



FAMILY DEVOTIONS FOR ADVENT & CHRISTMAS

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

The devotions in this booklet are intended to be used during the family dinner. However, there is the option to use them shortly before children go to bed. They proceed as follows:

- The devotion opens with a brief **responsive reading**. The devotion leader reads the regular text. Others respond by reading the boldface text.
- **The candles are lit** on the Advent wreath. You might let children who are old enough do this.
- Then comes **prayer**. Examples of both dinner and bedtime prayers are found on page 5 of this booklet. This is also a time to pray about/for the individuals your family lists in the *Our Personal Mission Field* found on pages 50 and 51.
- *If it is dinner time, the family would now eat dinner, enjoying the glow of the Advent wreath.*
- When dinner is over, **listen to WELS online daily devotion**. Type “WELS online daily devotion” into a browser on your smart phone. Or go right to <https://wels.net/serving-you/devotions/daily-devotions/>
- The devotion leader asks the **two discussion questions**. The others take turns answering. Generally, the first question is very easy. The second question requires a child to think a bit more. Parents, encourage your children to answer. Do not be too quick to provide the answer for them. This is time well spent that will apply the Word of God!
- The devotion closes with everyone **reading or singing the closing**. The closing is always a hymn verse from a well known Advent or Christmas hymn. Typically, they are verses that are a prayer.

PURCHASING A FAMILY ADVENT WREATH

A family Advent wreath will become a beloved holiday decoration, helping prepare your family for Christmas. They are very common.

Northwestern Publishing House sells a number of different wreaths and candle sets.

A faux evergreen wreath that holds four taper candles:

<https://online.nph.net/advent-wreath.html>

Four taper candles, 3 blue, 1 pink: <https://online.nph.net/candle-taper-advent-blue-pink-4-pc-set.html>

Four taper candles, 3 purple, 1 pink: <https://online.nph.net/candle-taper-advent-purple-pink-4-pc-set.html>

A simple brass colored wreath with four taper candles, 3 purple, 1 pink: <https://online.nph.net/catalog/product/view/id/22937/>

White Christ candle for the center of the wreath: <https://online.nph.net/pillar-ceremonial-stearine-candle-3-12.html>

White Christ candle with Chi-Rho symbol for center of the wreath: <https://online.nph.net/radiance-christ-candle.html>



THE HISTORY AND SYMBOLISM OF THE ADVENT WREATH

The Advent wreath is a combination of two very common symbols: light and the fir tree. From the early centuries of Christianity it has been a common practice to represent Christ's presence with a burning candle. The fir tree also has a long history of religious use. The evergreen nature of fir trees symbolizes eternal life.



It seems that the Advent wreath originated a few hundred years ago among the Lutherans of eastern Germany. A wreath of evergreens, made in various sizes, was either suspended from the ceiling or placed on a table in believers' homes. The general symbolism of the Advent wreath lies in the growing light of the wreath, increasing each week as we approach the birthday of Jesus, the Light of the world. Eventually, Advent wreaths made their way into church decorations. However, their origin was in the home. They were meant to aid in the family devotional life.

The colors of the candles are symbolic as well. Some choose to use purple candles in their Advent wreath. In Advent, we hear John the Baptist's call to repent. Purple is a color of repentance. It also symbolizes the royalty of Jesus Christ.

Other choose to use blue candles in their wreath. Blue is the color of the sky. It reminds us that in Advent we look forward, not just to Christ's first coming on Christmas, but to Christ's second coming on judgment day.

The third candle of the wreath is generally a rose color, symbolizing the joy we have in Christ.

Come Christmas, a fifth candle—white, representing Christ himself—is placed in the center of the wreath. Some will replace the other four candles with white candles as well.

PRAYERS

PRAYERS FOR DINNERTIME

Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest. Let these gifts to us be blest.
Amen.

Bless us, O LORD, and these gifts which we are about to
receive as a gift of your bounty, through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

The eyes of all look to you, O LORD, and you give them their
food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the
desires of every living thing. Amen.

For food in a world where many walk in hunger; for faith in a
world where many walk in fear; for loved ones in a world
where many walk alone; we give you thanks, O LORD. Amen.

PRAYERS FOR BEDTIME

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your
dear Son, that you have graciously kept me this day; and I
pray you to forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong,
and graciously keep me this night. For into your hands I
commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let your
holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no
power over me. Amen.

Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.
Amen.

Now the light has gone away; Savior, listen while I pray.
Asking you to watch and keep, and to send me quiet sleep.
Jesus, Savior, wash away all that I've done wrong today.
Make me ever more like you: good and gentle, kind and true.
Amen.

