



2006
Advent
Meditation
Guide for
Students

*Come
& see*

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✧ *First Sunday in Advent*

Isaiah 1:1-9, Matthew 15:1-13

...Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. (Matt. 15:13)

The world can be a cold and confusing place.

People's hearts can be quickly swayed by anger and injustice. But there are those people who seem to be full of compassion and love.

This makes me ponder whether the world will always have its quarrels and its wars. I think that if you keep your heart open and your mind untainted by the evil and malady this world has in it, you will do good and the people around you will share in that same good and love.

Pain and anguish, selfishness and lust go hand-in-hand to create the bitter and hostile environment that we sometimes experience. It is easy to forget the paths we wish to follow when temptations come. And temptations come in many different faces and situations.

But, if we embrace emotion and the people around us with compassion, love, knowledge, and justice, we will honor each other with our hearts, not just with our lips, and we will keep ourselves as vibrant and beautiful plants, planted by our heavenly Father.

Prayer:

Let us pray for warmth in dark, cold places. Help us, Lord, to find a fire to huddle around, a warm meal, and a warm heart to share this life with. Let us find our right path, guiding us toward goodness and love to share. Amen.

✧ *First Monday in Advent*

Isaiah 1:10-20, Luke 20:1-8

...learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow. (Isa. 1:17)

The more gifts you offer others and the more things you do for others, the more you will be rewarded. In doing acts of goodness and charity, you show love and compassion for those who need it.

In keeping a good heart for those who oppress and offend you, you will show strength and love for them, and they may learn to love with a bigger heart.

No matter what evils or demons dominate your past or present, if you show persistence toward a good, clean heart and mind and actions, you will overcome your demons and the evils that try to persuade you into darkness. Ask what you can do for others so that you may love and be loved.

Prayer:

We pray for the strength to do our best, for the goodness of our intentions and the intentions of others. We pray for those in need of love, those starving, motherless and fatherless, those walking the long road of life on the streets, those chasing addictions and other worldly torments. We pray for those in need of love and those in need of light. Amen.

Brian Boyns,
Graduate of Seattle Center Community College,
Landscape Design

✧ *First Tuesday in Advent*

Isaiah 1:21-31, Luke 20:9-18

Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness. (Isa. 1:27)

The idea of consequences as a result of our actions may be difficult for us to hear, especially in our modern world where interconnectedness is often lost.

But what are the consequences of our decisions for how we live our lives? I know very little about who grew my food, who made my shirt, or who might be benefiting or suffering because of my actions.

The degenerate city in Isaiah and the wicked tenants in Luke are harsh examples of what could happen by not following God's will, and the consequences of not listening to God's direction for our lives today could be just as disastrous. How much would we despair to reach the end of our lives and realize that we had lived by the expectations of others and not by following God's call to us?

Prayer:

May God open our eyes, hearts, and minds to the calling of the Holy Spirit. May we possess the strength to follow God's call when we do hear it. Amen.

✧ *First Wednesday in Advent*

Isaiah 2:1-11, Luke 20:19-26

Come let us go up...that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths. (Isa. 2:3)

As I sit here writing, I can see piles of laundry that I need to wash as well as shelves of books that I still want to read.

As a student, I never really think that I am in danger of developing “affluenza,” or accumulating too much stuff. It’s not hard for me, though, to think of a time when I bought a lipstick out of boredom, the latest novel out of loneliness, or a new pair of jeans out of insecurity.

In today’s readings, I hear a message about the importance of intention.

What motivates us to acquire something? Is it out of true need or something else? What is it that God asks us to give and how do we respond?

Prayer:

I pray that in this season we may see our own lives in a fresh, new way, and that we will remind ourselves every day of the plenty that surrounds us. I also pray that in this quiet season of waiting and preparation, our hearts may give our focus and love to God, and that we may act from this center of peace. Amen.

*Kristin Risinger,
Seattle University student*

✧ *First Thursday in Advent*

Isaiah 2:12-22, Luke 20:27-40

Turn away from mortals, who have only breath in their nostrils...
(Isa. 2:22)

Often, I feel as though it is so simple to become ensnared by the distractions in life. Whether in work, education, or in our personal relationships, we may find ample opportunities to gain wealth, to be victorious over another, and to earn stature. And we could be consumed easily by these fleeting prizes that inevitably will disappear.

