed, beaten and nailed to a cross but instead of getting back at his offenders, he hung on the cross with his arms outstretched in love and asked God to forgive his offenders.

This Advent season, I am reminded that God loved us so much he came down to live among us. He came to share and experience our lives and he came to show us a better way to live...a way of forgiveness and a way of sharing our blessings with others. What better Christmas gift can you give this year than to forgive someone and to share with them the promise of God's saving grace!

*Prayer: Lord, we are humbled by your great love and forgiving acts. As we have been forgiven, may we also forgive others. Amen.*



Ms. Joyce McLendon  
First Christian Church, Purcell  
December 16, 2010

**December 12, 2011**

## **“Revisiting ”**

Scripture: Psalm 122:1-9

This song of a pilgrim to Jerusalem expresses soul-lifting joy at seeing the city and temple of God. Perhaps it was a return visit, charged with memories.

To what can we compare this experience? Jerusalem, now a holy city for three Abrahamic faiths, still inspires in pilgrims a gasp of awe, a fire of recognition in the belly, a confirmation that our faith is based on actual events that happened in a real place.

Whether we've been to Jerusalem or not, we've all revisited places that were important in our past and hold increasing significance as we process their meaning for the present. A college reunion, a rare visit to a hometown, or a conversation with a long-lost relative can cause memories to rearrange themselves in new patterns of meaning, as we consider them from the perspective of today.

In September [2006] I returned, after 50 years, to the scene of the single most life-changing year of my life. As a student at Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland, in 1955-56, my eyes were opened to ideas and customs not previously encountered. Re-visiting TCD in 2006 brought additional insights as I reflected on my life since.

Re-visiting Advent presents a similar opportunity. We're not exactly the same persons we were in Advent 2005 [2010]. The past year's experiences have created openings in our minds and hearts into which new meaning can come. Let us await the re-birth with expectation.

Prayer: *As I stand within your Advent, O Christ, bless me with new insight.*

Ms Martha Hatt  
University Place Christian Church, Enid  
December 4, 2006

**December 13, 2011**

## **“Genuine Gifts”**

Scripture: Psalm 24:1-10

Literally billions of dollars will be spent this Christmas Season to suggest the gifts that we need to give to each other. Untold hours will be spent worrying whether we should give a gift to nieces, cousins or a friend that gave us a gift last year. Is this a good enough gift? Does this seem like an appropriate gift in view of what they gave us last year? Well, normally I would give them a gift, but they didn't give me one last year—or I did and they didn't send a thank you note so I don't even know if they got it. How thoughtless!

It's not fair to ask if you have indulged in one of the above exercises. Probably we all know someone—not us, of course—who has. But the tangible gift during Christmas is pretty measly in comparison to the love that we may have given that friend or relative during the rest of the year or now. We often have relatives or friends who are so wealthy that any physical gift we could give them would be pretty insignificant. What do you give the person that literally has everything they want?

The gift that you can give is your genuine friendship, love and caring during this season and for all the time to follow. Gifts are trinkets, not worth much when everything is really the Lord's. GIVE LOVE. After all, isn't that what God gave us when he gave his only begotten Son?

Prayer: *If we give love, O God, we need not worry about whether our presents are worthy.*

Mr. Paul Thompson  
Yale Avenue Christian Church, Tulsa  
December 24, 2006

**December 14, 2011**

## **“The Rough Road to the Manger”**

Scripture: Genesis 3:1-24

Can you imagine being in paradise? The perfect temperature, all the exotic fruit you can imagine, and of course the perfect soul mate. Adam and Eve found themselves in such a place for just a little while; full of joy, happiness and peace. They barely had time to get settled when suddenly their perfect paradise was gone and they were on the outside looking back. Ashamed and afraid, they turned to face a new world.

