ADVENT DEVOTIONS 2026



Christmas Blessings
From Your
First Christian Church Family

November 29
First Week of Advent: Hope
Light the First Purple Candle

Today we begin our celebration of the Advent Season! This book of devotions is a gift of love written by our church family. Our stories, poems, songs, and scriptures will help us remember the many ways the Lord blesses our lives. We will be lighting the candles of
The Advent Wreath during our worship services and daily in our homes if you choose to have your own Advent Wreath.

"The history of the Advent season began in the 4th and 5th centuries as a period of preparation for new Christians being baptized on Epiphany (the 12th day of Chr istmas).
Over time, it evolved to focus on both the anticipation of Christ's birth and his second coming. In the the 6th century, Roman Catholics linked Advent to Christ's coming, and in the 9th century, the Roman Catholic Church fixed the four-week length." (Google search).

The Advent Wreath originated in 16th century Germany. An Advent wreath is made in a circle to symbolize eternity and reminds us of our life with God, which is eternal. There are three purple candles representing Hope, Peace, and Joy. The rose candle represents Love. The white candle in the center, shows the purity of Jesus and represents His birth.

The First Sunday of Advent, the first purple candle, Hope, is lit and will glow during the devotional time each night that week. The second Sunday, the second purple candle, Peace, is lit and both candles will burn during devotion. The third Sunday the third purple candle, Joy is added; the fourth Sunday, the rose candle, Love, completing the circle.
On Christmas Eve the white candle in the center will be lit.

Our last devotion is on Christmas Day. In the busyness of Christmas Day, please set aside a few quiet moments. Gather your friends and family around the Advent Wreath. Let the warmth and beauty of the Wreath and candles warm our hearts and draw us close to Him as you share one last devotion.

James 4: 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Bless our devotion times this year as we seek to draw closer to You. Open our hearts to the love, truth and wisdom that have been shared in these devotions. Let Your Presence touch everything we do and say this Christmas season. Amen

Merry Christmas
First Christian Church

November 30

Psalm 38:15 I will hope in Thee, O Lord; Thou wilt answer, O Lord my God.

When I was six years old and in the first grade we lived in Chickasha, OK. My brother Frankie was twelve, and he wanted a bicycle for Christmas. Of course, whatever my brother wanted was what I wanted so I wanted a bicycle also. My Mom and Dad both worked and did what they could to make us happy and keep us fed and clothed.
When we told Dad and Mom what we wanted for Christmas was bicycles, they told us that Santa didn't have much money that year so we might not get exactly what we wanted for Christmas.

Frankie and I told them that we understood but deep down we were disappointed because we still wanted bicycles.

My Dad and Mom were both Christians and took us to church regularly. Mom told us to pray about it and ask God to help us, so we both hit our knees each night saying our prayers and never forgot to ask God to help Santa to have enough money to be able to bring us the bicycles we wanted.

So, when Christmas rolled around, we got a few small gifts and some candy. After a while Dad said I think I hear something outside. Dad went out the front door and came back in pushing a new twenty inch red bicycle for me and went back out and came in with a new Schwinn Wasp with knee action for Frankie.

Frankie and I were so happy we said thank you Mom and Dad and thank you God for answering our prayers.

Thank God for a Christian family that taught us to pray.

Prayer: Thank you Lord, that we belong to a church that knows the power of prayer. Amen

Rick Underwood

December 1

John 13:34. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” Jesus

Human connections have always been very important to me. So a major part of the Christmas season has been the opportunity to have time with friends and loved ones. I believe that my family and friendships are a great gift from God. Therefore, one of my favorite Christmas traditions is the exchanging of Christmas cards. With some of my faraway loved ones, that is our best communication throughout the year. I look forward to hearing from them, and, while I send a standard letter that tells of the special events of the previous year for my family, I add personal notes inquiring about their lives and families. I so look forward to those responses. I really love it when they include family photos!

Continuing a tradition that my mom used to do, I tape the received cards and photos on an inside door in my kitchen where I can look at them often. I leave them up until Easter in order to get to see them and enjoy them for an extended time. After that the photos go into an album so I can look them up whenever I want to do so.

Nowadays with Facebook, I have better regular communication with some faraway friends and family, but not with everyone. Not all of my friends are on the computers. We keep up our connections with Christmas cards.

Of course, maintaining this tradition is becoming more expensive every year. I’m so very glad postage wasn’t this high when my fiancé and I were on opposite sides of the planet when I was in college and he was serving in the U. S. Army in Italy! We had nineteen months of letter writing—not even one phone call back then—before he completed his service and came back to Broken Arrow to marry me. Thank goodness stamps were MUCH cheaper then! When I don’t hear from someone on my Christmas card list, I wonder if something has happened to them or if the missing card is related to the high costs. I try to find out, because the people on my list matter to me.

Christmas is a time to recognize and celebrate our blessings. We recall the birth of Jesus, our Savior, our human connection to God. And with sending my yearly Christmas cards, I thank God for the people He has put into my life who have blessed me in so many ways.

Linn Ball

December 2

St Luke: 2-16 And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

As a child, I could imagine baby Jesus lying in our horse barn manger.

I was born in the middle of the Great Depression. My family were sharecroppers on a small farm north of Wagoner. I shared a small home with three older siblings.

Because my mother was so dedicated, we attended church almost always unless weather or impassible dirt road conditions prevented. My early Christmas memories were of Jesus's birth celebrations rather than of Santa bringing gifts.