This passage in Isaiah serves as a reminder that earthly things bring only momentary joy, and may serve to push us further from the Lord. Deep in our hearts we may fear the day when we will have to confront what our lives truly have been focused on.

These verses are a warning to people, that they should be terrified if their hearts are not given to the Lord.

It is comforting to know that while it is easy to feel you will never be good enough by human standards, the Lord rejects these material standards that we may never live up to. Instead, he wants us to have more than just “breath in our nostrils” and focus on having the Lord in our hearts as the sole possession we need.

Prayer:

Lord, keep us from giving in to temptations, and keep us close to you. Help us to focus each day on you and your will for our lives. Amen.

✧ *First Friday in Advent*

Isaiah 3:8-15, Luke 20:4-21:1-4

He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. He said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on." (Lk. 21:2-4)

The woman who put her two coins in the basket probably did not realize the effect that her actions would have on Jesus. She simply was doing her best to give what she had. Despite the fact that she could not give as much as many others, she gave everything that she had. That is a beautiful idea to live by.

Often, we may feel insufficient and incapable of truly living up to the Lord's expectations for us. This woman could not give very much; her donation could not physically supply the church with much, but it was viewed equally by Jesus. None of us is blessed with all of the gifts we may hope for, but our efforts under Jesus make us equal in the eyes of God and negate any area in which we may lack.

It is a good feeling to know that despite our imperfections, just trying to give our all to God makes us complete and is pleasing to him.

Whether it is two coins, or two thousand, true giving is the mark of one who has been blessed.

Prayer:

Lord, we thank you each day for all of our blessings and reminders to live for you, despite any temptations or frustrations in our lives. Comfort us and those around us and allow us to love you with all of our hearts. Give us strength to do the best we can for you and to live the lives you intend for us. Amen.

Ashleigh Clark
University of Washington student

✧ *First Saturday in Advent*

Isaiah 4:2-6, Luke 21:5-19

On that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious.
(Isa. 4:2)

We live in a time of turmoil and confusion. War and rumors of war, earthquakes, fires, floods, insurrections, hunger, and diseases are occurring all around us—the wealthiest nation on earth. What are we, as the faithful people of God, to do when faced with all of this?

We can put effort into making our temples very pretty. Or, we can proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ. Proclaim the subversive, radical love of Christ to a world starved for love.

No amount of beautiful stones, gifts, or ipods can take the place of a loaf of bread, a gentle touch, and a listening heart. This does not mean we are promised a gentle life. No, we are promised some hard knocks, some downright hatred.

But when we are faithful to God and to one another, then, “On that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious.” And by our endurance we gain our souls!

Prayer:

Beloved Creator, stand with us in these times of fear and hatred. So fill us with your love that it pours through us to a starving world. May we have the courage to love those who hate us, and speak the truth to those who use you to lead us astray. Amen.

Deacon Mary Shehane,
Episcopal Campus Chaplain,
University of Washington, Diocese of Olympia

✧ *Second Sunday in Advent*

Isaiah 5:1-7, Luke 7:28-35

...he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. (Isa. 5:2)

Today, perhaps especially, it is easy to dismiss and doubt God's words and presence in our lives.

Everything seems to be going wrong. God understands this, and realizes that we are not perfect.

We often do things that God does not want us to do, but he still loves us because we are his children, and like all children, we make mistakes.

Though we are like "wild grapes," as Isaiah sang in his song of the vineyard, God will welcome us back into his arms, even if we doubt. The door is always open to come back into the presence of God.

Prayer:

Gracious God, be with us in our time of doubts and allow us to see your works in the world around us that we might believe again. Your presence is a comfort in our times of need, even if we do doubt. We give you thanks for keeping your arms open to us, in spite of our doubt and dismissal of your words and teachings. In your name we pray, Amen.

✧ *Second Monday in Advent*

Isaiah 5:8-12, Luke 21:20-28

Ah, you who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room for no one but you, and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land! (Isa. 5:8, 9)

This passage in Isaiah speaks of what we should try to avoid doing in our lives. Too many people in this day and age are greedy and impatient. They want things done for themselves and they want them done quickly. They dismiss signs of distress in the world and think only of furthering themselves.

