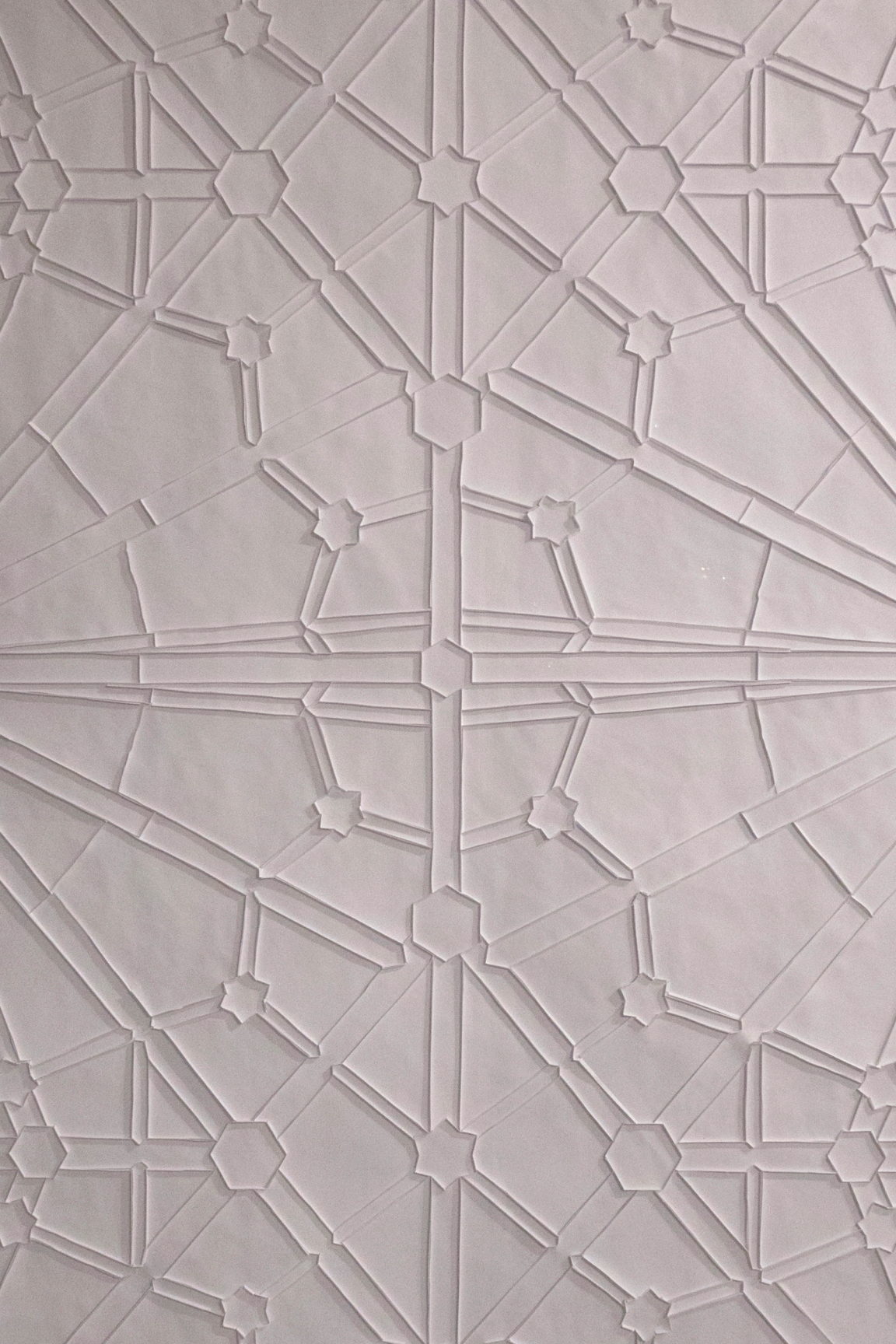

Pillar Journal

Where God Loves to Be

Advent 2026

God does not go the way that people want to
prescribe for him; rather, his way is beyond
all comprehension, free and self-determined
beyond all proof.

Where reason is indignant,
where our nature rebels,
where our piety anxiously keeps us away:
that is precisely where God loves to be...

