

# Advent 2015

Traditionally, the weeks leading up to December 25th are observed as Advent, which means “coming.” In anticipation of Jesus’ birth and the celebration to come, the Church lights a candle each week symbolizing God’s light and sets aside this season for quiet reflection and preparation. Our King is coming with mercy and justice; in this dark season we await His arrival. Consider keeping this Advent calendar at your desk, and set aside a few moments each day to focus your spirit. Each day offers a brief reflection on the themes of Advent and how you embody them through your work at Outreach. Our prayer is that this gift strengthens you as you extend the candles of God’s hope, peace, love, and joy to your community.



In Advent, *Hope* begins to shine in the darkness. In the coldest, darkest season, one small candle of light is kindled. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” John 1:5



*Advent* means “arrival” or “coming.” During this season we do not celebrate yet, but wait expectantly, preparing for deliverance. We wait in hope. Write down an area of waiting in your life, then physically lift it to God.



Our world is so dark. We find darkness not only in the season but in our own hearts, families, and community. Yet with one candle we *boldly declare* that the darkness will not win. Read John 1:9.



Outreach’s *Mission Statement* begins: “To restore hope...” By God’s grace, your work shines a candle in the darkness each day. Take a moment to read Outreach’s Mission and realize the role you play in restoring the light of hope.



Hope means our longing is “not yet fulfilled.” Still, in Christ, we have certainty in hope. Though He is coming, *Emmanuel* is with us and you are His Body, here. Reflect on hope made visible in and through your ministry.



The second candle of Advent now burns, and as one additional flicker of light enters the world we reflect this week on *Peace*. He has come to bring peace, to the hearts of individuals, and to broken relationships and communities.



Is there a busier month than *December*? Between work and parties, family and friends, baking and shopping, traveling and hosting...phew! Yet Advent is a season of waiting, of peace and of hope. Take 5-10 minutes to begin this week in stillness.



Read Isaiah 9:6. *Isaiah* prophesied that the Messiah would be called the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Now read Luke 2:8-14. At Jesus’ birth, the angels announced God’s peace to the earth.



“*Lord*, make me an instrument of peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; Where there is injury, pardon; Where there is doubt, faith; Where there is despair, hope; Where there is darkness, light; Where there is sadness, joy.” -St. Francis



As an Outreach employee, *you are* an instrument of God’s peace on earth. While you confront the darkness of pain and brokenness, you offer a flame of hope; one more step towards peace. Thank you for your redemptive work.



Is there a relationship in your life that needs peace? Take a moment to send an email, note, or text to someone with whom you have had conflict. *Receive* and extend the peace of the Lord today.



As you *advocate* for peace in this community, may God fill your spirit and home with His peace. “May the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.” Read Numbers 6:24-26 and receive this gift from the Lord.



The third candle has been lit, and our Advent wait is halfway through. This week we reflect on *love*. God did not leave his beloved creation, but took on flesh and came to walk among us. Read 1 John 4:10



Listen to *O Holy Night*. “Truly He taught us to love one another: His law is love, His gospel is peace. Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother; and in His name all oppression shall cease.”



The angel gave Mary a heavy redemptive burden. She responded “I am the Lord’s *servant*; may it be to me as you have said.” You, too, carry heavy redemption. Are you weary and depleted? May His love enrich you today.



Listen to *O Love that Will Not Let Me Go*. As you listen, allow your soul to rest in Him. Lift your flickering light to His Light. Open your heart to His joy. His love is the final word.



Read Luke 1:68-79. John came to *prepare the way* for Jesus, and through Jesus God fulfills His promise first to Israel, then to all creation. God has not left us as orphans. By His love and mercy redemption has begun.



“*O God*, I pray for peace and justice, for love and joy for all people. Through my words and actions this day help me live as an instrument of your peace and justice, love and joy.” –Doris Warrell, adapted



In Bethlehem God took on flesh and made His dwelling among us. Through your ministry He dwells in you in this community. *You embody His love*. As you bring one candle to the darkness, His light begins to overcome.



As we begin the final week of Advent, our waiting is nearly at an end. The days of preparation and anticipation will soon give way to joyous celebration. Four candles now shine through the darkness. Our *King* is coming!



Carrying the *Messiah* in her womb, Mary broke into a song of joy. You, too, carry Christ into the lives of those you work with. Read Luke 1:46-55. He has remembered us, and His justice is coming. Let us rejoice!



We have so much to *celebrate*. Why not break into song today? Find a friend and do a little office caroling. 'Tis the season to Rejoice! While you gather the courage to sing to your coworkers, read Romans 8:38-39.



At Jesus’ birth, joy breaks out. “I bring you good news of great joy for all people...then suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “*Glorify* to God in the highest heaven!”



Today is *Christmas Eve*. All creation waits to receive her King. At home preparations are nearly complete, and in our spirits we eagerly anticipate the joy that awaits. Take the time to read aloud the old, old story—Luke 2.



*Rejoice!* The Light is come, the darkness vanquished. Emmanuel, God-with-us, is here. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” John 1:14.

*Oh come let us adore him, Christ the Lord!*