Instead we should strive not to overlook the suffering of others. We should think not only of ourselves, but of those around us who are less fortunate.

It may seem like there is no justice in the world, and that we cannot feel God's presence.

But we should do our best to face these inequities and let others see the presence of God in us.

Prayer:

Gracious God, open our eyes to the suffering and social injustices that surround us every day. Be with us as we try to confront these injustices. Help us to show others that they can make a difference, and help us to help those who need our help the most. Amen.

✧ *Second Tuesday in Advent*

Isaiah 5:13-17, Luke 21:29-38

Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down... (Lk. 21:34)

Advent is a season of waiting and these passages remind us that there are times when we must wait. Often these times of waiting are difficult and long, and it is easy to become distracted with everything else that is going on in our lives, and in the world.

This makes it easy to miss the little signs of God in our lives, because we are too preoccupied with our own worries.

We need to learn to still our minds and push away the worries and distractions; we need to see God in the world around us, and to listen for his presence.

Prayer:

Gracious God, help us to realize your presence in our lives. Give us the ability to slow down and to look for your signs, however small they may be. Too often we are rushed and distracted. Be with us in our times of waiting, especially in those that are difficult or full of upheaval. Amen.

Cat Ray,
University of Washington student

✧ *Second Wednesday in Advent*

Isaiah 6:1-13, John 7:53-8:11

I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty... (Isa. 6:1)

After reading the passage from Isaiah, I was immediately struck by the eloquent depiction of God's magnificence and wonder.

The beginning verses explain that God's glory was so bright and powerful that with two wings the Seraphim covered their faces. The vision of God was too much for their eyes to behold, perhaps much like when I desire to look up at the sun, but I remember that it is too brilliant and bright for my eyes to look at directly.

For me, this is a depiction of reverence, and of feeling completely overwhelmed and awestruck in the presence of God.

Sometimes I have felt like the Seraphs in this passage, or even like the adulterous woman, described in John 7 when she was confronted by Jesus. A bit unworthy and exposed, I, too, feel sure that God can see all of my sins and imperfections.

However, I have also felt humility and awe, and a sense of eagerness to carry out God's will, and to tell others of the splendor of God's glory.

These two passages give us hope that in the midst of our feelings of unworthiness, sin, and despair, there is still a forgiving and merciful God.

Prayer:

As our nights grow longer and our days grow short, may the light of Jesus Christ burn brightly within us, and warm our hearts so that we may approach this Christmas season with kindness and love. Amen.

✧ *Second Thursday in Advent*

Isaiah 7:1-9, Luke 22:1-13

If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all. (Isa. 7:9)

The verse that resonates with me the most in these two passages is verse nine in Isaiah. For me, this verse has a simple, yet powerful message: have faith in the Lord.

In the face of any dangers and struggles I may encounter, if I simply have faith in the Lord, I will have the strength necessary to overcome any challenges.

While the passage from Isaiah paints a dismal portrait of a nation torn apart by political divisions, with an ever-present threat from other nations, the Lord, through Isaiah, reminds Israel that they need not fear and should embrace the presence of God. Only then will they be comforted and granted peace.

This message of faith and trust in the Lord is also evident in Luke. Though Jesus was faced with betrayal from those closest to him, his faith in God did not waver, and he continued to celebrate God's love and grace in the Passover feast.

Prayer:

Keep watch over us, and protect us, Lord. Help us to remember that you are here to offer us comfort and guidance in times of trouble and despair. Keep our faith unrelenting and strong, so that we may face each day with courage and strength. Amen.

✧ *Second Friday in Advent*

Isaiah 7:10-25, Luke 22:14-30

But I am among you as one who serves. (Lk. 22:27)

When Jesus gathered his disciples together for what we call the “Last Supper,” he knew that it would be their last meal together before he would be crucified.

If I knew I were going to die tomorrow, chances are I would want to do something exotic or out of the ordinary. Maybe take that vacation I always wanted to take, or ride in a hot air balloon.