C18: REACHING ONE MILLION SOULS

C18 is short for “Christmas Eve 2018.” WELS has established a goal of reaching one-million people with the gospel prior to and on Christmas Eve. One way to reach that goal is for WELS members to invite unchurched friends, neighbors, and relatives to join them in worship on Christmas Eve.

How many people do you and your family know who do not have a church home? Even if most of your friends are people from church, you *still* undoubtedly know a *lot* of unchurched



individuals. They might know who Jesus is and what he did, but they are not regularly connected to the Word and do not have a Christian community to which they belong. Scripture teaches both—regular contact with the Word and gathering with fellow Christians—are vital to a healthy faith.

On pages 50 and 51, there is a place for you and your family to fill out a *My Personal Mission Field* list. It might be a sibling, a next-door neighbor, a co-worker, a student at your school, someone from your soccer team. These are people that God brought into your life who you believe do not have a church they attend regularly. God brought them into *your* life wanting *you* to be the way he might reach those individuals with the gospel.

Christmas Eve is a natural time to do this. LifeWay Research conducted a survey a few years back that found that 80% of unchurched Americans would seriously consider accepting an invitation to attend a Christmas Eve service if that invitation came from someone they knew. Christmas Eve has

surpassed Easter as the worship service that an unchurched person is most likely to visit.

It makes sense. Everyone loves Christmas: the decorations, the “holiday cheer,” the music, the giving and receiving of gifts. People who otherwise do not attend church find something comforting about going to church on Christmas Eve, worshipping by candlelight, singing carols, and hearing the very familiar Luke, chapter 2 read. They are probably not attending Christmas Eve worship for the right reason. They attend out of a sense of nostalgia, not out of a desire to worship the Christ Child. Yet, when they are in worship, they hear the gospel. Through that gospel, the Holy Spirit can work miracles in their heart. That one visit to worship can turn into a second...and a third.

God willing, eventually the Holy Spirit binds that person to Jesus Christ for all eternity. And how did it all begin? With you stepping out of your comfort zone to invite that individual to join you on Christmas Eve.

This is something anyone can do, no matter how young or old. So, along with the devotions, use this Advent to identify your *personal mission field*—the people God wants to reach through you and your family. Talk about the individuals you would like to invite in your devotional time. Pray for them and for yourselves, asking God to give you the courage to invite as many of these people as possible.

May God richly bless your Advent preparation!

Your friends at WELS Congregational Services



ADVENT: WEEK ONE

THE GIFT OF HOPE

The Scripture lessons for this week are all about hope. Most people think that “hope” is an optimistic feeling that in the future things will work out for the best. “*I hope I don’t catch a cold this winter.*” You might not get sick. But you also might get sick. Your hope does not have any bearing on that. But in the Bible, the believer’s hope is always connected to a promise of God. God cannot break his promises. So when the believer says, “*I hope Jesus comes and takes me to heaven,*” his hope is more than an optimistic feeling. His hope is actually the same thing as faith.

SHARING CHRIST THIS CHRISTMAS

On pages 50 and 51 in the back of this booklet, you will find a place to list *My Personal Mission Field*. These are people that God has brought into your life that you know do not have a church they attend regularly. It could be a relative or a co-worker. It could be the child next door that you play with or someone on your soccer team.

This week, each day, add one person to that list. Begin to pray about them. Ask that God would give you the courage and opportunity to invite those people to your congregation’s Christmas Eve service.

Do this as a family! No one is left out. Parents and children both take time this week to create *My Personal Mission Field*.

Sunday, December 2nd

A FULFILLED PROMISE BRINGS HOPE



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

As we light our Advent candles,

Light of the world, shine on us.

To all the people who don't know you,

Light of the world, shine through us.

Jesus, you are coming again.

Light of the world, light the way.

The Hope candle is lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. What “good promise” did God make to Adam and Eve after they sinned? How does it tie into Christmas?
2. What other promises has God made to us, so we don't lose hope?

CLOSING

Come, O long-expected Jesus,
Born to set your people free;
From our sins and fears release us
By your death on Calvary.
Israel's Strength and Consolation,
Hope to all the earth impart,
Dear Desire of ev'ry nation,
Joy of ev'ry longing heart.

CW6:1

Monday, December 3rd

THE HOPE OF SALVATION



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

We light one Advent candle, remembering Jesus, who is coming again. He will come to gather his people from everywhere, both the living and the dead.

We remember Jesus, who will come at the end of time. None of us know what day that will be.

We hear his call to watch.

We light one Advent candle as a sign of our watchfulness.