Likewise, a young girl found herself in this same situation. This young girl was visited by an angel and told that she would be the mother of the Holy Child. While she was afraid and unsure, as time slowly goes by she does indeed become pregnant. Returning home from a visit to her cousin Elizabeth, Mary returns not as the young carefree girl, but as an expectant unwed young woman. Imagine the stares, stories, and gossip that rippled and roared through the town, as Mary made her way home only to be met by disbelieving parents and an angry fiancé. How to convince them of the truth she knew? She too had to turn and face a new world.

As you see the beautiful Christmas light displays, the decorated Christmas trees, and listen to the wonderful Christmas music, I challenge you to remember the rough edges of the Nativity Story. Before the angels sing, before the shepherds visit, and before the baby's first cry, Mary was far from paradise.

*Prayer: Lord, as we make our way to the manger and its celebration, let us be ever mindful of the struggles and despair that many experience during this time. Open our eyes and let us share Christ's love with those in need. Amen.*



Rev. Ronnie Hopkins  
Central Christian Church, Fairview  
December 8, 2010

**December 15, 2011**

## **“The Lord has done Great Things for Us”**

Scripture: Psalm 126: 3

For me, Christmas begins well before Thanksgiving. I hurl no criticism at seasonal splendor in July, no, not I. My creative juices begin to flow with the heat of summer as I start early with unique, handmade treasures for my loved ones. I always adored the frivolous fantasy of choosing frilly frocks for my little girls, of picking out perfect plaid PJs to snuggle by the warm fires on cold December nights, where telling tales of my own childhood at this magical time of the year mesmerized my dear daughters' imaginations.

I enjoy concocting culinary delights, planting dazzling décor for neighborhood nights, and I plan to eat, drink, and be jolly, to party with plenty, and saturate the season with merriment. Deck the halls, jingle bells, and you better watch out.

Year after year, we glide from the blessings of November to abundance of December, and we praise the Lord and are glad. We have created a cornucopia of plenty; we have lighted the holy tree; we idolize our families; we sanctify the holiday meal; we have done it all, have we not? Oh, really?

Psalms reminds us that “the Lord has done great things for us.” Christmas is about what the **Lord has done**. We can meticulously manage minutiae and call it celebration, there is no sin in that, but may our focus be upon the **great things the Lord has done**, in presenting the perfect gift of Jesus who embodies Hope, Peace, Love and Joy, **great things, whereof we are glad**.

Prayer: *Lord God, all good and perfect gifts come from You; we rejoice and give thanks for Christ Jesus. Amen.*

Ms. Nancy deQuevedo  
Northwest Christian Church, Oklahoma City  
December 14, 2006

**December 16, 2011**

## **“Finding our Pathway”**

Scripture: Luke 1:46-49

As children we sometimes find that pivotal lessons about life come in the most ordinary and unexpected circumstances. As a boy who loved to ride bicycles, I found it quite enjoyable to get off the paved roads onto the dirt roads and the trails across the fields in the countryside where I grew up. I have scars on my knees and several memories of unexpected dips that came up very quickly on the path I was riding. It is all about adventure. Finding a new adventure is so much of why I enjoy riding my bicycle on unfamiliar trails to this day. Today, I ride more cautiously though, and with better balance too!

Architect Frank Lloyd Wright once told about an incident that may have seemed insignificant at the time, but had a profound influence on the rest of this life. The winter he was 9, he went walking across a snow-covered field with his reserved, no-nonsense uncle. As the two of them reached the far end of the field, his uncle stopped him. He pointed out his own tracks in the snow, straight and true as an arrow's flight, and then young Frank's tracks meandering all over the field. "Notice how your tracks wander aimlessly from the fence to the cattle to the woods and back again," his uncle said. "And see how my tracks aim directly to my goal. There is an important lesson in that".

Years later the world-famous architect like to tell how this experience had greatly contributed to his philosophy in life. "I determined right then," he'd say with a twinkle in his eye, "not to miss most things in life, as my uncle had."