But Jesus did not do anything like that. Instead, he did what he did every night: invited people to eat with him. He simply gathered his friends and his enemies, and offered them bread and wine. He ate with them, just as he had done countless times before. Jesus’ true power and might lay in the ordinary acts of kindness and grace that he performed as he went about his daily life.

And it is important to remember that when Jesus broke bread, everyone—the Pharisee and the leper, the rich and the poor, the righteous and the sinner—all were welcome at God’s table.

This table is God’s gift—a gift that continually invites us into fellowship with him and serves as an ever-present reminder of God’s covenant.

Prayer:

Thank you, Lord, for the wonderful relationships you bless us with, and for the memories and good times shared. Grant us kindness and patience to support each other, and bind us together by your love. Amen.

Melissa Kennedy
University of Washington student

✧ *Second Saturday in Advent*

Isaiah 8:1-15; Luke 22:31-38

...and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers. (Lk. 22:32)

The Scripture readings in this season of waiting and watching are often harsh and pointed. As I read them each day, I get the same feeling that I get at the end of the week when I look at my planner and have to face the fact that my life is not as neat and controlled as I intended it to be.

Can't you just hear Peter saying, "What do you mean that we'll be scattered? That we'll run? I have it right here in my planner, I am sticking with you."

Christ knows how messy life can become, even with the best of intentions. Christ knows that Peter will deny him, but he does not condemn him. Rather, he tells Peter that he has prayed for him and he tells Peter that later, when he has "turned back," he should strengthen the others.

The passage in Isaiah reminds us that the Lord is with us, he speaks, he warns, and he gives us his grace so that we may continually return to the Way, and we may assist others as they return also.

Prayer:

Gracious God, be with us this day in the scripted and unscripted paths that come our way. Amen.

✧ *Third Sunday in Advent*

Isaiah 13:6-13, John 3:22-30

John answered, No one can receive anything except what has been given from heaven. (Jn. 3:27)

Hearing about God's greatness and power can be both relieving and frightening. It's relieving because an all-powerful God is the best protector. It's frightening because of what such a powerful being could do, if you were on his bad side.

Some choose to use God in a threatening way, to show what will happen to you if you don't do as you are told. But God's power is not meant to scare you into submission; it is just one more path to gaining understanding about God.

John knew that the Messiah he was waiting for was a being greater than himself. John knew that all he was came from God and that this was the God to whom he belonged.

To accept God's power, we must learn to accept our own helplessness with the knowledge that God has been there for us since the beginning, and will be with us until the end.

Prayer:

Lord, help us to put our trust in you. Let us see how much we need you. Let us see the beauty and endlessness of your might. Amen.

✧ *Third Monday in Advent*

Isaiah 8:16-9:1, Luke 22:39-53

Bind up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples. I will wait for the Lord who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him. (Isa. 8:16, 17)

It is not hard to fall away from what you are “supposed” to do. Don’t sin. Keep the Ten Commandments. Love your neighbor. Spread the Word. God asks a lot of us, and it’s easy to forget or get frustrated.

But we are not the first to slip up while trying to do what is right by God, and we will not be the last. The disciples did it, and the Israelites before them. But just like those before us, God will forgive our minor indiscretions. God made us human and knows how easily humans can make mistakes.

Strive to do what God is calling you to do, and know that if and when you fall away from the path God sets out for you, God will be there to forgive you and help you up again.

Prayer:

Dear God, help us to look to you for guidance and to stay alert while we wait for your return. Please forgive us when we stumble. Please pick us up when we fall. Lead us and we will follow you. Amen.

Katrina Hamilton,
University of Washington student

✧ *Third Tuesday in Advent*

Isaiah 9:1-7, Luke 22:54-69

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.

(Isa. 9:2)

The Prince of Peace is born, bringing healing and freedom to a people long in the dark. War is to cease while the people enter into a time of harmony. It is God who is doing this. He keeps the sacred Covenant with his faithful followers, an event that brings great joy!

In Jesus' birth and in his death, we see God's love. He does not fear humiliation or judgment, and we understand that all our comforts are not anything compared with this unparalleled treasure: that Christ is in our midst!!

True suffering was felt by Jesus, through his death on the cross. It was a sacrificial gift for our sins giving us the ability to be forgiven. His life was offered for us, and his standards of justice, truth, and mercy should be met, and should be offered to those around us.

