

# Advent Devotions

**Bible Devotions and Activities for Each Week  
of the Christmas Season**



Joy to the world! The Lord is come.

These devotions and activities are designed to help the elders in your care to engage with the Advent season – the four weeks before Christmas – and its traditional themes of hope, love, joy, and peace.

The prayers, meditations, and activities are especially designed to meet the spiritual needs of older adults with dementia (though anyone may enjoy them). Feel free to pick and choose the elements that work for you.

If possible, have a simple advent wreath and candles (electric if appropriate) to light during each of the devotions and activities.

Access easy-to-sing versions of the Christmas carols on [youtube.com/spiritualeldercare](https://www.youtube.com/spiritualeldercare). Simply search for the song name.

Bless you during this time of hope.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elisa". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Elisa Bosley  
Chaplain and Founder  
Spiritual Eldercare

## Advent Week 1: Hope

**Sing:** Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

**Light** the first (hope) advent candle.

### Opening Prayer:

Father of hope, who brought love into this world, be the love that dwells among us.

Son of hope, who brought peace into this world, be the peace that dwells among us.

Spirit of hope, who brought joy into this world, be the joy that dwells among us.

God of hope, the rock we stand upon, be the center, the focus of our lives always, and particularly this Advent time. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

### Discussion or Private Reflection:

- Name or write down three things that you wait for. (Examples: birthdays, a baby to be born, a visit from a loved one, your next meal)
- Say or think about: How might you feel while you're waiting? (Examples: excited, nervous, impatient)
- In the Bible, hope is much more than optimism or wishing; hope is waiting in faith for a future *certainty*. We don't say that we wish the sun would come up tomorrow, because we *know* it will. That's the biblical sense of hope!
- We hope *in someone who is the same yesterday, today, and forever*<sup>2</sup>: We trust God and his goodness and mercy.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://faithandworship.com/prayers\\_Advent.htm](http://faithandworship.com/prayers_Advent.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 13:7

- Advent is all about waiting in hope: looking back to when people awaited the birth of Jesus, and looking forward to Jesus' return to establish God's kingdom of goodness and justice.
- As you fix your eyes on God, complete this sentence: "In hope, today I look forward to ..."

### **Closing Prayer:**

May the Father of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Jesus, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> Go in peace. Amen.

**Sing:** O Come, O Come Emmanuel

**Activity:** Leaves of Hope

### **Supplies:**

- Leaf cutouts, printed on colored paper (especially green and red).
- Black pens for residents (or be ready to write down each response on a leaf).

