

**Ontario Community Church**

**Journey of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love**

November 30th - December 24th, 2025



Amber L. Dailey

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## A Note From the Author

Advent is a season of waiting, watching, and preparing our hearts for the coming of Christ. In a world that often feels hurried, heavy, or uncertain, Advent invites us to slow down long enough to notice the work of God, both around us and within us.

These devotionals were created to guide hearts and minds in intentional reflection during the four weeks of Advent: hope, peace, joy, and love. Each week offers scripture, prayer, art, and thoughtful practices designed to gently draw us toward Jesus, the One who came to dwell with us and who will come again to make all things new.

My prayer is that these pages become more than weekly readings. I pray they become moments of restoration, spaces where families gather, individuals listen for God's voice, and our church community grows together in anticipation. Some of us enter Advent with deep longing. Some with weariness. Some with gratitude. Some with questions. Wherever you find yourself this season, may these reflections help you meet Christ right there.

As you light candles, share stories, sit with scripture, and practice simple acts of love, may you sense the nearness of the One who is our Light in the darkness, our Prince of Peace, our Good News of Great Joy, and our Emmanuel.

May this Advent be a time of mindful preparation, quiet worship, and faithful living, as we wait with expectation for the coming King.

  
Amber L. Dailey

# ADVENT WEEK 1 DEVOTIONAL

## Day 1: November 30th

**Theme:** *Hope of His Return*

**Scripture:** *Revelation 21:1–5 (HCSB)*

**Date:** *November 30–December 6*

**Focus:** *Jesus is our Light in the Darkness*

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### **Revelation 21:1–5 (HCSB)**

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth;  
for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away,  
and the sea no longer existed.*

*I also saw the Holy City,  
new Jerusalem,  
coming down out of heaven from God,  
prepared like a bride  
adorned for her husband.*

*Then I heard a loud voice from the throne:*

*“Look! God’s dwelling is with humanity,  
and He will live with them.  
They will be His people,  
and God Himself will be with them  
and be their God.*

*He will wipe away every tear from their eyes.  
Death will no longer exist;  
grief, crying, and pain will exist no longer,  
because the previous things have passed away.”*

*Then the One seated on the throne said,*

**“Look! I am making everything new.”**

*He also said, “Write, because these words are faithful and true.”*

## Devotional: All Things New

Advent begins with a whisper of hope, the kind of hope that does not ignore the darkness around us, but shines straight into it.

When John writes, *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth”* (Rev. 21:1), he is not talking about escape. He is talking about restoration. He is describing a God who refuses to abandon what He created. A God who enters into our chaos, steps into our suffering, and declares, *“Behold, I am making all things new.”*

Right now, that promise meets us where we live.

Many of us carry the ache of broken relationships. Many feel the weight of bodies that weaken, minds that tire, or hearts that have been stretched thin. We see division in our nation, tension in families, and weariness in our



community. But Revelation 21 reminds us that none of this will have the final word.

God is not merely improving the world; He is restoring what the enemy tried to destroy. He is rebuilding, renewing, and redeeming.

And in our church family, we’ve felt this. Ontario Community Church has known seasons of both beauty and brokenness. Yet here we are, still carrying some of the wounds left from the past, yet watching God gently restore what fear and loss once tried to take from us. What was shaken did not stop His work; instead, He has been renewing confidence, unity, and hope in ways only He can. He has honored the past and is leading us into a future filled with hope, unity, and renewal. The same God who renews creation is renewing this church.

This is why Christians long for the new heaven and new earth, not out of fear or escapism, but because we know that the One who came as a humble baby will one day complete His work. The manger was not the end of the story. It was the beginning of restoration. Advent teaches us that hope was born once, and hope will return again.

Hope is not just a feeling; it is an expectation. An anticipation that what God started, He will finish. And in the new creation, we will not simply watch God reign; we will participate in His kingdom, His peace, His joy. God will dwell with us. Not distantly. Not symbolically.



Fully.

There will be no more separation. No more division. No more fear of losing salvation or messing up too much. No more anxiety about whether we are enough. Christ died for every fear, every failure, every regret, and He promises to complete the good work He began in us.

Advent reminds us:

If He had not come once, we would have no hope for His coming again.

But because He came as a baby in a manger...

Because He walked among us...

Because He conquered death...

We can live free from fear and full of hope.

Let this week anchor you in the truth that Jesus is our light in the darkness, and nothing will overcome His coming kingdom.

## Discussion Questions

1. What do you hope for when you think about Jesus returning?
  2. In what ways does Revelation 21 challenge fear-based interpretations of the end times?
  3. What does it mean to actively “participate” in God’s coming kingdom rather than simply wait for it?
  4. How does Advent connect the first coming of Jesus with the theology of new creation?
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## Bridge-Building Activity

**Write encouraging, hope-filled cards to shut-ins.**

Many who are homebound or in care facilities experience loneliness, fading hope, and the fear of being forgotten. Your words can remind them that they are loved, seen, and not alone, that the Light of Christ has not left them.

