



Coming Home

Advent Devotions

Editor: Heather Roth Johnson

Sunday, November 28, 2021



Coming Home

“...day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, God’s people received their food with glad and generous hearts.”

- Acts 2:46

Coming home. When I think about coming home at Christmas, this Bible verse is what comes to mind. Coming home and visiting family gives us glad and generous hearts. We go to church together and break bread around the table. More like a feast, but there is usually bread.

It will be two years for many of us since we have seen some of our family members at Christmas. Last Christmas, I was holed up with my husband and two boys in our house. We missed our cousins, in-laws, grandparents, aunts, and uncles that we normally see.

My prediction is that coming home this year will include: family reunions, work parties with colleagues, and full pews on Christmas Eve. This little devotion explores all the people we may encounter as they start coming home for Christmas: college students, grandparents, and grandkids, partners, crazy uncles, and our favorite pets.

Use this booklet to create an Advent habit: each day read the story, reflect on the question, and pray. Be thankful and grateful for all the reasons that coming home is so good.

Dear God, thank you for all the ways we are able to come home together. Amen.

Who is coming to your house this Christmas?

Monday, November 29, 2021



Grandkids

“You have looked deep into my heart, Lord, and you know all about me. You have looked deep into my heart, Lord, you notice everything I do and everywhere I go...I can’t understand all of this!” - Psalm 139:1-6

Guess what, I don’t have any grandkids — and neither does God. Nope, not one! God only has “kids,” because God has a direct relationship with YOU! You don’t need to go through your parents, grandparents, or caregivers to talk to God or for God to know you. Pretty cool, huh?

How many times, prior to Christmas, do you remember a grown-up asking, “Hey, have you been naughty or nice?” Then warning, “Santa knows everything you do. Santa only brings presents to those who have been good!” As a young child, looking nervously over your shoulder, you probably wondered, “How is this even possible?”

The words at the beginning of Psalm 139 tell us that God is a bit like Santa.

Like Santa, God gives us gifts, except there is one BIG difference — God doesn’t keep a list of our wrongs. In spite of all the times we mess up, God loves you with a NEVER STOPPING, NEVER GIVING UP, UNBREAKING, ALWAYS, and FOREVER LOVE! (Jesus Storybook Bible)

You are not God’s grandkid — you are God’s very own, beloved child!

Dear Lord, you gave me Lord Jesus and you made me your child. I thank you, God, for being your kid and loving me at Christmas and all year long. Amen.

What gifts does Santa give you? What gifts does God give you?

Tuesday, November 30, 2021

Nephew (& Nieces!)



“Remember that in a race everyone runs, only one gets the prize”
- 1 Corinthians 9:24

I am an only child. That's not a bad thing. But if you want to be an uncle, chances are slim to none on my side of the family. That's where my wife's side of the family is handy. Enter Andrew: the whirlwind of a nephew anyone would be blessed to have in their family.

He is quite a bundle of energy. As Andrew came into his teenage years, he was a popular, positive, and an adventurous young person. He was a fabulous hockey player. In fact, hockey would be among the first words Andrew would use to describe himself.

As a young adult from a small town coming home was a special thing for Andrew. He came home if there was anything going on in his hometown concerning hockey tournaments, hockey camp, or hockey games. My nephew brings joy into the world through the sport of hockey, humor, and adventure.

No doubt that nephews (and nieces) bring joy into the world of extended family! I consider them my prize.

Lord, as we move through this life may we live with the energy and passion that nephews and nieces bring to this world. Amen.

*Did you know that you are quite the catch, a prize, too?
What do you think that means?*

Wednesday, December 1, 2021



Uncle

“Then the Magi saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy! On entering the house, they saw the child Jesus with Mary, his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” - Matthew 2: 10-11

One of my favorite parts about being an uncle is giving my nieces and nephews gifts. I love to watch their faces when they open their presents, but I also enjoy the process of picking out something I know they’re going to like.

But I’m also reminded a lot about the most awesome gift of all – Jesus! He is a gift for all of us this Christmas, and all year long!

I imagine that the Magi were also careful about picking out their gifts and excited to give them to Jesus!

