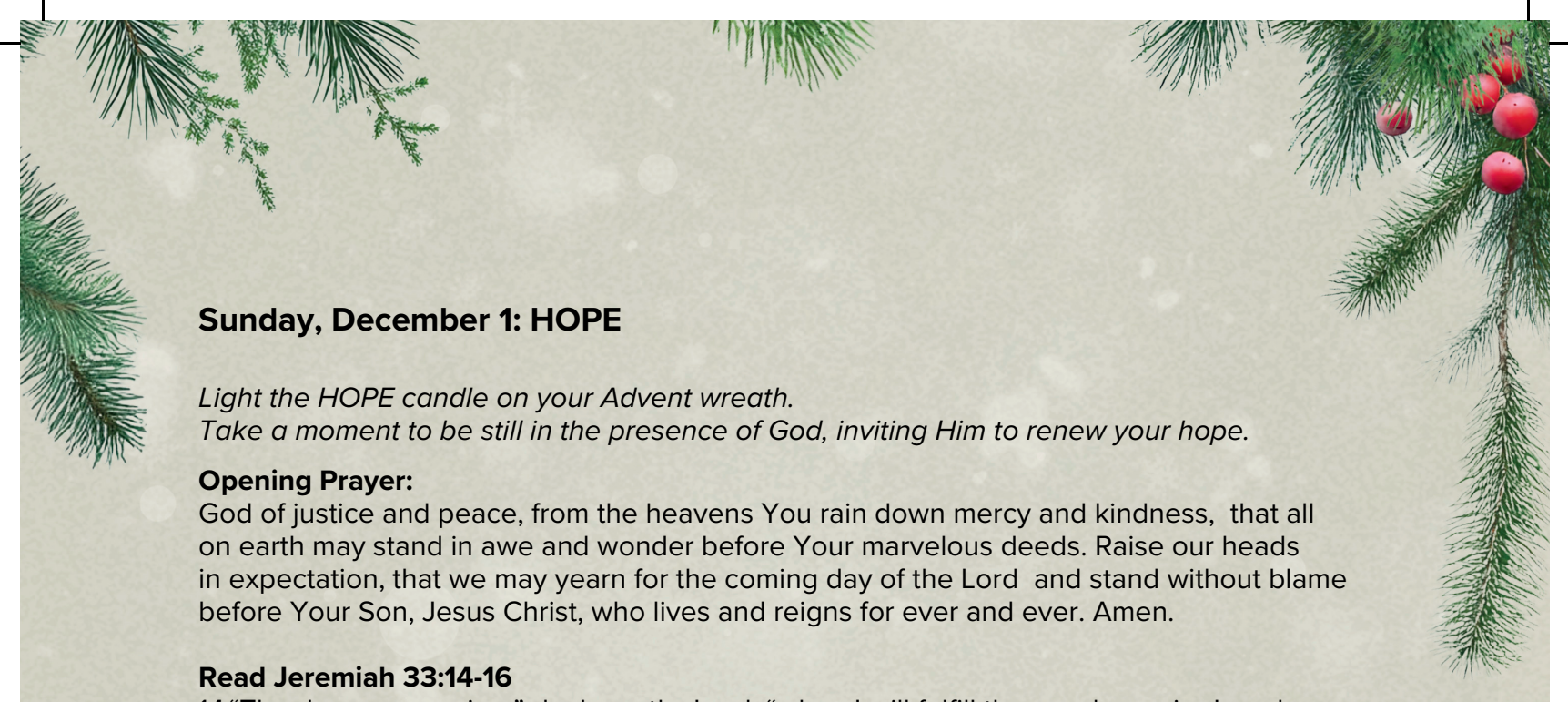




# ADVENT WREATH

DEVOTIONALS



## Sunday, December 1: HOPE

*Light the HOPE candle on your Advent wreath.*

*Take a moment to be still in the presence of God, inviting Him to renew your hope.*

### **Opening Prayer:**

God of justice and peace, from the heavens You rain down mercy and kindness, that all on earth may stand in awe and wonder before Your marvelous deeds. Raise our heads in expectation, that we may yearn for the coming day of the Lord and stand without blame before Your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

### **Read Jeremiah 33:14-16**

14 “The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will fulfill the good promise I made to the people of Israel and Judah. 15 “In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line; he will do what is just and right in the land. 16 In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The Lord Our Righteous Savior.”

### **Read Psalm 25:1-10**

“In you, Lord my God, I put my trust. 2 I trust in you; do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me. 3 No one who hopes in you will ever be put to shame, but shame will come on those who are treacherous without cause. 4 Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. 5 Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. 6 Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old. 7 Do not remember the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you, Lord, are good. 8 Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. 9 He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. 10 All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful toward those who keep the demands of his covenant.”

### **Pause and Reflect:**

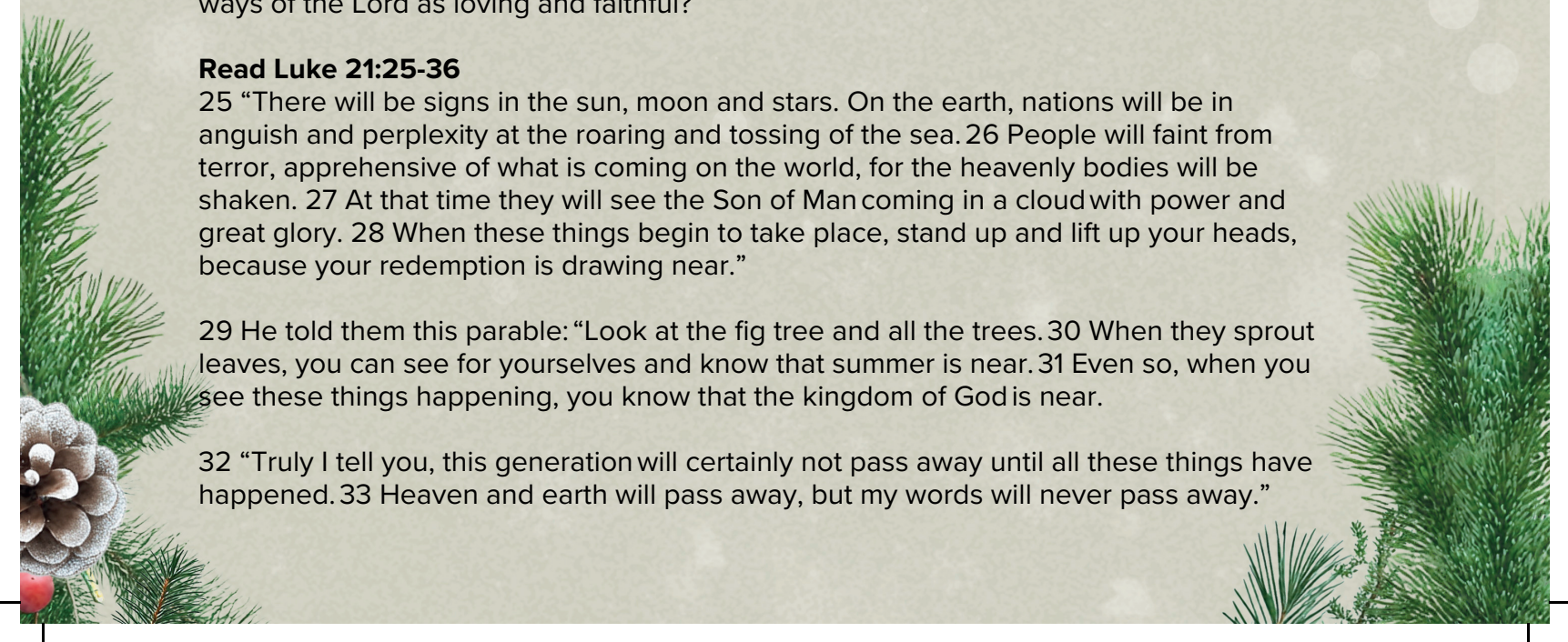
Where do you need your hope in the Lord renewed? How have you recently seen the ways of the Lord as loving and faithful?

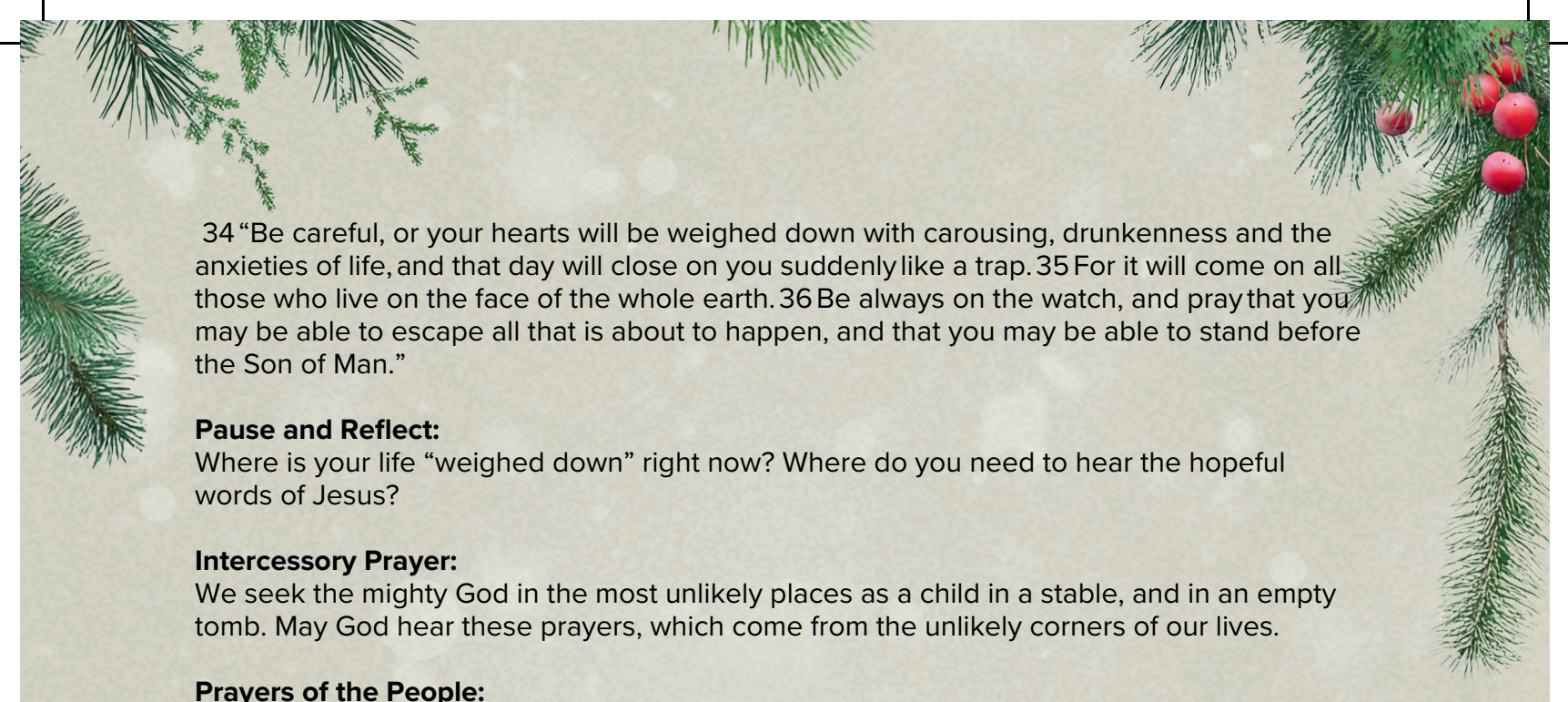
### **Read Luke 21:25-36**

25 “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. 26 People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. 27 At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

29 He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. 30 When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. 31 Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

32 “Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”





34 “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. 35 For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

**Pause and Reflect:**

Where is your life “weighed down” right now? Where do you need to hear the hopeful words of Jesus?

**Intercessory Prayer:**

We seek the mighty God in the most unlikely places as a child in a stable, and in an empty tomb. May God hear these prayers, which come from the unlikely corners of our lives.