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## Kids Activity

**Draw what you hope heaven will look like.**

Encourage children to express what they imagine when they think of a world with no sadness, no pain, and Jesus living with us.

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**Day 2: December 1st**

## **Hope Reflection**

**Make a “Hope List.”**

Write down the things you long for God to make new: relationships, health, fears, or situations in your lives and community. Pray over them throughout the week.



## Day 3: December 2nd

### Reflective Contemplation

Spend a few moments looking closely and reflectively at this artwork. Reflect on the symbolic colors. Be still and notice the places where God is restoring you. Use the reflective questions to guide your focus and prayer this week.

**“Behold, I am making all things new.” — Revelation 21:5**



1. Where do I see God bringing light into my darkness this week?
2. What part of my life feels “cracked,” and how might God fill it with gold?
3. What am I afraid of that the hope of Christ speaks into?
4. Where is God forming me, like clay in His hands?

## Day 4: December 3rd

### Poem Reflection

Sit quietly with this poem. Read it slowly, more than once if needed. Notice the emotions, images, or phrases that awaken hope within you. Let the language draw your imagination toward Christ, who brings light into the darkness and makes all things new.

As you reflect, ask the Holy Spirit to show you where this week's theme, hope, meets your life today.

#### The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns

John Brownlie (1857–1925)

*Public Domain*

*The King shall come when morning dawns  
And light triumphant breaks;  
When beauty gilds the eastern hills  
And life to joy awakes.*

*Not as of old a little child,  
To bear, and fight, and die,  
But crowned with glory like the sun  
That lights the morning sky.*

*O brighter than the rising morn  
When Christ, victorious, rose,  
And left the lonesome place of death  
Despite the rage of foes.*

*O brighter than that glorious morn  
Shall this fair morning be,  
When Christ, our King, in beauty comes,  
And we His face shall see.*

## Day 5: December 4th

### Hymn Reflection

Take a quiet moment to slowly read the words of this hymn. Let the imagery settle into your heart. Pay attention to any word or phrase that draws your focus or stirs your hope. Allow this historic hymn to join your own voice in longing for the coming of Christ.

Pause, breathe, and let these words guide your reflection and prayer.

#### **“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”**

Text: Latin, 12th c. (“Veni, veni, Emmanuel”)

English trans.: John Mason Neale, 1851

Tune: “Veni Emmanuel” (15th-c. French)

#### **Public Domain**

*O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.*

## Day 6: December 5th

Godly Play is a gentle, imaginative way of helping children and adults enter the **true stories of Scripture**. It presents the story faithfully and then invites us to *wonder*, not to change the truth, but to notice how the Holy Spirit is speaking to us through it.

Today's story is told in that same spirit: simple, quiet, and open to God's presence.

Take a breath, settle in, and let the story come to you.

### A Short Story of Hope

A candle flickers in the deep blue night.

Someone sits curled up, tired from waiting, unsure of what comes next.

Even prayer feels far away.

But in the distance... something glimmers.

A small light. A tiny change.

Just enough to whisper, "*You are not alone.*"

Jesus draws near, placing a gentle hand on a trembling shoulder.

Relief comes slowly, like warmth returning to cold fingers.

And hope... hope wakes up.

Not all at once,

but like a child recovering strength after sickness,

quiet, steady, growing.

Somewhere in that night,

a heart begins to believe that God *can* make all things new again.

And those who were once hurt...

those who lost their way...

those who longed for renewal...

they find themselves loving Jesus,

loving Scripture,

loving His church again.

Hope has come close.

*Take a moment of silence before beginning the wondering questions.*

## **Wondering About Hope**

- I wonder where you saw yourself in this story.
- I wonder where Jesus came close to you this week.
- I wonder what glimmer of hope God is waking in your life.
- I wonder what new thing God is forming in your heart.
- I wonder who around you needs this hope too.

## Day 7: December 6th

### Contemplative Prayer

#### **Romans 15:13 (HCSB)**

*“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in Him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”*

#### **1. Read**

Read the verse slowly.

#### **2. Reflect**

Notice the word or phrase that stands out to you.

What is God drawing your attention toward?

#### **3. Respond**

Speak a simple, honest prayer.

Tell God what this verse awakens in you.

#### **4. Rest**

Sit quietly in God's presence.

Receive His hope, joy, and peace.

## ADVENT WEEK 2 DEVOTIONAL

**Day 8: December 7th**

**Theme:** *Jesus is our Prince of Peace*

**Scripture:** *Revelation 22:1–5 (HCSB)*

**Date:** *December 7–December 13*

**Focus:** *Peace that Flows and Heals*

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### **Revelation 22:1–5 (HCSB)**

*Then he showed me the river of living water, sparkling like crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the broad street of the city. The tree of life was on both sides of the river, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree are for healing the nations, and there will no longer be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His servants will serve Him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. Night will no longer exist, and people will not need lamplight or sunlight, because the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever.*

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## Devotional: Peace that Flows and Heals

Revelation gives us a crystal-clear picture of what peace truly is. Not the temporary, fragile calm we try to build in this life, but a promise:

**“No longer will there be any curse.”** No suffering. No separation. No fear.

One day, everything that has ever broken us will be undone.

