

THE COMPASS



Family Devotional for December 2023

What is Christmas?

Activity - An Advent Candle Wreath

The Advent wreath tradition draws attention to the light that Christ brings as Christmas approaches and inspires us to bear witness to that light in the world. With an Advent wreath at home, we can keep our focus on Christ by reading a passage of Scripture or saying an Advent prayer each day or week as we light the candle(s).



If you have an Advent candle wreath/holder you can use it but you don't need one. Simply gather 5 candles. They can be any color or size. Place 4 of the candles in a circle on a table. Each of these 4 candles will

represent the 4 weeks of advent. Next, place a candle in the center of the 4 weekly candles to represent the light of Christ.

Light a different candle each Sunday of Advent—one for hope, one for peace, one for joy, and one for love—concluding with a fifth candle representing the light of Christ to be lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Use the liturgy below or create your own.

Liturgy for Advent Candle Lighting at Home (You can follow the prompts for multiple readers, or have one reader for all. How you do this is up to you. Make it your own.)

First Sunday of Advent (Focus: Isaiah 64:1–9)

Reader 1: O God, we light the first candle of Advent.

(Light the first candle.)

Reader 2: We kindle it with hope. We long for you to come to our world, to break through and reign with compassion, justice, and peace.

Reader 1: The prophet Isaiah also cried to God to tear open heaven and come down. He called God's people to do right. Isaiah called them to be refashioned like clay by God, the potter. This Advent, we call out to God.

All : Mighty God, creator of the world, break through all that keeps us from you. We ask for your mercy and reform us in your image. This Advent, visit us with your justice, love, and peace. Amen.

The blessing may conclude with verse 1 from "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" See below.

Second Sunday of Advent (Focus: Isaiah 40:1–11)

Reader 1: O God, we light the second candle of Advent. (With the first candle already burning, a family member lights the second candle.)

Reader 2: We seek your comfort. Both mighty and tender, you come. Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you.

Reader 1: Isaiah announced God's coming to a people exiled in a broken and parched wilderness. He declared that God's redemption would make a highway in the desert and change the rough places into plain. God would come as a shepherd—feeding, leading, and cradling the weary flock. This Advent, we seek such a God.

All: Saving God, look upon your world and heal your land and your people. Prepare us to be changed. This Advent, teach us to be tender and just, as you are. Amen.

The blessing may conclude with verse 1 & 2 from "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" See below.

Third Sunday of Advent (Focus: John 1:6–8, 8–11)

Reader 1: We light the third candle of Advent.

(With the first two candles burning, a family member lights the third candle.)

Reader 2: We look to John, the one you sent, to point us to your light. The light will come into our world and enlighten everyone.

Reader 1: God sent John the Baptizer to prepare the people for the coming of Jesus Christ, the true Light of the World. John called for people to repent of their sins and to live faithfully. He baptized with a cleansing water and proclaimed the new life that Christ, the one who would follow him, would bring. This Advent, we ask for God's mercy and a joyful new beginning.

All: Merciful God, we give thanks that you send messengers like John to call us to greater faith. We ask that in these days we prepare for you in prayer and acts of holy compassion. Forgive us and lead us to your light. Amen.

Fourth Sunday of Advent (Focus: Luke 1:26–38)

Reader 1: O God, we light the fourth candle of Advent.

(With the first three candles burning, a family member lights the fourth candle.)

Reader 2: We hear your angel Gabriel and witness the faith of Mary. Fill us with your grace and light.

Reader 1: Mary was a young, strong, spiritual woman. Even though her life was not easy, she heard God's voice and said yes. Her song was a prayer that would uplift those who were downtrodden. Her lyrics shattered the proud and called the world to change. She would bear within her the promised child, Jesus, the Light of the World. This Advent, we respond to God's beckoning to us as well.

All: Revealing God, visit us and fill us with your Spirit. Bring your good news to life within us. Give us courage to carry your light into the injustices and shadows of this world. Amen.

The blessing may conclude with verse 1-4 from "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" See below.

Christmas Eve or Day (Focus: Isaiah 9:2–7, Luke 2:1–14, or John 1:1–14)

Reader 1: Rejoice, people of God! The light has come into the world.

(A member of a family lights the four Advent candles.)

Reader 1: O God, now we light the candle of your nativity!

(With all Advent candles lit, a member of the family lights the center white Christ candle.)

Reader 2: With the company of heaven and with sounds of great joy, you come to us. This is the time of light and resplendent joy.

Reader 1: The prophet Isaiah proclaimed a time when those who walked in the shadows would see a great light. A light would shine and a child would be born to us. The evangelist Luke painted the nativity sky and repeated the heavenly song of the angels, "Glory, peace on earth and goodwill!" John declared that this great light is Christ, the Word made flesh. This great light lives among us. By it we behold God's glory—full of grace and truth. At Christ's nativity, we now rejoice.