The season of Christmas speaks of light, love, and peace among all people through Christ. Christians are pledged to discover through the humanity of Jesus, the truth and meaning of life. In order to find our way to God we are inspired by the Good News of Jesus, to make Christ alive in today's world through service to each person around us. Through this, Jesus is reborn today!

Prayer:

O Mighty God, the command you give us is to be your disciples, and to go out and spread the Good News. In every place and at all times, we are to be your witnesses, by what we say, do, and are. May we receive the joy of this season and remember its true meaning. Amen.

❖ *Third Wednesday in Advent*

Isaiah 9:8-17, Mark 1:1-8

He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals." (Mk. 1:7)

The life of John the Baptizer was consumed by devotion. His goal: to guide people to Jesus Christ and the coming of his Word. Surrounded by a people not interested in hearing about God, John stirred their curiosity. Similar to what was written in the Old Testament, John's fundamental idea was to educate people about God's disapproval towards faithlessness and the need to ask for forgiveness for their sins.

His ministry challenged people to appreciate and accept Christ when he came. He told them to confess their sins and be baptized, saying, "The One who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals."

Though John considered his purpose an important one, and he felt a calling from God, he did not consider himself nearly as essential as the "coming one." In this Advent season and throughout the year, we may hear similar callings. Like John, the need to spread the word of God through what may seem like the smallest acts may be huge in the eyes of God.

No matter how impossible life might seem or how dark the world might get, God is calling us to remember that he is coming!! He calls us to take part and prepare the way.

Prayer:

Lord God, please guide us to know your Word. To understand that even when we feel insignificant in this world, in your hands we may hold great purpose. Guide us so that we may see what you have in mind for each of our lives. In your name we pray, Amen.

Nicole Bondurant,
University of Washington student

✧ *Third Thursday in Advent*

Isaiah 9:18-10:4, Matthew 3:1-12

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, “Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” (Matt. 3:1, 2)

What is the nature of sin? What are the consequences of our actions?

This Isaiah reading seems like a study in consumerism. No matter how much we have we are told we must have more. We may think that if we have more, we will feel better, safer, more important. We look to “stuff” to fill the empty places within us. We bleed the resources of the earth with little regard for those in real need.

In the Gospel of Matthew we read of John the Baptist who came to call people to repentance. He is the prophet Isaiah has spoken of, “The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.”

There is no amount of or kind of “stuff” that will fill our emptiness. God’s love for us reaches through all of the pain and sin, and empties and completes our lives.

Advent is a time of waiting and awareness. It is the time to look into our hearts, into our lives, and make way for the One who heals this world and ourselves.

Prayer:

Holy Lord, you have poured your loving kindness onto and into the world through Jesus your Son. Heal our broken world and our broken hearts. Give us the courage to say “no” to the empty promises of consumerism and “yes” to your unbreakable love. Amen.

Deacon Mary Shehane,
Episcopal Campus Chaplain
University of Washington, Diocese of Olympia

✧ *Third Friday in Advent*

Isaiah 10:5-19, Matthew 11:2-15

This is the one about whom it is written, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you."
(Matt. 11:10)

John the Baptist is sitting in prison when he sends his disciples to Jesus to ask if Jesus is the one they have been waiting for. Even after baptizing Jesus, John still asks, "Are you the one?"

John is not alone in his doubts. We all have them. This does not diminish John, nor does it diminish us. God does not choose his prophets for their perfection. God chooses each of us to be his messengers of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Jesus reminds the disciples of John that in the Kingdom of Heaven, the greatest in this world is less than the least in God's Kingdom.

Status and worldly importance mean very little. Love and servanthood to God and one another are the true measure of a person.

Prayer:

Jesus, Redeemer of the world, help us to be your true servant to you and to one another. May we live with wide-open hearts, loving the world, one another, and even those who do not love us. Amen.

✧ *Third Saturday in Advent*

Isaiah 10:20-27, Luke 3:1-9

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. (Lk. 3:8)

In the past couple of years, we have had hurricanes, wars, earthquakes, social unrest, and political turmoil. We may feel a bit like the remnant of Israel. But enduring hard times, personal, local, and global is part of life. All around us there is one overwhelming event after another. What can we do? What should we do?