John sees *the river of the water of life*, flowing directly from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It runs down the middle of the renewed city, feeding the tree of life whose fruit never runs out. Every month, new fruit. Every season—new healing.



When I picture that river, I imagine the way earthly rivers bring life to everything around them. Plants grow along their banks. Animals depend on them. Communities gather by them.

This river is the same, but infinitely more. It's God's own peace, flowing outward and healing everything sin has damaged. This is the peace we long for. It's the peace we cannot create ourselves.

When I look at our congregation, I see very real places where this peace is needed:

Marriages and families pulled between religions, faith traditions and doctrines.  
Adult children in relationships that raise spiritual questions and emotional strain.  
People living with the anxiety of uncertain healthcare or food insecurities.  
Fear about the future of our nation.  
Pain in bodies recovering from cancer, surgeries, chronic illness.

We know brokenness intimately.

And yet, even now, the peace of God begins to move toward the places that hurt.





When the river of life touches our fears, it softens them.  
When it reaches our exhaustion, it steadies us.  
When it flows over our insecurities, it reminds us:  
**God Himself will provide everything we need, now and for eternity.**

But let's tell the truth plainly:  
Christians often believe a lie about peace.  
Some have been told, "Just pray harder and your anxiety will go away."  
Or, "If you really trusted God, you wouldn't be afraid."

That is not biblical.  
That is not compassionate.  
And that is not true.

We will not experience complete peace on earth until Christ returns and makes all things new. Even the most faithful believer will sometimes feel overwhelmed, afraid, or uncertain. That doesn't mean they are weak, it means they are human.

The good news, though, the good news I want you to hold close, is this:

**God's peace heals what sin has broken.**

You are allowed to feel anxious.  
You are allowed to feel sad.  
You are allowed to feel the weight of your circumstances.



And still, you are seen.  
You are understood.  
You are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who walks with you through every storm.

The fullness of peace is coming, and nothing can stop it.  
But even now, the river begins to flow.  
Your future is whole.  
Your eternity is healed.  
And Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is near you today.

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### **Discussion Questions**

1. What “fruit” (patience, gentleness, trust, compassion) do you feel God inviting you to grow as a way of experiencing His peace?
  2. What’s one area where you need to stop forcing peace and allow God to carry it instead?
  3. Identify one person in your life who needs peace right now. How can you be present or supportive for them this week?
  4. Share a time this past year when God brought peace to you in a way you could not have created yourself.
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## Bridge-Building Activity

### Peace in Our Community: Map & Bookmark Blessing

As a group, **look** at the local area **map** and **identify 4 places** in our valley that need God's peace this week: schools, hospitals, care facilities, fire stations, government buildings, neighborhoods (or somewhere else specific). Circle or highlight these places on the map together.

Each person chooses **one** location that stood out to them. Take one of the **Peace in His Kingdom** bookmarks with you. Sometime this week, stop by your chosen location. You may pray quietly from your car, the sidewalk, or the entrance. If it feels appropriate, leave the bookmark with a staff member or at the front desk as a small gesture of peace and blessing.

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## Kids Activity

Create a *paper river* using blue strips.

Write or draw on each strip a way God gives peace:

- God helps me when I'm scared.
  - Could DRAW smiling sunshine with a cross next to a sad raincloud.
- Jesus is with me.
  - Could DRAW a heart with a cross inside.
- God helps us forgive.
  - Could DRAW two smiling faces next to each other.
- God loves my family.
  - Could DRAW a house with hearts around it.

Tape them together so the river "flows."

## **Day 9: December 8th**

### **Peace Reflection**

Take a quiet moment to think about the peace Jesus offers, a peace that flows gently into the places that feel broken or heavy. Let your mind rest on the truth that His peace is a gift, not something you have to create or hold together on your own.

#### **Reflection Prompt:**

Where do you need God's peace to flow in your life this week?

**Day 10: December 9th**

## **Reflective Contemplation**

### **Peace That Flows and Heals**

Spend a few quiet moments with the image on this page.

Let your breathing slow.

Allow your eyes to wander gently across the shapes and colors.