God is not ashamed of the
lowliness of human beings.

God marches right in.

He chooses people as his instruments and
performs his wonders where one would
least expect them.

God is near to lowliness; he loves the lost,
the neglected, the unseemly, the excluded,
the weak and broken.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer
3rd Sunday in Advent Sermon, Dec. 17, 1933

Pillar Journal
Advent 2026

A seasonal journal produced by Pillar Church in Holland, MI to guide us through the Christian year.

Edited by Jonathan Gabhart
Contributors: Jon Brown, Molly Kehrer, Mikayla Briggs, Luis Torres
Liturgy and Prayers compiled from various public domain sources from the Christian tradition

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(18) The Magnificat, Henri Simon Thomassin, French, 1724
(21) Christmas card with nativity scene, Jean Charlot French, 1944
(27) The Flight into Egypt: a Night Piece, Rembrandt (Rembrandt van Rijn), Dutch, 1651
(35) Adoration of the Shepherds: A Night Piece Rembrandt (Rembrandt van Rijn), Dutch, ca. 1657
Back Cover: Beaumaris Mount, near Bangor, Wales, William Collingwood, British, 1843

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Using the Journal

The Lord be with you, and a "good Advent" to you. Wherever you find yourself on the journey of life and faith, we hope this journal can be a companion for you as we travel through this season toward the celebration of the Incarnation at Christmas.

As you navigate your way through these pages, the primary mode of engagement is through the liturgies for daily prayer. There are set prayers for Monday-Sunday with the intention that they can be repeated for each of the four weeks of the season.

We will also be praying these prayers together daily in the Pillar sanctuary on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday mornings at 7:30 AM; and Wednesday evening at 5:30 PM. So whether you can make it to some, all, or none, we will have the fellowship of the whole Pillar community near and far joining our hearts and voices in prayer.

At the beginning of the journal are four reflections on our theme: "Where God Loves to Be." Pastor Jon will frame the theme and then we will experience a few reflections "on the ground" from our community.

Peace to you as you pray, listen, watch, and wait.

Jonathan Gabhart
Pastor of Worship Arts



Where God Loves to Be (I)

Pastor Jon Brown

"Where God loves to be..." We're borrowing that line as our theme this Advent season from a sermon Dietrich Bonhoeffer preached on the 3rd Sunday in Advent in 1933. "Where God loves to be..." Here is a little more of what Bonhoeffer offered in that sermon on that day: Where reason is indignant, where our nature rebels, where our piety anxiously keeps us away: that is precisely where God loves to be...

God is so free and so marvelous that he does wonders where people despair, that he takes what is little and lowly and makes it marvelous. And that is the wonder of all wonders, that God loves the lowly.... God is not ashamed of the lowliness of human beings. God marches right in. He chooses people as his instruments and performs his wonders where one would least expect them. God is near to lowliness; he loves the lost, the neglected, the unseemly, the excluded, the weak and broken.

That's where God loves to be: with us in the complex realities that make up our humanness, the highs and the lows, the joys and the confusions, the hurts and the hopes- that's where God loves to be. That's where God loves to be because God is love and God loves you, God loves the world, so he sent his son, Jesus.

Advent is the season of anticipating God's commitment to be with us. Christmas is the celebration of his coming once. Advent is the anticipation he's coming again. Advent and Christmas hold hands in that way, both announce what Bonhoeffer preached and the Scriptures promise; "where God loves to be..." is with us. Matthew's angel announced it to Joseph, "Name him Emmanuel, which means, God is with us." St. John in the book of Revelation promises, "See the home of God is among mortals..." Jesus himself said, "I will send to you another to be with you." That's where God loves to be.

So this Advent, as we open our hearts to the incarnate one who promises to come again, be attentive to God's presence with us. Be attentive to Christ's presence not only when all is well, the family is together, the fire is on, the Christmas carols stir in you a deep contentedness, but when it's complicated too. Let this Advent be an invitation into alertness, awake to Christ where lowliness or neglect show up, when things appear unseemly or you find yourself excluded, when you feel weak and broken, that's where God loves to be. In Jesus, God took on vulnerability, He entered into fragility, they laid him in a manger because "there was no place for him in the inn." His way of making a place for us in the life of God. Where God loves to be.

