

Reimagining Faith Formation

Advent, Year C

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Join our synod this Advent in reimagining faith formation.

Together we are using the ministry tool of social media for the uplifting of God's word in the world.

Use the hashtags #InstADVENT, #LSS15, and #ELCA with the photo-a-day study guide to follow along.

Enjoy reflecting on the scripture assigned to each week as the photo-a-day project helps bring Jesus' birth to life in refreshing ways this season.

Peace be with you.

#INSTADVENT PHOTO-A-DAY

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|---------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. Lifted | 11. Smooth | 21. Burn |
| 2. Promise | 12. Prepare | 22. Greeting |
| 3. Compassion | 13. Witness | 23. Magnify |
| 4. Justice | 14. Blameless | 24. Joy |
| 5. Teach | 15. Rejoice | 25. Filled |
| 6. Love | 16. Gentleness | |
| 7. Pathway | 17. Peace | |
| 8. Thanks | 18. Bear fruits | |
| 9. Wilderness | 19. Root | |
| 10. Rough | 20. Water | |

#LSS15
#ELCA

Week 1: “Hope”

Advent is about the “coming days.” God’s people have always lived in great expectation, but that expectation finds specific, repeated enunciation in the texts appointed for these four weeks. The ancients anticipated a “righteous Branch to spring up for David.” The Thessalonians awaited “the coming of our Lord Jesus with all the saints.” Our Lord’s contemporaries hoped for the time “to stand before the Son of Man.” With them we eagerly await the coming days: another Christmas celebration, a second coming, and the advent of our Lord in word and supper.

First Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16

In the Old Testament, “righteousness” often has to do with being faithful in relationship. God acts righteously both in punishing Israel for its sin and in having mercy. In today’s reading, Jerusalem’s future name—“The Lord is our righteousness”—proclaims that the Lord is even now working salvation for Israel.

14The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 15In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 16In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: “The Lord is our righteousness.”

Psalm: Psalm 25:1-10

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. (Ps. 25:1)

1To | you, O Lord,
I lift | up my soul.

2**My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be | put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph | over me.**

3Let none who look to you be | put to shame;
rather let those be put to shame | who are treacherous.

4**Show me your | ways, O Lord,
and teach | me your paths. R**

5Lead me in your | truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all | the day long.

6**Remember, O Lord, your compas- | sion and love,
for they are from | everlasting. R**

7Remember not the sins of my youth and | my transgressions;
remember me according to your steadfast love and for the sake of your good- | ness, O Lord.

8**You are gracious and up- | right, O Lord;
therefore you teach sinners | in your way.**

9You lead the low- | ly in justice
and teach the low- | ly your way.

10**All your paths, O Lord, are steadfast | love and faithfulness
to those who keep your covenant and your | testimonies. R**

SUN 11/29 – Lifted

MON 11/30 – Promise

TUES 12/1 – Compassion

WED 12/2 – Justice

THUR 12/3 – Teach

FRI 12/4 – Love

SAT 12/5 – Pathway

Week 2: "Love"

Forerunners and messengers advance the advent of our God. While John the Baptizer's voice in the wilderness may be the principal focus of the day, Malachi's prophesy could as easily herald the coming Lord Jesus as forerunner of the Lord of hosts. Finally all the baptized are called to participate in the sharing of the gospel. In so doing we prepare the way for the coming of the Lord and assist all flesh in capturing a vision of the "salvation of God."

Second Reading: Philippians 1:3-11

The apostle Paul was the pastor of many new churches. He writes in this letter about his joy to be in partnership with the Christians of Philippi. Listen to how tender-hearted Paul, sometimes a stern preacher, is with his friends as he encourages them to grow in love and knowledge.

3I thank my God every time I remember you, 4constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, 5because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. 6I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. 7It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. 8For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. 9And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight 10to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, 11having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Gospel: Luke 3:1-6

John the Baptist is a herald of the saving Lord, whose way is prepared by "repentance for the forgiveness of sins." As we hear the careful record of human leaders, we sense the spectrum of political and religious authority that will be challenged by this coming Lord.

1In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, 2during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, 4as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

5Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;

6and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

SUN 12/6 – Thanks

MON 12/7 – Wilderness

TUES 12/8 – Rough

WED 12/9 – Smooth

THUR 12/10 – Prepare

FRI 12/11 – Witness

SAT 12/12 – Blameless

Week 3: "Joy"

The presence of the Lord "in your midst" in the wonder of the holy supper is cause for singing. The nearness of the Lord in prayer, in every circumstance, is cause for rejoicing. The coming of one "more powerful" than John, even with his winnowing fork in his hand, is good news—and cause for exultation—for us who are being saved. Great joy is the tone for the third Sunday of Advent.

Psalm: Isaiah 12:2-6

In your midst is the Holy One of Israel. (Is. 12:6)

- 2 Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not | be afraid,
for the Lord God is my strength and my might, and has become | my salvation.
- 3 With joy you | will draw water
from the wells | of salvation. R
- 4 And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the Lord, call | on God's name;
make known the deeds of the Lord among the nations; proclaim that this name | is exalted.
- 5 Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done | gloriously;
let this be known in | all the earth.
- 6 Shout aloud and sing for joy, O | royal Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy | One of Israel. R

Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

Despite being in prison, Paul is remarkably upbeat as he writes this letter. Here, he urges his friends in Philippi to trust God with all their worries and concerns, with the hope they will experience God's joy and peace.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Gospel: Luke 3:7-18

John the Baptist heralds the mighty one "who is coming." John teaches that preparation for God's reign is not a matter of identity but of bearing fruits of merciful justice, radical generosity, and vocational integrity.

7 John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." 10 And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" 11 In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" 13 He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." 14 Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

15 As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, 16 John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

18 So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

SUN 12/13 – Rejoice
MON 12/14 – Gentleness
TUES 12/15 – Peace
WED 12/16 – Bear fruits
THUR 12/17 – Root
FRI 12/18 – Water
SAT 12/19 – Burn

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Week 4: "Peace"

Cradle and cross are inextricably connected on the fourth Sunday of Advent. Between a lovely tribute to the little town of Bethlehem and the blessed virgin Mary's magnificent song of praise, the letter to the Hebrews reminds us in no uncertain terms that Christ's advent is for "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." It is the kind of tension in which the church always lives as when in the holy communion—with high delight—"we proclaim the Lord's death."

Gospel: Luke 1:39-45 [46-55]

We are presented with Elizabeth, John's mother, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, two women filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith. In Elizabeth's inspired greeting and Mary's song of praise we hear of a saving God who remembers, scatters, lifts up, and fulfills all things.

39In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, 40where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit 42and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? 44For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. 45And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

46And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

47and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

48for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

49for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

50His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

51He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

52He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;

53he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.

54He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,

55according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

SUN 12/20 – Greeting

MON 12/21 – Magnify

TUES 12/22 – Joy

WED 12/23 – Filled