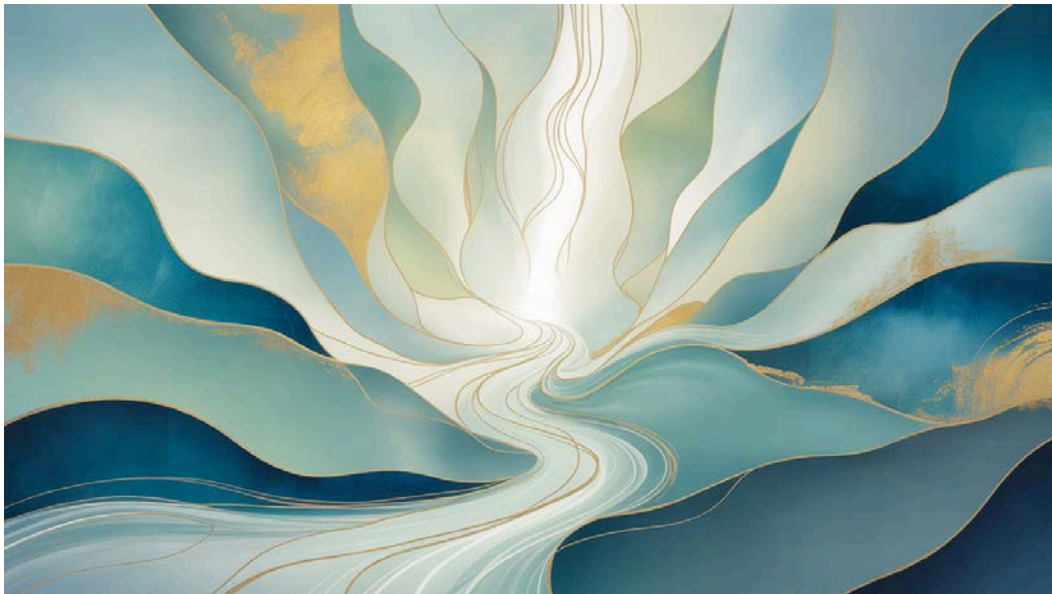
Notice where the light flows.

Notice where the lines mend what is broken.

Let this visual space invite you to rest in God's peace.

*The Lord gives His people strength; the Lord blesses His people with peace.*

*-Psalm 29:11*



1. Which part of the image draws your attention first: the light, the cracks, or the flow between them? Why do you think that is?
2. What emotions rise in you as you sit with this image: calm, longing, hope, resistance, gratitude?

3. Imagine the light in this image as the peace of Christ. Where do you need that peace to flow today?
4. Where do you see “flow” in this image, and how might that flow represent the river of life moving through your own brokenness?

## Day 11: December 10th

### Poem Reflection

Sit quietly with this poem. Read it slowly, more than once if needed. Notice the emotions, images, or phrases that stir a longing for peace within you. Let the language draw your imagination toward Christ, the Prince of Peace, who brings calm into our fear, healing into our broken places, and wholeness into a world still waiting to be made new. As you reflect, ask the Holy Spirit to show you where this week's theme, **peace that flows and heals**, meets your life today.

#### Peace, Perfect Peace

*Edward H. Bickersteth (1825–1906)*

#### Public Domain

*Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?  
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.*

*Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed?  
To do the will of Jesus, this is rest.*

*Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round?  
On Jesus' bosom naught but calm is found.*

*Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away?  
In Jesus' keeping we are safe, and they.*

*Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown?  
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.*

## Day 12: December 11th

### Hymn Reflection

Take a quiet moment to slowly read the words of this hymn. Let the imagery settle into your heart. Pay attention to any word or phrase that draws your focus or stirs your hope. Allow this historic hymn to join your own voice as you rest in the presence of Christ, the Prince of Peace who carries you through every storm.

Pause, breathe, and let these words guide your reflection and prayer.

### “Be Still, My Soul”

Text: Catharina von Schlegel (1697–c.1777), 1752

English trans.: Jane Borthwick (1813–1897)

Tune: FINLANDIA, Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)

### Public Domain

*Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side.*

*Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.*

*Leave to thy God to order and provide;*

*In every change He faithful will remain.*

*Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heavenly Friend*

*Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.*



## Day 13: December 12th

Godly Play is a gentle, imaginative way of helping children and adults enter the **true stories of Scripture**. It presents the story faithfully and then invites us to *wonder*, not to change the truth, but to notice how the Holy Spirit is speaking to us through it.

Today's story is told in that same spirit: simple, quiet, and open to God's presence.

Take a breath, settle in, and let the story come to you.

### A Short Story of Peace

Sometimes, when things feel confusing or hard,  
we forget that God is always making things new.  
But God has given us a story to help us remember.

A very long time ago, when the world was full of hurt and worry,  
God showed John a special picture.  
It wasn't like a picture on a screen or a book.  
It was more like a dream that felt completely real,  
a gift from God to help us see what is coming.

John saw a **river**.  
Not just any river.  
A river so clear it sparkled like crystal.  
And this river wasn't hidden in the wilderness  
or flowing from mountains or rain.

This river flowed  
**right from the throne of God  
and from Jesus, the Lamb.**

The river moved gently  
down the very middle of the city God is making new.  
And on each side of the river  
stood the **tree of life**.  
**One tree** that grows on both sides at once.  
And it was always bearing fruit,  
a different kind of fruit every month,  
as if nothing could ever stop it from growing.

John looked closer  
and saw that the leaves of this tree  
were **for healing the nations**.

Every hurt, every wound,  
every broken place in the world,  
the leaves could heal them all.

Then John heard something else:

**“There will be no more curse.**

No more sickness.

No more fear.

No more night.”

God’s light would shine everywhere.

No shadows.

No hiding.

No hurting.