Where God Loves to Be (II)

Molly Kehrer

God Who Loves to Abide with Us

Years ago, God met me so personally I could not ignore it. The short version is I'd been hyper-focused on his instruction to me to "abide" that calendar year. In the same way that when you buy a certain make and model of car you begin to see others like it everywhere you go, this word "abide" found me in every possible and unlikely place. (The long version is worth the time it takes to tell it, and I'd love to do that in person, so please connect with me and we'll find time to share over coffee or tea.)

The more I sought to acquaint myself with the idea of "abiding," the more God kept nudging me to dig deeper. I'd get into my car, and without prompting, "Abide with Me" would come on the speaker so routinely my kids would intermittently groan aloud or sing the words in confidence because they'd heard it 1,000 times. It was like I couldn't escape it. I'd asked God for a direction, and he was going to make it clear. Abide. Abide. Abide.

A year came and went, and I learned that to abide could look like a number of beautiful things: to remain, stay, or continue; to dwell in a place; to bear patiently; or to submit to a decision, rule, or authority. In all of these ways, I wanted to be more like who God was calling me to be through his one kind and simple instruction to me: abide. It's been seven or so years since that first nudge toward this level of intentional connectedness to him, and I now know with confidence that abiding in God is far more a gift to us than it is to God himself. But then, his instructions are always kind, always drawing us nearer to him.

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." — John 15:4–5 (ESV)

Apart from him, we can do nothing. Jesus instructed his disciples in this way two millennia ago, and we are called to the same reality and responsibility today. But how? How do we abide in Christ, in God, in our daily lives and throughout this season of Advent? Oh, how the distractions of this world pile up around us by way of "good" things masked as Truth. There's no better time than now to take to heart this calling to remain in and to dwell with God, even (and maybe especially) if it means we have to put down something on our holiday calendar or to-do list for the sake of giving time and attention to the advent of our coming King.

Can the absolute awe and wonder of God coming to us in the form of a helpless baby set up permanent residence in our hearts? Can it be ushered in this Advent and remain in such a way that we become more intimately connected with our God? Our ongoing fellowship with both the Father and the Son directly correlates with our devotion to the Word, and God loves for us to abide in him as we grow in our hunger for his presence.

"...But whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked... Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father." — 1 John 2:5–6, 24

And so we're called to take what often feels like the harder path—to pursue attentiveness to God and his instructions above all else, and to draw near to him even when worldly things beg for our time, our resources, and our affections. While life gets loud and pushy and demanding, God is not there barking out a list of commands to complicate things. Instead, he's in the gentle nudge of a song on repeat 1,000 times over seven years. He's invested for the long game. He's the One who came as a baby to a feeding-trough-made manger in the middle of the night two thousand years ago, knowing that this many generations later, we'll still be in need of a savior who draws close. God loves to abide with us, and this Advent as much as ever, he is so very near.

"Abide with me: fast falls the eventide; the darkness deepens;
Lord, with me abide. When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day; Earth's joys grow dim,
its glories pass away. Change and decay in all around I see.
O thou who changest not, abide with me.