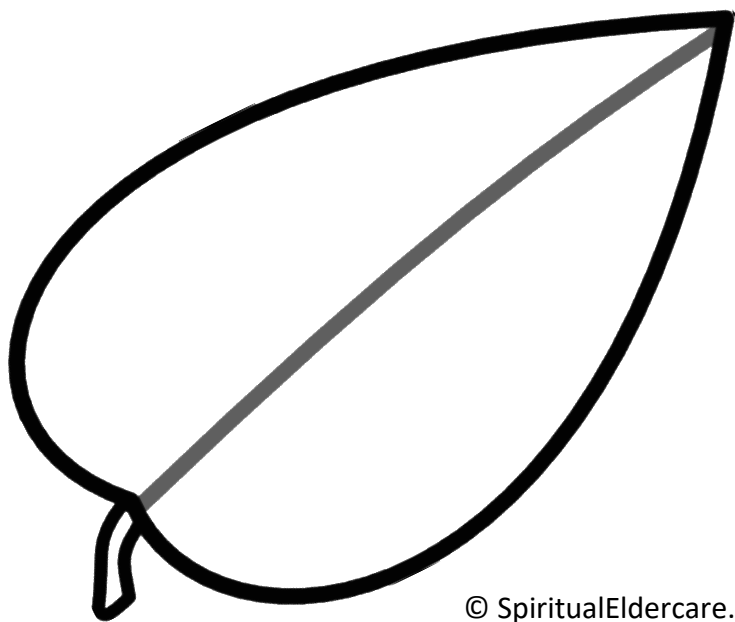
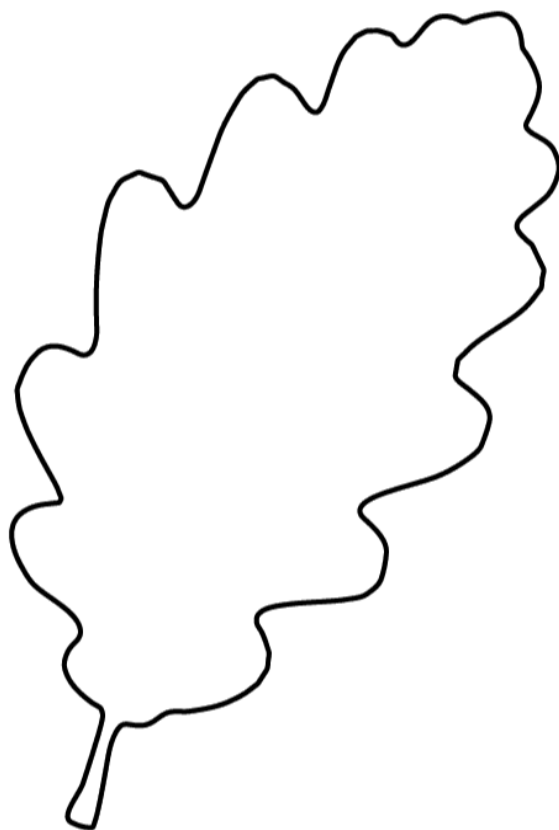
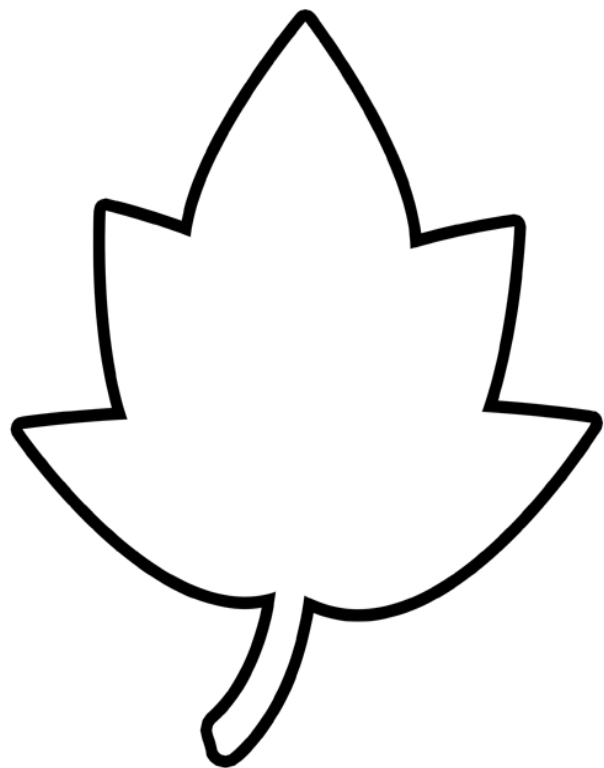
### **Activity Meditation:**

Every spring, what do you expect to see on bare trees? Leaves! You know they will sprout and grow, year after year. That's what hope is like in the Bible: we know that God's promises will be fulfilled at the right time.

On these paper leaves, write down hopes you have today for yourself, your loved ones, and the world. String, tape, or staple them together to make a banner. Hang it in a place where you'll see it every day. Put your trust in God to fulfill these hopes in the right way and at the right time.