*Prayer: Father, may we seek the path today that takes us out of our own limited sense of destination and efficiency, but onto one of those truly adventurous paths that lead us closer to abundant life. In Christ we ask. Amen.*

Rev. Chuck Pettigrew  
Liberty Heights Christian Church, Lawton  
December 11, 2009

**December 17, 2011**

## **“Trusting God, Living Authentically”**

Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11

In a commentary written by Eugene Boring, the author suggests that this account of Jesus’ temptation may have something to teach us about “what it means to have a trusting relationship with God that doesn’t ask for miraculous exceptions to the limitations of an authentic human life.”

If we understand Jesus as one who lived and worked to bring about the “kingdom of God on earth” as an authentic human, then we may also understand ourselves as those called to do the same. But what does it mean to be authentically human and resist the temptation to call on God for miracles?

Living authentically per Jesus’ example, is to proclaim the existence of the kingdom of God on earth in the midst of the chaotic, intimidating, even threatening experiences of life. It is to trust that God is here at work among us, not somewhere removed.

Advent helps us remember this as we anticipate the birth of the child known as Emmanuel, God with us. In this birth, the kingdom of God comes to dwell on earth.

As we prepare to embrace this promise and hope once again, our work may well be found in developing our trust in God’s presence in the world, despite all that the culture around us tells us to the contrary. And, then, perhaps we might also find ways to use our voice to proclaim that good news when it needs to be heard most above the noise and confusion of our daily lives.

*Prayer: God with us, grant that we would grow to trust more in you and that we might risk being voices for your kingdom that is at work among us on earth. Amen.*

Rev. Christy Moore  
Bethany Christian Church, Tulsa  
December 1, 2010

**December 18, 2011**

## **“God with Us”**

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5

The journey to Bethlehem was a journey of faith and hope. Required by law, Joseph and Mary had to return to his home for the census. The time was also drawing near for their first child. Bethlehem was a trek south for the holy family.

In the history of Oklahoma, the journey was west. Those who braved the trail for their own home sites had many reasons for heading to the new territory.

Journeys take us to places that have lasting effects. Oklahomans would find hard times but also new life. Mary and Joseph would never be the same nor are any of us who dare take the journey.

Those who braved the journey west came with expectations of something new and different. It was for a new life of hope. It took deep faith to make a decision to leave the familiar and predictable to enter a land of the unknown and unpredictable.

Whether it is a journey to Bethlehem or Oklahoma, or a journey down the hall to apply for a new job, or to meet the parents of your intended, a journey is a journey and the first step takes faith.

This stories in this devotional booklet, your stories, point to one star, the star of faith that brings us back to the belief that God’s hand is intimately involved with our lives. After all, it was God becoming like us that was the most intimate of involvement in our lives.

*Prayer: Guide our steps and make us bold to take the first ones. May we have faith to follow where you lead. Give to us what we need to go the distance. In the name of Jesus, we ask it. Amen*



Rev. Larry B. Metzger  
First Christian Church, Ponca City  
December 24, 2009

**December 19, 2011**

## **“Traveling to Bethlehem”**

Scripture: Rev. 21:5

About 15 years ago, the Advent calendar on our refrigerator door had the title “Traveling to Bethlehem”. One might think that after many years that trip could become boring, that it would be the same. But, that’s not true. Each year, our fellow travelers are different and we, ourselves, are different. Even the same Scriptures and stories hide new meanings to be discovered. Christmas is always old but new, the same but yet not the same.

This 2008 [2011] Christmas is a dark time – there are wars, economic woes, hatred and violence – the same conditions that existed that first Christmas. But this year, on the road to Bethlehem, I’m reminding myself of some words of Howard Thurman. He says, “There must be always remaining in everyone’s life some place for the singing of angels – some pliiio: for that which in itself is breathlessly beautiful...”

This year, may we all concentrate on the breathlessly beautiful life that Jesus lived and try our best to follow in his Way. Then, trust that God, through us, is at work “making all things new”.