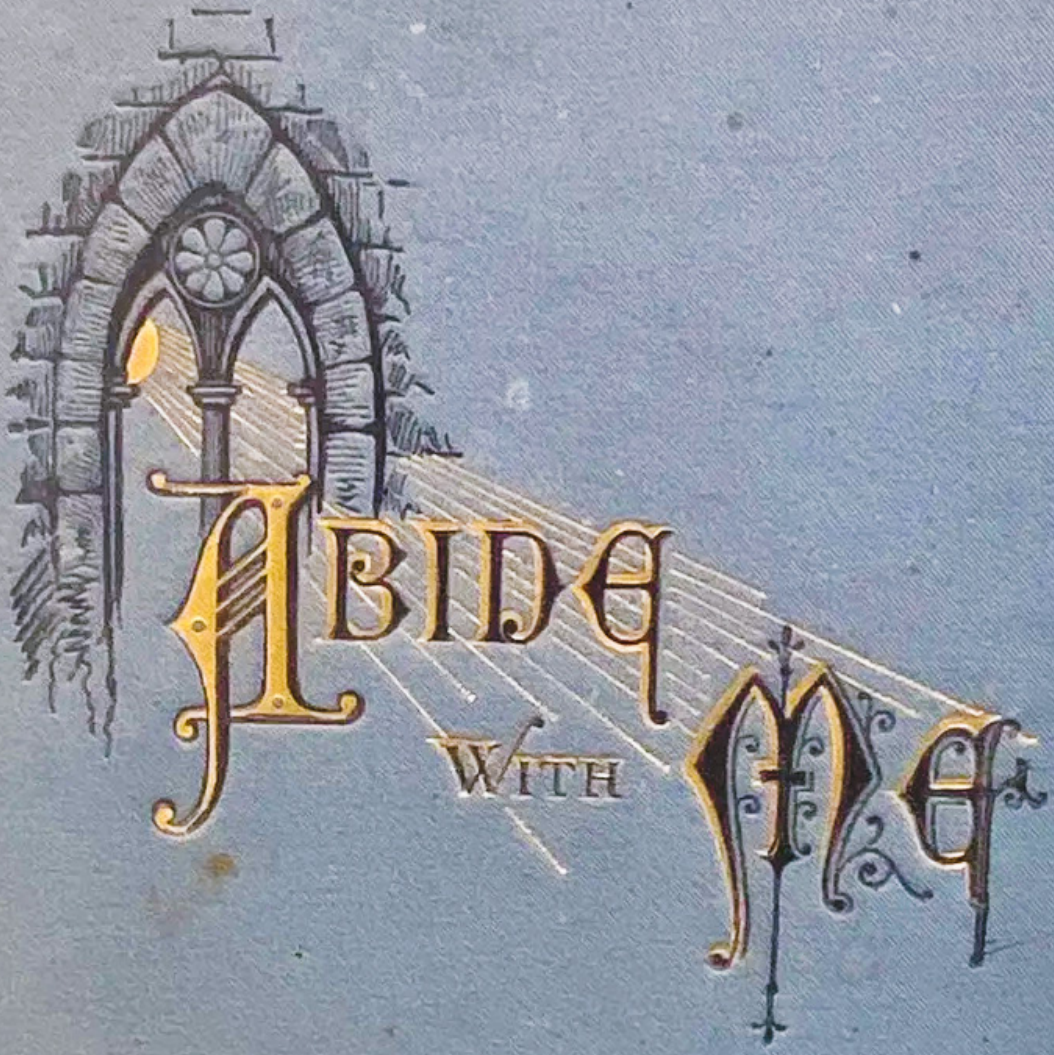
I need thy presence every passing hour. What but thy grace can foil
the tempter's power? Who like thyself my guide and strength can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.

I fear no foe with thee at hand to bless, ills have no weight,
and tears no bitterness. Where is death's sting?
Where, grave, thy victory? I triumph still, if thou abide with me.

Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes. Shine through the gloom
and point me to the skies. Heaven's morning breaks and earth's vain
shadows flee; in life, and death, O Lord, abide with me."

— Henry Francis Lyte

opposite page: Cover of 1877 American Hymnbook


ABIDE
WITH
ME

Where God Loves to Be (III)

Mikayla Briggs

One crisp autumn evening, as the sun began to dip below the horizon, I bundled up in my coat and hat and took a walk around the neighborhood. I used to walk while listening to music or a podcast, but more recently I've encouraged myself to become better acquainted with the sounds of nature. I passed a cul-de-sac that marked the neighborhood's end and the start of the expansive forest behind it. A line of tall trees guarded the forest entrance. As I wandered by, I heard a group of birds chattering in the trees. Something about it drew me closer. The crescendo of birds grew steadily louder until I realized the forest was alive with them! The scene called for me to stop, close my eyes, and take in the moment.