John the Baptist tells those coming to him for a baptism of repentance that just belonging to the “right crowd” will get you nothing. We have to live right and do right.

Now the question is: What is right living and right doing? It helps to embrace the truth that we will never get this just right. We just keep loving, living, and doing our best. And that is enough. Because when we know better, we can do better.

Prayer:

Jesus, show us the way, your way. Lead us in love. Comfort us when we are lost and afraid. Reveal your glory through those around us and may we never lose hope in this beautiful and tragic world. Amen.

Deacon Mary Shehane,
Episcopal Campus Chaplain,
University of Washington, Diocese of Olympia

✧ Fourth Sunday in Advent

Isaiah 42:1-12, John 3:16-21

I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations. (Isa. 42:6)

The Lord calls all to him; he calls everyone into the light of his goodness and faithfulness. He will not harm those who are weak, but he will help them become strong and grow in faith to sing God's praise and give glory to the Lord.

As the Lord calls us to praise and sing for joy of his creation and glorious deeds, he also calls us to hold up the bruised reed and shelter the dimly burning wick until they are strong and can sing for joy from the mountain tops.

We must shelter and nurture the people of God and do his work with our hands so that his name may be praised.

Prayer:

Creator God, help us not only to praise your name but also to do your will. Motivate us to move our hands so that we may hold up in faith our brothers and sisters who need that extra support. Help us to open our eyes so that we may see where we are needed most. And, open our hearts to receive your love and in turn spread that love to all people around us. Amen.

❖ Fourth Monday in Advent

Isaiah 11:1-9, John 5:30-47

His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear. (Isa. 11:3)

These powerful words are hard to take to heart. Judging others on a first glance or from a rumor that we have heard is not what we are taught, but it is easy to do. For what we see, or hear, may be wrong.

The true self of a person lies within the heart and soul of that person, and the only one to make a true judgment is God and God alone.

Do not waste your time judging others. Love and accept them for who they are, and teach others to do the same. For when you teach someone to love, you open his or her eyes to a new world.

Prayer:

Lord Almighty, help us to wipe free our notions of what we believe to be the truth, and help us to discover what you want us to understand. Help us to believe that the wolf and the lamb can live together in peace and harmony. Most of all, teach us to love unconditionally. Amen.

✧ *Fourth Tuesday in Advent*

Isaiah 11:10-16, Luke 1:5-25

But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John.” (Lk. 1:13, 14)

The Lord can do marvelous things. His acts can be marvelously terrible as well as marvelously wonderful. He granted Zechariah and Elizabeth a son, John, who would be “great in the sight of the Lord.”

Acts of faith are marvelous and powerful. Acts of faith can uplift your life, making you a messenger of the Lord. Act out your faith! Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, love the loveless, and house the homeless.

Living out your faith acts as the best teacher for the world, showing that you care and that you believe it is your privilege to act out God’s calling.

God sends us messages and we do not always respond, or even know he is calling us. But, if we listen hard enough, we will know what to do when he calls us. His call stays in our hearts and grows through acts of faith.

Prayer:

Lord, give us our mission in life. Help us to discover how to act out your will. Encourage us to listen for your words and understand them when we do hear them. For we know you are everywhere and in everything and all we need to do is look just a little harder to find you. Let your light shine upon us and help us grow. Amen.

Leah Stettler,
University of Washington student

✧ *Fourth Wednesday in Advent*

Isaiah 28:9-22, Luke 1:26-38

And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus..." (Lk. 1:28-31)

Many of us have grown up with the Virgin Mary, and have heard her story so many times that we may have lost track of what she really went through. How often is a young lady told—by an angel, no less—that she will be impregnated?

To me, however, the most impressive part of this passage is Mary's amazing, faith-filled reply. In a gesture of complete trust, she says, "Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

Her words are so simple and her meaning so clear. Trust in the Lord, your God.

Prayer:

Lord, have patience with us when we lose faith. Teach us to love, and help us to follow your guidance. Amen.

