

Season of the Nativity Devotional

Fayetteville First United Methodist Church

Week 4

Hello!

Welcome to the fourth and final week of our Season of the Nativity Devotional: *Let Heaven and Nature Sing*.

In this holy season, we join heaven and nature as they worship in hopeful expectation of Christ's return, when everything will be made new. Worship, however, is not just confined to singing or going to a worship service. Indeed, because of the gifts of Christ, worship becomes our primary vocation. We become living sacrifices.

We also know this season as Advent. Advent comes from the Latin *adventus*, meaning "coming"—a reminder that we wait not in idleness, but with anticipation and longing.

This time of year is busy, of course; life always seems to be speeding up. Instead of being swept up in the rush, we invite you to pause, to reflect, and to consider how you might join the song that is already rising all around us.

Let heaven and nature sing!



"This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing; haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary." William C. Dix, 1865

Monday, December 22

An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit." -Matthew 1:20

As Christmas Day approaches, some of us may begin to wonder, "Will Christmas really change anything? Does it truly matter?" These questions can surface in apathy—or in fear. We may fear that the pain points of our lives will remain, even with the promise of Christ born among us and a better future proclaimed.

The truth is that our lives—and our world—are fragile. And Christ chooses not to fix everything instantly, but to be present with us, reminding us that our fears and longings matter. Our humanity matters enough for Jesus to become human. On the lines below, write down your fears. Know that God enters into your fears and heartbreaks, as God did for Joseph and the countless others in scripture.

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Tuesday, December 23

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us')." -Matthew 1:22-23

At the heart of the Christian story is love—not love from afar or above, but love that dwells within and walks beside. It is remarkable to consider Jesus, "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God," being born among us and becoming completely dependent on human parents for everything.

This—this is Christ the King. Christ, who meets us fully in our humanity. This is the Light of the World. In prayer, thank God for God's nearness in Christ Jesus. Ask God to show you signs of that nearness today. On the lines below, write down where you most need to recognize God's love and closeness in your life.

Christmas Eve

"When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage." -Matthew 1:10-11

This is an adapted prayer from the Book of Common Prayer: Almighty God, you have given your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to be born: Grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with you and the same Spirit be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

As you linger this day in the miracle of Christ's coming into the world, take some time to write down your own praise and gratitude for the gift of Christ. How have you sensed the Holy Spirit renewing you?

Christmas Day

"Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion! For I will come and dwell in your midst, says the Lord. Many nations shall join themselves to the Lord on that day and shall be my people, and I will dwell in your midst." -Zechariah 2:10-11a

"When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with their flocks, the work of Christmas begins: to find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among the people, to make music in the heart."

-Howard Thurman

On the lines below, write what Howard Thurman's quote sparks in you?

Friday, December 26

"With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." -Isaiah 12:3

The message of Christ's coming is cosmic in scope, yet it is also intimate and personal. Christ came so our lives would change. As Charles Wesley wrote, "Christ was born to give us second birth." As we approach the new year, remember that each day offers the possibility of a fresh beginning. God is a God of second chances.

s below, reflect on the ways you sense God inviting you into the coming year.



This devotional is dedicated to Joan Aycock and June Hanks.

Christmas Eve Services

4:00 p.m. — Sanctuary

6:00 p.m. - Sanctuary

11:00 p.m. — Chapel