As I marveled at the birds' song, I recognized how different even a simple walk can be when we pay closer attention. Since I often walked wearing headphones, distracted and unaware of the beauty around me, I likely would have missed this chorus of creation. It was almost as if God whispered in my ear: *My child, this is what you experience when you slow down and abide in me.*

In this season of life, a piece of scripture that has stirred my curiosity is 1 Kings 19, when God appeared to Elijah on Mount Horeb. Elijah hid in a cave as God passed by. "And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake, a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice" (1 Kings 19:11-12)

This story has helped me understand more deeply where God makes His presence known in everyday life. I often fill my days with noise and constant activity, finding comfort in the rhythms of busyness, perhaps because they keep overthinking at bay. It's interesting how a simple comfort can gradually give way to a steady dependence. I easily become tangled in the alluring web of distraction, which muffles that still, small voice. Sometimes I'm tempted to confuse doing more with drawing near to God. Yet endless stimulation fragments our attention and makes living in the present moment all the more difficult.

1 Kings 19 reveals that God isn't in the hustle and bustle, but in the quiet ordinary of everyday life. Quiet may feel threatening because it can invite other unwelcome guests through the door: loneliness, insecurity, anxiety, uncertainty, discontentment. Living in a state of motion appears to keep these emotional undercurrents from surfacing, because life doesn't slow down enough for them to catch up with us. Yet, God met Elijah in the stillness. I wonder what would happen if we trusted Him to meet us there, too.

I often return to this quote from Eden Phillpotts: "The universe is full of magical things patiently waiting for our wits to grow sharper." Perhaps part of wit-sharpening means discerning how we fill our days. The more I hold space in my calendar for rest, the more I see God. Filling my life with constant activity while trying to hear God's voice would be like walking with a friend and wearing headphones. My friend might be with me, but am I really with them? Can I hear them above the noise?

In this season, God has encouraged me to slow down (perhaps to the "speed of love") and allow His voice to speak truth into my life. The Spirit has guided my thoughts and prayers toward befriending stillness and trusting that God will meet me there. For me, it has meant slowing down before hastily accepting an invitation, stepping outside each day, turning off the car radio, and prioritizing morning Bible study and prayer. Little by little, my attention to creation grows sharper, and my spirit is richer for it.

Perhaps during Advent, we can create space for God's still, steadfast voice to speak. I wonder how He would reveal Himself if we did.

Where God Loves to Be (IV)

Luis Torres-Avila
Director of Missional Engagement

In Matthew 1, Joseph is trying to make sense of a future he hadn't imagined. In the middle of that uncertainty, an angel tells him that Mary's child will be called Emmanuel, "God with us." That is where God loves to be. With us. This Advent, we hold on to that promise for ourselves and for our neighbors in Nepal as they face the long work of recovering from devastating floods and landslides.

After the floods swept through northern Nepal in late August, Muan, a field coordinator with Words of Hope Nepal, visited Rasuwa. In an update from the region, he described a family searching through what remained of their home for anything they could still use. It's a small glimpse into what recovery asks of a family. *Where will we sleep tonight? How will we cook a meal? What can we keep, and what will we have to begin again without?*

Head to this link to read more about Muan's visit and how Words of Hope is walking with families after the floods. (*https://bit.ly/4zyjZtr*)

Words of Hope's team in Nepal is working alongside local churches and leaders who know the communities affected. They've helped provide basic supplies and temporary shelter. They've also made time to sit with people who are grieving, listen to what they've lived through, and pray with them. Through our partnership, Pillar gets to support people who are already present with their neighbors and who will be there as the work of recovery continues.

For our final mission project of 2026, we hope to raise $30,000 through Pillar's Advent offering for Words of Hope's disaster relief in Nepal. The offering could help a displaced family cook again with food staples and kitchen supplies, have safe drinking water through a water filter, or get through a cold night with waterproof shelter materials, a mattress, and warm bedding. It could also help supply medicines and clinical materials requested by local health posts, as well as essentials for women, children, and adults who need extra care.

As communities begin to rebuild, the offering could also help clear and repair schools and restore damaged church spaces where people gather for worship and community care. Words of Hope will coordinate locally and direct the funds according to confirmed needs and the resources available.

Pillar, I invite you to pray and give as you are able. Pray for families grieving loved ones and facing winter away from home. Pray for the local churches, health workers, and neighbors caring for them. And as we wait for Christmas, may the promise of Emmanuel move us to stay near in the ways we can, through our prayers, our giving, and our commitment to the people walking alongside these families day by day.





Daily Prayers

Prayers that can be offered silently or aloud; alone or together.
If you are able, please join us at Pillar to say and sing these prayers together.