*Amy Christine Olson,
University of Washington student*

✧ *Fourth Thursday in Advent*

Isaiah 29:13-24, Luke 1:39-48a (48b-56)

And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior...” (Lk. 1:46, 47)

At our campus ministry site here at the University of Washington, we frequently use “Holden Evening Prayer” as our liturgy on Wednesday evenings.

There is a wonderful part of the liturgy where we all sing together the Magnificat, Mary’s astonishing song of praise after her greeting by Elizabeth.

In the dark winter, with many candles lit, and the delicious smells coming from our kitchen (of the meal we will share after receiving the Lord’s Meal), I like to look around at the worshiping community while they sing the Magnificat.

It never fails, as I look at the energy, the faith, and the contentment of students singing the Magnificat, I catch a glimpse of what it is that Mary proclaims and we sing.

We are a community of peace, a community where all are fed and all are cared for, a community of faith. It is this for which we wait, and it becomes real as we gather around Word and Sacrament.

Prayer:

Gracious God, let us lift our voices to you this day in praise, in expectation, and in faith. Amen.

✧ *Fourth Friday in Advent*

Isaiah 33:17-22, Luke 1:57-66

But his mother said, “No; he is to be called John.” (Lk. 1:60)

Elizabeth has some serious strength. Going against the norm, with her husband struck silent and the glory of God in her heart, she proclaims that her newborn son will be called John. John. Not Zechariah like his father. John.

I like to imagine the crowd turning away from Elizabeth and motioning to Zechariah—not to get his opinion, but to have him confirm what they wanted. They remind me of the people who stand out on campus getting students to sign up for credit cards. They don't care who the students are, or what cost the credit cards will add to the students' lives. They just want the name, the right name, the name that will give them credit and fill their quota.

But Zechariah doesn't confirm what the neighbors want. He takes the little clipboard and writes “John.” His name will be John.

God is always doing a new thing in our midst. Can we see this new thing, or do we look to the crowd?

Prayer:

We wait, O Lord, knowing that you come in many ways. Help us to see the new things that you create around us every day. Amen.

Pastor Scott Postlewait,
ELCA Lutheran Campus Chaplain
University of Washington

✧ Christmas Eve

Isaiah 35:1-10, Luke 1:67-80

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. (Lk. 1:78, 79)

Flashlight tag is a big deal in my neighborhood. There is a rhythm and dance that goes with the neighborhood children making a plan for a game of flashlight tag.

Darkness is needed. Sounds easy and basic, but in the Pacific Northwest in the summertime, it doesn't get dark until about 10 p.m. And you need good, strong flashlights. And most of all, you need a sense of adventure.

There is a magical quality to running around in the middle of the night trying to find your friends with a beam of light. There's laughter, and yelling, and activity, and while you're hiding in the shadows watching, planning, sitting quietly, there's a tinge of fear. Will you be caught? Will you be found? Will you find the others?

How satisfying it is when the game is over, and all have been caught and found and shined upon with a powerful beam of light, and you sit around together shining your flashlights on the trees and the sky and each other, reliving the excitement and getting ready to do it all over again!

What a vision of a community that is caught in the light. What a vision that Isaiah and Zechariah hold out for us of the light that is to come, a light that dawns from on high, a light that says to all who are weak or fearful or unsure: be strong, do not fear! God will come and find you, God will come and save you! God knows that you are there.

Prayer:

Dear God, we wait in our darkness and look to your light. Shine on us, and help us to reflect your light to those around us. Amen.

Pastor Scott Postlewait,
ELCA Lutheran Campus Chaplain
University of Washington

✧ Christmas Day

Isaiah 59:15b-21, Philippians 2:5-11

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:9-11)

God is our Redeemer.

The most unfathomably awesome Creator of the universe looked upon his creation and saw our plight.

The Mighty Warrior put on his battle garb and descended from the heights.

But he entered this crazy world as a tiny baby. The King of Kings was born in a pile of straw, near cows and manure.

He made himself a servant. Yet, at his name every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, for we have been saved indeed.

And the Spirit of God who is now with us will never leave.

Prayer:

Father, you have saved us from spiritual death and you have shown us how to live a life of love here on earth. You have given us more than we will ever understand. Thank you. Amen.

Rachel Dexter,
University of Washington student