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<sup>3</sup> See Romans 15:13



## Advent Week 2: LOVE

**Sing:** O Come All Ye Faithful

**Light** the first (hope) and second (love) advent candles.

### **Opening Prayer:**

Dearest Lord,  
You are the peace of all things calm  
You are the place to hide from harm  
You are the light that shines in the dark  
You are the heart's eternal spark  
You are the door that's open wide  
You are the guest who waits inside  
You are the stranger at the door  
You are the calling of the poor  
You are my Lord and with me still  
You are my love, keep me from ill  
You are the light, the truth, the way  
You are my Savior this very day. Amen.<sup>4</sup>

### **Discussion or Private Reflection:**

- Think about how love differs depending on its object. Discuss or write down how these different situations feel and how you might act in each:
  - Loving nature
  - Loving a pet
  - Loving a friend
  - Loving a family member
  - Loving God

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<sup>4</sup> Celtic oral tradition, first millennium

- Christmas is often marked by giving and receiving gifts. Think about what you do when giving a gift.
  - What do you ask yourself about the person who's receiving the gift? (What's my relationship with them, what do they like, what do they need ... "it's the thought that counts.")
  - What tasks are involved in giving a gift? (Examples: find a shop, buy it or materials to make it, use money, figure out how to mail or deliver it.) Giving a gift involves cost, effort, thought and attention.
- What response do you hope the person has to your gift?
  - Gladness, delight, gratitude
- The gospel writer John described God's love for the world as wrapped up in a gift: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)
- What was God thinking about when he gave the world the gift of his Son? (His love for us!)
- What can you do to receive Jesus as God's gift to you this Advent?

### **Closing Prayer:**

Father in heaven,  
 our hearts desire the warmth of your love  
 and our minds are searching for the light of your Word.  
 Increase our longing for Jesus Christ our Savior  
 and give us the strength to grow in love,  
 that the dawn of his coming  
 may find us rejoicing in his presence  
 and welcoming the light of his truth.  
 We ask this in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.  
 Amen.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> International Committee on English in the Liturgy (ICEL)

**Sing:**

Hark, the Herald Angels Sing

**Activity:** Love in Action

**Supplies:** Printed “I Love You Because” and “I Appreciate You Because” cards

Write the name of a loved one or someone you appreciate – relative, friend, postal worker, caregiver – at the top of the card. Then list specific reasons why you love or appreciate that person. Slip the note into a Christmas card or gift, or simply give it to the person.

If you’re in a group, have everyone sit in a circle, take a card and write their name at the top. Then, have everyone pass the card to the person on the left. As each person looks at the name at the top of the card, have them write something they love about that person. Keep passing the cards until they’ve been all the way around the circle.





**I LOVE YOU BECAUSE ...**

Thank you and Merry Christmas!



**I APPRECIATE YOU  
BECAUSE ...**

Thank You and Happy Holidays!

## Advent Week 3: JOY

**Sing:** Go Tell It on the Mountain

**Light** the first (hope), second (love), and third (joy) advent candles.

### **Opening Prayer:**

Shout for joy  
the whole earth,  
and everything in it.

Rejoice!

For Light has come into the world.

The mountains sing,  
the seas resound  
to the praise of your name.

Salvation once promised is here on earth.

The angels' song  
rings in the air,  
a child has been born.

Hallelujah!

The Savior of the world is here. Amen.<sup>6</sup>

### **Discussion or Private Reflection:**

- Let's think about joy: What are some things, events, and people that make you feel joyful?
- Let's reflect on a story that seems the opposite of joy. When Mary was pregnant with Jesus, what were her circumstances? (poor, young, female, unmarried, pregnant)
- What were Joseph's circumstances? (poor, unmarried, with his fiancée pregnant)

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<sup>6</sup> [http://faithandworship.com/prayers\\_Advent.htm](http://faithandworship.com/prayers_Advent.htm)

- If you were in Mary or Joseph's situation, how might you feel?
- Even though some of Mary's circumstances were troubling, what was her response? Joy! "My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."<sup>7</sup>
- What was Mary focused on that enabled her to have joy? (Certainty and trust in God, not in her circumstances.)
- Write down or discuss: What helps you to focus on God and trust him? (Examples: prayer, singing, reading the Bible, talking to others about God)
- What are some ways that you can cultivate more joy during the Advent season?