All: God, our Life and Light, thank you for coming this night (day) to us. Thanks for touching all heaven and earth with your splendor. In every corner of the world, shine (this night) with your peace. In every corner of our hearts, shine (this night) with your grace. Amen.

The blessing may conclude with verse 1-3 from "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" See below.

Lyrics O Come, O Come Emmanuel

1 O come, O come, Immanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

2 O come, O Wisdom from on high,
who ordered all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show
and teach us in its ways to go Refrain.

3 O come, O come, great Lord of might,
who to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times did give the law
in cloud and majesty and awe. Refrain

4 O come, O Branch of Jesse's stem,
unto your own and rescue them!
From depths of hell your people save,
and give them victory o'er the grave. Refrain



Sometimes it's hard to know what to pray for. Here are some simple things to pray for during Advent as we wait for the birth of the Christ-child and meditate on what that means for us today:

- Pray for attentiveness to what truly matters, without being distracted by trivial things.
- Pray for opportunities to learn something new about God regularly.
- Pray for discernment of how God would like you to set your priorities and the ability to focus on them consistently to fulfill His purposes in your life.
- Pray for the grace to be able to rest, become aware of God's presence, and enjoy it.
- Pray for peace in all situations, no matter what the circumstances.
- Pray for freedom from all that burdens you - past mistakes, fears, destructive habits, hurts other people have inflicted, and more.
- Pray for joy and a sense of humor.
- Pray for confidence in God's love for you and trust in His power to work things out for the best in your life.
- Pray for openness to the Holy Spirit's guidance. Pray for a genuine awareness of God's grace in your life and the humility to extend grace to others.



Dear Heavenly Father,

This is my one word prayer: PEACE. I can't see ahead. I don't know what to do. Here are all my fears and my questions... [share yours]

I want to experience your perfect peace. Let it be with me. Just as you say.

Hold me, God, so I can hear you whisper to me, "You don't have to know the way. I do." In Jesus' name, Amen

~ Bonnie Gray, from "Praying for Perfect Peace When We Can't See How"

Womb of Creation, we often get caught up in what we do not have –

The material things we lack, the access and privilege we may lack,

The answers, even, that seem to escape us in crucial moments.

Forgive us for the times we forgot to remember you.

Hold us accountable for the moments we failed to see you in

The blessings of ages past.

Help us reconnect with our joy and our gratitude.

Remind us to name our joys, our miracles, our deliverances, our redemptions

One by one by one, for you are there in them all.

~ The Rev. Mia M. McClain, Senior Pastor of Riverside Baptist Church in Washington D.C.

Sunday Scriptures

Look for our December Scripture Puzzler. We used the New Revised Standard Version (updated edition) to create the crossword. Read the texts for the month of December and find the answers to the puzzler.

Dec. 3 - Mark 13:24-36 - Be Ready

Dec. 10 - Mark 1:1-8 - John the Baptizer Prepares the Way

Dec. 17 - The Gospel According to Sheep Youth Program

Dec. 24 - Luke 1:26-38 - Angels Visit

Dec. 24 - 9PM - Luke 2:1-20 - Jesus is Born

Dec. 31 - Luke 2:22-40 - Simeon & Anna

Did You Know?

Did you know Pilgrim Church has a Hearing Loop for hearing aid users in the Sanctuary!



What is a Hearing Loop & how does it work? Hearing Loops broadcast sound from the PA system wirelessly to hearing aids equipped with telecoils (T-coils). Users report they hear the spoken word much easier and without background noise. **Do you use hearing aids?** If you wear hearing aids you need to find out if your instruments have this wireless receiver called a telecoil or T-coil. The telecoil program is accessed by pushing a button on the hearing aid or smart phone. This T-coil program must be activated by your audiologist. Talk to your hearing aid provider to find out if your instruments can have both a T (no background noise pick-up) and an M+T program (blended microphone & T-coil program) to hear well at our church. **Hearing loops improve hearing aids.** While hearing aids have much improved in the last decade, they do not restore hearing to normal especially in large venues and churches. Hearing loops help overcome this problem by broadcasting clear sound without background noise to hearing aids. No hearing aids but own an iPhone? By using LoopBuds (T-coil headphones) and a free app, **you will be able to hear every word in church. We installed the hearing Loop system to make our services more accessible to all. We believe it is important to meet people where they are at and we hope our Hearing Loop system will make them feel more welcome and better able to experience and participate in worship and community events.**

THE BIG QUESTION: What are some other things we can do to become more accessible to all?