**Prayers of the People:**

*Take some time to pray to Jesus about the areas of your life that are “weighed down,” casting your cares on him and inviting him to renew your hope.*

Give us ears to hear, O God, and eyes to watch, that we may know Your presence in our midst during this holy season of joy as we anticipate the coming of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Concluding Scripture:**

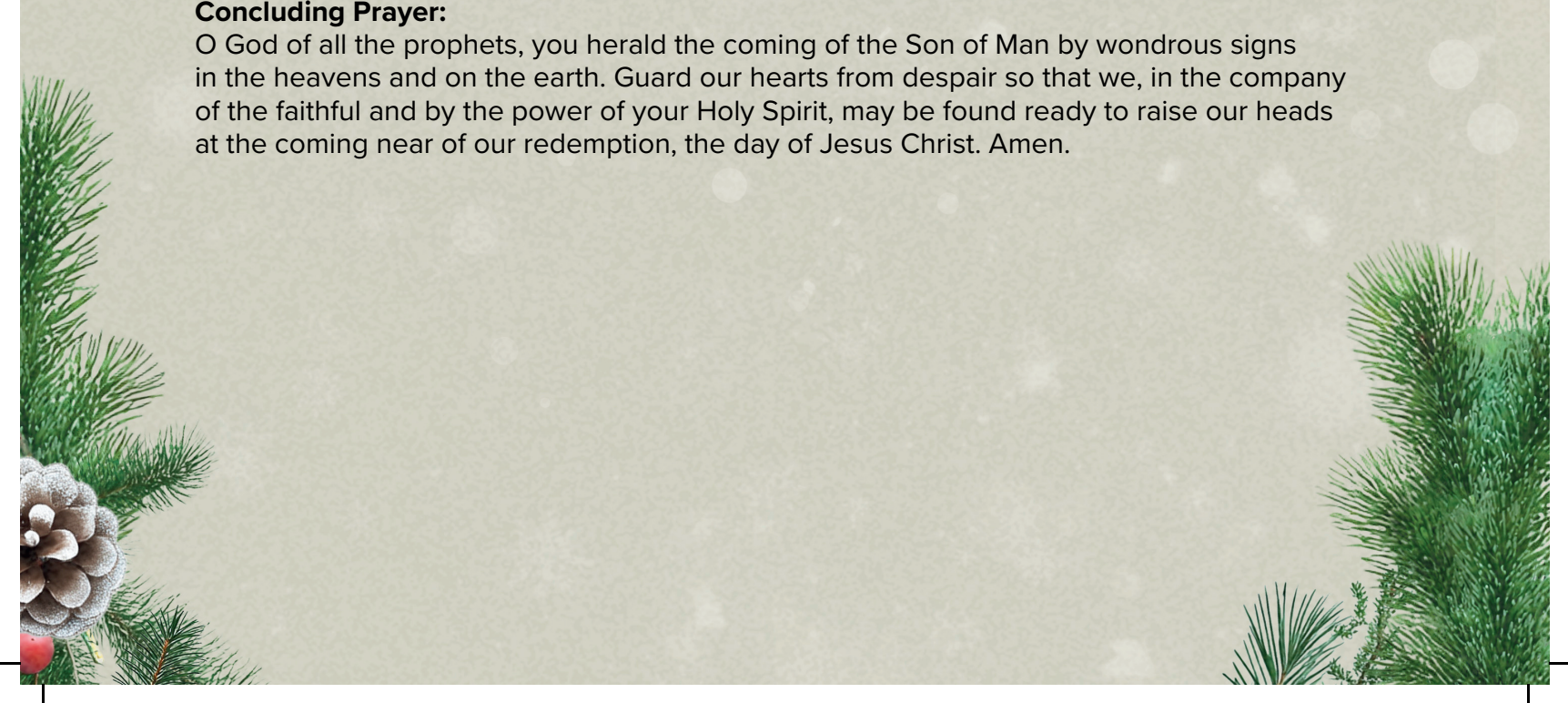
**Read 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13**

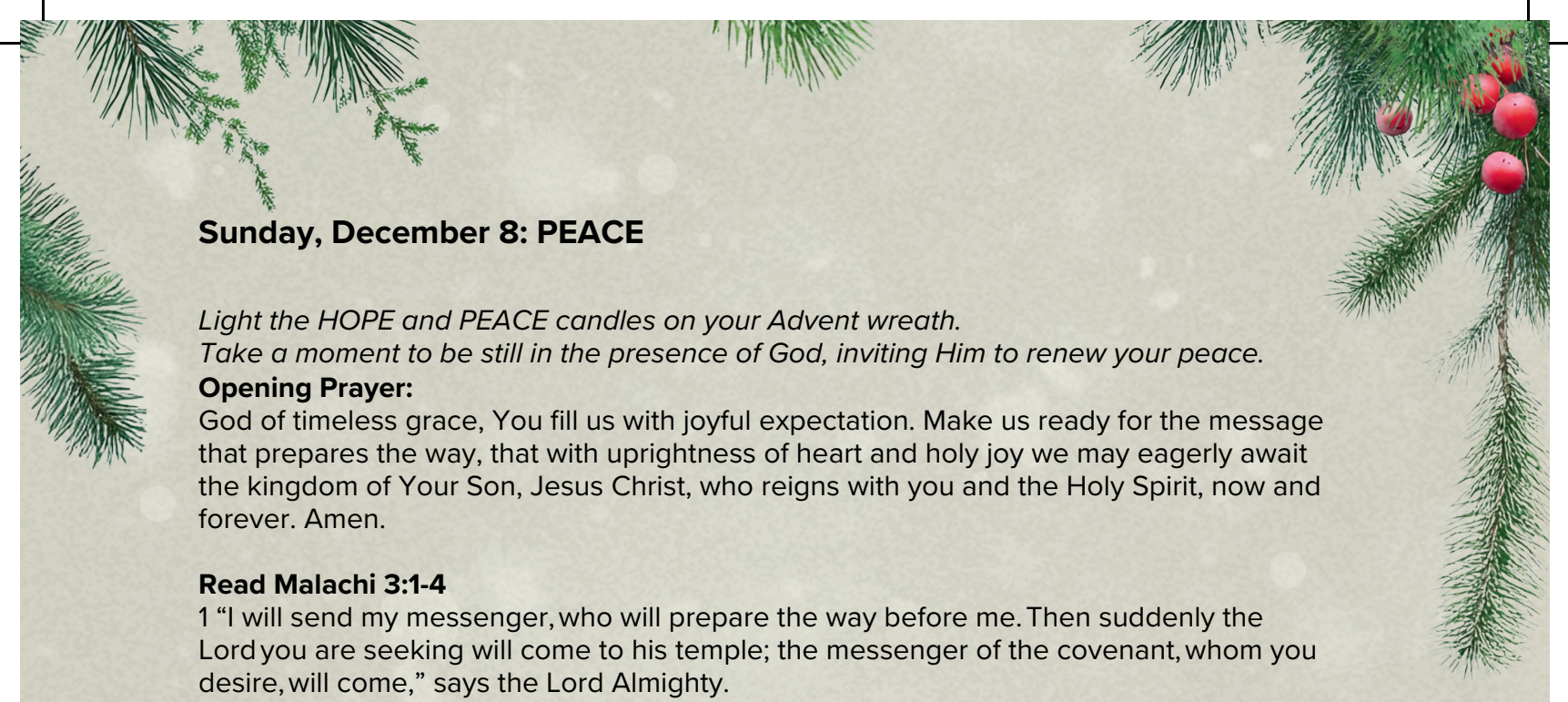
9 How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? 10 Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. 12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. 13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

**Concluding Prayer:**

O God of all the prophets, you herald the coming of the Son of Man by wondrous signs in the heavens and on the earth. Guard our hearts from despair so that we, in the company of the faithful and by the power of your Holy Spirit, may be found ready to raise our heads at the coming near of our redemption, the day of Jesus Christ. Amen.





## Sunday, December 8: PEACE

*Light the HOPE and PEACE candles on your Advent wreath.*

*Take a moment to be still in the presence of God, inviting Him to renew your peace.*

### **Opening Prayer:**

God of timeless grace, You fill us with joyful expectation. Make us ready for the message that prepares the way, that with uprightness of heart and holy joy we may eagerly await the kingdom of Your Son, Jesus Christ, who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

### **Read Malachi 3:1-4**

1 “I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty.

2 But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. 3 He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, 4 and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years.

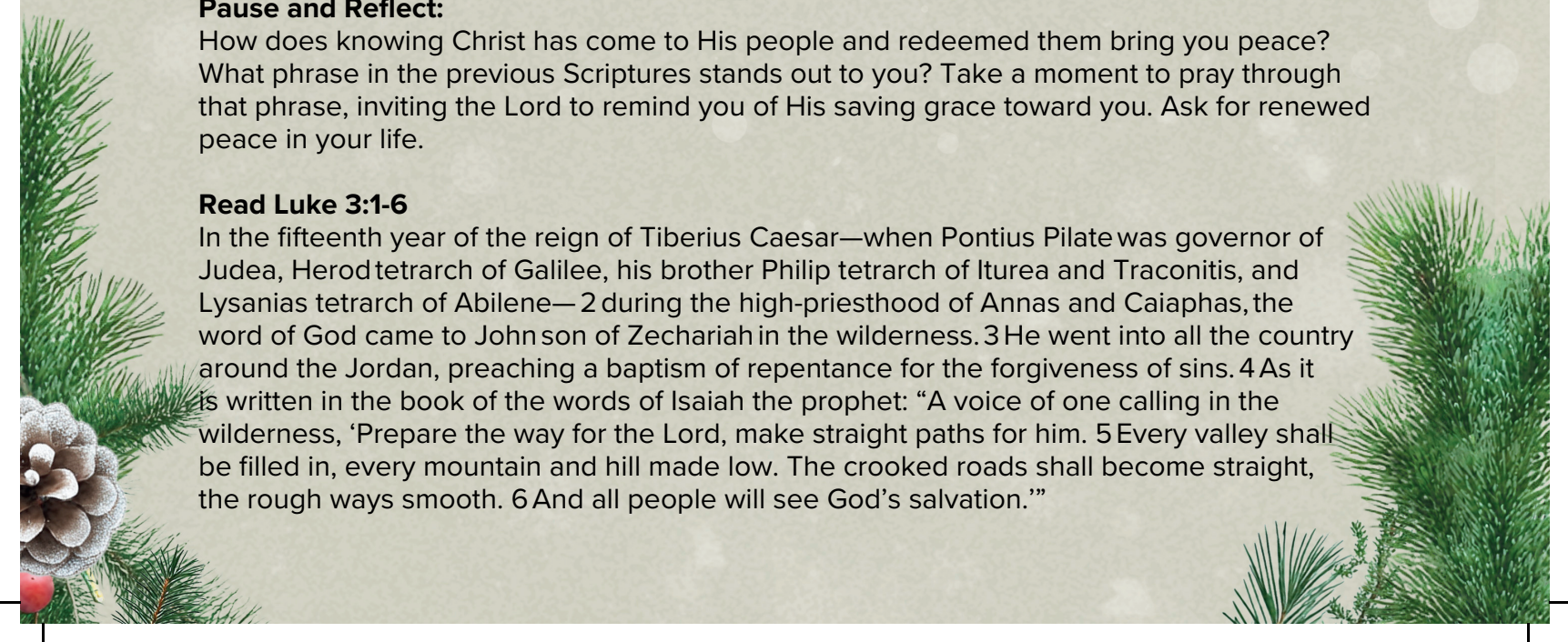
### **Read Luke 1:68-79**

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them. 69 He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David 70 (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), 71 salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us— 72 to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant, 73 the oath he swore to our father Abraham: 74 to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear 75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. 76 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, 77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, 78 because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven 79 to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