During Advent, I spend a lot of time thinking about what I’m going to get people for Christmas and hoping that they’ll like it.

God, thank you for the awesome gifts you give us – friends, family, food, shelter, and most of all your son, Jesus! Amen.

*Who will you give a gift to this Christmas?
Do you like to do the shopping?*

Thursday, December 2, 2021



Aunt

“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice.” - Philippians 4:4

In December of 1989, my sister, Beth, who had been living on a German Army base came back to Wisconsin for extensive knee surgery. Since I was a junior in high school, we spent much of the month together doing all of our favorite Advent and Christmas activities together.

One night while decorating my parent’s tree, Beth shared the joyful news that she was expecting a baby!

The new baby would be my parent’s first grandchild and my very first niece or nephew - making me an Aunt!

I thought nothing could top the plans, dreams,, and deep thoughts I had about becoming an Aunt...until September 6, 1990, the day Alexandria Rose was born in Wurzburg, Germany; “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice!”

I was able to rejoice all over again the day Ally was actually born. Although I am now a mother myself, I am so grateful for the relationship of an Aunt which God has given us for our nieces and nephews!

Dear God, thank you for the gift of our relationships with our aunts and the unique role they play in blessing our lives. Amen.

Do you have a favorite aunt, great aunt, or someone who is like an aunt in your life? What makes them special?

Friday, December 3, 2021



Godparent

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love.” - Ephesians 3:16-17

These verses are the beginning of the prayer I've prayed for all of my godchildren since the day they were baptized. Sometimes when we think about godparents we think about what we might see in movies or cartoons, something like Cinderella's fairy godmother who came along and granted wishes, or Sirius Black who was Harry Potter's godfather, and looked after him when his parents couldn't.

Talk to your parents about why they chose your godparents. If you don't regularly see them, find some time this holiday season to spend some time together. Go to a worship service and brunch together or schedule a zoom call if you live far away.

Ask your godparent if you can share prayer requests with them, and let them know that you are praying for them too!

A godparent is someone who promises with the church and your parents to make sure that you learn about God and the Bible. Do you know who your Godparents are?

Gracious God, thank you for giving us so many people that love us and want to teach us about who you are. Help us to grow in our relationships with you and each other. Amen.

Can you write a prayer in the space below for your godparent?

Saturday, December 4, 2021



Sibling

“Whoever claims to love God yet hates a [sibling] is a liar. For whoever does not love their [sibling], whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And [God] has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their [sibling].” - John 4:20-21

In my house, there are two kids who love playing with toys—but they do not like sharing with each other. When presents are opened on Christmas morning, they immediately start playing with their new dinosaurs and action figures—but soon, it becomes a tug-of-war!

Sibling versus sibling, arguing and crying about who gets to play with each toy. That doesn't sound like a Christmas celebration!

One way to love Jesus is to listen to his command to love our siblings—even when they're annoying (siblings sometimes get on our nerves, don't they?). Jesus isn't only

talking about the siblings who are related to us or live with us, but everyone in the world—our fellow children of God!

Even though we can't see God, we can love God by loving the people around us. We can show our love by sharing, helping, and using kind words.

Dear God, help us to love our siblings, even when we don't want to. Show us how to share your love with the whole world. Amen.

What things can you do this week to love your siblings?

Sunday, December 5, 2021



Wife

“Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.”- Genesis 2:24

“Mary, how can you be pregnant?” I imagine this is the question that Joseph asked Mary when he found out she was pregnant with baby Jesus. Mary and Joseph were only dating.

Mary and Joseph were now a duo; Jesus’ mom and dad.

They hadn’t probably gone beyond a kiss. Yet here she was pregnant. As her belly grew, her love for her son grew too. Don’t you think Joseph had so many questions and wanted to run far away?

But Joseph was a good man. He knew that he had to take Mary to Bethlehem so they could register with the census. This was an important step for them as Jesus’ parents.

God, thank you for choosing Mary and Joseph to parent Jesus. Help us to follow their lead as we love and care for your children in this world. Amen.

Do you think Jesus was ever grounded or punished when he disobeyed his parents?