As a child, the gifts I might receive were practical rather than toys. The only toy I ever received was a red rubber ball from country school after WWII was over and rubber again was available.

I have been so blessed, particularly in health. I have enjoyed being able to be a giver. I began working in commercial hay baling at the age of 12 and when I was 18, bought my folks the only new car they ever had.

Being able to help grandsons with higher education, transportation and other needs has brought me much joy. I can attest to "It is more blessed to give than receive." As a lifetime blood donor, the feeling that each time I gave, I possibly was saving a life was immeasurable.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Your gift of life, Your Son's gift of eternal life surpasses any other gifts we may give or receive. You have given us faith, hope, joy and peace through Him whose birth we celebrate. Help us enjoy all of the Christmas festivities as we remember
"The Reason for the Season." Amen

Jack Ensminger

December 3

Advent in the Worship & Wonder Center

1st Sunday in Advent: The Prophets Show the Way to Bethlehem. Isaiah 9:2 and John 1:5. "The people who walk in the darkness shall see a great Light-a Light that will shine on all those who live in the land of the shadow of death." "His life is the light that shines through the darkness-and the darkness can never extinguish it."

2nd Sunday in Advent: Mary and Joseph Show the Way to Bethlehem. Luke 1:26-33.
"The following month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin, Mary, engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, 'Congratulations, favored lady! The Lord is with you!' Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. 'Don't be frightened, Mary,' the angel told her, 'For God has decided to wonderfully bless you! Very soon now, you will become pregnant and have a baby boy, and you are to name him Jesus. He shall be very great and shall be called the son of God. And the Lord God shall give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he shall reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom shall never end!"

3rd Sunday in Advent: The Shepherds Show the Way to Bethlehem. Luke 2:8-16.
"That night some shepherds were in the fields outside the village, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly an angel appeared among them, and the landscape shown bright with the glory of the Lord. They were badly frightened, but the angel reassured them. 'Don't be afraid!' he said. 'I bring you the most joyful news ever announced, and it is for everyone! The Savior-yes, the Messiah, the Lord-has been born tonight in Bethlehem! How will you recognize him? You will find a baby wrapped in a blanket, lying in a manger!' Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others-the armies of heaven-praising God: 'Glory to God in the highest heaven,' they sang, 'and peace on earth for all those pleasing Him.' When this great army of angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, 'Come on! Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this wonderful thing that has happened which the Lord has told us about.' They ran to the village and found their way to Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger."

4th Sunday in Advent: The Magi Show the Way to Bethlehem. Matthew 2:1-2, 9b-11.
"Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem, in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. At about that time, some astrologers from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking 'Where is the newborn King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in far off eastern lands and have come to worship him.' And look! The star appeared to them again, standing over Bethlehem. Their joy knew no bounds! Entering the house the baby and Mary his mother were, they threw themselves

down before him, worshiping. Then they opened their presents and gave him gold, frankincense, and myrrh."
"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."
Prayer: Pray for our children that they learn the true meaning of Christmas this season.

Submitted by Worship and Wonder Storyteller, LBH.

December 4

When I was a child, my family would celebrate Advent with an Advent Wreath, lighting candles for the four weeks leading up to Christmas. It was always a joyful time, as we read the Scriptures. Christmas Day, my father would read the Christmas story from the Bible. My mother always made much of Advent and Christmas, so it was natural that I would carry on the practice with my children. Micah 5:2 and Isaiah 53 prepare our hearts for Jesus' First Coming when He came to live as a human being in a broken world, not only showing us that we need a Savior, but giving Himself as a Sacrifice, so we can have His life in us.

As we look in the Bible, we can see how much He loved us, as He was willing to lay down His life, both in the living of it and in His dying at the hands of sinners. He suffered for our salvation.

We needed him to come and bring victory over the power satan had wielded over this world for so long. Because of the terrible effects of the curse of sin, we did not need just a Meek and Mild Messiah, but one full of Power, Strength, and Authority – One who was Righteous and able to overcome ALL the power of the enemy.

Jesus came to confront and stop the curse of sin (sickness, poverty, destruction, and on and on) that had been on His creation from the time of Adam's sin. This curse had to be eradicated once and for all! Forever! Never to be heard from again!

And while it seems that the effects of the curse linger on, celebrating Advent helps us to see that because of this First Coming of Jesus as the Sacrificial Lamb of God (His birth, death, burial, and resurrection,) there ***will be*** that Second coming to look forward to, when He will appear as the Lion of Judah, King of Kings, and lure Redeemer from the curse. ***All*** things will be set right, finally and forever!

The expectation of this event becomes more real to me each year, and the anticipation grows as I learn to know Him more intimately on this journey of life.

As we look forward to our finished redemption, we must remember that He is also coming as Judge of all the earth to purge the evil from all of His creation as we are told in Malachi 3:2-3: "Who can endure the day of His coming…for He is alike a refiner's fire…"

Luke 3:17 repeats the warning, showing the destiny of those who choose Him as “Wheat” and those who reject Him as “Chaff.” He will gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.”

Above all, God loves each of us completely, whether we choose to love Him or not. And the wonderful news is that we can choose to receive what He has done for us and never be subjected to the judgement. We can be the “wheat” with Him, or we can decide to be the “chaff” without Him.

Wheat or Chaff – which do you choose to be?