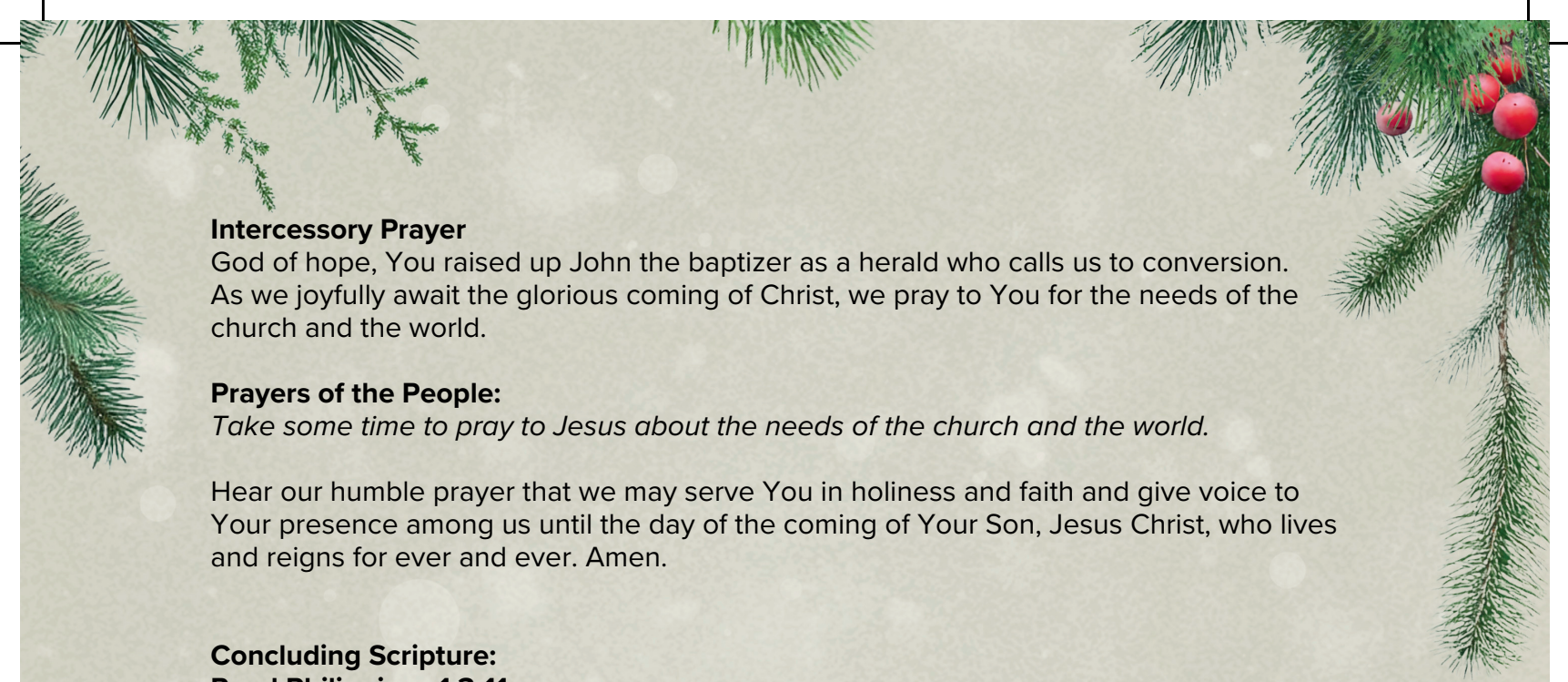
### **Pause and Reflect:**

How does knowing Christ has come to His people and redeemed them bring you peace? What phrase in the previous Scriptures stands out to you? Take a moment to pray through that phrase, inviting the Lord to remind you of His saving grace toward you. Ask for renewed peace in your life.

### **Read Luke 3:1-6**



In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene— 2 during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to Johnson of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3 He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 4 As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. 5 Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. 6 And all people will see God’s salvation.’”



**Intercessory Prayer**

God of hope, You raised up John the baptizer as a herald who calls us to conversion. As we joyfully await the glorious coming of Christ, we pray to You for the needs of the church and the world.

**Prayers of the People:**

*Take some time to pray to Jesus about the needs of the church and the world.*

Hear our humble prayer that we may serve You in holiness and faith and give voice to Your presence among us until the day of the coming of Your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

**Concluding Scripture:**


**Read Philippians 1:3-11**

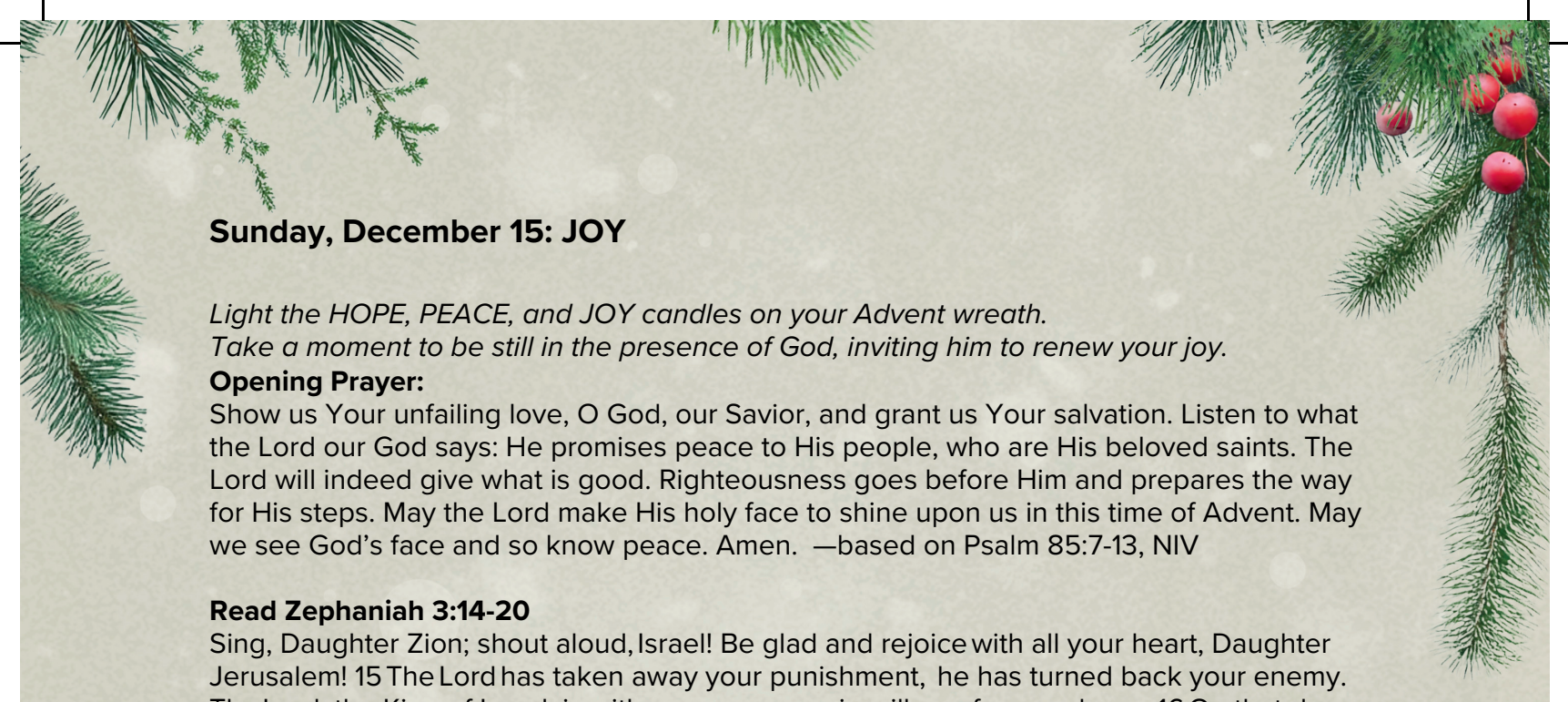
3 I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

7 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. 8 God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. 9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

**Concluding Prayer:**

Out of the embrace of mercy and righteousness, You have brought forth joy and dignity for Your people, O Holy One of Israel. Remember now Your ancient promise: make straight the paths that lead to You, and smooth the rough ways, that in our day we might bring forth your compassion for all humanity. Amen.





## Sunday, December 15: JOY

*Light the HOPE, PEACE, and JOY candles on your Advent wreath.*

*Take a moment to be still in the presence of God, inviting him to renew your joy.*

### **Opening Prayer:**

Show us Your unfailing love, O God, our Savior, and grant us Your salvation. Listen to what the Lord our God says: He promises peace to His people, who are His beloved saints. The Lord will indeed give what is good. Righteousness goes before Him and prepares the way for His steps. May the Lord make His holy face to shine upon us in this time of Advent. May we see God's face and so know peace. Amen. —based on Psalm 85:7-13, NIV

### **Read Zephaniah 3:14-20**

Sing, Daughter Zion; shout aloud, Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem! 15 The Lord has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The Lord, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm. 16 On that day they will say to Jerusalem, "Do not fear, Zion; do not let your hands hang limp. 17 The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing." 18 "I will remove from you all who mourn over the loss of your appointed festivals, which is a burden and reproach for you. 19 At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you. I will rescue the lame; I will gather the exiles. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they have suffered shame. 20 At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes," says the Lord.

### **Read Isaiah 12:2-6**

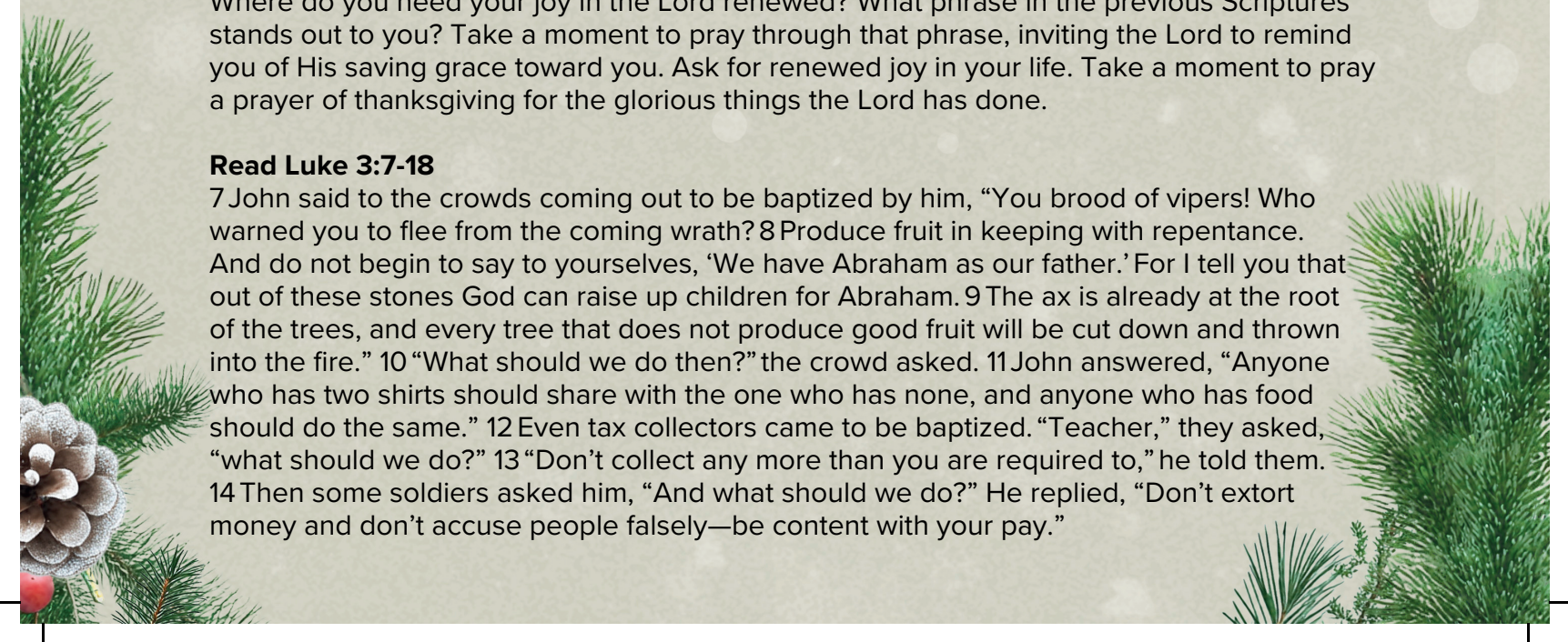
"Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation." 3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. 4 In that day you will say: "Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. 5 Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. 6 Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you."