The Hope candle is lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. What happened in your past (“back in my day...”) that continues to make you feel bad? How does looking ahead to Christmas allow you to forget your past?
2. Think back to your baptism. Why is it worth remembering at Christmas time?

CLOSING

**Behold, a Branch is growing of loveliest form and grace,
As prophets sang, foreknowing; It spring from Jesse’s race
And bears one little flow’r
In midst of coldest winter, at deepest midnight hour.**

CW4:7:1

Tuesday, December 4th

HOPE IN THE FACE OF FEAR



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

We light the first candle on our Advent wreath:
the candle of Hope.

We eagerly await the birth of the one who is called the Light of the world and the Hope of the nations.

As we light the candle of Hope we give thanks for the prophets of today who speak words of hope to us.

The Hope candle is lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. How does Jesus help you face your fears?
2. Who do you know that is struggling with fear? How could Jesus take away their fear?

CLOSING

Arise, Desire of nations; O Jesus, now appear,
The Hope and Expectation Of ev'ry Christian here.
With hearts and hands uplifted We plead, O Lord, to see
The day of earth's redemption That sets your people free.

CW7:4

Wednesday, December 5rd

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Christ we sit in darkness, but you are our light.

We long for your coming into our hearts, into our lives, and into our world.

You are the One for whom all the peoples of the earth wait.

We wait in hope, expecting God's light to penetrate our darkness and radiate within us.

The Hope candle is lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. What is your favorite decoration on the Christmas tree? Why?
2. In what ways does the Christmas tree and its decorations help you keep Jesus as the most important thing during this busy Christmas season?

CLOSING

Jesus comes to hearts rejoicing,
Bringing news of sins forgiv'n;
Jesus comes with words of gladness,
Leading souls redeemed to heav'n.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Hope to all the world is giv'n.

CW26:3

Thursday, December 6th

HOPE WHEN FACING STRESS



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

As the season of Advent begins we celebrate hope.

**We know that through the birth of a tiny and helpless child,
God is coming to save the world.**

We speak words of comfort and love to a world in need of healing as we share our stories of God's transforming Spirit.

Together, we are a sign of God's hope for the world.

The Hope candle is lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. Think of something that upset you today. What does Jesus tell us to do with it?
2. Why is it helpful to pray your problem to Jesus?

CLOSING

**Teach us in watchfulness and prayer
To wait for your appointed hour,
And fit us by your grace to share
The triumphs of your conqu'ring pow'r.**

CW9:5

Friday, December 7th

HOPE THAT DEEPENS FAITH



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

The Spirit of God rests fully on the coming Lord.

The promised Christ is full of wisdom and understanding.

The promised Lord will rule with true, justice, and righteousness.

In the grace of God, we find our hope.

The Hope candle is lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. With what does Jesus want to fill an empty heart?
2. Why shouldn't we be afraid to share Jesus with someone this Christmas?

CLOSING

Rejoice, then, you sad-hearted, Who sit in deepest gloom,
Who mourn o'er joys departed And tremble at your doom.
Despair not; he is near you, He's standing at the door
Who best can help and cheer you And bids you weep no more.

CW18:3

Saturday, December 8th

HOPE THAT INCREASES LOVE



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

O God, let your blessing come upon us today.

Bless us and our time of meditation.

May the light that shines forth from these candles illumine our way as we journey towards Christmas.

May the light that shines forth from them illumine our lives as we wait in hope for the birth of the Christ Child.

The Hope candle is lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. How does Christmas prove that God loves us?
2. How is inviting someone to church this Christmas Eve a way of loving that person?

CLOSING

**You loved me first, Lord, sending me Jesus,
Then I responded, trusting your Son.
Now you invite me to love my neighbor,
Showing your true love to ev'ryone.**

CW505:2



ADVENT: WEEK TWO

THE GIFT OF PEACE

We know the Scripture verse well. It is the song of the angels on Christmas Eve. “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace...” This week’s Scripture lessons are all about peace.

This time of year can be anything but peaceful. Our “to do” list is long. There are end of the semester tests at school. There are presents to buy. Perhaps you need to make travel plans or prepare for visitors. It can be a hectic time of year. So use this week’s lessons to remind you to slow down, take a deep breath, and focus on what is *really* important—Christ. Let him give you peace.

SHARING CHRIST THIS CHRISTMAS

Last week you filled out the *My Personal Mission Field* pages at the back of this booklet. This week, you want to continue to pray for those individuals. However, it is also time to actually start inviting them to your congregation’s Christmas Eve service.