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Donna Engebretson

December 5

Actions, Words, and Love

1 John 3:18: "Let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and in truth." Imposter Syndrome is real. For those new to the term, imposter syndrome is a psychological experience where people doubt their success and fear being exposed as a fraud, despite clear proof of their skills. In my life, I've had three extreme incidents where I felt like an imposter.

In 2014, I started my doctoral program at OSU. I still remember hopping on the Big Orange Bus to ride down to Stillwater for my first class: Theoretical Foundations of Inquiry. The class was once-a-week for three hours. I walked out of that first class with key terms like Ontology, Epistemology, Hermeneutics, etc. Swirling around in my head. I called Diane on the way back to the bus and told her I made a mistake. I wasn't cut out for this program. Not even a month later, classmates who were on the verge of graduation were asking me for help with their assignments. I knew I was where I was supposed to be. The power of others' actions!

Last year, I became the head coach for Jenks Tennis. At one tournament, I watched all of my players self-destruct during their matches. I felt helpless. Once again, I told Diane that I had taken a step too far. Later that week, a freshman parent came up to me and said, "Please tell me you're going to keep coaching my son for the next three years." Extreme doubt turned to poise and a return of self-confidence in a heartbeat. The power of others' heartfelt words!

However, my first encounter with Imposter Syndrome was back in 2002. I accompanied my significant other to her church on a Sunday morning. My nerves were frayed in the lead up to that morning. Having grown up in a Baptist church, I felt very out of place in this new environment. Although I felt I had a strong grasp on my religious beliefs, I was confronted by a new manner of worship–different traditions, practices, and beliefs. I was a religious imposter, but I was never treated that way. FCCBA is a special place. Luke Bevel was the first kind face I encountered–but many more joined the chorus of love and acceptance. Church members made me feel welcome from my first moments walking through the doors, and they continue to do so today. Before long, I was attending Sunday School under Joy Naylor. I was standing between Marc Crews and Kevin Howard in the choir. I was leading Jessica Crews, Kelly Howard, Marilyn Martin, McKenna McCausland, and Mickane Replogle in JYF. I wasn't an imposter; I was a part of the family. The power of others' love!

Prayer: Lord, As we begin this new church year, help us remember the power our actions and words have on those we encounter in our community. Help us continue to show them the love that makes FCCBA such a special place to worship! Amen

Justin M.McCrackin

December 6

I WONDER

I wonder what you're doing in Heaven
I ask my mother that day
Hanging angels on the Christmas tree
I wondered what she would say.

Yes, what are you doing in Heaven?
Is the china too fine to use?
Do you get lonely in Heaven?
Do you ever get the blues?

Just wonder are rainbows & moonbeams in Heaven?
Do the stars ever go out of sight?
Are you "Rocking around the Christmas Tree?"
Are there peaceful "Silent Nights?"

I wonder if you get bored in Heaven?
Is it ever scary at night?
Do the angels sing "Hark the Herald"
Before they suddenly take flight?

I wonder will you have a "Blue Christmas" without us?
Do you wish that you were still here?
Are you dreaming of a "White Christmas?"
Is this "The Most Wonderful Time of the Year?"

Well, it's been 6 years with no answers but
I just know one is headed for me
Every year I have hung those angels
On that beautiful Christmas Tree —Since 2023

Poem by Rosella

Message Bible. Luke 2: 8-12.
There were sheepherders camping in the neighborhood.
They had set night watches over their sheep.

Suddenly God's Angel stood among them, they were terrified
The angel said "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great
And joyful event that is meant for everybody worldwide.

A Savior has just been born in David's Town, A Savior sho is Messiah and Master.
This is what you are to look for, a baby wrapped in a blanket lying in a manger.

AT once the Angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises
"Glory to God in the heavenly heights
Peace to all men and women who please him."



One of 50 angels Rosella's mother, Aileen Garman, made for her, 30 years ago.



December 7

Ninety-Nine Years of Reflections
Family, Friends and Faith

Philippians 1:3 “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you.” Paul

“The best times in our lives were not about what we had, but who we were with.”

Friendship and Freedom - Summer 1941, Age 13 - Hominy, OK - Boarded the train in Hominy with my bicycle and headed to Broken Arrow, OK. Met up with Joan, childhood friend, who lived in BA with her mother, who worked at the Broken Arrow Newspaper. Her father worked for the railroads. Joan and I spent countless hours riding bikes all around Broken Arrow and through the Bixby farm fields. Pure freedom and joy spending time with a dear friend, during summer vacation!

Cleaning House - I cleaned my piano teacher’s house in Hominy each week. In return, I received piano lessons. Oh, how I loved the lessons, playing the piano every chance I got.

Easter Outfits - We were very poor during the depression, but Mom (Bernice) always managed to get material to make an Easter dress for me. The new dress and shoes worn to church, made the Easter celebration even more memorable. Picture on back

Music and the Church - I sang in church choirs, sang solos, directed all levels of choirs and programs. I played the piano and organ for services throughout the years. Music has been a part of my church life, as long as I can remember. I was active with the CWF group, taught Sunday School, served as Youth Director and was Director of Christian Education at University Place Christian Church, Enid, OK. Being a part of the church community has enriched my faith and spiritual life.

“It’s not what we have in life, but who we have in our life that matters.”

Family acts as an anchor of love, guidance and blessings.
Friends lend support bringing joy, love and comfort.
Faith crosses our lives daily, in unexpected ways.
Love creates warmth in our hearts that last forever.
Life keeps finding its way through cracks and offers rays of hope.