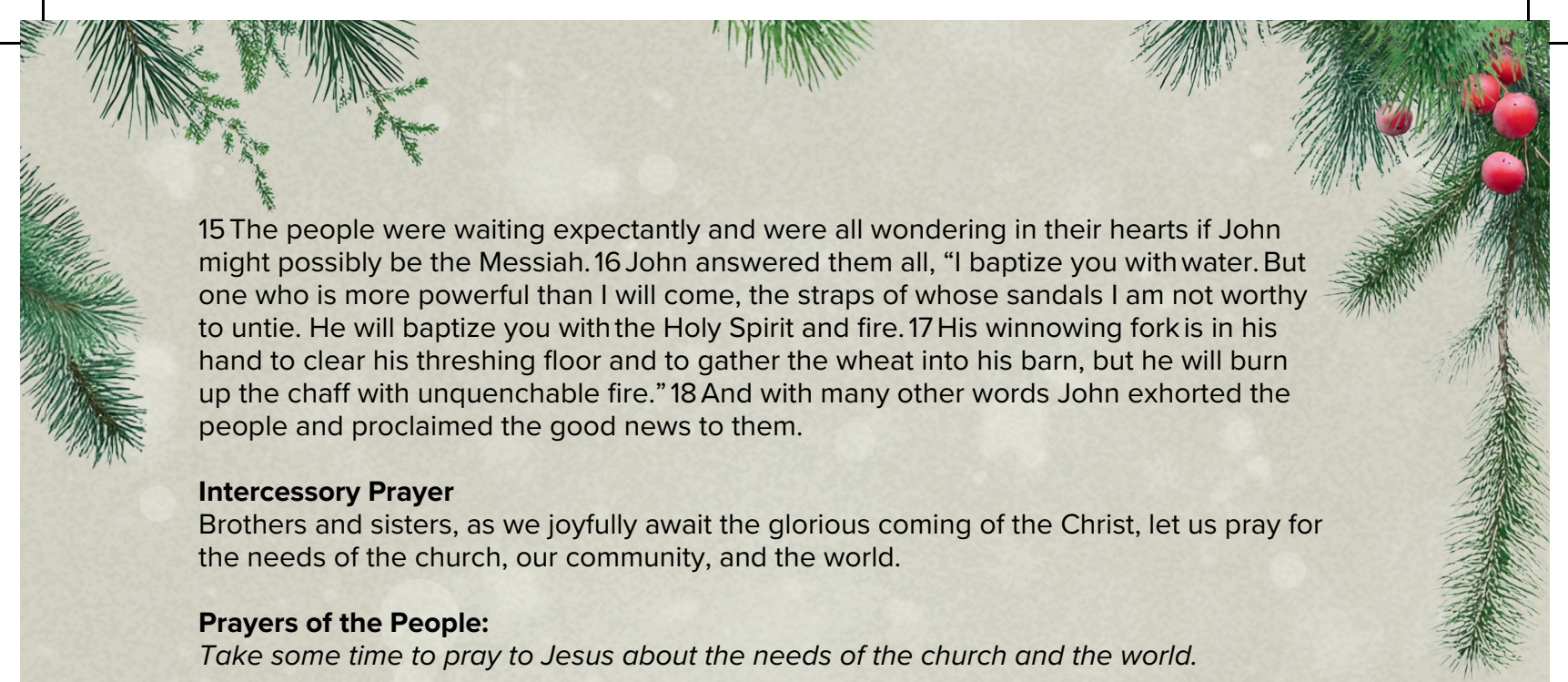
### **Pause and Reflect:**

Where do you need your joy in the Lord renewed? What phrase in the previous Scriptures stands out to you? Take a moment to pray through that phrase, inviting the Lord to remind you of His saving grace toward you. Ask for renewed joy in your life. Take a moment to pray a prayer of thanksgiving for the glorious things the Lord has done.

### **Read Luke 3:7-18**

7 John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 9 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." 10 "What should we do then?" the crowd asked. 11 John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same." 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?" 13 "Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them. 14 Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay."





15 The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. 16 John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. 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 barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." 18 And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.

### **Intercessory Prayer**

Brothers and sisters, as we joyfully await the glorious coming of the Christ, let us pray for the needs of the church, our community, and the world.

### **Prayers of the People:**

*Take some time to pray to Jesus about the needs of the church and the world.*

God of joy and exultation, You strengthen what is weak; You enrich the poor and give hope to those who live in fear. Look upon our needs this day. Make us grateful for the good news of salvation and keep us faithful in Your service until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives for ever and ever. Amen.


### **Concluding Scripture:**

#### **Read Philippians 4:4-7**

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

### **Concluding Prayer:**

O God of the exiles and the lost, You promise restoration and wholeness through the power of Jesus Christ. Give us faith to live joyfully, sustained by Your promises as we eagerly await the day when they will be fulfilled for all the world to see, through the coming of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.





## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22: LOVE

*Light the HOPE, PEACE, JOY, and LOVE candles on your Advent wreath.*

*Take a moment to be still in the presence of God, inviting Him to renew your love.*

### **Opening Prayer:**

O Almighty God, You visited your servants, Elizabeth and Mary, with news of the world's redemption in the coming of the Savior. Make our hearts leap with joy, and fill our mouths with songs of praise, that we may announce glad tidings of peace, and welcome Christ the Savior in our midst. Amen.

### **Read Micah 5:2-5a**

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” 3 Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor bears a son, and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. 4 He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. 5 And he will be our peace.

### **Read Isaiah 12:2-6**

Hear us, Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth 2 before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. Awaken your might; come and save us. 3 Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved. 4 How long, Lord God Almighty, will your anger smolder against the prayers of your people? 5 You have fed them with the bread of tears; you have made them drink tears by the bowlful. 6 You have made us an object of derision to our neighbors, and our enemies mock us. 7 Restore us, God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

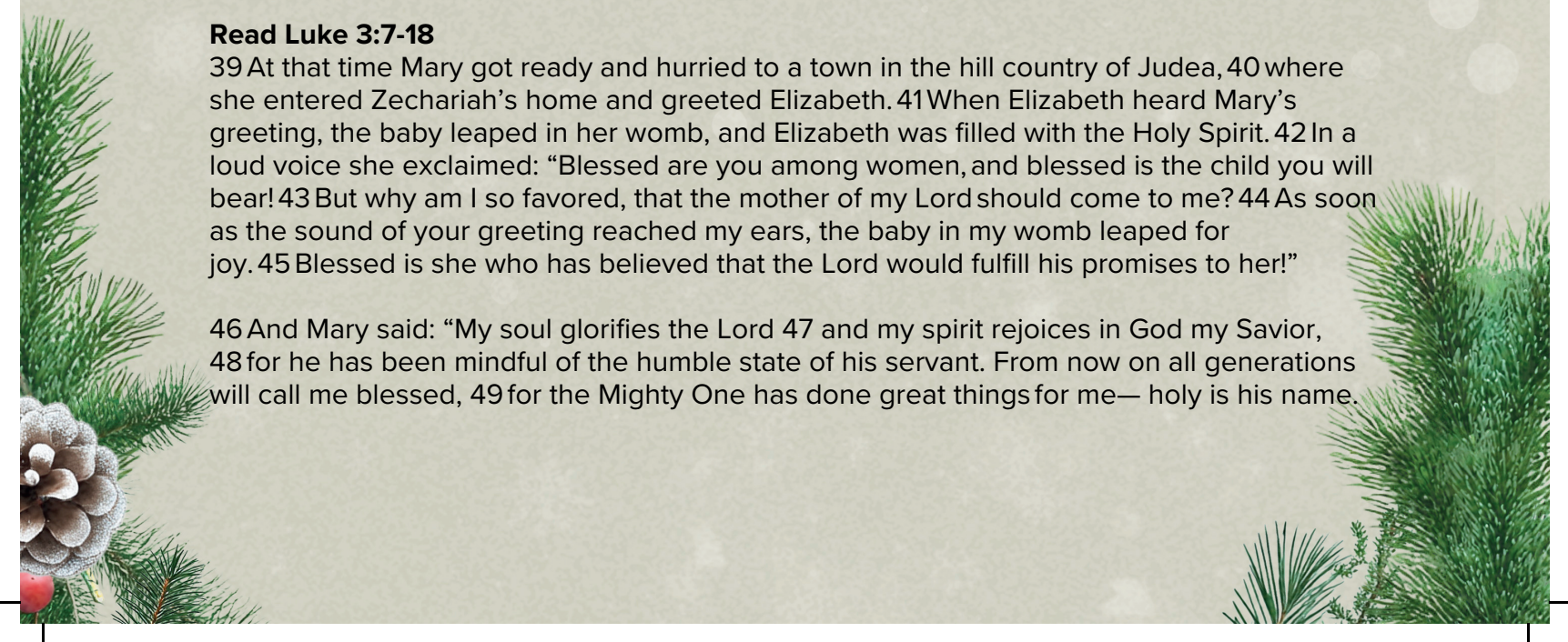
### **Pause and Reflect:**

Where do you need the love of God to restore you? What phrase in the previous Scriptures stands out to you? Take a moment to pray through that phrase, inviting the Lord to remind you of His saving grace toward you. Take a moment to pray for the Lord to shepherd you with His love.

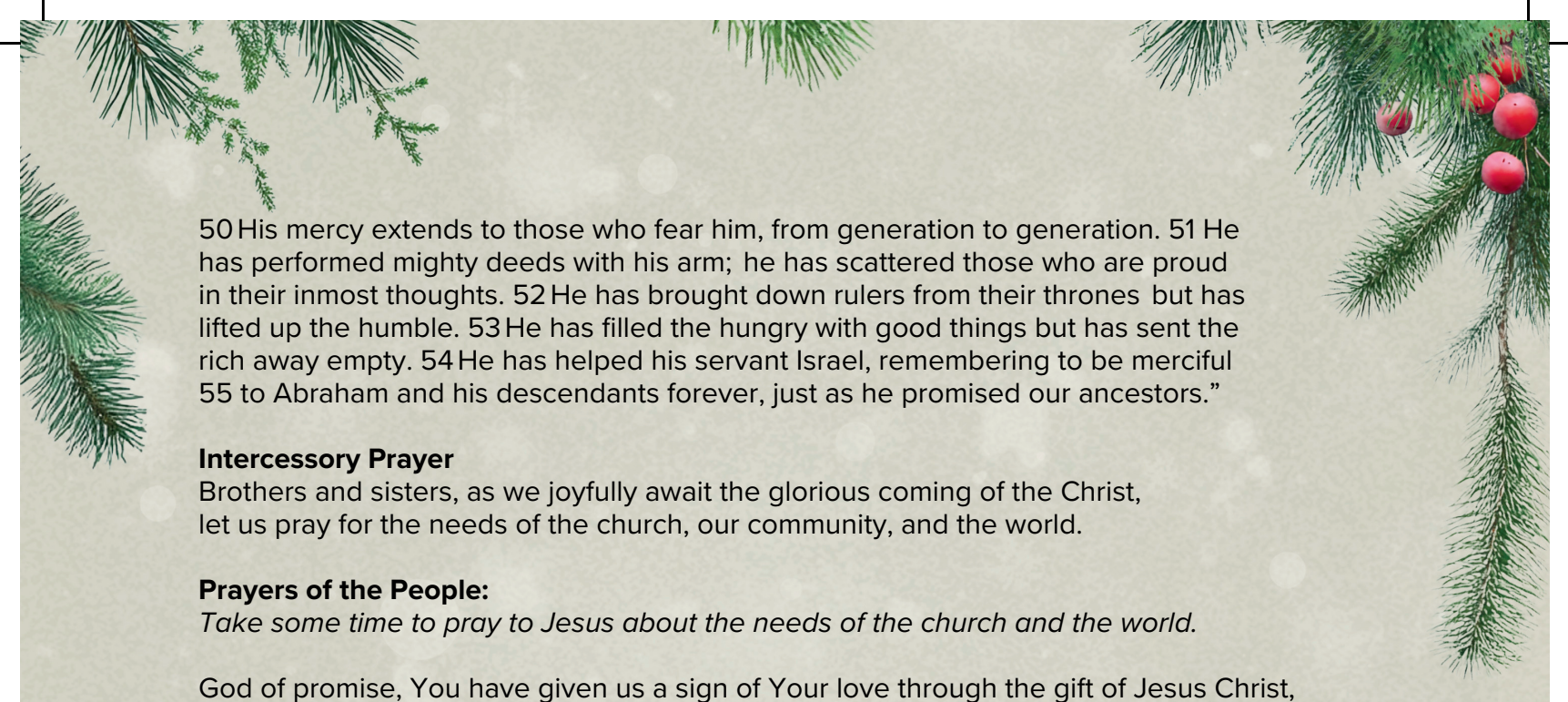
### **Read Luke 3:7-18**

39 At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!”

46 And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, 49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name.