Just peace,

a peace that flows like a river  
and heals everything it touches.

This is the world God is preparing.  
This is the world Jesus will make new.

And even now,

His peace begins to flow toward us  
like the first light of morning.

*Take a moment of silence before beginning the wondering questions.*

## **Wondering About Peace**

- I wonder what the river of life might sound like.
- I wonder how it would feel to stand beside a river that brings peace wherever it flows.
- I wonder what it means that this river flows from Jesus Himself.
- I wonder what kinds of healing the leaves of the tree might bring.
- I wonder if there is a place in your life, or someone you know, who needs that healing peace today.

## Day 14: December 13th

### Contemplative Prayer

#### **John 14:27 (HCSB)**

*“Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Your heart must not be troubled or fearful.”*

#### **1. Read**

Read the verse slowly.

#### **2. Reflect**

Notice the word or phrase that stands out to you.

What is God drawing your attention toward?

#### **3. Respond**

Speak a simple, honest prayer.

Tell God what this verse awakens in you.

#### **4. Rest**

Sit quietly in God’s presence.

Receive His hope, joy, and peace.

## ADVENT WEEK 3 DEVOTIONAL

**Day 15: December 14th**

**Theme:** *Joy of His Victory*

**Scripture:** *Revelation 19:6-9 (HCSB)*

**Date:** *December 14–December 20*

**Focus:** *Joy That Comes From His Victory*

### **Revelation 19:6-9**

*Then I heard something like the voice of a vast multitude, like the sound of cascading waters, and like the rumbling of loud thunder, saying:*

*“Hallelujah! because our Lord God, the Almighty, has begun to reign!*

*Let us be glad, rejoice, and give Him glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has prepared herself.*

*She was given fine linen to wear, bright and pure.*

*For the fine linen represents the righteous acts of the saints.”*

*Then he said to me, “Write: Those invited to the marriage feast of the Lamb are fortunate!” He also said to me, “These words of God are true.”*

### **Devotional: Joy That Comes From His Victory**

Revelation 19 gives us one of the most stunning pictures in all of Scripture.

John hears *a sound like a great multitude,*  
like the roar of rushing waters,  
like loud peals of thunder.

It is the sound of heaven  
rejoicing.



This is not quiet peace.  
This is not whispered hope.  
This is **joy**, the kind that shakes the air and commands the moment.  
The kind that stops you in your tracks.  
The kind that rises from every corner of creation because **Jesus wins**.

For many in our congregation, joy feels distant.  
The weight of constant scrutiny, public, social, even self-imposed,  
has drained the simple delight out of ordinary life.



Parents feel judged.  
Grandparents feel  
helpless.  
Families feel divided.  
Some wrestle with adult  
children who have  
walked away from the  
faith.  
Some feel like failures  
because the world tells  
them they should have  
done more.

And everywhere we look, we see brokenness:  
sickness, fear, injustice, cultural tension, spiritual fatigue.

But Revelation 19 interrupts all of that with a sound so loud, so overwhelming,  
that it drowns out every lesser noise.

It tells us something we forget:  
**Every ache, every fear, every grief is temporary.**

Sin will not have the final word.  
The illnesses and limitations of our bodies will not have the final word.  
Loneliness will not have the final word.  
Political chaos will not have the final word.  
Human failure will not have the final word.

## **Jesus will.**

And when He does, it will not be a quiet ending.  
It will be a celebration, the wedding supper of the Lamb,  
a feast prepared not for the perfect,  
but for those who endured, trusted, fought through trials,  
and held on to Him.

We will be united with Christ  
and gathered with those who served beside us,  
those who prayed with us,  
those who walked through fire and sorrow with us.  
Everything sin fractured will be restored.  
Everything grief broke open will be healed.

This is the joy Scripture speaks of:  
a joy that looks beyond the moment  
to the victory already secured.

A joy that does not deny suffering  
but declares that suffering will not last.

A joy that is gentle, but lifting,  
pulling our hearts upward  
toward the sound of heaven celebrating  
the One who makes all things new.

Let this week remind you that joy is not pretending everything is fine.  
Joy is knowing the ending of the story.  
Joy is hearing the roar of heaven and remembering:  
**Your grief is temporary. Your joy is eternal.**

## Discussion Questions

1. What part of the wedding celebration imagery in Revelation 19 gives you joy or stirs your imagination?
  2. Where in your life have you felt joy dimmed or weighed down this year?
  3. How does knowing that every ache, fear, and grief is temporary shape the way you see your current struggles?
  4. In what area of your life do you need to let Jesus' victory lift your heart this week?
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## Bridge-Building Activity

### Sharing Joy: A Simple Gift of Celebration

As a group, choose one person or household in our church or community who could use joy this week, someone who is lonely, discouraged, recovering, overwhelmed, or simply in need of encouragement.