Prayer: Thank God for bringing the people across our paths who made us who we are.

Gwynn Bishline



Easter - Hominy, OK - Bernice, Cletis (5), Gwennie (7)

Making Room

December 8

"She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them." Luke 2:7 (NIV)

This year, my husband, Glenn, and I moved to Broken Arrow. And if you have ever moved after living somewhere for a while, you know that you discover just how much stuff you own.

We found things we had forgotten we had. Some things brought back wonderful memories. Other things made us look at each other and ask, "Why in the world do we have this?"



Moving forced us to make choices. What do we keep? What do we give away? What still has meaning? And what is simply taking up space? It occurred to me that Advent asks us a very similar question: ***What is taking up space in our lives?***

The Christmas story tells us that when Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, there was no guest room available for them. Everything was already occupied. The town was crowded. The rooms were full. And yet, into that crowded space, there was room for Jesus.

I wonder sometimes if our lives become just as crowded during Advent. Our calendars fill. Our homes fill. Our shopping carts fill. Our minds fill with lists, plans, obligations, expectations, and memories. None of those things are necessarily bad. But if we are not careful, we can become so busy preparing for Christmas that we leave very little room for Christ.

Maybe Advent is not about adding one more thing to our December schedules. Maybe it is about making a little room: room to be still, room to pray, room to notice someone who is hurting, and room to remember what Christmas actually means.

As Glenn and I unpacked our new home, every empty shelf represented possibility — a place waiting to hold something worth keeping. Perhaps our hearts can be the same. This Advent, may we release a few things we no longer need to carry and make room for the One who came to dwell among us.

After all, the greatest gift of Christmas may not be something we add to our lives, but Someone for whom we make room.

Gracious God, in the busyness of this Advent season, help us make room for You. Show us what we need to release, what we need to treasure, and where we need

to slow down. Quiet our hearts so that we may recognize Your presence and receive again the wonder of Jesus, Emmanuel—God with us. Amen.

Jillian Sulley

December 9

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" Revelation 14:13

Louise Smith This gentle lady was a member of the Disciples of Christ church for well over fifty years. She and her beloved Ernie attended First Christian, Tulsa until they moved to Broken Arrow and became members of our church. Before Louise had her health issues, she volunteered at St John's BA, went out to lunch with friends and enjoyed spending time with Ernie. Louise always had beautiful jewelry and would take your hand as she talked to you. The power of touch, I think. She would always brush aside my questions about how she was doing and focus on me and how I was doing. She focused on others rather than self. That was Louise. I can see her now at the back of the church ready to say a kind word to those who came over to say hello. She was quiet, focused and strong in her faith. Her favorite flower was Blue Daze and she used to have it grow in pots on her porch. Look it up.
It's a lovely flower and when you see this sweet flower, think of Louise.

Greg Sutton Married to Debbie for over fifty years, this Kansas-born farm boy was a bull rider in his younger days. He was passionate about his family, baseball and fishing. He put his all into everything he did. Greg was a people-person which helped him in his work as a regional manager for Kelly-Moore Paint company for over 38 years. He set a good Christian example in his dealings with people, his work ethic and his loyalty to family. Greg tried to do the right thing each day . I imagine heaven for Greg is a day of fishing on the lake, a family dinner with lots of laughter and attending a baseball game in the evening.

Donna Freeborg I first met Donna when she and Paul came to our church one Sunday. While Paul chose not to be a part of our church, Donna found her home at First Christian. She had worked at K-Mart for years and had lots of stories to tell about her work there. Donna immersed herself in all of our activities at church. She was in Sunday school, CWF and choir. Donna was funny and loved to laugh. She was so very generous. I still have a glass hummingbird that she gave me because she knew I loved hummers. Bookkeeper she was not. She was the person in charge of the Faith Class donations and each week she put them in an envelope in a drawer in a church filing cabinet. When she went to Cedarcrest Nursing Facility, we found the envelopes which came to over $300! On the envelopes was the date and the amount. I guess she didn't know to deposit the money; other than in a church filing cabinet. As I tell this story, I can still hear her sweet voice saying "oh well". Janet Chapin told me that after Paul passed away, she told her she was on the hunt for a rich cowboy. She never found that rich cowboy but oh how she enriched our church. She just walked into our church and our hearts and never left.

Dr Lenard Poplin, Elder Emeritus When I close my eyes, I see Lenard there with his cherished wife Rosella each Sunday. I cannot think of him without thinking of strength, wisdom and strong character. He was a medical doctor and served our community of Broken Arrow for many years. A veteran himself, Lenard spent several years after retirement working at the VA clinics in Tulsa and Muskogee. He had a servant's heart. Lenard was in my opinion the epitome of a church leader; someone you could always trust who had the church's best interest in his heart and his actions. In a very tense meeting with emotions running high and with a very difficult decision to be made, Lenard's calm voice and his wisdom tempered with kindness helped to guide us. It is a meeting I will never forget and it showed me what it meant to be a leader in church. He was admired and loved by those of us at First Christian and his own large family. Thank you Lord for sending Lenard to help lead our church.