Mon - 7:30 AM
Tues - 7:30 AM
Wednesday - 5:30 PM
Thursday - 7:30 AM


2/3 - 1st St

Monday

Call to Worship

In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Isaiah 40.3

Prayer:
Lord God, Heavenly Father, Who has revealed to us through your Son how heaven and earth shall pass away: We pray you would keep us steadfast in your Word and in true faith; graciously guard us from all sin and preserve us amid all temptations, so that our hearts may not be overcharged with the cares of this life, but at all times in watchfulness and prayer may await the return of your Son and the expectation of our eternal salvation with joy; through that same Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Song:

Confession:

Almighty and most merciful Father; We have erred, and strayed from your ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against your holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us. But you, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare those, O God, who confess their faults. Restore those who are penitent; According to your promises declared unto us in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake; That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, To the glory of thy holy Name.

Lord's Prayer:
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever. Amen.

Song:

Psalm 48.1-9
Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised
in the city of our God.
His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation,
is the joy of all the earth,
Mount Zion, in the far north,
the city of the great King.
Within its citadels God
has shown himself a sure defenses

Then the kings assembled;
they came on together.
As soon as they saw it, they were astounded;
they were in panic; they took to flight;
trembling took hold of them there,
pains as of a woman in labor,
as when an east wind shatters
the ships of Tarshish.

As we have heard, so have we seen
in the city of the Lord of hosts,
in the city of our God,
which God establishes forever.
We ponder your steadfast love, O God,
in the midst of your temple.

Scripture - Matthew 1.1-17

An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, and Aram the father of Aminadab, and Aminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.

So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

Prayer:
Reader: God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth,
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,
God the Holy Spirit, Sanctifier of the faithful,
Holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, one God,

All: Have mercy upon us.

Reader: Remember not, Lord Jesus, our offenses, nor the offenses of our forebears; neither reward us according to our sins. Spare us, good Lord, spare your people, whom you have redeemed with your most precious blood, and by your mercy preserve us for ever. Spare us, good Lord. From all evil and wickedness; from sin, from the works and assaults of the devil; from your wrath and everlasting condemnation, From all blindness of heart; from pride, vanity, and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred, and malice; and from all lack of charity, from all oppression, conspiracy, and rebellion; from violence, battle, and murder; and from dying suddenly and unprepared.

All: Good Lord, deliver us.

Reader: By the mystery of your holy incarnation; by your holy nativity and submission to the Law; by your baptism, fasting, and temptation. By your agony and bloody sweat; by your Cross and passion; by your precious death and burial. By your glorious resurrection and ascension; by the sending of the Holy Spirit; by your heavenly intercession; and by your coming again in power and great glory. In all times of tribulation; in all times of prosperity; in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment.

All: Good Lord, deliver us.

Song:

Closing Prayer:

God of the watching ones, give us Your benediction.
God of the waiting ones, give us Your good word for our souls.
God of the watching ones, the waiting ones,
the slow and suffering ones, give us Your benediction,
Your good word for our souls, that we might rest.

God of the watching ones,
the waiting ones,
the slow and suffering ones,
and of the angels in heaven,
and of the child in the womb,
give us Your benediction,

Your good word for our souls,
that we might live
in the kindness of Your company.



Tuesday

Call to Worship:
In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Isaiah 40.3

Prayer:
Almighty Father, by the advent of whose Son into the world the Kingdom of Heaven is open to all who believe in him: grant us your Holy Spirit so that we may believe in him with our whole heart, and so serve him in our daily lives that when he comes again to make up his jewels, we may, by your mercy be gathered into the Kingdom which abides eternal in the heavens; through your mercy, O our God, who lives and reigns One God, world without end. Amen.

Confession:

O promised Christ:
We are a world at war.
Our peace depends on your coming.
We are a sinful people.
Our pardon depends on your coming.
We are full of good intentions but weak at keeping promises;
our only hope of doing God's will
is that you should come and help us do it.
Lord Christ, Word made flesh,
our world waits
for your peace,
for your pardon,
and for your grace.
Even so: come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Lord's Prayer:
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever. Amen.

Song:

Psalm 62.1-8

For God alone my soul waits in silence;
  from him comes my salvation.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
  my fortress; I shall never be shaken.