Monday, December 6, 2021



Partner

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." - Genesis 2:18

When I was young, my family had a Christmas tradition of inviting people from the community to spend time with us. Sometimes they came for a Christmas Eve dinner, and sometimes they came over the day after Christmas.

Regardless of when they came, they were always invited to be a part of our celebration. When I asked my parents why we did this, they said "No one should be alone, especially during Christmas." And they're right. Jesus teaches us to care for one another always. Way back at the beginning of the Bible when God was creating people, God saw that it's not good for people to be alone, so a partner was created.

God was caring for us way back then and wants us to care for one another now. You might not be able to invite people who are alone to join you for Christmas, but you can sit with someone at lunch or invite a friend over to play. Maybe you can share something with them at school?

No matter how you do it, know that you are caring for people as Jesus cares for us, and that is how we can be partners with God.

Jesus, you teach us to care for one another, and we know that being lonely is hard. Help us be good partners to you and each other by inviting people to be our friends. Amen.

How can you be a partner this year and help someone feel less lonely?

Tuesday, December 7, 2021



Friends

“...but I have called you friends because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.” - John 15:15

It can be extra special spending time with friends around Christmas. I love being together, sharing stories, and giving gifts. I miss my friends when I don't get to see them. Did you know Jesus had friends, too?

The disciples were Jesus's students and followers, but they were also his friends. Even when Jesus' friends messed up (they did a lot!), he still loved them. Even when he could not be with them every day anymore, Jesus was still their friend.

Jesus, who knows what it's like to have friends and who knows what it's like to be lonely, too, is also our friend. In the busyness, bustle, and waiting of Advent, Jesus is with us. When we have lots of good friends to hang out with, Jesus is with us.

When we're all alone, Jesus is with us. Whether our friends feel like family, or it feels like we have no friends, Jesus is with us.

Just like us, Jesus chose friends who became like family, but even better, Jesus' family and friends include everyone! In Jesus, we can all be friends.

*Dear Jesus, thank you for loving us and wanting to spend time with us all the time!
Amen.*

Who are your BFF's? What do you like to do together?

Wednesday, December 8, 2021



Great-Grandma

“We won’t hide them from our children. We will tell them to those who live after us. We will tell them what the Lord has done that is worthy of praise. We will talk about his power and the wonderful things he has done.” - Psalm 78:4

Did you ever get to meet your great-grandma? Maybe. But how about your great-great-grandma? Or your great-great-great-great-grandma? Of course not!

But maybe you heard stories about someone in your family who lived a long time ago. (This Christmas, you should ask YOUR grandma to tell you a story about HER grandma. You might learn something amazing!)

It’s fun and important to remember our ancestors because without them, we wouldn’t know the story of Jesus!

Think about it – Jesus’ friends and family passed on their stories to their children. The next generation passed those same stories on to their children. The stories got written down, and the writings were also passed on from generation to generation – and now the story of Jesus and his birth has been passed on to you.

The only reason your parents or grandparents can tell YOU the story is because someone else first shared it with them. This means that someday, it will be your responsibility to share the story of Jesus and his birth with your children and grandchildren!

Dear God, thank you for all my ancestors who have passed your story on so I can hear it today. Amen.

Can you tell someone the story about Christmas?

Thursday, December 9, 2021



Brother

“Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.” - Hebrews 13:1

My brother, Leroy, and I were very adventurous. Being the older brother, I was protective of him. You would not believe the things we boys could get into when we were young!

On Christmas break, we were living in Texas. We played outside all the time. One sunny day, Leroy and I were watching a movie that had some awesome stunts. We saw this guy jump off a roof only to be caught by other people holding a sheet or towel. (Now what I am about to tell you, don't attempt this at home.)

We decided to try this stunt out! In the morning, Leroy and I snuck our bed sheet

outside. It was bigger than a towel! I told Leroy to let me jump first and test it out. I didn't want him to get hurt. I climbed on top of the shed and looked down. It was much higher than I thought, but I jumped! TV made it look so easy as the man floated down and was caught by the sheet! My jump was nothing like that. I didn't float down to the ground; I fell so fast. I landed and collapsed to the ground!

The sheet didn't save me. It didn't work, but Leroy said, “When can I go?” I told Leroy he couldn't jump. When I think about Leroy and our crazy antics, I smile. Leroy passed away 10 years ago, but his memories with me live on.