John 11:25
Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet he shall live"

If you have a moment this busy season, please lift up the families of these departed souls. God bless and keep you safe in His loving arms. Joyeux Noel

Terry Beckwith

December 10

Memories of Mary

Proverbs 31:30-31 Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Honor her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

As we look back over the years, we can absolutely say that Christmas was Mary Garner's favorite time of the year. Pleasing her family was her greatest joy. Every Christmas Eve she prepared a delicious meal of sliced ham, cheesy potatoes, baked beans, and a vegetable tray with dip. Our family would gather at her house and eat before going to the Christmas Eve candlelight service. On Christmas morning she woke up at four o'clock to put the turkey in a blue enameled roasting pan with domed lid and made dough for cinnamon rolls. Later in the morning the family would again go to her house. Mary had Christmas stockings and presents for everyone to open. Then we enjoyed the freshly baked cinnamon rolls with gooey frosting and drank hot cocoa in Santa mugs. The turkey was ready to eat around noon on Christmas Day. There were all the side dishes along with the best turkey gravy from the pan drippings. She always asked, "did everyone get enough to eat?" After the meal the dishes were done, and the kitchen was cleaned with the family's help. While still wearing her apron, she finally sat down, put her feet up, and had an exhausted happy smile on her face.

Today these memories are bittersweet as God called Mary home recently. Our family is so thankful for her presence in our lives.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the special loved ones you put in our lives, especially mothers. Help us to cherish the memories. Amen.

Bob and Rihab Garner

December 11

We are the weavers, the tailors, the seamsters and seamstresses
That design every detail with our decisions
Threads riding a needle of time
Joy and pain intertwined
A field of kaleidoscopic colors
Revealing our individual experiences
Memories twining about one another
Yesterdays and today braided
Blending a panorama of happiness and sorrow
Loose and ragged during times of confusion and doubt
Areas of our story worn thread-bare from re-visitation
Scenes of what-ifs and regrets
Alongside vibrant visions of bliss and gladness
Gleaning and gleaming with positive energy
From days of glory passed
Days we thought would last
Construct our twisting tale
In the interwoven scenes
These are the tapestries of our lives.
Poem by Chris Anderson
Psalm 139: 1-2 Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Heavenly Father, Thank You for continuing to weave in my life. Amen

December 12

I love daily devotion books. In them I've found words of peace, wisdom or encouragement on just the right day. But Sunday, October 4th devotion touched me deeply.

Written by Jon M Sweeney Walking in Grace 2026 by Guideposts p 305
Ezekiel 11:19. I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them.

I once took our dog, Max, to a blessing of the animals service at a local Episcopal church. After the service was over, as we returned with our animals to our cars, I met a woman who had brought her hedgehog. Yes, hedgehog.

"I've seen dogs and cats, even parrots and bunnies, at these things over the years," I said "but this is a new on to me."

"I know. I've never seen another like Sam, either, in church. But this was good for him," she said, "He's had a really rough year." Even hedgehogs, apparently, have difficult years and need a new start.

Don't be sheepish today about your own need to reboot, recharge, or start again. We all need to be reminded of God's blessing on us. Wouldn't it be wonderful if, once a year, we had a ritual where sanctified oil (which is used to anoint the heads of kings and queens and which we often use at baptisms and when someone is near death) was rubbed into the palms of our hands, reminding us that they are the hands of God?

With this new spirit, Lord, I will tend Your garden with these simple hands of mine.
Jon M Sweeney

I know I identify with the hedgehog as Bill & I have had a rough year and know the need to reboot. But the hands…Oh my!
We are the hands of God in this world. Of course they are blessed by His presence in us. If we are home bound, it's the folded hands that pray, or send cards or call others. In the world, it's our hands that will bless others, reaching out to family, friends, and Broken Arrow.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Thank you for Jon who has reminded us how special our hands are. Let us be aware, in all we do, that they are Your hands at work in this world. Amen

Beverly Forester

December 13
Third Week of Advent: Joy
Light the Third Purple Candle

Christmas Eve 1969

This was the greatest night of my life. However, it started 4 years earlier.

I was three years old and jumping on the couch…a naughty girl. Stopping, I kicked the big book off the coffee table to the floor. Mama came over and told me these were the Words of God. She emphasized that they were very important. She said I could pick a Bible verse & she would teach me so I would always know & remember it. We put the Bible on its spine and let it fall open. Then I moved my finger in a circle. It stopped on John 3: 16
"For God so loved the world He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." That is Jesus.

Now 4 years later, My Mamma was a Sunday School teacher and my dad was a Deacon.
We had a Christmas Pageant. I was the angel with the big star and I sang Away in a Manger. Then I lead everyone out of the sanctuary. You would think as a child this was special. But it was what came next.

I was baptized. Then we went home. I felt so clean. The best I have ever felt.

I wish you the same clean and sanctification in your life.

With Love,
Katie Huffman

December 14

I love the arts: music, visual art, drama and dance. Not only for the joy that comes with personal growth and a sense of self-worth and accomplishment, but because it has been proven that the arts have a powerful impact on knowing, thinking and understanding. They expose us to a broad range of ideas and perspectives and expand our ability to see the world and our place in it. They tell a story of human experience and are expressions of thoughts, values and feelings. For me, music offers a way to express feelings and promote understanding, tolerance and togetherness by encouraging us to see beyond the everyday to something greater than ourselves. It has the ability to heal the mind and spirit. It becomes a means for sharing memories, instilling hope, providing inspiration, expressing love, and creating something quite special with others.

I was a young mom when a gentleman at church began sharing Advent stories for the children. I was not "young enough" to go forward to sit with them in the front pew, to get a little closer and cluster around Don's knees as he shared a story each Sunday in Advent. However, I did make sure to move from my spot in the choir loft to get a better view. I wanted to make sure I had a good vantage point, because Don would never just read a story. He would sing a song, show us pictures, play a dulcimer or guitar and, on the fourth Advent Sunday, always transform the page to the stage by way of a puppet show, followed by the distribution of a small bag of ribbon candy to each child*.