50 His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. 51 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. 52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. 54 He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful 55 to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.”

### **Intercessory Prayer**

Brothers and sisters, as we joyfully await the glorious coming of the Christ, let us pray for the needs of the church, our community, and the world.

### **Prayers of the People:**

*Take some time to pray to Jesus about the needs of the church and the world.*

God of promise, You have given us a sign of Your love through the gift of Jesus Christ, our Savior, who was promised from ages past. We believe as Joseph did the message of your presence whispered by an angel, and offer our prayers for Your world, confident of Your care and mercy for all creation. Amen.


### **Concluding Scripture:**

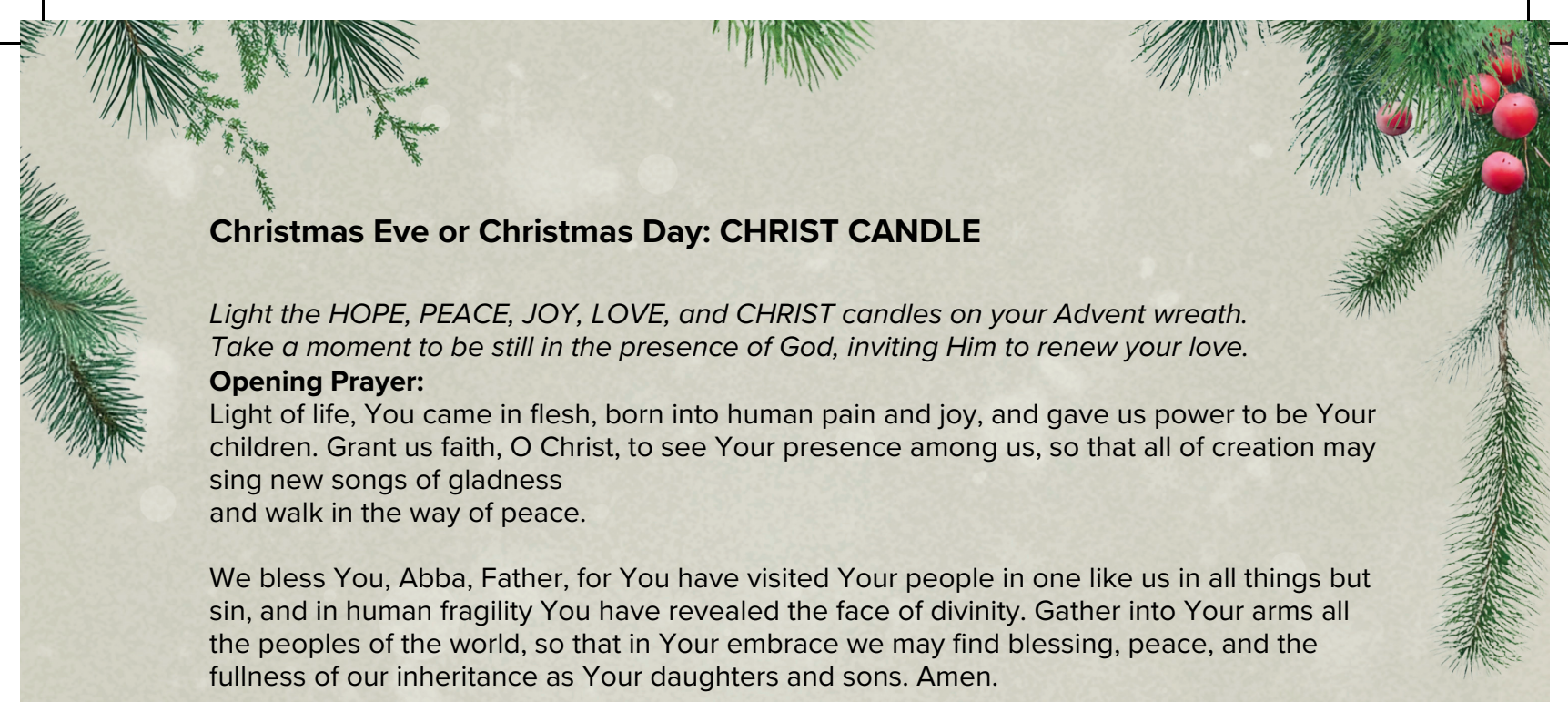
#### **Read Hebrews 10:5-10**

5 Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; 6 with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. 7 Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll— I have come to do your will, my God.’” 8 First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them”—though they were offered in accordance with the law. 9 Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. 10 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

### **Concluding Prayer:**

Shepherd of Israel, You gently support the one who is with child and call forth the Lamb who dances in the womb, Stir our hearts to recognize Christ’s coming, as Elizabeth recognized His presence in Mary’s radiant obedience to Your desire, an open our souls to receive the One who came to love Your flock. Amen





## Christmas Eve or Christmas Day: CHRIST CANDLE

*Light the HOPE, PEACE, JOY, LOVE, and CHRIST candles on your Advent wreath.  
Take a moment to be still in the presence of God, inviting Him to renew your love.*

### **Opening Prayer:**

Light of life, You came in flesh, born into human pain and joy, and gave us power to be Your children. Grant us faith, O Christ, to see Your presence among us, so that all of creation may sing new songs of gladness and walk in the way of peace.

We bless You, Abba, Father, for You have visited Your people in one like us in all things but sin, and in human fragility You have revealed the face of divinity. Gather into Your arms all the peoples of the world, so that in Your embrace we may find blessing, peace, and the fullness of our inheritance as Your daughters and sons. Amen.

### **Read Isaiah 9:2-7**

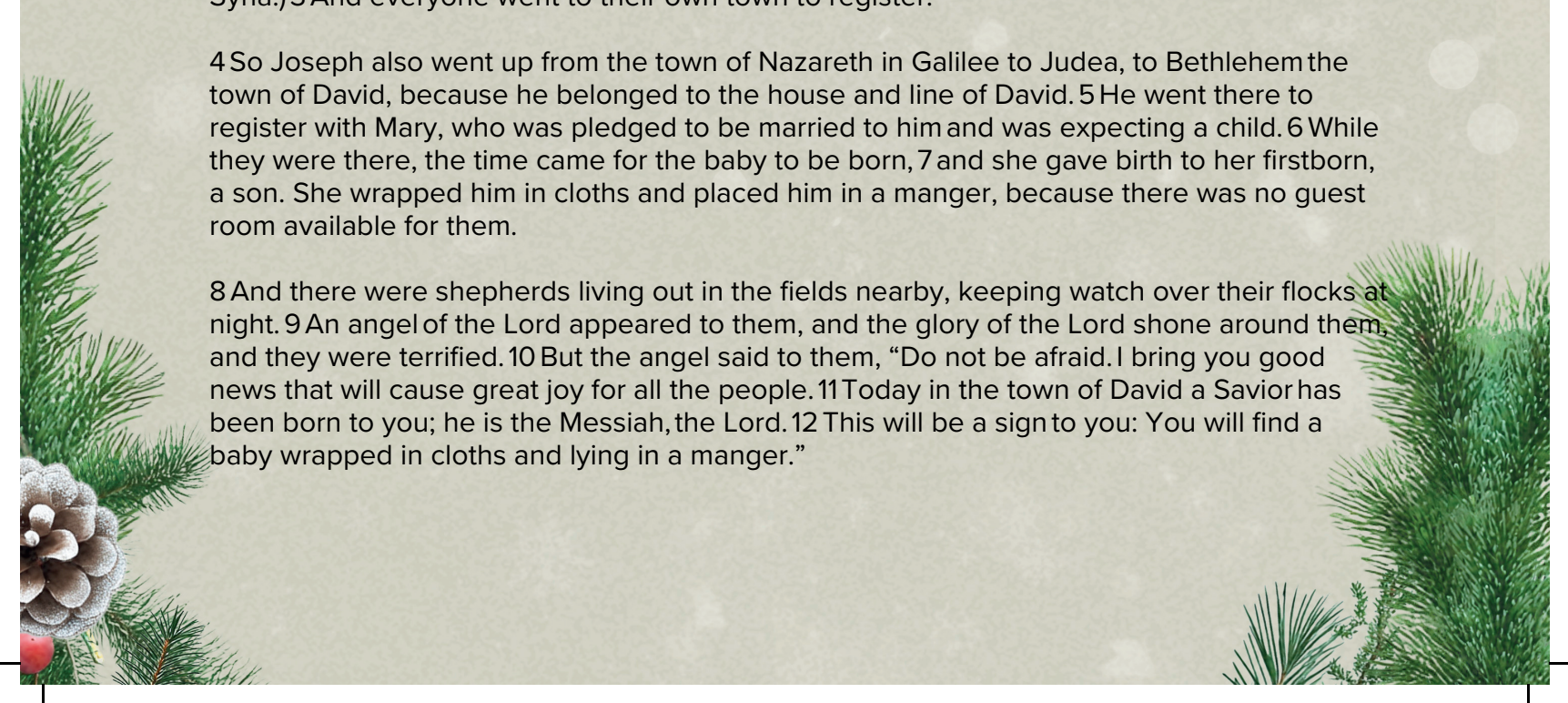
The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. 3 You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. 4 For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. 5 Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

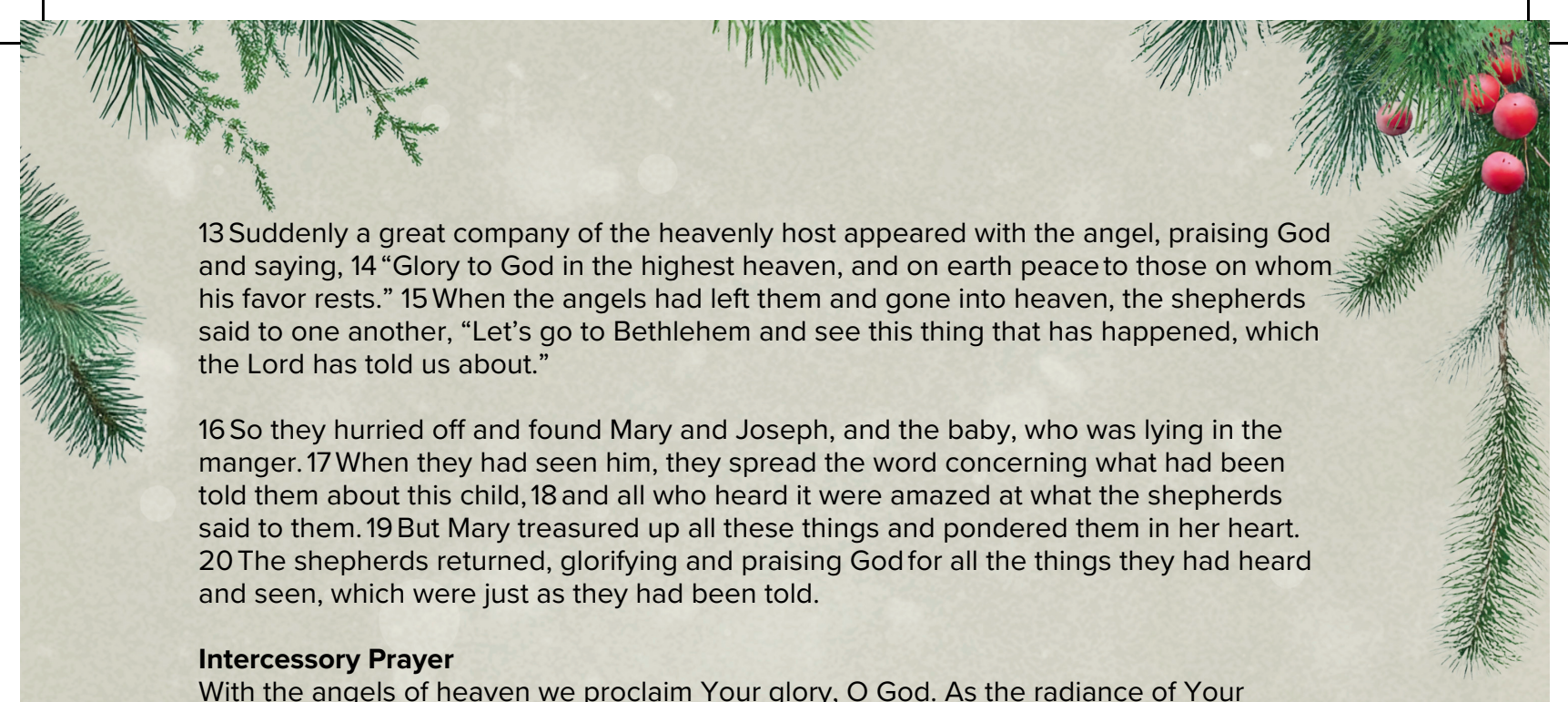
### **Read Luke 2:1-20**

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register.