Creator God, thank you for the people in our lives. Amen.

Do you have a brother? Step-brother? Half-brother? A friend who is like a brother? How will you make them smile today?

Friday, December 10, 2021



Sister

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?” - James 2:14-16

Each Christmas my sister and I like to give gifts and help those in need. We have donated food, adopted a child for Christmas, delivered Christmas cookies to community helpers, and given gifts to the elderly.

This is something we enjoy doing together, and we also receive the gift of spending time together. Plus, it's really fun to spread some Christmas cheer!

Gracious God, please help us to help others and thank you for our sisters, brothers, and friends. Amen.

*How can you help others this Christmas?
Can you do something with your sister, brother, or friend?*

Saturday, December 11, 2021



Son

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” - John 3:16

The best Christmas gift I've ever received is my son, Micah, who was born a couple of days after Christmas in 2019. As I sat in church that Christmas Eve, eagerly awaiting the arrival of my baby boy, I thought about the story of Jesus' birth in a new way.

I know I've never been more excited for a Christmas present to arrive. I'm sure Mary was just as excited for her son, Jesus, to be born.

Like any new mom, I'm sure she was eager and even a little scared to welcome her precious son into the world. Now that he's here, I love my son more than any other Christmas present I can imagine!

However, as much as I love my son, I know it can't compare to the love God has for me, for you, and for the whole world.

The Bible says God loves the world so much that God gave his son Jesus to us. Then, Jesus gave his life for us on the cross so we can live with him forever in heaven. What an amazing Christmas present for the whole world!

God, thank you so much for giving us the incredible gift of your son, Jesus. Amen.

*What's the best Christmas gift you have ever received?
A cool toy? A new bike? A puppy?*

Sunday, December 12, 2021



Cousin

“As soon as I heard your greeting, my baby became happy and moved within me. The Lord has blessed you because you believed that he will keep his promise.”
- Luke 1:44-45

Mary and Elizabeth were expecting babies at the same time. Mary would be Jesus’ mom and Elizabeth’s baby became John the Baptist. Even before the babies were born, John was excited to meet his cousin.

Maybe you have grand adventures playing in the snow or having a family football game if you live in a warm place. Does everyone spread sleeping bags on the basement floor for a sleepover and movie night?

I wonder if Jesus and John played together and worried their parents with their tricks. Did they celebrate holidays together? As they grew up, John would tell others about God’s love and help them to know Jesus.

Cousins and family are great gifts from God. They remind us of God’s joy as we spend time together. Cousins also remind us of God’s love as we care for each other. They are built-in friends. With cousins, you can build memories that last a lifetime.

Don’t you just love getting together with your cousins at Christmas? Do you have special activities you do? Does everyone fight over a piece of grandma’s pie? How do you decide who gets to open the first present?

Dear God, please watch over all of my cousins and help us to have a great time when we are together again. Amen.

What do you like to do with your family and cousins at Christmas time?

Monday, December 13, 2021



Daughter

"I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better."

- Ephesians 1:16-17

"Your daughter looks just like you!" a woman announced to my mother after the Christmas pageant when she saw me in my angel costume. UGH! All I could think was DON'T SAY THAT! I didn't think I looked anything like her - and I didn't think it was a compliment either.

I wanted to fly far away with my sparkly angel wings! As a kid, I always thought my mom wore funny outdated clothes, had a funny old-lady hairdo and tried to embarrass me as much as possible. Couldn't I just be someone else's daughter!?!??

But as I grew older, I realized that "Your daughter looks just like you!" really means is this:

You are beautiful on the outside and the inside.

You are kind and caring.

You are loved.

You have special gifts and abilities.

You are important to God and to your family.

Dear God, help me to remember that being a daughter means I am made in the image of my parents but also in your holy image. Thank you for loving me. Amen.

Who do you look like in your family?

Tuesday, December 14, 2021



Mother

Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. – Luke 2:51

Once, when one of my kids was very little, he disappeared in the rows of Christmas trees as we were shopping for our holiday decorations, and I was frantic to find him. Where was he? He was so small, and those darned trees were so tall!