How long will you assail a person,
  will you batter your victim, all of you,
  as you would a leaning wall, a tottering fence?
Their only plan is to bring down a person of prominence.
  They take pleasure in falsehood;
they bless with their mouths,
  but inwardly they curse.

For God alone my soul waits in silence,
  for my hope is from him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
  my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
On God rests my deliverance and my honour;
  my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.

Trust in him at all times, O people;
  pour out your heart before him;
  God is a refuge for us.

Scripture - Matthew 1.18-25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel',

which means, 'God is with us.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

Prayer:

Leader: O Lord, show your mercy upon us;
All: And grant us your salvation.
Leader: O Lord, guide those who govern us
All: And lead us in the way of justice and truth.
Leader: Clothe your ministers with righteousness
All: And let your people sing with joy.
Leader: O Lord, save your people
All: And bless your inheritance.
Leader: Give peace in our time, O Lord
All: And defend us by your mighty power.
Leader: Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten
All: Nor the hope of the poor be taken away.
Leader: Create in us clean hearts, O God
All: And take not your Holy Spirit from us.

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Song:

Closing Prayer:

God of the watching ones, give us Your benediction.
God of the waiting ones, give us Your good word for our souls.
God of the watching ones, the waiting ones,
the slow and suffering ones, give us Your benediction,
Your good word for our souls, that we might rest.

God of the watching ones,
the waiting ones,
the slow and suffering ones,
and of the angels in heaven,
and of the child in the womb,
give us Your benediction,

Your good word for our souls,
that we might live
in the kindness of Your company.

Wednesday

Call to Worship
In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Isaiah 40.3

Prayer: Jesus, Sun of Righteousness, rise in our hearts and enlighten us with the brightness of your coming, that we, who rejoice in the sure word of your promise, may not be confounded at your coming in glory; through your mercy, our God, Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost, lives and governs all things now and evermore. Amen.

Confession:
Merciful God, always with us, always coming:
We confess that we do not know how to prepare for your Advent.
We have forgotten how to hope in miracles;
we have ignored the promise of your kingdom;
we get distracted by all the busyness of this season.
Forgive us, God. Grant us the simple wonder of the shepherds,
the intelligent courage of the Magi, and the patient faith of Mary and Joseph, that we may journey with them to Bethlehem and find the good news of a child born for us. Now, in the quiet of our hearts, we ask you to make us ready for his coming. Amen.

Lord's Prayer:
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever. Amen.

Song

Psalm 34.1-10

I will bless the Lord at all times;
  his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul makes its boast in the Lord;
  let the humble hear and be glad.
O magnify the Lord with me,
  and let us exalt his name together.
I sought the Lord, and he answered me,
  and delivered me from all my fears.
Look to him, and be radiant;
  so your faces shall never be ashamed.
This poor soul cried, and was heard by the Lord,
  and was saved from every trouble.
The angel of the Lord encamps
  around those who fear him, and delivers them.
O taste and see that the Lord is good;
  happy are those who take refuge in him.
O fear the Lord, you his holy ones,
  for those who fear him have no want.
The young lions suffer want and hunger,
  but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

Scripture and Song - Magnificat Luke 1.46-55

'My soul magnifies the Lord,
  and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
  Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
  and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
  from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
  he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
  and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
  and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
  to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'

Prayer:
This night we listen and await His cry.
This night we are longing and await His appearing.
Wait, with watchful heart.
Listen carefully, through the stillness;
listen, hear the telling of the waves upon the shore.
Listen, hear the song of the angels glorious –
ere long it will be heard
that His foot has reached the earth:
news – that the glory is come!
Truly His salvation is near
for those who fear Him,
and His glory shall dwell in our land.
Watch and pray, the Lord shall come.
Those who are longing await His appearing.
Those who listen await His cry.
Watch...
Wait...
Listen...

Song:

Closing Prayer:
God of the watching ones, give us Your benediction.
God of the waiting ones, give us Your good word for our souls.
God of the watching ones, the waiting ones,
the slow and suffering ones, give us Your benediction,
Your good word for our souls, that we might rest.