4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."





13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” 15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

### **Intercessory Prayer**

With the angels of heaven we proclaim Your glory, O God. As the radiance of Your presence lights up the heavens, we pray for enlightenment for Your church on behalf of the whole world.

### **Prayers of the People:**

*Take some time to pray to Jesus about the needs of the church and the world.*

Grant that, through our prayers, our lives may radiate the presence of Christ to all who dwell on earth, for He is our Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

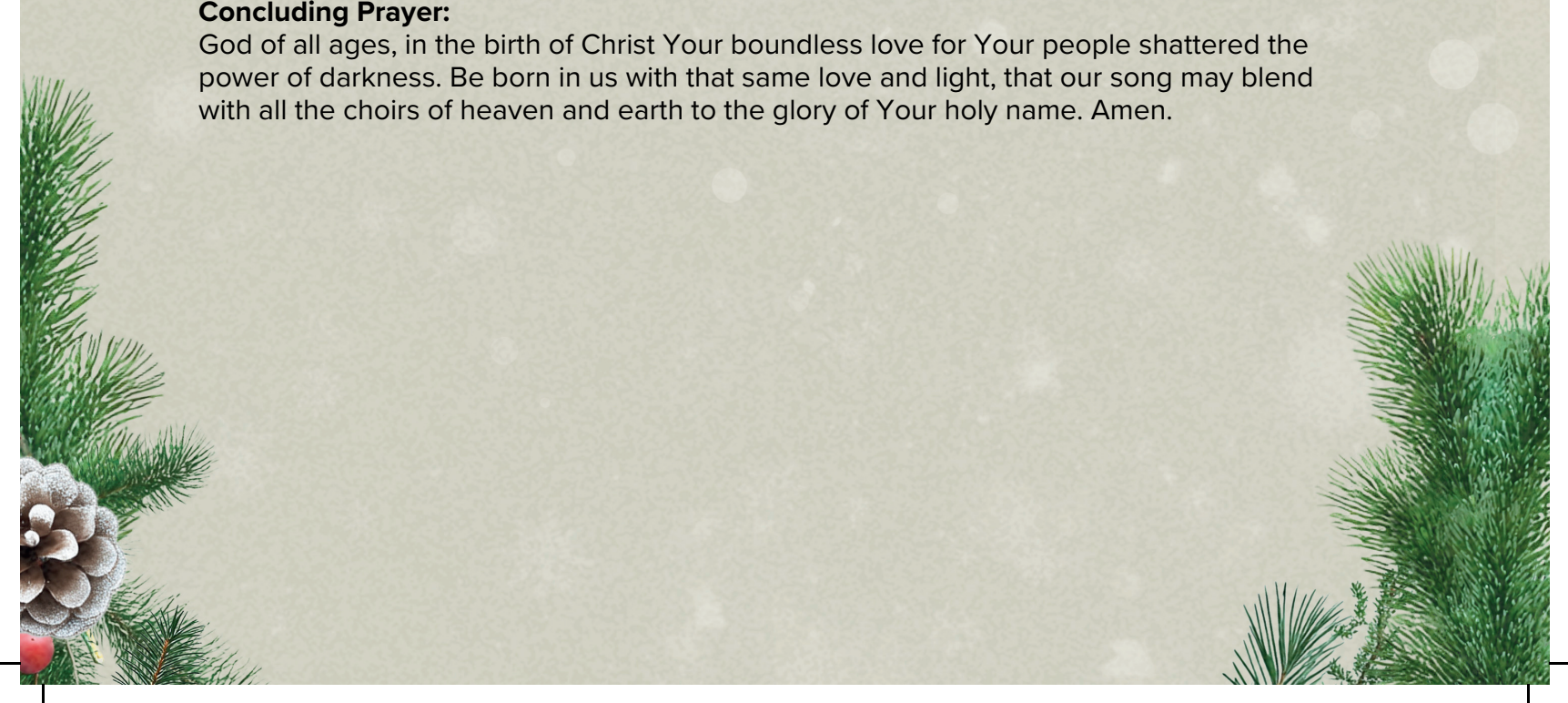
### **Concluding Scripture:**

#### **Read Titus 2:11-14**

11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

### **Concluding Prayer:**

God of all ages, in the birth of Christ Your boundless love for Your people shattered the power of darkness. Be born in us with that same love and light, that our song may blend with all the choirs of heaven and earth to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.





# THE CREEK

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO JESUS



**HOPE**

**PEACE**

CHRIST

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord."

Luke 2:11, NIV

**LOVE**

**JOY**

# Christmas Memories Challenge

Have a Bethlehem Dinner

\*Google search for ideas!



Go on a prayer walk.



Take a meal to a family in need of extra joy

Play Christmas I Spy while running errands



Make a snowman together as a family

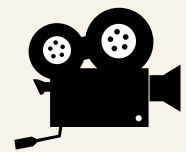
Pay for another person's meal or drink in the drive-thru line



Go to Martinsville Candy Kitchen to watch them make candy canes



Create a Christmas chain to count down to Christmas Day



Watch a family-favorite Christmas movie



Enjoy your Christmas lights by sitting together as a family snuggled up under blankets

Go downtown and take pictures by Christmas tree on Monument Circle



Go on a Christmas Lights tour.



Fill an orange Generous Bag for the food pantry



Invite a friend or neighbor to Christmas Eve services at The Creek



Make an ornament for your tree that represents your family's favorite memory of 2024

Build a Nativity Scene

Take turns praying for each person in your family

Go Christmas caroling at a nursing home



Make Christmas cookies for fire fighters and police officers

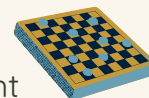


Share with each other one thing you love about every person in your family



Have a gingerbread house decorating competition.

Have a game night with hot cocoa and candy canes



Get holiday pajamas for the family



Throw a birthday party for Jesus

Have a Christmas Dance Party.



# CHRISTMAS COMMUNION

Today, we celebrate the gift of Jesus,  
our Wonderful Counselor,  
Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father,  
Prince of Peace,  
and Immanuel ~ *God with us.*

On this day He brought unconditional love down to us. May He fill our hearts, minds, and souls with the wonder of His love and may we never tire of this story. May we never take it for granted. May we never forget the ultimate sacrifice He made for us.

## TAKE COMMUNION TOGETHER

On the night that He was betrayed, Jesus took bread, and, after giving thanks, He broke it and said: “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in memory of me.” In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying “This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood; do this in memory of me.”

(1 Corinthians 11:23-25, NIV).





A decorative border of green pine branches, red berries, and pinecones frames the top and bottom corners of the page. The background is a light beige color with a subtle bokeh effect of white light spots.

*JESSE TREE*  
**INSTRUCTIONS**

# Instructions

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## **WHAT IS A JESSE TREE?**

The Jesse Tree is a way of experiencing Advent by journeying through the stories of Jesus' family tree. Each day of Advent, you will read a Bible story about someone from Jesus' lineage and hang an ornament symbolizing the story on your Jesse Tree. As you decorate your tree, you'll see how God prepared for Jesus' birth through many generations.

## **WHERE DOES THE JESSE TREE COME FROM?**

The Jesse Tree tradition is rooted in Isaiah 11:1: "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." Jesse was the father of David, Israel's greatest king. And Jesus is descended from the line of David. He is the branch God promised would grow from Jesse's family tree. Each symbol represents a story from within this family tree and a step toward the birth of Jesus.

# December 1



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**READ:** Isaiah 11:1-2

**LISTEN:** Long ago, God's people were kicked out of their neighborhood and sent to live somewhere else. Life was hard, and their new neighbors were mean. God's people weren't being kind, either. It seemed like everyone only cared about themselves. Some little kids had no parents and no one took care of them. Some old people had no family and nobody bothered to check in on them.

God was fed up with that behavior. He cares about people and wants them to care about each other! So, he told His people He was going to put a stop to it. God planned to cut off His connection to His people like He was chopping down a tree. But God made a promise: a tiny branch would sprout out of the dead tree stump. A fresh green shoot would start growing. Things wouldn't be dead anymore.

That little branch is Jesus. He's coming from the stump of His great-great-way-back-great grandpa, Jesse. For the rest of Advent, we're going to hear more stories about the people in Jesus' family history and about how they helped God bring new life to His people.

**PRAY:** God, You give us hope. Thank You for giving us Jesus, like new growth in spring. Would You help us to pay attention to Him this Advent? Amen.

# December 2



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**READ:** Genesis 1: 1, 27-31

**LISTEN:** Did you know that when God made humans, He made us to be like Him? God made all the stars and planets, all the beluga whales and blue jays, all the buffalo and begonias—but God didn't make any of those things in His image. It was only when He made humans that He said, "Let's make them like us." It's true! But what does it mean to be made in God's image? When children are born, they often look like their parents. A daughter may have the same curly hair as her father, or a son may have the same beautiful color of skin as his mother.

When Jesus was born, He bore the image of his Father, but it wasn't in His hair or His skin color. Jesus' life showed us that to bear the image of God the Father means that our hearts and inside qualities resemble Him. Jesus' life was filled with love, compassion, gentleness, and obedience. Are you loving to your family? Are you compassionate when a friend is sad? Are you slow to anger when someone is rude to you? Are you obedient when a parent asks you to do a chore? Jesus showed us that to live like Him is how we bear God's image.

**PRAY:** Wow, God! We feel pretty special that you made us like You. Thank You for sending Jesus who showed us how to look like You. Help us to be more like Jesus.

# December 3

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**READ:** Genesis 3:12-13, 22-23; Isaiah 53:6

**LISTEN:** Sunshine warmed the garden, and big trees made cool, shady spots in just the right places. Flowers bloomed wildly. Birds sang. Bunnies scampered. This garden, with a tree right in the middle, was the place where God lived with the people He created.

But when Adam and Eve ate the fruit, God knew he couldn't trust them to live in the garden anymore. He sent them away. Since then, people haven't been able to live as close to God as Adam and Eve did.

The good news is that God has been working hard so we can live with Him again. In the Bible, we get a sneak preview of the end of the story. God is building a city—with a tree right in the middle—where we will live with Him again! So how do we get from the tree at the beginning to the tree at the end? God uses another tree. That tree got chopped down and put together in the shape of a cross. When Jesus died on that tree, He closed the distance between us and God. Jesus made it so that we could return to a joyful, peaceful life with God.