Prayer: *Help us, dear Spirit, to welcome the singing of angels and to help you in the work of making all things new. Amen.*

Ms. Dorothy Messenger  
Southern Hills Christian Church, Edmond  
December 5, 2008

**December 20 2011**

## **“The Favored One of God”**

Scripture: Luke 1:26-38

If you asked Mary exactly who she was, what do you think her answer might be; the mother of Jesus? Perhaps, but I think it more likely she would say “the favored one of God”.

What would it mean, I ask myself, if I too came to the place where I saw my primary identity in life as “the favored one of God”? Would I view myself differently at the end of the day? Absolutely!

It is said that you become what the most important person in your life (wife, father, boss, etc.) thinks you are. How would my life change if I lived as though I believed the Bible’s astounding words about God’s love for me, if I looked in the mirror and saw what God sees?

Wouldn’t it then follow that I would look at others and see what God sees as well? What would happen if we all looked at each other and saw a favored one of God? I think it would be a lot more difficult – no, impossible - to hate, to be angry. Jealousy, envy, greed would find no heart to infect. Anxiety and fear would find no home. “Peace on earth among those he favors” would come to pass.

Prayer: *Holy God, bless this day those whom you favor that they might see themselves and each other as you see them. Amen.*

Ms. Sandy Moyers  
Del City Christian Church, Del City  
December 20, 2007

December 21, 2011

## “Seeking our Spiritual Inheritance”

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-9

In her book, Every Earthly Blessing, Celtic Christian Theologian Esther de Waal writes that some early Irish Christians, as did Abram, set out into the unknown on journeys for God. They were prompted by an inner passion to seek their spiritual inheritance. “A journey...to search for the holy, answers a deep need in all of us, the outer journey which reflects the inner journey. And...unless we carry within our hearts the God whom we are seeking we will not find him.” (42)

The season of Advent invites us into the unknown on a pilgrimage for God. We are called to embrace the promptings of our inner passion to seek our spiritual inheritance. Though our journeys into the unknown may not be physical pilgrimages into foreign lands, we are invited to listen for God’s direction to a land that God will show us: the land of our self, our home or family, our city or town, our community of faith. And, as Abram acknowledges God’s presence along the way by building altars, we too are called to stop periodically to rest and reflect, and to leave behind signs for others that will bless them with awareness that God is in our midst.

As our journey leads us toward the promise of God-with-us, in a simple and humble babe, may we, in what we may think of as a familiar land, gain a new sense of who we are called to be as a blessing to the world.

Prayer: *God of the journey, we offer you our passion to be shown the land to which we are called through pilgrimage. We take you with us in our hearts that we may find you with new awareness. Amen.*



Rev. Dr. Mady Fraser,  
Phillips Theological Seminary  
December 22, 2010

**December 22, 2011**

## **“ A Friend Indeed!”**

Scripture: Luke 1:39- 56

Mary was confused, perplexed and apprehensive about her situation. The angel Gabriel had come to her and told her she was to have a baby and she was not married. So, she went to spend time with her cousin, Elizabeth.

How often, when life gets distorted and we are not at all sure what is going on, do we turn to a trusted friend or relative? A place where we feel safe and know we will be loved no matter what.

How God has blessed us with those people in our lives! People who can help us think things through, who may help us reframe our situation and assist us in getting on with the task at hand – people who are willing to just be a sounding board while we talk it out.

Elizabeth was that person for Mary. Who is it you can turn to when the world is upside down? Is there a person in your life who is like God with flesh on? We all need at least one of those from time to time not to worship, but to trust. God is even now preparing us to be one, and to receive one.

*Prayer: Holy One, you who know our needs and supply them, we thank you for the safe places in our lives and for the ones who provide them. Amen.*

Rev. Billie Lee  
First Christian Church, Wetumka  
December 8, 2007

**December 23, 2011**

## **“The Dove of Peace”**

Scripture: Genesis 8:6-12

We often see Christmas cards with a “dove of peace” holding an olive branch in its mouth. Indeed, a dove is such a familiar symbol of peace that we see it on other things and not only during the Advent season.