### **Closing Prayer:**

Father of joy, who sent your Son to Earth for us, we praise you for your everlasting love, your endless patience, and for the greatest gift you could possibly give us, salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Fill us with your Spirit, the source of all joy. Amen.

**Sing:** Joy to the World

**Activity:** Stained glass coloring page

### **Supplies:**

- Printout of stained-glass nativity scene
- Colored pens, crayons

### **Activity Meditation:**

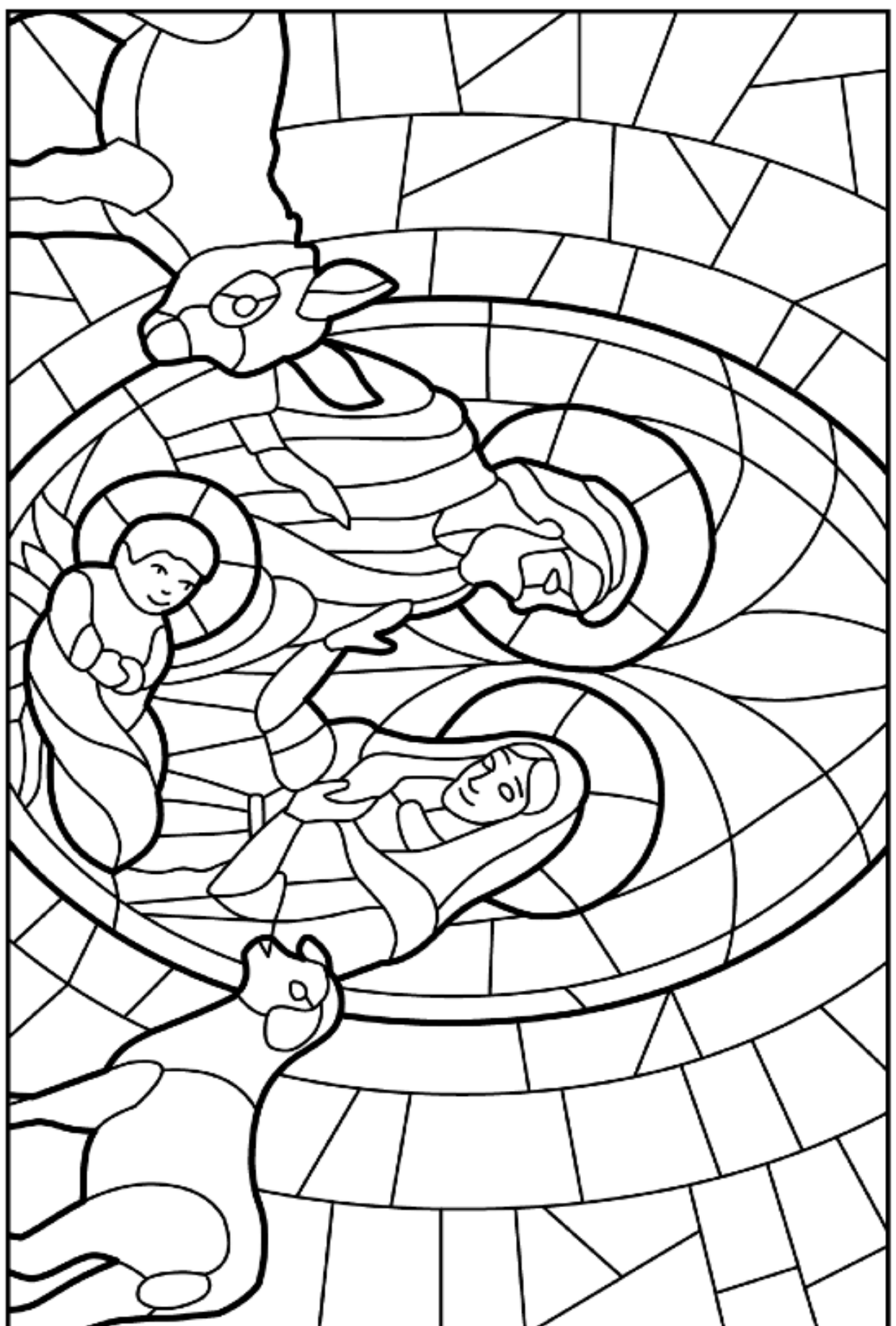
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<sup>7</sup> Luke 1:46-47