God of the watching ones,
the waiting ones,
the slow and suffering ones,
and of the angels in heaven,
and of the child in the womb,
give us Your benediction,

Your good word for our souls,
that we might rest and rise
in the kindness of Your company.



Thursday

Call to Worship

In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Isaiah 40.3

Prayer: Grant, Almighty God, that as your blessed Son Jesus Christ, at his first advent came to seek and to save that which was lost, so at his second and glorious appearing he may find in us the fruits of the redemption which he wrought; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Confession:
Almighty God,
you who shaped out of nothing all that is,
forgive us for returning empty-handed.
You who called forth light,
forgive our preference for the dark!
You who sent John to be a voice crying,
forgive our unwillingness to say anything at all!
Create in us clean hearts, O God,
and renew a right spirit within us.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord's Prayer:
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever. Amen.

Song

Scripture and Song - Benedictus (Luke 1.68-79)

‘Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has looked favourably on his people and redeemed them.
He has raised up a mighty saviour for us
in the house of his servant David,
as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.
Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered his holy covenant,
the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,
to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,
might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness
before him all our days.
And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.
By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.’

Prayer:
Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness,
send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.
We who have so much to do - seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day. We who are anxious over many things - look forward to your coming among us. We who are blessed in so many ways - long for the complete joy of your kingdom. We whose hearts are heavy - seek the joy of your presence. We are your people, walking in darkness yet seeking the light. To you we say, ‘Come Lord Jesus!’

Let our prayer, O Lord, come before you in the morning. You took upon yourself our feeble and suffering nature; grant us to pass this day in gladness and peace, without stumbling and without stain; that reaching the evening without any temptation, we may praise you the Eternal King: through your mercy, O our God, who is blessed and does live, and govern all things, world without end. Amen.

Song:

Closing Prayer:
God of the watching ones, give us Your benediction.
God of the waiting ones, give us Your good word for our souls.
God of the watching ones, the waiting ones,
the slow and suffering ones, give us Your benediction,
Your good word for our souls, that we might rest.

God of the watching ones,
the waiting ones,
the slow and suffering ones,
and of the angels in heaven,
and of the child in the womb,
give us Your benediction,

Your good word for our souls,
that we might rest and rise
in the kindness of Your company.

Friday

O God, you make us glad with the yearly expectation
of the birthday of Christ, your only Son. Grant that we,
who hail him with joy as our Redeemer, may also behold him without
fear when he comes to be our Judge; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
(Galasian Sacramentary)

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2–7

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone. You have multiplied the nation; you have
increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.
For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.
For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.
For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Lord, hear our prayers, and lighten the darkness of our hearts
by your gracious appearing; for you live and reign
with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
(Book of Common Prayer)

Sing:

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

Saturday

Brightness of eternal glory, comfort of the pilgrim soul, with you my tongue is speechless, and my silence speaks to you. Come! Come! for without you I can have no joyful day or hour. You are my joy, and without you my table is empty. Praise and glory be to you. Let my mouth, my soul, and all creatures together praise and bless you.
(Thomas à Kempis)

Scripture: Isaiah 40:3-5

A voice of one calling: 'In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'"

O Emmanuel, our king and our lawgiver,
the hope of the nations and their Saviour:
Come and save us, O Lord our God.
(O Antiphons)

Sing:

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

Sunday

O Lord,
raise up your power and come to deliver us,
that we who are oppressed by temptations
may be defended by your power,
that the hosts of the enemy may never prevail against us.
Hear us in your mercy, O Lord Christ,
who with the Father and the Holy Spirit
lives and reigns, one God, now and forever. Amen.
(Mozarabic Collect)

Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-2:

A shoot will come up from the
stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear
fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the
Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit
of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the
knowledge and fear of the Lord."

O Lord our God,
make us watchful and heedful
as we await the coming of your Son, Christ our Lord,
that when he comes and knocks, he will find us not sleeping in sins
but awake and rejoicing in his praises; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
(Gelasian Sacramentary)

Sing:

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.





She will bear a son,
and you are to name him Jesus,
for he will save his people from their sins.'
All this took place to fulfil
what had been spoken by the Lord
through the prophet:

'Look, the virgin shall conceive
and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel',
which means, 'God is with us.'

Matthew 1