It does not matter how: text, email, call, or talk to them face-to-face. The message can be short and simple: “Hey, do you have plans for Christmas Eve? My church is having a special service that night. It’s so beautiful. I think you’d love it. Do you want to come with? We could pick you up and take you with us or just meet you there.”

May the Holy Spirit bless your efforts to reflect the love and light of Jesus Christ!

Sunday, December 9th

FORGIVENESS BRINGS PEACE



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

As we light our Advent candles,

Light of the world, shine on us.

To all the people who don't know you,

Light of the world, shine through us.

Jesus, you are coming again.

Light of the world, light the way.

The Hope and Peace candles are lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. How does admitting our sin get us ready to meet Jesus?
2. What sin that you have committed in the past is weighing on your heart? Say a silent prayer admitting that sin and asking God to forgive you. Let his forgiveness bring you peace!

CLOSING

**Come, O long-expected Jesus, Born to set your people free;
From our sins and fears release us By your death on Calvary.
Israel's Strength and Consolation, Hope to all the earth impart,
Dear Desire of ev'ry nation, Joy of ev'ry longing heart.**

CW6:1

Monday, December 10th

A PEACEFUL HIGHWAY



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

We light two Advent candles remembering Jesus, who came in history. He came into a world of sin and death.

We remember Jesus, who came as the promised Messiah.

John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord. We hear his call to repent.

We light two Advent candles as a sign of our repentance and desire for renewal.

The Hope and Peace candles are lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. What are some ways we prepare our house for the Christmas season?
2. What types of things could you do leading up to Christmas to prepare your heart for Jesus' coming?

CLOSING

**Straighten out the crooked highway;
Make the rougher places plain.**

Let your hearts be true and humble, Ready for his holy reign.

**For the glory of the Lord Now o'er earth is spread abroad,
And all flesh shall see the token That his word is never broken.**

CW11:4

Tuesday, December 11th

PROMISES KEPT



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Christ is our only hope, and our peace is found through him.

We light this candle to remind us of the peace Christ gives to all who trust in him.

We eagerly await the birth of the one who is called the Prince of Peace.

As we light the candle of Hope we give thanks for those who share the peace of Christ with us.

The Hope and Peace candles are lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. What are some promises God has kept?
2. What are some promises God will keep in the future?

CLOSING

**Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes,
The Savior promised long;
Let every heart prepare a throne
And ev'ry voice a song.**

CW12:1

Wednesday, December 12th

STAND FOREVER



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Prepare the way! The promise is come!

The lion shall dwell with the lamb.

Prepare the way! The old with the young!

A child shall teach us to stand.

The Hope and Peace candles are lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. Why don't we need to be afraid to stand in front of God?
2. What would you say to someone who told you that they were full of fear over the fact that Jesus was coming back to this earth?

CLOSING

Lift up your heads! All grief and pain
Shall vanish when he comes again.
Where we shall see him face to face,
There joy alone shall have a place.

CW5:7

Thursday, December 13th

AN EARLY THANK YOU CARD



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

In this season of Advent, we celebrate God's peace.

Jesus Christ, whose birth we await, leads us in the way of peace.

We love one another and live out God's reconciling love for all the world to see.

Together, we are a sign of God's peace in the world.

The Hope and Peace candles are lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. List some things you can thank God for.
2. What tools does God use to keep us close to him until Jesus returns?

CLOSING

O Lord, how shall I meet you, How welcome you aright ?
Your people long to greet you, My Hope, my heart's delight.

O Jesus, let your Word be A lamp to light my way,
To show me how to please you, To guide me ev'ry day.

CW19:1

Friday, December 14th

PICKING WHAT IS BEST



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Come and gather, O people of God.

Let us gather and listen to our Lord.

We await the Word, who will lead all nations.

We await the One who will guide us in peace.

The Hope and Peace candles are lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. How do we know what pleases God?
2. What might be the result if we had love, but no knowledge? Knowledge but no love?

CLOSING

O Advent King, our sins forgive;
Come in our lives and hearts to live,
And let our humble souls become
A temple worthy of your name.

CW21:3

Saturday, December 15th

PURE AND BLAMELESS



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

O God, let your blessing come upon us today.

Bless us and our time of meditation.

May the light that shines forth from these candles illumine our way as we journey towards Christmas.

May the light that shines forth from them illumine our lives as we reflect the peace given us by the Christ Child.

The Hope and Peace candles are lit

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. How can we be sure that we will be pure and blameless when God returns?
2. How does our blamelessness and purity lead to God's glory?