#### Together:

1. **Choose a recipient as a group.**
2. **Write one simple note of joy** as a group to accompany the cookies.  
(One collective note—*not* individual cards.)
3. **Prepare or purchase a small item such as cookies, banana bread, or flowers** (Or something else you think of). *\*Please be mindful if they cannot eat or have allergies\**

4. **Decide who will deliver it** during the week. It can be one person, a couple of volunteers, or the whole group, whatever works best.

**Keep it simple.**

A small gesture of joy can make a big impact, and your group's shared act of kindness reflects the joyful celebration Christ is preparing for His people.

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## **Kids Activity**

### **Decorate Crowns for the King**

Provide children with crowns to color and decorate.

Talk with them about Jesus being our King and how we are His people, invited to the great celebration He is preparing.

Encourage them to draw or add stickers that show joy:

- smiling faces
- bright colors
- hearts
- Stars
- or anything that reminds them of a celebration

As they wear their crowns, remind them:

**“Jesus is our Good News of Great Joy!”**

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## **Day 16: December 15th**

### **Joy Reflection**

Take a quiet moment to think about the joy Jesus offers, a joy that looks beyond the weight of today and rests in the promise that every ache, fear, and grief is temporary. Let your heart lean toward the truth that His joy is rooted in His victory, not in your circumstances.

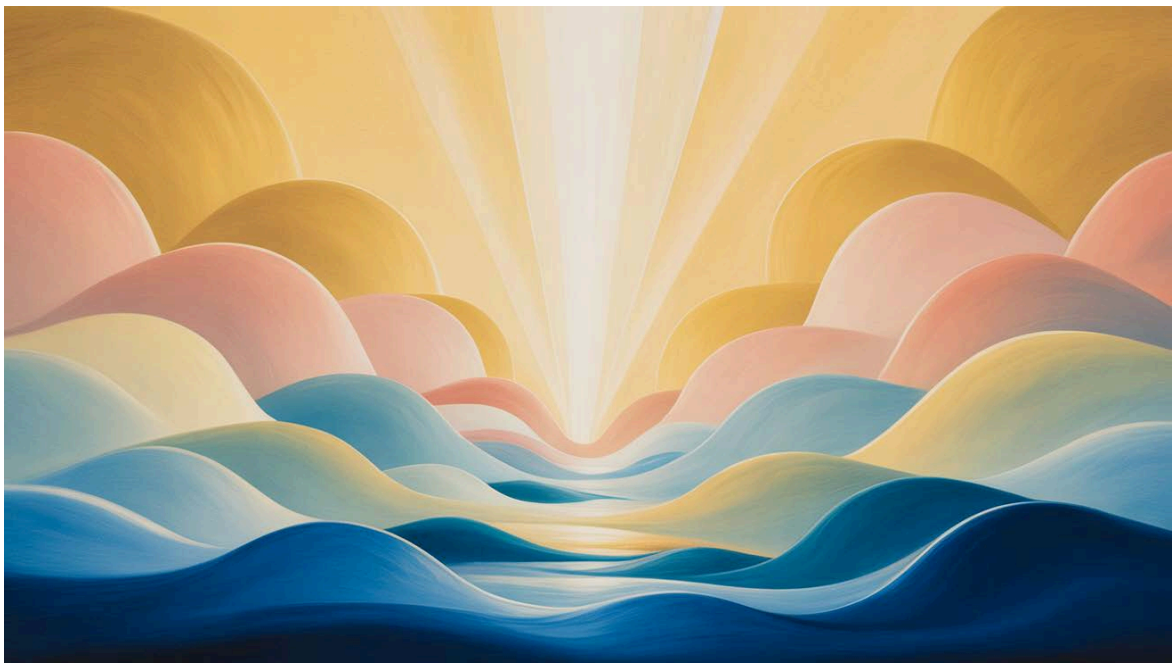
**Where do you need the joy of Jesus' victory to lift your heart this week?**

## Day 17: December 16th

### Reflective Contemplation

Spend a few quiet moments with the image on this page. Let your breathing slow. Notice the movement, the colors, and the spaces of light. Allow your eyes to follow the upward motion of the artwork, as if your heart, too, is being gently lifted toward the joy that is coming.

**“Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory...” — Revelation 19:7**



1. What part of the image draws your attention first: the light, the movement, or the space it creates? Why?
2. Where do you sense “upward joy” in the artwork, a hint of the victory that is coming?
3. What emotions rise in you as you sit with this image: longing, hope, relief, anticipation?
4. Imagine this light as the joy of Christ’s victory. Where do you need that joy to lift you today?

## Day 18: December 17th

### Poem Reflection

Sit quietly with this poem. Read it slowly, more than once if needed. Notice the images or phrases that lift your imagination toward the future Christ is preparing for His people. Let the language draw your heart toward the joy that rises beyond sorrow, a joy rooted not in this world, but in the victory of Jesus and the celebration to come.

As you reflect, ask the Holy Spirit to show you where this week's theme, joy that comes from His victory, meets your life today.