When I finally did catch up with him, I was equally relieved and furious at him for wandering off. That next December, I told him he had to stick to me like glue while we shopped for a tree, and he did.

Do I “treasure” this memory? In a way I do, now, because it is all part of my son’s story.

Once Jesus got lost when he was 12 years old! Mary was really upset at Jesus for staying behind after the family had left Jerusalem.

I’m guessing she was equally relieved and furious to find him in the temple. The Bible says Jesus behaved himself after that, and that Mary “treasured all these things in her heart.”

I believe she treasured both the good AND the tough memories, because they were all part of her son’s story from that first Christmas Eve in Bethlehem to his rising on Easter.

Moms are funny that way; they treasure us no matter what. God does, too.

Dear Jesus, when I lose my way, I know you will always find me. Thank you for treasuring me in your heart. Amen.

Have you ever been lost? Who found you?

Wednesday, December 15, 2021



Pets

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness;...that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.” - Romans 8:26

Do you think Jesus had a pet? What kind? If we're talking about our families, we can't forget our animal friends! We do know that friendly beasts are a beloved part of the story of Jesus's birth; sheep for sure and probably a cow, donkey, and maybe even a camel!

How does your dog or cat remain with you? What does your pet do when you're struggling? When I'm feeling sad, mad, stressed, scared, or frustrated my cat, Sugar, ALWAYS seems to know. She is right there with me cuddling and snuggling and staying close, as long as I need her.

If you don't have a living creature in your home, maybe it's a favorite stuffed animal that comforts you.

The way our pets come close, especially when we need them the most is a really good reminder that God is like that too!

God is so close; closer than our breathing! God gave us Jesus in human form, so we might know God more.

Dear God, thank you for pets and for all the ways you comfort us and are so close. Amen.

If you have a pet, what is it? If you want a pet, what would it be?

Thursday, December 16, 2021



Husband

“Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.” - Matthew 1:19-20

An American car company broadcasts a commercial called “One For You, One For Me” at Christmas. The husband buys two vehicles, one for his wife and one for himself. When he shows her the vehicle outside, she picks the vehicle he bought for himself. She is certain she wants that one. The husband doesn’t put up a fight and accepts that he will drive the one he bought for her.

God sent an angel to Joseph in a dream, telling him not to fear because God had a plan. Like the husband in the commercial who cared for his wife, even when it meant giving up what he planned, Joseph trusted God and became a loving, dependable husband to Mary.

When Joseph learned that his soon-to-be wife, Mary, was pregnant, the Bible shows he was a man of character. He didn’t want to hurt or shame her. He planned to quietly walk away from being her husband.

Holy One, inspire us to live with the loving and generous character of Joseph, who put his trust in you. Amen.

*Who do you know is a generous person?
What makes them generous?*

Friday, December 17, 2021



Grandfather

“For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.” Psalm 100:5

Have you ever heard your grandfather say that you are the ‘apple of his eye’? It means that he loves and cherishes you—that your image dances in his eyes. And, guess what? -this phrase was first used in the Bible! David asked God to keep him as the “apple of his eye” in Psalm 17.

David asked God to treat him as a cherished child, an object of great affection. It’s like how your grandfather treats you. You are not only the apple of your grandfather’s eye but also the apple of God’s eye – WOW!

During Advent, many images dance in our eyes – angels, shepherds, Joseph & Mary, the

innkeeper, and the animals in the stable.

These are the things we celebrate, love, and cherish during Advent as we prepare for the arrival of Jesus. Just as your grandfather is the foundation of your family’s loving legacy, Jesus’ birth is the foundation of God’s love for us. So when you give praise, pray, worship, and love & serve others, know your image dances in God’s eye!

God loves you as God loves your father and your grandfather, your great grandfather, and all of those who came before them!

God, thank you for your protection and love and thank you for waiting and preparing with me this Advent. Amen.

Will you get to see your grandfather this Christmas? What do you or did you love about your grandfather?

Saturday, December 18, 2021



Stepmom

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”
- Romans 12:18

Christmas is a time when families come home to one another! Sometimes it is awesome, and you get to hang out with your favorite cousins. Sometimes it is hard because you have to drive 6 hours and the house you are visiting does not even have good Wi-Fi. Sometimes when families are blended or hanging out with people you don't know, it can be tough and the celebrations seem to go on long.