Coloring pages for adults can be a creative way to pray and reflect. Consider this page your own stained-glass window, which you can color however you like.

As you fill in the picture, ponder the faces of Joseph, Mary, and the Baby Jesus. Think about how they may have felt at this moment.

Remember how you felt when you or friend got to experience the joy of a new baby. What memories do you have of welcoming a new baby into the world?



## Advent Week 4: PEACE

**Sing:** It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

**Light** the first (hope), second (love), third (joy), and fourth (peace) advent candles.

### Opening Prayer:

In this season of expectation  
We prepare to welcome you, Christ Jesus, Messiah  
Into the bustle of our lives  
and the hard-to-find moments of solitude.  
We prepare to welcome you, Christ Jesus, Messiah  
Into our homes and situations.  
We prepare to welcome you, Christ Jesus, Messiah  
Into our hearts.  
Yours, O God, is the presence that brings peace,  
the peace that comforts,  
the peace that gives us strength to carry on.  
Yours is the voice we long to hear,  
the persistent whisper in our ear,  
“Be still, and know that I am God.” Amen.<sup>8</sup>

### Discussion or Private Reflection:

- Write down or discuss: What makes life peaceful? (Examples: inner calm and well-being; lack of violence; cooperation among people; forgiveness; lack of worry)
- The Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, means “whole” or “well-being.” It captures God’s beautiful plan for people and creation to thrive, inside and out.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://faithandworship.com/prayers\\_Advent.htm](http://faithandworship.com/prayers_Advent.htm)

- Peace = Shalom with all people and shalom with God.
- At Christ's birth, the angels sing "Peace on earth, good will to humankind," and Christ is often called the Prince of Peace.  
Peace is God's promise in Jesus!
- Write down or discuss: What can you do today to foster peace in yourself and harmony between people?
  - Name some peaceful thoughts and actions. Take your time and be creative! (Examples: sitting by the fireside; having a cup of tea; watching snow fall; gazing at a candle; smiling and shaking someone's hand in greeting; saying "thank you"; considering others' burdens instead of judging them; praying; journaling; giving to the needy)
- Today and every day, soak in the knowledge that you are loved by God, no matter what. In the words of priest Henri Nouwen: "Nothing is more important in peacemaking than that it flow from a deep and undeniable experience of love. Only those who know deeply that they are loved and rejoice in that love can be true peacemakers."

### **Closing Prayer:**

As the Lord said through the prophet Isaiah,<sup>9</sup> "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you." We put our trust in the presence and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Sing:** Away in a Manger

**Activity:** Scents of Christmas

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<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 43:1-2

**Supplies:** Different objects that have pleasant scents of the season, such as:

- Fresh orange or tangerine (score the peel to release the scent)
- Pine boughs or rosemary (gently rub between hands to release the scent)
- Fresh sage (gently rub between hands to release the scent)
- Cinnamon
- Cloves
- Peppermint oil
- Vanilla extract

Keep each item hidden in a clean tea cloth, unlabeled jar, or paper bag. Go around the room and have people smell the object, then try to guess what it is.

### **Activity Meditation:**

Certain smells can take us right back to a peaceful memory: an ocean breeze, rain in the desert, your mother's perfume, your father's pipe, your grandmother's kitchen. When you smell the items in this activity, talk about something you connect with that smell. What does each scent remind you of? How does it make you feel?