#### There Is a Better Country (excerpt)

Isaac Watts (1674–1748)

Hymns and Spiritual Songs (1707/1709)

Public Domain

*There is a land of pure delight,  
Where saints immortal reign;  
Infinite day excludes the night,  
And pleasures banish pain.*

*There everlasting spring abides,  
And never-withering flowers:  
Death, like a narrow sea, divides  
This heavenly land from ours.*

## **Day 19: December 18th**

### **Hymn Reflection**

Take a quiet moment to slowly read the words of this hymn. Let the imagery settle into your heart. Pay attention to any word or phrase that stirs your longing for joy. Allow this historic hymn to join your own voice as you look toward the day when Christ's victory will fill all creation with celebration.

Pause, breathe, and let these words guide your reflection and prayer.

#### **Joy to the World (excerpt)**

Isaac Watts (1674–1748)

Tune: ANTIOCH, attr. George Frideric Handel, arr. Lowell Mason (1848)

**Public Domain**

*Joy to the world! the Lord is come;  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare Him room,  
And heav'n and nature sing.*

## Day 20: December 19th

Godly Play is a gentle, imaginative way of helping children and adults enter the **true stories of Scripture**. It presents the story faithfully and then invites us to *wonder*, not to change the truth, but to notice how the Holy Spirit is speaking to us through it.

Today's story is told in that same spirit: simple, quiet, and open to God's presence.

Take a breath, settle in, and let the story come to you.

### A Short Story of Joy

Sometimes, when life feels heavy or confusing,  
we forget that joy is part of God's story too.  
So God gave John a picture to help us remember.

John heard a sound,  
not quiet, not small,  
but loud and full, like rushing waters or rolling thunder.  
A sound so big it made him look up.  
It was the sound of God's people celebrating.

They were shouting,  
"Hallelujah! The Lord our God reigns!"  
because Jesus had won,  
and everything sad and broken was coming undone.

Then John saw a wedding feast,  
a joyful celebration where everyone who belongs to Jesus  
was welcomed like honored guests.  
Bright, clean linen was given to them to wear,  
a gift, not something they had to earn.

This is the joy God is preparing.  
A joy that lasts forever.  
A joy that rises even now  
like the first light of morning.

*Take a moment of silence before beginning the wondering questions.*

### **Wondering About Joy**

- I wonder what the sound of heaven's joy might be like.
- I wonder how it would feel to be part of a celebration that never ends.
- I wonder what it means that this joy is given to us.
- I wonder where you need Jesus to lift joy in your heart this week.
- I wonder who around you might need to hear that joy is coming.

**Day 21: December 20th**

### **Contemplative Prayer**

#### **Revelation 19:7 (HCSB)**

*"Let us be glad, rejoice, and give Him glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has come..."*

#### **1. Read**

Read the verse slowly.

#### **2. Reflect**

Notice the word or phrase that stands out to you.  
What is God drawing your attention toward?

#### **3. Respond**

Speak a simple, honest prayer.  
Tell God what this verse awakens in you.

#### **4. Rest**

Sit quietly in God's presence.  
Receive His hope, joy, and peace.

## ADVENT WEEK 4 DEVOTIONAL

**Day 22: December 21st**

**Theme:** *Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us*

**Scripture:** *Revelation 21:22-27 (HCSB)*

**Date:** *December 21–December 24*

**Focus:** *Love Made Visible — Love That Drives Out Every Darkness*

### **Revelation 21:22–27 (HCSB)**

*I did not see a sanctuary in it, because the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its sanctuary. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, because God's glory illuminates it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Each day its gates will never close because it will never be night there. They will bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. Nothing profane will ever enter it, no one who does what is vile or false, but only those written in the Lamb's book of life.*

### **Devotional:**

#### **Love Made Visible — Love That Drives Out Every Darkness**

Revelation 21 gives us a glimpse of something we have never known in this life, a world where God's presence is no longer something we sense in part, but something we experience fully, without anything in the way.

John looks at the new creation and notices something missing: there is **no temple**. The place where humanity once had to go to meet God, to worship, sacrifice, confess, and be renewed, is no longer necessary.



**“For the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.”** God Himself is the dwelling place. God Himself is the meeting place. God Himself is the home where love lives.

Then John notices something else: there is **no lamp** and no sun. Not because light is gone, but because light has finally come in its fullness. The very presence of God illuminates everything. No more shadows. No more confusion. No more darkness of any kind.

This is not symbolic light. This is not emotional uplift. This is **love made visible**, a love so powerful, so all-encompassing, that it drives out every darkness we have ever known.

And this is what many in our congregation long for.

Some long to feel God in their everyday moments. Some ache to hear His voice or sense His nearness. Some have carried wounds they cannot explain and wonder why a loving God would have ever allowed them to feel such pain. Some feel



abandoned because life has not looked the way they prayed it would. Some confuse isolation with God’s absence because they cannot see or hear Him the way they desire.

But Revelation 21 tells us the truth: God has never been distant. And one day, there will be **no distance at all**.

His presence will not be something we look for, it will be the air we breathe. His love will not be something we remember, it will be the reality we live in. His light



will not be something we cling to in hope, it will surround us, fill us, and remake everything.