CONTACT:

For questions about the youth group activaties or the 2024 mission trip to Knoxville TN, please contact **Rachel Wicihowski** for more information at ra.burns@hotmail.com or 1-920-238-5919.

For questions about our Sunday school or Family Fun Nights, please contact **Karen Goodacre** for more information at karen.goodacre@pilgrimuccfdl.org or leave a message at PUCC at 1-920-921-0415.

For questions about confirmation, The Compass Family Devotional, or any other reason, please contact **Rev. Rob Van Ess** at rvaness.pilgrim@gmail.com or 1-920-273-9794.

YOUTH GROUP EVENTS

Friday, December 15 – Intergenerational Christmas Caroling – Jingle BINGO w. cookies and hot cocoa

YOUTH GROUP EVENTS FOR JANUARY - MAY WILL BE ANNOUNCED NEXT MONTH.

MISSION TRIP TO KNOXVILLE, TN - JULY 7-13, 2024

Steven and Rachel Wicihowski, and Deb Wamser are chaperones. All youth 6th grade and older eligible to attend this life-changing spiritual journey. We are signing up youth now.

FAMILY FUN NIGHT ACTIVITES - Select Fridays from 5:30PM-7:00PM

Friday, December 15 – All Ages Christmas Caroling – Jingle BINGO w. cookies and hot cocoa

January 19 – All Ages Bingo

February 16 – Bowling for All

March 15 – Movie Night – Movie TBA

April 19 – All Ages Game Night

May 17 – Outdoor Yard/ Camp Games

SUNDAY SCHOOL DATES

*Sunday School runs Sept. 17, 2022 – May 12, 2023 after worship (10:15 AM – 11:15 AM)

Dec. 3: Make N' Take – During our normal class time, while the Alternative Gift Fair is happening, students will be able to make a variety of crafts as gifts while learning not all gifts have to be store bought.

Dec. 17: Youth Christmas Program – during worship. No Sunday school Classes

Dec. 24: Christmas Eve – No Classes

Dec. 31: New Year's Eve – No Classes



2023-2024 YOUTH MINISTRIES AT PILGRIM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

SUNDAY SCHOOL – We have a wonderful program for children offered after worship on Sunday mornings! Each class focuses on a Bible story, a lesson, or a way of living faith. We use art, music, prayer, and group activities to share stories that connect us with our God and our understanding of community.

CONFIRMATION – A small group that meets for approximately nine months of confirmation preparation during which young people participate in church activities and reflect on questions of faith and life, both alone and together with their peers.

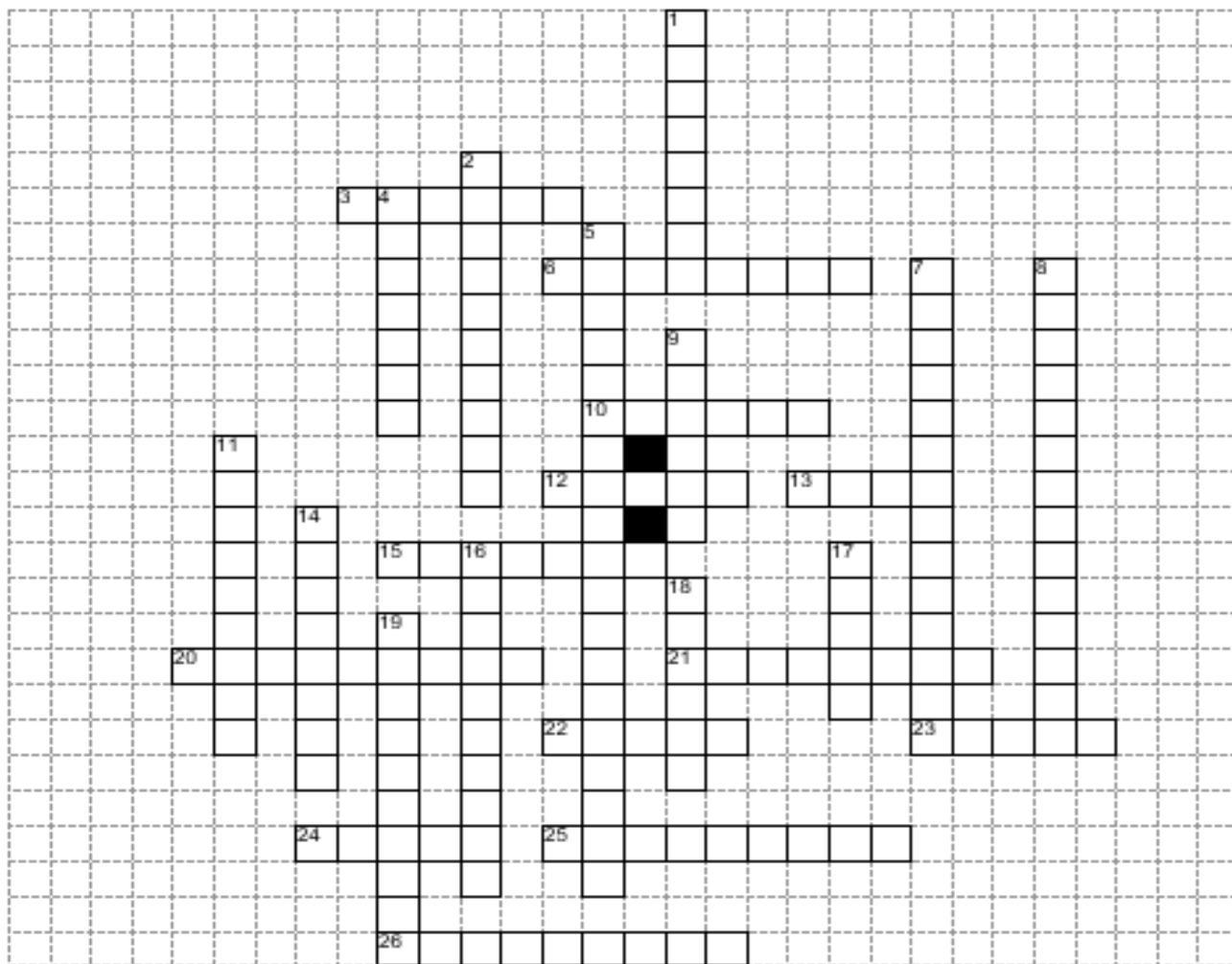
MISSION TRIPS – Our mission trips provide opportunities for students to explore their faith, experience God, and extend service to others. This is a transformational experience by which our youth get to know themselves by getting out of their comfort zones while being the hands and feet of Jesus. Last year we went to Cleveland, OH and next year the youth will choose between Knoxville, TN or Kansas City, MO.