Those Advent moments are like a handprint on my heart. Memorable, not just for the message shared, but because of the way he shared them. Through music, song, picture and drama, Don was able to combine his love of literature and his appreciation of different art forms to recount tales of the human spirit, of kindness, generosity, witness and the miracle of the birth of Christ. Through his clear, calming voice and manner, he offered a gift of love that not only set an example of gentle compassion, but a standard of understanding and blessing.

Over the years, Don touched a remarkable number of lives by exposing all of us to the joys and true meaning of Christmas, and in doing so, created memories and impact
that have lasted a lifetime. My children remember the stories, the music and the puppets. Admittedly, not an Advent goes by that I am not singing, perhaps not outloud, but always in my heart:

Merry, Merry Christmas everywhere. Cheerily it ringeth through the air.
Christmas bells, Christmas trees. Christmas branches on the breeze.
Merry, merry Christmas everywhere. Cheerily it ringeth through the air.

(*And, oh yes, once in a great while, I was given a bag of candy, too.)

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to
God with gratitude in your hearts. Colossians 3:16
Donna Anderson

December 15

Do you have any collections? I have a few. OK, maybe more than a few. Mugs, bells, angels, cats (only 2 are live cats!) vinyls & CDs, and nutcrackers. I may have a problem.

Nutcrackers started when I was a little girl and was obsessed with The Nutcracker Suite. I played that record over and over, especially Sugar Plum Fairy! My parents gave me my 1st nutcracker for Christmas. I was gifted a few after that, but later as an adult, I bought a new one every year, maybe 2. However last year I ended up with 5! I found the
3 Wise Men!! How could I not??

The history of the nutcracker was a symbol of protection. German folklore was that these" fierce-looking soldiers or king figures warded off evil spirits and protected homes."

As Christians, we have God and Jesus to protect us and our families. I am thankful to have my faith and church family as well as my own family. Thank You, God!

Psalms 32:7. "You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance."



Ann Mayfield

December 16

Christmas Eve 1989

I was newly divorced mother of two young boys, ages 5 and 8. I had no income and the boys' father had not paid child support in two months. My 8 year old, Brandon, told me he didn't believe in Christmas anymore because there were no presents under our tree.

About 7:00 pm that evening, someone knocked on our door. It was Santa and his helpers. They came in bringing gifts and food for our family. We had hot cocoa and Santa let them open one present, saving the others for Christmas day. I stood in the kitchen and cried.

When they left, Brandon asked, "Who were those people?". I replied that it looked like Santa to me.

Christmas Eve 1997

Brandon was working at McDonalds to earn money for a car. We had an agreement that he would pay half and I would pay half.

That morning Brandon asked if I would help him with something. Of course, I said yes. He told me a story of a lady he worked with that was raising two boys alone. He wanted to use some of his money to buy the boys bicycles for Christmas. We went to Walmart and he purchased two new bicycles and big bows to put on them. While we were there, I bought food for the family.

We loaded the truck and headed off to find their home. It was a small rental in a not so good part of town. Brandon unloaded the truck and placed everything on the front porch. He knocked on the door and ran back to the truck, which we had parked next door. When they opened the door, we drove off.

Matthew 6:3-4

But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Anonymous

December 17



Blair



Millie

LOVE CAME DOWN

You will find a baby, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

Luke 2: 12

Worship and Wonder Class



Campbell



Be Still Psalm 46:10 December 18

I started going to church at two weeks old. Reverend Jim Lewis started a new Disciples Church in a Laundry Mat that closed on Sunday. My parents & grandparents helped 'Brother' Jim start a new church that later became Sheridan Ave Christian Church (DOC).

I loved the Christmas pageants our youth group would preform. The songs and costumes were so much fun. I remember all the girls wanted to be Mary with the baby Jesus. From two weeks old and that Laundry Mat to graduating, our youth group became 100 strong.

Just as important to my Christian upbringing was my family and our traditions at Christmas. My Mom loved Christmas and we forged many traditions throughout my life that included both sets of Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles and Cousins because we all lived within a mile of each other. Singing Christmas Carols has always been my favorite.

My life has had many ups and downs, especially the last two years. I lost my beloved husband of 56 years; broke my femur that required major surgery (and lots of titanium) and in April this year I was diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma-Blood Cancer. By Christmas of this year I will have had chemotherapy for eight months. I will have chemotherapy once a month for 2 more years and another fighting cancer pill for a few years after that. But God has been with me every step of the way. Every time I didn't think I could do something, or pay a bill or go through one more treatment or medical test, there He was, front and center, giving me the strength and courage to make it through.

I'm blessed to be a choir member. We have an amazing choir. Occasionally an anthem comes along where the words feel like God is speaking to me. It is so overwhelming that tears in my eyes & a lump in my throat completely block any notes that are supposed to come out of my mouth. One such song is Be Still from Psalms 46:10. Music by Mary McDonald & Lyrics by Herb Frombach. Some of the lyrics are: "Be still and know that I am God; Be still and know that I am here for you and I will wipe your tears; you will be renewed. Come unto Me my child, be still and know that I will give you rest. I am present in your pain and I always will remain your comforter and friend. Peace, I leave with you. My Peace I give to you, Peace, Peace, Be Still, Be Still" (Listen to the song on YouTube)

How in the world could anyone expect me to sing these words, let alone speak them after what I've been through these last 2 years. This is God speaking to me. Christmas is very different now without the people who raised me in Christian faith and my husband who was my rock and love of my life. But because of Christmas,

Jesus is here FOREVER. God gave us Jesus for eternity and that is what I carry in my heart at Christmas.