Every disappointment will be answered. Every fear will be quieted. Every darkness, inside us and around us, will be gone forever.

The God who was with us in the manger, the God who walked among us in Jesus Christ, the God who dwells with us now through the Holy Spirit, will one day make His presence known in full. And when He does, **love will be all that remains.**

Let this week remind you that Emmanuel does not simply mean “God once came near.” It means **“God is with us, now, and fully, and forever.”**

That is the love that drives out every darkness. That is the love we wait for. And that is the love Advent prepares us to receive.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What does it mean to you that God Himself is the “dwelling place” in the new creation?
2. Where have you longed to experience God’s presence more deeply this year?
3. How does the picture of God’s glory driving out every darkness give you hope today?
4. In what ways has God shown you His love in the midst of difficult or confusing moments this year?

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## Bridge-Building Activity

### Love in Our Community: Baby Essentials Blessing

As a group, choose whether to:

- gather items for the **Baby Shower / Baby Essentials Box**, or
- write a simple, loving card to bless one of the families who will receive these items.

Work together during your gathering to coordinate donating an item/or composing a single card from the group. *Please don't feel obligated to bring an item; your compassion and involvement are deeply appreciated in whatever way you are able.*

Offer these gifts as a way of showing God's love in a tangible, gentle way to parents or caregivers in our community.

Let this act of kindness reflect the heart of Advent: **the God who comes near, the God who dwells with us, the God who loves us.**

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## Kids Activity

### Make a Dwelling Place: "God Is With Us"

Provide children with materials to build or decorate a small dwelling:

- a gingerbread house,
- a paper house,
- a paper tent,
- or a simple cardboard "home."

Invite them to decorate it with colors, stickers, stars, hearts, or crosses.

Inside or on the front, help them write or draw:

**“God is with us.”**

Explain that in the new creation, God will live with His people forever, no darkness, no fear, only love and light.

Encourage them to show their dwelling to their family and talk about how **Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us.**

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**Day 23: December 22nd**

### **A Short Story of Love**

Sometimes, when life feels dark or confusing, we forget how close God truly is. But God gave John a picture to help us remember.

John saw a city, new, bright, and full of light. But something was missing. There was no temple anywhere. No special building to go to in order to meet God.

That was because God Himself was the dwelling place. His presence filled every space like warm light filling a room. There was no corner left in shadow. There was no darkness anywhere.

The city didn't need a lamp or even the sun or the moon, because the Lamb was its lamp, and the glory of God shone over everything.

People from every nation walked in that light. They were welcomed, safe, seen, and loved, living in a world where nothing hurt anymore, and nothing untrue or unkind could enter.

This is the love God is preparing for us. A love that is near, a love that is bright, a love that fills everything and drives out every darkness.

*Take a moment of silence before beginning the wondering questions.*

## **Wondering About Love**

- I wonder what it would feel like to live in a place where God's light shines everywhere.
- I wonder what it means that God Himself is our dwelling place.
- I wonder how it would feel to have no darkness at all, not in the world, not in our hearts.
- I wonder where you have felt God's presence close to you this year.
- I wonder what part of this story is meant just for you today.

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**Day 24: December 23rd**

## **Reflective Contemplation**

Spend a few quiet moments with the image on this page. Let your breathing slow. Notice the warmth, the light, and the sense of nearness it creates. Allow your eyes to rest on the places where light meets shadow and imagine the presence of God filling every corner with love.

Let this visual space remind you that in the world to come, there is no temple and no lamp, because God Himself is our light, and His love dwells with us forever.

***“God’s glory illuminates it, and its lamp is the Lamb.” — Revelation 21:23***



1. What part of the image draws your attention first: the light, the warmth, or the sense of nearness? Why?
2. Where do you see “love made visible” in the artwork’s shapes or colors?
3. What emotions rise in you as you sit with this image: comfort, longing, safety, belonging, gratitude?
4. Imagine this light as the presence of God dwelling with you.  
Where do you need His love to drive out darkness today?

## Day 25: December 24th

### Contemplative Prayer

Take a quiet moment to read this prayer slowly. Let the words become your own as you rest in the presence of Emmanuel, the God who dwells with you and fills every place with His love.

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Emmanuel,  
You are the God who comes near.  
The God who dwells with Your people.  
The God whose glory brings light  
to every place that once held darkness.

Draw me nearer to You today.  
Let Your presence fill the places  
where fear tries to hide.  
Let Your love touch the corners of my heart  
that feel forgotten, weary, or uncertain.

Where there is loneliness, be my companion.  
Where there is confusion, be my clarity.  
Where there is sorrow, be my comfort.  
Where there is darkness, be my light.

Make Your dwelling place in me.  
Let Your love be visible in my life,  
in my words, in my actions,  
in the way I welcome others  
as You have welcomed me.

Nearer, my God, to Thee,  
nearer to Thee.

Amen.

Thank you for being a part of our Advent Table Devotional Gatherings this year.  
We trust that God has richly blessed you on this:

**“Journey of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.”**



**Ontario Community Church**

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