**PRAY:** Loving God, we're sorry for doing things that put a gap between us and You. Jesus, thank You for closing that gap when You died. We're excited to live with You one day! Amen.

# December 4

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**READ:** Genesis 9:8-17

**LISTEN:** God wants His people to be close to Him and choose to live the way He knows is best. Sadly, during the time of Noah, people were not doing that. They chose to live their own ways, and this made God sad. His heart was so grieved by the sins of the people He thought it best to start over with Noah's family.

God instructed Noah to build an ark, load it with animals, and ride out a very long storm. The flood that followed the storm would wash away all the death, destruction, and disconnection that came from people not living the way God knew was best.

After the storm, God made a promise. He promised that He would never again flood the earth. He provided the rainbow in the sky as a reminder to all people that He always keeps His promises.

There are two important things we can learn about God from this story: God wants what's best for us and He knows that sin isn't what's best; and God provides a way to rescue us from our sins.. We can trust His promises. God knew people would continue to sin and need to be rescued. He promised to send a Savior, His Son, Jesus, to rescue us permanently. We know from the story of Noah that He always keeps His promises, and the promise of Jesus would surely come.

**PRAY:** God. thank You for rescuing us from sin. Help us to remember Your promises when we see rainbows.  
Amen.

# December 5

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**READ:** Genesis 12:2-3; 15:5-6

**LISTEN:** If there's a clear night this week, go outside with your family before you go to bed. Be sure to bundle up if it's cold! Find a spot where you can see the sky and look up. If the sky is dark and clear enough, you should be able to see the tiny pinpricks of stars, way off in the distance. The longer you look, the more stars you'll be able to see.

This is how God showed Abraham how big Abraham's family would be. God promised Abraham that he would have one son and so many grandchildren and great-grandchildren that he wouldn't be able to count them, even if he tried.

Did you realize that you're part of Abraham's family? When God showed Abraham all those stars, He was including you, too! Because of Jesus Christ, we're adopted into that same family—the family of Abraham and the family of God. The people in the stories you're reading this Advent are your spiritual great-great-great grandmas and grandpas!

**PRAY:** God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, thank You for making me part of Your family. I'm thankful that I get to be in the same family as Jesus. Amen.

# December 6



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**READ:** Genesis 28:10-15

**LISTEN:** What kinds of things do you dream about? My dreams are usually silly, mixed-up stories. Sometimes they're scary or strange.

Jacob had a pretty strange dream. He dreamed about a stairway that reached from the ground all the way up into the sky, with angels climbing up and down on it. And in his dream, he heard God talking to him. God told Jacob that God was going to give him the land all around him. Jacob's great-great-grandchildren's great-great-grandchildren would move far away and would be a blessing to everyone else. God also promised Jacob He would stay near him wherever he went. What a wonderful promise!

Sometimes, we're so busy during the day that we don't notice God. God waited until Jacob had slowed down, gotten quiet, and fallen asleep to talk to him. Nothing distracted Jacob from hearing God's voice. God's words were so thrilling that they woke Jacob right up, and he promised to serve God in return.

**PRAY:** God, thank You for Your promise to Jacob. Will You help me pay attention to You and listen when You have something to tell me? Amen.



# December 7



**READ:** Genesis 37:1-36

**LISTEN:** Little brothers can be the worst. In Joseph's case, his father, Jacob, loved him more than all his brothers. Jacob gave Joseph a special coat, which made them jealous. And at the breakfast table in the mornings, Joseph liked to tell his family about his dreams. He often dreamed about being in charge of all his brothers. That made his brothers furious. Big brothers can be the worst, too. In this story, Joseph's jealous brothers decided to put an end to him and his stupid dreams. They didn't kill him, but they did take his special coat and sell him to slave traders for twenty pieces of silver. Joseph isn't the only child to have been his father's favorite and make his brothers want to kill him. The Bible says that Jesus is God's beloved Son, which is kind of like God's favorite. And when Jesus started sharing His message with people, they got so mad they tried to kill him. They took His coat, too. The good news is that the story about Joseph and his brothers ends well. Joseph is placed in charge and helps save his family—just like in the story of Jesus. Jesus is sold for thirty pieces of silver and then killed. But He comes back to life and is king over the whole world. The people that hated Jesus are the same people that He came to save. And do you know who those people are? They are you and me.

**PRAY:** Wow, Jesus! I'm amazed that You and Joseph were willing to love the people who hated you. I'm also thankful because it means that You love me and have saved me. Amen.

# December 8



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**READ:** Exodus 3:1-10

**LISTEN:** God's people were slaves in Egypt for hundreds of years. This made God sad, and He knew it was time to rescue His people from slavery through His servant Moses. In verse 7, the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, to a land flowing with milk and honey."

Did you catch those important parts about God's character?

He sees us.

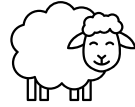
He hears us.

He knows us.

And because He sees us and hears us and knows us, He is quick to come to our aid when we need Him. It doesn't matter if we're a slave struggling in Egypt or a child struggling in modern day America, God always sees us, always hears our prayers, and always knows what we're going through. It's what He does. And He does it because He loves us.

**PRAY:** God, thank you so much that You see us, hear us, and know us. Thank You for loving us and always being there for us. Amen.

# December 9



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**READ:** Exodus 12:21-23

**LISTEN:** God's plan to rescue His people from slavery in Egypt involved the sacrifice of a perfect male lamb. Each family was instructed to pick a lamb and keep that lamb in their home with them for several days. At just the right time, each family had to kill their perfect lamb and paint the doorposts of their home with blood from their lamb. The blood marked which families were God's people and needed rescued out of slavery in Egypt. The Passover lambs had the very important job of dwelling with each family and sacrificing themselves for the lives of others.

Does that sound familiar to you? There's another Passover Lamb that came many years later. He, too, had the very important job of dwelling with the people and sacrificing Himself for the lives of the people. Can you guess who it is? That's right! It's Jesus. Jesus is our Passover Lamb. He lived with us here on Earth. He taught about God's kingdom. He healed people. He showed the world how to live in the way God knows is best for us. And just like the Passover lambs in Egypt, Jesus had to give up His life so all people could be rescued from death, destruction, and disconnection with God. It was His very important job and He completed it perfectly.

**PRAY:** Jesus, thank You for being the Passover Lamb for us! Thank You for loving us so much and rescuing us from our sins. Help us to remember You in this way. Amen.

# December 10



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**READ:** Deuteronomy 5:1-22

**LISTEN:** Have you ever seen the list of rules at the pool? Shower first. No running. No diving. No unsupervised children. No food or drinks.

Someone made these rules. The rules are there to keep us safe, but they sometimes seem like no fun.

The Ten Commandments can seem that way, too. They can feel like a list of rules God gave us to ruin our fun. But God's not like that. He gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments to help everyone live together well and to set them apart as His people. He didn't post the Ten Commandments on a wall and leave the Israelites on their own. No, God had already chosen the people of Israel and promised to love them. When He gave the commandments to Moses, He planned to stay with His people and keep loving them.

We should follow God's commandments, not just because they'll keep us safe, like the rules at the pool, but because God loves us. And the best news of all is that Jesus helps us to follow them!

**PRAY:** God, will You remind me how much You already love me? Help me remember that following Your rules shows my love for You. Amen.

# December 11

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**READ:** Joshua 2:1-21

**LISTEN:** The Israelites had been wandering in the desert for 40 years, and it was finally time to move into the land God promised them. That land is called Canaan, and it was filled with people who don't love or trust God.

But when two Israelite spies snuck into the city of Jericho in Canaan, they got help from someone they least expected: a woman named Rahab. Even though she was not an Israelite, she had heard about the God of Israel. And she believed that He is the true God. After she helped the Israelite spies, she asked them to protect her family when the Israelite army came to knock down Jericho.

The spies agreed—if she would hang a red rope in her window so they'd know which house to protect. The red rope saved Rahab's life.

That red rope hanging in her window looked a lot like a trail of blood, which reminds us of the blood of Jesus. When Jesus died, His blood saved our lives, just like the red rope saved Rahab's life. If we trust in God, like Rahab did, we get to join God's family and be protected.

**PRAY:** Jesus, thank You for Your sacrifice and giving Your life on the cross so that I can live. I'm glad I can be part of Your family. Amen.

# December 12

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**READ:** Ruth 3:1-4:17

**LISTEN:** In Israel, there were rules to protect widows (women whose husbands had died). Back then, women didn't have jobs, so they couldn't make money to pay for food or a house. Plus, men were the ones to carry on the family name, so if a woman had no sons, the family would end with her. So, there was a special rule made to protect a widow with no sons. The rule was that the brother of the widow's dead husband had to marry the widow (back then, it was sometimes okay to have more than one wife). That brother was called the "kinsman redeemer." Kinsman means a relative and redeemer means someone who rescues you. The brother would rescue the widow and her family by paying for food, giving them a place to live, and carrying on the family name. In this story, Boaz is the kinsman redeemer for Ruth and Naomi. Naomi's husband and Ruth's husband both died, and Naomi and Ruth were helpless without any sons. But they weren't hopeless. Boaz stepped up to marry Ruth so the family could continue. Much later in the Bible, we read about another kinsman redeemer named Jesus. Everyone in the world is as helpless as Ruth and Naomi were. But the Bible says Jesus is like the groom at a wedding, and the church is His bride. Like Boaz, He steps up to marry us, join His life with ours, and rescue us.

**PRAY:** Jesus, thank You for Your sacrifice and giving Your life on the cross so that I can live. I'm glad I can be part of Your family. Amen.

# December 13

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**READ:** 1 Samuel 16:1-13

**LISTEN:** God loves to make the underdog the hero of the story. God doesn't usually pick the strongest, coolest, or oldest person. He likes to use little siblings.

If you looked at him, you wouldn't think David would make a very good king. He didn't know how to fight in battles. He had never worked in city government. He spent a lot of time with sheep, and that was about it.

But that's exactly the person God wanted to use. The little brother. It's kind of like how God picked the people of Israel—a tiny group of people who weren't very strong or impressive on their own—to be the people He would bless the whole world through.

And it's a lot like God's decision to come to earth as a tiny, fragile baby. If you looked at Jesus, you wouldn't think He would make a very good king. When He was a kid, He spent a lot of time working with his earthly dad, Joseph. When He grew up, He didn't show everyone how cool and powerful He was. Later, He allowed the government to kill Him. In Jesus, God makes Himself the underdog so that we can live.

**PRAY:** Sometimes You surprise me, God! You like to use people whom the world doesn't think are important. Help me remember that You want to use me, too. Amen.

# December 14

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**READ:** 2 Samuel 5:1-5

**LISTEN:** Kings and shepherds seem like exact opposites. Kings sit on thrones. They wear expensive clothes and talk to important people. Shepherds, on the other hand, stand on the hillsides. They wear clothes that can get dirty, and they talk mostly to sheep.

David was both. He was a shepherd that God chose to be king. A shepherd would probably make a very good king, since shepherds have to be humble and they probably care more about people than about power.

Can you guess who else is a shepherd-king? If you guessed Jesus, you're exactly right. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He knows all of us as well as a shepherd knows his sheep, and He was willing to die so we could live. Jesus is also the King of kings. He beat the powers of sin and death. Now He sits on His throne, ruling over all of creation.

**PRAY:** King Jesus, thank You for having the heart of a shepherd! Would You help the leaders of our cities and nations be as kind and gentle as shepherds, too? Amen.



# December 15

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**READ:** 1 Kings 5-6

**LISTEN:** The temple was really important. If you read all of 1 Kings 6, you'll see how intricate and beautiful it was! It was very tall, and the whole thing was made of gorgeous wood, with pictures of trees and fruit and angels carved into it. The inside was covered in gold, so everything gleamed and sparkled.

It wasn't just a building. It was the place where God and humans could meet. Before Solomon built the temple, God met His people in a big tent called a tabernacle. Inside the temple, there was a special room, called the Holy of Holies, where God's presence lived. In that place, God and humans could be together.