FAMILY FUN NIGHTS – Intergenerational activities for the entire family. The entire church family is invited to come together for card or board games, a chili cook off, movie night, Christmas caroling, etc. Time to relax as a family and get to know each other better.

YOUTH GROUP – Our youth gatherings are designed as a "respite" from a socially pressured world for teens, and an opportunity to participate in the justice and fellowship ministries of the church. We strive to help our youth experience Pilgrim United Church of Christ as a supportive, trust-worthy, and loving community – a place that is safe and enjoyable to explore and respond to the spiritual side of being human, by building relationships and creating community.

THE COMPASS – A monthly family devotional to grow your faith and draw you closer to God. Each devotional has a theme and activity for the family to come together while learning more about our faith.

2023 December Puzzler



Across

3. The angel said to Mary: "Do not be _____ (Lk 1:30)." 6. The angel said Jesus will be called the Son of the _____ (Lk 1:32). 10. On Dec 31 we will read about when Jesus is presented at the _____. 12. The angel said Jesus would reign over the house of _____ forever (Lk 1:33). 13. A prophet, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher (Lk 2:36)? 15. What will never pass away (Mk 13:31)? 20. Who was living in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night (Lk 2:8)? 21. After visiting the Temple Joseph, Mary, and Jesus returned to the town of _____ (Lk 2:39). 22. On Dec 17 we will hear about The Gospel According to _____. 23. In the _____ month the angel Gabriel appears to Mary (Lk 1:26). 24. What will fall from the sky (Mk 13:25)? 25. The homeowner tells the servant at the door to _____ (Mk 13:34). 26. Who is Mary's relative who the angel reveals are also pregnant?

Down

1. "Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths _____ (Mk 1:3b). 2. Luke, chapter 2, verse 40 reports that Jesus grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the _____ was upon him (Lk 2:40). 4. Now learn the lesson of the _____ (Mk 13:28). 5. What did John eat in the wilderness (Mk 1:6)? 7. Who sent out the decree that all the world should be registered (Lk 2:1)? 8. The proclamation of _____ (Mk 1:1-8) 9. A man living in Jerusalem who was righteous and devout (Lk 2:25)? 11. Joseph and Mary went to the city of David called _____ (Lk 1:4). 14. When the owner of the house comes back, do not let him find you _____ (Mk 13:38) 16. Where was John the Baptizer (Mk 1:4a)? 17. Everything the shepherds told Mary she treasured and pondered in her _____ (Lk 2:20). 18. When Jesus was born Mary wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a _____ (Lk 2:7). 19. John proclaimed a baptism of _____ for the forgiveness of sins (Mk 1:4b).