Sharren Hall

Prayer: Count your blessings.

December 19

One of the themes I would like to explore during this time of Advent is that of “joy”. As one reads the birth story in Luke, one finds out that when the angel of the Lord appears to Zechariah, “When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. 4He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth” (1:12-13).

We find out later that when the pregnant Mary visits a pregnant Elizabeth, the baby leapt in Elizabeth’s womb. Her response was, “When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.” (1:41-44)

Mary’s song is one of great joy for what God has done for her. “And Mary said:“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.” (1:46 - 55)

When John is born his parents, relatives and neighbors respond in joy. “When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. (1:57-58)

When Jesus was born, the angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds to announce the birth of the Messiah. “But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

In Matthew, when the Magi came to the place where the star they followed from the west, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him." (2:11)

It is with this same feeling of "joy" that we should anticipate the celebration of advent. We remember God's great love for all humanity that God made a way possible to bring the relationship of humanity together again. It is in the birthing of new life, that our lives have become completed. In joy, we can remember with hopefulness that the Creator of the Universe wants to love us.

Reverend Katrina Palan

December 20
Fourth Week of Advent: Love
Light the Rose Candle

As You Wish, God

Luke 1:30,31 & 38
Then the angel said to her, “Do not by afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son and shall call his name Jesus.” Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to Your Word.”

This is an extraordinary response from an unmarried teenage girl! She didn’t argue or say, OK, well I really want to do this, but let me run it by my boyfriend. Perhaps we can get married real quick first. He did ask me to marry him. Oh, and my parents! Could you stop by my house and tell them this wonderful news because my dad will not understand a grandbaby without a marriage. What about the stigma on this child, Jesus, born too soon after a marriage. People will talk and count months. Her response was nothing like that. Simply, “Let it be to me according to Your Word.” She had total trust.

Prayer: Here I am Lord, as you wish Lord. I’m so excited to be a part of Your plan, and I trust you to work out the details. Lord, help your people to trust more and fear less. Help us to say, “As You wish, God.” Amen

Jesus's birth was the beginning of the fulfillment of God’s plan to save mankind, His beloved creation. Advent is a time to celebrate His first coming and to look forward to His second coming.

Gloria Long

December 21

When I was in elementary school, we always had a Christmas play about the birth of Jesus. All of the Community was invited to attend. My young classmate was chosen to play the part of Mary, Mother of Baby Jesus. She told our teacher that she had a doll that she could bring to be the baby. Our teacher was ok with that and the night of the play she brought the doll wrapped up in a blanket. Mary and Joseph entered the stage and proceeded to the make-shift manger. Mary very carefully laid the doll in the manger and when she did, the doll cried, “Mama.” Of course hearing that, it was an instant hit with the audience.
Everyone clapped at the end of the performance. Then the wise men and Shepards came to the end of the stage to take their bows. They parted to each side of the stage and Mary and Joseph came to the front of the stage. When taking her bow, Mary laid the doll over her arm and again it cried, “Mama.”

When we were finally settled into the first few rows of the auditorium after our performance, we heard Jingle Bells and the familiar cry of “Ho, Ho, Ho,” and we all knew that Santa Claus had come to pass out Christmas socks. Each one was filled with an apple, orange, various nuts and stripped hard candy.

After Santa’s departure, everyone sang Silent Night. I never come close to the Christmas Season, but what I don’t think of the Baby Jesus who cried “Mama.”

What was the reaction of Mary, Mother of Jesus when she first saw her son’s face. What may have been the baby’s reaction when he saw his first glance of his Blessed Mother. Who knows? Maybe he did cry out “Mama.” What do you think?

Matthew 1:21

And She brought forth her first born son and you shall call him Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins.

The most important gift we will ever receive did not come wrapped in an elaborate box with sequined bow, but wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger full of hay. He was born “King of Kings” but never wore a jeweled crown. He wore a crown of thorns, was persecuted and crucified on the cross. His crucifixion and resurrection can be summed up in two words: Love and Sacrifice. It was through his sacrifice and love, that we received the best gift ever given. It is not a recent gift, but one that we received over 2000 years ago, long before we were ever born. It came at a tremendous cost, one that we can never repay. Yet it is free to all who accept it.

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, There’s just something about that name.

Naomi Goodman

December 22

Tribute to My Brother, Alton Graumann

I just wanted to tell you about a very brave 8-year-old, who was responsible for care of a 3-month-old sister, feeding her and changing her diapers on the way back to Lone Wolf, Oklahoma from Casper, Wyoming in January 1947, along with 3 sisters: Evelyn 7, Janice 6 & Linda 5-years-old. I can remember being so cold and scared with blankets piled on us in the back seat of my Grandpa Graumann's car. Uncle Alvin had come with him, one of my Dad's younger brothers; he was one of 13 children. I don't know if they knew how to change diapers or refused, probably both. They were German. That was my brother's job.
(This was at least a 3 day journey!)

Our Dad had been in a construction accident with the loss of his right leg. Our Mother stayed with him while he went to rehab. We were passed around among relatives until our parents returned to pick us up 3 months later. We were so happy to see them. Alton and I had discussed this over the years. The fear of them not coming back for us.