A story is told of two kings who held grudges against each other for years. One king decided to wage war after not having been in war for years. All of his armor had been stored. The king asked his mother to bring his helmet. The mother returned to the angry king with no helmet. “I just couldn’t lift it. It was too heavy for me,” the mother said. The king went to search for himself because he couldn’t wage war without his helmet. The mother revealed her secret.

“A dove has built a nest in your helmet. There are three baby doves. If we disturb the dove’s nest, disaster might come to our country.” The king could not argue with his mother’s logic, so he went to meet the other king, bare-headed...no helmet. The warring king couldn’t believe his eyes. “Where is your helmet?” he asked. “I can’t wear my helmet. A mother dove is using my helmet to raise three baby doves.”

Each warring king paused for a moment and extended their hands to each other. “Let’s make peace together, forever!” (Azerbaijani legend taught in their public schools.)

*Prayer: Peace-loving God, shine in our hearts, so that we might search Your ways for ever-lasting peace...peace, not only with others, but peace with you, and with ourselves. In the name of the Prince of Peace. Amen*

Ms. Merrilyn Buchfink  
First Christian Church, Nowata  
December 19, 2010

**December 24, 2011**

## **“Faith”**

Scripture: Luke 1:5-20

Times change. Our lives change. One day we know exactly what the next day will bring. Then suddenly we are given a whole new world to explore, if only we had the faith to do so. Imagine the confusion Zachariah must have felt when confronted by the angel of the Lord. There he was, being told that he and his wife, Elizabeth, would be blessed with a son in their old age. And that son would be born filled with the Holy Spirit, and then would turn many back to the Lord!

Such gifts were truly unbelievable, yet there was that angel, sent by God, to tell Zachariah that all those things would come to pass.

What would any of us do if given such a complete turn-around in our lives? Our lives may have been settled, but any number of things could place us in the same state of bewilderment as Zachariah. An unexpected move, a new child to welcome, an old friend long unseen, a marriage – all these are blessings from God, if we just look to Him for guidance.

We can come out of a near darkness into a pure light in our lives – a true new beginning – as did Zachariah and Elizabeth. All we need to do is pray to our Lord, and listen for the answers he will always give us. This is what we call “Faith”.

Prayer: *Lord, give me the faith to hear you and the courage to obey. Amen.*

Ms. Mariana Graham  
Disciples Christian Church, Owasso  
December 8, 2009

**Christmas Day,  
December 25, 2011**

## **“A Way to the Manger”**

Scripture: Psalm 85

We have arrived! We are here! It is Christmas! We have been on a way to the manger officially since December 2 [November 27], the First Sunday in Advent. Unofficially, we have been traveling this road since the first ornaments were displayed in the department store aisles last July! But today has finally come.

Some of us have arrived weary, tired of all the trappings that have weighed us down these many weeks, some of us have arrived cautiously optimistic that this year's trek has been truly blessed with moments of reflection along the way, and some of us have arrived thankful for the blessings of family and friends that have shared our journey.

*A way to the manger* we have come. By many different roads we now find ourselves at this day. Hopefully we are nearer to the Babe of Bethlehem than when we first began this journey. God does not ask us by what road we have arrived. Rather, God blesses each of our journeys, even if they have been burdened along the way.

As the Psalmist reminds us, “for he (the Lord) will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.” May you find a quiet moment this holy Christmas Day to relish in the peace of God that is a blessing to us; not just this day, but every day when we turn our hearts toward God.

*Prayer: Gracious God, we have come a way to the manger to bless you and thank you for the gift of peace that comes through the Babe of Bethlehem. Amen.*



Rev. Dr. Thomas R. Jewell, Regional Pastor  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma  
December 25, 2007