Families are messy; that's a fact. Blended families can be tricky at times - like when your dad marries someone other than your mom. Maybe you know this or not, but stepmoms are special.

She has chosen to come and be a part of your family and with that, she promises to love and care for you. So, think about Romans 12:18: “If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”

It is not easy, but it is possible for you to be a peacemaker in your family. Have some extra patience, offer a smile, or maybe even take out the trash before you are asked. Remember that you are loved by God and so are stepmoms. Blended families are a special kind of family made up with special people.

God, help me show love to those who love me as I try to live peaceably with my whole family, especially during the holidays. Amen.

Who is in your family? How are they special? How do you keep the peace?

Sunday, December 19, 2021



Grandmother

“So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.” - Matthew 1:17

Who was Jesus' grandmother? Matthew's gospel begins with a whole list of names, but no mention of Jesus' grandmother. Grandmothers are important. They provide us with a link to the past.

Some “grandmothers” are not even related to us. They may have become part of our lives in other ways, yet they are just as important. We don't know for certain who was Mary's mom, but she must have been a faithful and bold woman of God. Mary certainly was bravehearted with her willingness to say “yes” to God and with her ability to see God's presence in all those crazy things that happened to her.

Whatever it was, there is a part of Mary's faith that was passed down to her. Our faith was passed down to us from people of faith who carried the story of Jesus to us.

Whether it was a person in your family or those in your wider circle, we learn about God from others. I learned ways to live as a follower of Jesus from Connie, Helen, Joyce, and Nancy. They are my grandmothers in the faith.

Thank you, God, for those who shared you with me, may I do the same. Amen.

Who are your grandmothers in the faith? Who has shown you how to follow Jesus?

Monday, December 20, 2021



Human

“So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.” - Genesis 1:27

I feel fairly certain that nobody threw a baby shower for Mary and Joseph, and definitely not a gender reveal party. Have you ever attended one of those?

Families and friends gather for some suspense-filled reveal, like cutting into a cake or popping a confetti-filled balloon, to share the gender of a baby prior to its impending arrival. Pink or blue spews forth announcing girl or boy.

Often our families begin to tell us who we are before we're even born, but our labels of male and female, girl and boy, and family roles like sister and brother, are so limiting if we really believe we are each created in God's image.

A God of the vastness beyond our comprehension or imagination is certainly far beyond gender.

We understand that Jesus was born a baby boy and laid in that manger, but what matters is that this was God made human; God with us. You and I, each of us are part of God's family.

We are children of God. We are humankind. Each of us was created so uniquely and wonderful it is impossible to just be this or that. We are absolutely beloved beyond the binaries.

Dear God, thank you for creating humans in your image, beloved in all who we are. Amen.

Who is your favorite human on earth or in heaven?

Tuesday, December 21, 2021



Coworkers

“Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.” - Ruth 1:16b

Sometimes we live far from our families and Christmas traditions. There are times where our friends, schoolmates, and coworkers become family.

Christ desires for us and all creation, just as Ruth says in our passage, “your people shall be my people, and your God my God.”

This pandemic year, our families since we work together, vacationed together at a beach in South Carolina. We made memories and shared new traditions of the beach by swimming in the ocean, digging for shells, and eating at our favorite restaurants.

Christmas time can be the same with friends. Take some time this year to learn another person’s Christmas traditions and talk about yours. Share in the Christmas spirit as it is a time where we are able to see the unity that

Dear Jesus, thank you for all you provide us, especially friends who are family. Amen.

If you could spend Christmas with anyone outside your family who would it be?

Wednesday, December 22, 2021



Father

“So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.” - Luke 15:20

My dad used to go to work early so that he could be home when I got off the bus when I was in elementary school. I would walk down our driveway when I got home, and my dad would yell out my name. I would run up to him and yell back, “Daddy!” and he would pick me up and give me a big hug.

Jesus tells the story of a grown son who made some bad mistakes. He hurt everyone he was closest to, and even abandoned his family. But one day he decided to come home. Instead of being angry, his father welcomed him back with open arms and a heart full of compassion.