We loved our brother and will miss him dearly!

His sister,

Linda Middaugh

This was read by his former brother-in-law (minister) in his eulogy at his memorial in 2017.

Psalms 91: 11-12 For he orders His angels to protect you wherever you go. They will steady you with their hands to keep you from stumbling against the rocks on the trail.

Psalm 91:1. December 23

"For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways."

I was born and raised in the small town of Avant, Oklahoma, about 40 miles north of Tulsa. I was an only child, and I was very close to both of my parents. After graduating from Avant High School, I moved to Tulsa to attend business college and eventually worked as a secretary for about ten years.

Moving to Tulsa was quite a culture shock after growing up in a small town! Paul and I eventually met and married, and we had two children, Alan and Sheri. Even though we lived in Tulsa, I continued to visit my parents in Avant often. We always spent the holidays together, along with many other visits throughout the year.

One particular Christmas, we planned to drive to Avant, pick up my parents, and bring them back to Tulsa to spend the holidays with us. It had already begun to snow before we left, but at first, it was coming down lightly. As best I can remember, Alan was about four or five years old, and Sheri was seven or eight.

As we drove, the snow became heavier and was mixed with sleet. The roads grew increasingly slick, and we soon realized that our tires were not the best for those conditions.

When we arrived in Avant, we picked up my parents and the children, then headed back toward Tulsa. By then, the snow was falling harder, the roads had become even more treacherous, and the children were getting restless. I began to worry that we might slide off the narrow, winding, two-lane road and end up in a ditch. Feeling increasingly anxious, I silently prayed that God would watch over us and bring us all home safely. I am sure Paul was praying, too. The drive was frightening at times as the car slid on the slick roads. But after what seemed like a long and uncertain journey, we finally arrived home safely. We were so thankful to be home, and I truly felt that God had heard our prayers and sent His angels to watch over us.

Once we were safely inside, we warmed up with hot chocolate and some of Mom's homemade cookies before bedtime. Then we enjoyed a wonderful Christmas together, as we always did.

Looking back on that experience, I am reminded of the comforting promise in Psalm 91:11. We cannot always know what dangers lie ahead, but we can trust that God hears our prayers and is with us along the way. That Christmas, I felt especially grateful for His protection and for the blessing of having my family safely together.

Barbara Droll

December 24
Christmas Eve
Light the White Christ Candle

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, He gave his only begotten Son..."
before this story, but I know why Christmas has always been so dear to me.

When I think about Christmas, and the beginning of the Holy Day, it begins when I was a very young girl, maybe 4 or 5, with my brother John. Mom had been a Methodist and carried the holiday with her when she married my father who was a Seventh Day Church of God believer. I'm not sure how they celebrated Christmas

I was living on a farm several miles from Fairview on the plains of western Oklahoma. Winters were brutal in our part of the country, and this one was no different. It felt like Christmas! I think this holiday was so memorable because of my age.

My mother was able to recognize the holidbecause I had a fabulous father who was also an understanding and caring husband. My brother and I slept on a divan near mom and dad's bedroom and on Christmas morning we awoke to two beautiful ripe oranges, a gift from them both. My brother and I were overcome! An unheard gift of infinite beauty.

As I have grown older, I have become aware of how much love and care went into that gift from my dad who considered my mom. What a blessing that day was for us! There was never an argument between my mother and father, only love and understanding.

How much our God loves us, by sending Jesus, who God gave us as a gift of His love for all. What would we do without God's gift of Jesus to us? We can only imagine what our lives would be like without Jesus. He gave us His Son to die on the cross as He did to save us from sin. Sometimes that is so hard to comprehend.

Prayer: Dear Lord, on this special night help us to reflect on our love for each other as we remember our Savior at Christmas. Each person is so special and so unique and worth reflection upon this time of year, just as You remembered us with the Perfect Gift, our Christ! Amen

Donna Shoun

December 25

Christmas Day

The Body Remembers

Certain smells can carry us across decades in a single breath. So can temperature. The first cool breeze of fall takes me back to a dozen autumns I cherish. I can't explain the science, but I trust what we all know: our bodies remember things our minds have set down. They keep their own record.

Christmas may do this more than any day of the year. The cold air, the early dark, and the feeling of the morning bring back Christmases long past, and last year's most of all. A year ago we were saying goodbye to dear friends, standing between what we had left and what we couldn't yet see. This Christmas, my first in Broken Arrow, we are here.

Maybe Christmas memories don't warm you. Maybe a smell or a chill brings back an empty chair, a loss, or a year you would rather forget. Christmas doesn't ask you to pretend otherwise. The first Christmas was cold, crowded, and far from home. Mary and Joseph were far from anyone who knew them, and the night offered no comfort except the child.

And that is the good news of today. God did not send us a message from a distance. The Word became flesh. He took on a body like ours, with its hunger, its cold nights, and its tender, aching memories. Nothing we carry into this day is foreign to him.

The waiting of Advent is over, and God is with us. As he came once, so he will come again, but today we rest in the gift that has already arrived.

So this Christmas, notice what your body remembers: the smells, the chill, the people who are missing and the people who are new. Let it be an invitation. The God who took on flesh meets us in all of it.

Thank you, Lord, for coming to us. Be with us today. Amen.

John 1:14. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory as of a Father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Merry Christmas!

Pastor Matthew Crowe