But God had even better plans. He didn't want people to have to go into a tiny room to be with Him in person. So God decided that He would become the temple. Jesus called Himself the temple. He is both God and human, the place where the two meet. We don't have to go into a special room anymore. Now we can know God directly because of Jesus!

**PRAY:** Jesus, thank You for being the temple, the place where I can meet God. By Your Holy Spirit, I am connected with God. Help me sense You with me today. Amen.

# December 16

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**READ:** 1 Kings 18:17-39

**LISTEN:** God doesn't often seem very popular. In this story, there were a lot of people who trusted in pretend gods, while only one person—Elijah—trusted in the one true God. But just because God wasn't popular doesn't mean He wasn't powerful. It didn't matter how many people believed in the pretend gods, Baal and Asherah. Those pretend gods were exactly that: pretend. So of course they couldn't actually help anybody!

No matter how hard people prayed to Baal and Asherah, nothing would ever happen. But as soon as Elijah prayed to God, God lit the whole altar on fire!

God is the only one who can really help us. God's power doesn't come from His popularity. God's power comes from Himself, from His deep love for other people. God showed His love in the biggest way when He came to earth as Jesus. And God showed His power in the biggest way when Jesus won the fight against evil and death.

**PRAY:** God, thank You for showing me Your power and Your love through Jesus. Help me to trust in Him. Amen.

# December 17

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**READ:** Micah 5:1-5

**LISTEN:** Do you know what a prophecy is? It's kind of like a promise about the future. A prophecy tells us what's going to happen.

When someone tells you something that's going to happen, do you usually believe it? Maybe you believe it if your dad says he'll pick you up from school, but not if your sister says she'll let you play with her toy. It depends on who is making the promise!

When God or His prophets say something, it will definitely happen. So when God's prophet Micah says that someone is coming who will rule Israel, he really means it. A king is coming who will stand and feed his flock—he'll take care of his people. And he will bring peace everywhere he goes. Micah prophesied that many, many years ago. But Jesus actually came! He cared for His people and was full of peace. We can be confident that Jesus will come again and His peaceful kingdom will stay forever. He is the Prince of Peace.

**PRAY:** Prince of Peace, You are a good and loving. Help prepare me for the day You come back or that I meet You. Amen.

# December 18

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**READ:** Jeremiah 23:5-6

**LISTEN:** Today we're going to explore another prophecy. God's prophet Jeremiah shared a promise about the future. This prophecy is about a Branch. That sounds familiar, doesn't it? At the very beginning of the month, we read a prophecy about a Branch that would grow up out of the stump and roots of Jesse—a Branch that would be wise and mighty and honor God.

Jeremiah's prophecy is about the same Branch! The Branch is Jesus, our Lord and Savior! In this prophecy, we're reminded that the Branch would be righteous, deal wisely, and seek justice. We also learn from this prophecy He will reign as king. But He won't reign like the kings of this world; they desire power and money and success. This King would be different. He would be a servant, humble of heart and gentle in spirit, plain and lowly. This Branch would be a king who would lay down His life for the people He cares about. All people.

**PRAY:** God, thank You for always keeping Your promises. We pray we never forget that we can trust You. Amen.

# December 19

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**READ:** Isaiah 9:2-7

**LISTEN:** Have you ever been in a place where it's pitch-black? If you've ever gone camping, maybe you know the feeling of not being able to see anything. You're in the woods at night, and you can't see the moon or stars. You can't see anything at all. Or maybe it's just really dark in your bedroom at night. That can feel scary and confusing, can't it?

When you don't know what's around you, you might feel afraid and lonely and not want to move. This is the kind of deep darkness the people of Israel walked in. Well, it wasn't actually nighttime all the time, but it had started to feel that way. They couldn't see the person who was coming to save them. After a while, they started to think he might never come. They had no hope.

This chapter in Isaiah reminds the people of Israel of the light that is coming. The sun will come up in the morning! It won't be nighttime forever. The light that is coming is a person, and His name is Jesus. He is coming to save His people. When He is here, we don't have to be scared or sad anymore. We'll just feel peace and joy. Jesus is the light of the world. Jesus is turning night into day. Jesus is on His way!

**PRAY:** God of light, would You turn the world's darkness into light? Amen.

# December 20

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**READ:** Isaiah 11:6-9

**LISTEN:** This scene reminds me of a silly parade! A wolf walks next to a lamb. A baby cow and a bear and a lion march in a line, led by a child. Halfway through, the child stops to play with a snake. And on the edge of the street, a leopard and a baby goat sit on their picnic blanket to watch.

Can you imagine a parade like that? If you've ever been to the zoo, you know those animals can't be together. The wolf would eat the lamb! The bear and the lion would attack the cow. The snake would bite the child. The leopard would gobble up the goat. It would be the worst parade ever!

But this is the world God imagines. God is creating a world where that parade is just an average Monday. Predators and prey will get along. Instead of fighting, we'll work together and play together.

That's the world where Jesus Christ is King.

**PRAY:** God, I'm excited for the day when we can have a parade with lions and bears. Until that day comes, show me how to be more like You. Amen.

# December 21

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**READ:** Matthew 3:1-6, 11; John 1:6-9

**LISTEN:** When someone comes to your house, they don't just come right in. They usually knock or ring the doorbell. It's how they announce that they're coming.

If your mom or dad is especially tidy, they might pick up a few toys and stack a few papers before they answer the door. The time between hearing the doorbell and answering the door gives them a chance to clean up—to prepare for the person to come in.

John the Baptist was kind of like a doorbell for Jesus. He let everyone know that Jesus was coming. John came first, giving everyone a chance to prepare their hearts for Jesus. He invited people to confess their sins and be baptized, so that they could be clean when Jesus arrived. Like John and the people he baptized, we can prepare for Jesus to come. We can make our hearts ready to receive Jesus at Christmas!

**PRAY:** Lord, what parts of my heart are messy? Would You help me clean up so I'm ready for You to come? Amen.

# December 22

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**READ:** Luke 1:26-38

**LISTEN:** Ask your mom or dad what it's like to be a parent. They might say that it's both wonderful and hard. They think you're the coolest person ever. (Yup, even if you have siblings! Shh, don't tell.) They love seeing the person you're becoming. And every time you grow taller and more independent, they probably want to cry. When Mary agreed to become Jesus's mom, she may not have realized all that she was signing up for. She was probably doing something really normal, like walking home from a friend's house. But once that angel showed up, nothing was normal anymore!

Now Mary would be Jesus' mom—the mom of the Son of God. Her life was going to change a whole lot. She was going to feel everything your parents feel, except maybe even more. Her Son is definitely the coolest person ever, and she got to help raise Him! She had to watch Him die, which is maybe the worst thing for a parent. But she also got to see Him come back to life as the Savior of the whole world. Like Mary, nothing is “normal” for us anymore, either. We get to live in a world where God became a human being. God has chosen to save the world. Through Jesus, God is making all things new!

**PRAY:** God, thanks for becoming a human being. Thanks for choosing to become one of us and for saving the world. Amen.



# December 23

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**READ:** Matthew 1:18-25

**LISTEN:** Joseph could have said, “No way! I’m not going to marry her anymore. Even though I love Mary, I want to have a normal life. I don’t want to be the adoptive dad of the Son of God. That’s weird. People will think I’m weird.”

But he didn’t say that. Joseph said, “Yes, I’ll marry her. I’ll help raise the Son of God. I’ll let people think I’m weird.”

Joseph cared less about what other people thought and more about what God thought. He cared more about Mary and less about himself. And because of that, God gave him a pretty cool part in this story. God used Joseph to raise Jesus. Joseph got to teach Jesus how to use a hammer and build a chair, how to read the Bible, and how to love other people. Joseph got to be Jesus’ dad.

**PRAY:** God, Joseph reminds me that You can use me in amazing ways when I let you. Help me to know what part You want me to play in Your story. Amen.

# December 24

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**READ:** Luke 2:1-21

**LISTEN:** Eeek! Have you heard the good news?! Jesus is born! A new branch is finally sprouting from the stump of Jesse. Mary is taking it all in. As she feeds little Jesus, she's thinking about what it means that He is here, ready to save the world.

The angels are celebrating it. They come as a huge choir, singing about how amazing God is.

The shepherds are a part of it, too. God chooses to tell them first. The shepherds aren't fancy or important, but they're the first ones who get to meet Jesus.

And today, you get to be like the shepherds. You get to hear the good news. Jesus is born! You get to go tell other people about it. God has chosen you! He wants you to have a part in His story.

**PRAY:** Jesus, we're so glad You've come! Thank You for being born into our world. Thank You for loving us enough to come save us and live with us. Amen.

# December 25

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**READ:** Hebrews 1:1-3

**LISTEN:** Well, it's here! The day we've been waiting for and working towards. It's Christmas Day—the day we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus, our wise and righteous Branch, our Rescuer, our Passover Lamb, our servant King, our humble Shepherd, our Light, our Prince of Peace, and God's very special Son.

Long ago, before the creation of the universe and everything we know, God knew we would need Jesus. He knew our sin would hurt us and separate us from Him. He knew we would need rescuing. God saw how much we need Him. He heard our prayers. He made a promise and kept it. Jesus—the sweet baby born in an ordinary manger one dark night in Bethlehem—the heir of all things, the one who was present at creation, the reflection of God's glory, and the exact imprint of God, took on the very likeness of man and became obedient to death. And on the third day he rose from the grave in victory. The very same power that brought breath back to his dead body is the same power that continues to hold us together.

Pretty incredible, right?! This is the Jesus we celebrate this Christmas Day.

**PRAY:** Jesus, we are so happy we get to celebrate Your birthday today! Thank You for the ways You have shown us who You are through the Bible. Help us to remember that we can celebrate You every single day and share this good news with everyone! Amen.



# THE CREEK

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO JESUS

Adaptation from: [Faithward.org](https://faithward.org)

*L*ESSE TREE





# INTERACTIVE NATIVITY SCENE

## **Materials Provided:**

Cardstock stable, three wooden people (to represent Jesus, Mary, and Joseph)

## **Optional Materials:**

Markers, stickers, paint, glue, scraps of cloth, toy animals, action figures

## **Instructions:**

Before you begin, read through the activity and gather any of the optional materials you choose to use.

Gather your family together. Ask them if they know what the word “Nativity” means and explain that it’s a word we use in church for the birth of Christ. Ask them if they’ve ever seen a “Nativity scene.” (You may even have one in your house or yard.) Talk together about where you might see a Nativity scene and what they usually look like. Explain that people place Nativity scenes around their homes to help them remember the special story of Christ’s birth.

## **Say to Your Family**

This Christmas season, we get to create our own Nativity scene! *Show your family the cardstock stable and the wooden pegs representing Mary, Joseph, and Jesus.*



Encourage your family to color and decorate the stable, even putting some star stickers in the sky if you have them. Use markers or paint to turn the wooden pegs into Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. Glue scraps of cloth on them for clothing if you want. Encourage your family to be creative. Maybe you have farm animals in your toy collection to add to the stable, or action figures that could represent the shepherds and wise men. Consider finding a small box for the manger or making an angel out of a clothespin and round cotton pads. Your family can spend as much (or as little) time as you'd like on this activity.

Basically, just have fun creating your very own Nativity scene!

Once you're done decorating your Nativity scene, read some key passages that tell the story of Christ's birth. Encourage your kids to use Mary, Joseph, Jesus, and whatever other cast members you have to act out the story as you read along. You may read a different passage each time you gather around your Nativity or read them all at once.

Encourage your kids to look up the Bible passages themselves (helping as much as needed). This is a great opportunity to practice Bible navigation. Older children can read the passages aloud themselves.

- **Luke 2:1-7 The Birth of Christ**
- **Luke 2:8-20 The Shepherds Visit Jesus**
- **Matthew 2:1-2, 9-12 The Wisemen Visit Jesus**
- **Isaiah 9:6-7 For to Us a Child is Born**

When you're done, find a spot in your home for your Nativity scene to sit during the Christmas season. We'd love to see your finished Nativity scene. Take a picture of you with your Nativity scene, and to post it to social media. Tag us @kidustrialpark.







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