God is kind of like that father. No matter

what, God will always love you—through your greatest triumphs and your worst mistakes.

This Advent season, may that be your continual reminder. That just as we wait for Christ’s birth, God anticipates us with excitement and hope too, calling your name, ready to share God’s unconditional and unlimited love with you.

Dear God, thank you for always loving us. Amen.

Do you have a favorite memory of your dad, step-dad, or someone who is like a dad to you?

Thursday, December 23, 2021



College Students

“You also must be patient. Keep your hopes high, for the day of the Lord’s coming is near.” - James 5:8

I remember when I was a little girl waiting for my oldest sister to come home from college. Our Christmas tree was already set up in the living room. I would turn the lights on the tree, play house with my stuffies and wait for my sister to arrive.

tree sparkling just right, frost some cookies, and wait.

When they walk through the door, it’s an amazing feeling. Maybe we could call that feeling the spirit of Christmas?

Now, I wait for my college student son to come home for Christmas. He just walked through the door yesterday. We will spend time together setting up the Christmas tree, last-minute shopping, and baking cookies.

Waiting for people to come home at Christmas takes patience and practice. We are so eager to see our family members or friends - that we decorate the house, get the

God of sweet homecomings, while we wait, grant us patience and peace. Amen.

Who are you waiting for right now? Why?

Friday, December 24, 2021



Baby

“While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.- Luke 2:6-7

How did the baby tell her mom she had a wet diaper? She sent her a pee-mail. Isn't that funny? Everyone loves a baby, dirty diapers and all. But why?

What do babies do? Eat. Sleep. Poop. Cry. They can't take care of themselves. They need help with everything!

Have you ever wondered why a baby is at the center of the Christmas story? A helpless, little child? That's how God chose to come into the world. That's how God chose to save the world.

God used a baby to surprise the world! The very best gift of all—Jesus—came as a baby. But since babies need love and care, God sent Jesus into a family with Mary and Joseph as parents. With siblings and lots of relatives.

And Jesus' family is still growing today. You are part of God's family too. That is what Christmas is all about. Jesus coming into our world, our heart, and our life.

Baby Jesus, we wait for you and make space in our homes for your love. Amen.

What is your prayer for the world tonight?

Saturday, December 25, 2021



Grandparents

“Since my youth, God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds. Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.” - Psalm 71:17-18

Christmas is more than a day in December,
It's all of those things we love to remember.

I may look old and gray,
But you, dear grandchild, are part of God's
day.

For generations we share our favorites with
you,

Meals, family, toys, cookies, candy, sadness,
and joy, too.

Jesus was born with so much hope for all,

You and generations to come will remember
our savior; a gift to all.

Gather round the tree and table,

Be grateful for all we have and do good
works as you are able.

Merry Christmas and blessings to you, as you
celebrate happily,

For someday you will remember, host, and
lead your family.

*Dear God, we remember favorite traditions and people in our lives that add
meaning to our season of hope. Amen.*

What will you do today?

Thank you to everyone who helped with this Advent devotional! It's been fun to make a new tradition that pulls people together from all over the USA to make a free and accessible Advent journal.

Editor

Heather Roth Johnson

Layout

Kenna Chase

Contributors

Kelly Benz (sister)
Shawna Berg (godparent)
Erin Bodenstab (friend)
Emily Dalen (cousin)
Kari erickson (grandfather)
Cindy Fritz (coworkers, grandparents)
Christin Flucke (son)
Raul Garcia (brother)
Kristina Hill (sibling)
Peter Horn (coworkers, grandparents)
Tanner Howard (uncle)
Carole Joyce (baby)
Aly Kohlmeyer (husband)
Don Marsh (nephew/ niece)

Nicole Meyer (human, pets)
Joe Orner (father)
Linnae Peterson (grandmother)
Stacy Plethke (stepmom)
Trish Reedstrom (great grandmother)
Heather Roth Johnson (coming home, college students)
Elise Seyfried (mother)
Jennifer Schnieder (daughter)
Tammie Sinibaldo (aunt)
Linda Staats (grandkids)
Lydia Svenulski (partner)
Tara Ulrich (wife)



bethlehem-church.org