CLOSING

**Crush for me the serpent's head
That, set free from doubt and dread,
I may cling to you in faith,
Safely kept through life and death.**

CW28:5



ADVENT: WEEK THREE

THE GIFT OF JOY

Perhaps your Advent wreath has a different colored candle for this week. On week three of Advent we light the Joy candle, which is often rose or pink colored, a joyful shade.

The Scripture lessons for this week are all about joy. Joy, as the Bible speaks of it, is not quite the same thing as happiness. Happiness is about the present. If things are currently well, you are happy. If currently you are suffering, you are not happy. But the believer's joy is rooted in God's promises of the perfect, eternal future that awaits us, thanks to the work of Christ. Thus, joy has nothing to do with present circumstances. We can be joyful, even in hard times.

SHARING CHRIST THIS CHRISTMAS

Last week you began inviting the people on your *My Personal Mission Field* list to attend your congregation's Christmas Eve service. This week, continue working through that list, finishing those invitations.

Studies have shown that Christmas Eve is the service unchurched people are most likely to attend, if they receive an invitation from someone they trust. So there are chances you will have a number of individual accept the invitations your family extends. If that is the case, use this week to start planning how to manage that on Christmas Eve. Are you picking everyone up? If so, do you have room in your vehicle? Are you meeting them at church? If so, where? Start planning that all out.

Sunday, December 16th

REJOICE ALWAYS



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

As we light our Advent candles,

Light of the world, shine on us.

To all the people who don't know you,

Light of the world, shine through us.

Jesus, you are coming again.

Light of the world, light the way.

The Hope, Peace, and Joy candles are lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. When you think of past Christmases, what are some favorite memories that make you joyful?
2. Now think of the future. How will the joy we have in heaven be different than the joy we have at Christmas?

CLOSING

Come, O long-expected Jesus,
Born to set your people free;
From our sins and fears release us
By your death on Calvary.
Israel's Strength and Consolation,
Hope to all the earth impart,
Dear Desire of ev'ry nation,
Joy of ev'ry longing heart.

CW6:1

Monday, December 17th

JOY VERSUS ANXIETY



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

We light three Advent candles remembering Jesus, the Light of the world.

He came to take away our fear and bring us joy.

We hear his call to see the light.

We light three candles as a sign of our trust.

The Hope, Peace, and Joy candles are lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. What is something you are worried about?
2. How does knowing that God loves you help with that worry?

CLOSING

Rejoice, rejoice, believers, And let your lights appear;
The evening is advancing, And darker night is near.
The Bridegroom is arising And soon is drawing nigh.
Up, pray and watch and wrestle; At midnight comes the cry.

CW7:1

Tuesday, December 18th

SINGING WITH GREATER JOY



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

We light the third candle, the candle of Joy, as we remember the angel's words to the shepherds,

“Do not be afraid. I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people.”

We light it with the prayer that all may know the joy of Jesus Christ.

We light it in honor of those who show us the joy of following Christ.

The Hope, Peace, and Joy candles are lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. What is your favorite Christmas hymn?
2. When do you usually sing, when you are happy or sad? Why do you sing at that time?

CLOSING

**You saints, who here in patience Your cross and suff'rings bore,
Shall live and reign forever When sorrow is no more.
Around the throne of glory The Lamb you shall behold;
In triumph lay before him Your shining crowns of gold.**

CW7:3

Wednesday, December 19th

A JOYFUL SONG FOR YOU



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God.

We give thanks to you, O God, for the promise of joy that this season brings to light.

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God.

Renew in us this day the promises of joy, for our trust is in you.

The Hope, Peace, and Joy candles are lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. The prophet Zephaniah told us that God “will rejoice over you with singing.” How does it make you feel to know that when God looks at you, he is so happy he sings for joy?
2. What did Jesus do to make it possible for God to sing for joy when he sees us?

CLOSING

**Arise, Desire of nations; O Jesus, now appear,
The Hope and Expectation Of ev'ry Christian here.
With hearts and hands uplifted We plead, O Lord, to see
The day of earth's redemption That sets your people free.**

CW7:4

Thursday, December 20th

LIVING JOYFULLY



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

In this season of Advent, we celebrate God's joy.

Knowing that Christ is coming, to bring healing and wholeness to the world, is a source of genuine delight.

Even when we face difficulty and trouble we sing a song of faith,

confident that Jesus is able to give us joy in the midst of trouble.

The Hope, Peace, and Joy candles are lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. List some sins you committed today. It might have been something bad you said or did. Or it might be something good you *didn't* do.
2. You know that Jesus forgave that sin and is going to take you to heaven. What are some things you can do to thank him?

CLOSING

**Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes,
The Savior promised long;
Let ev'ry heart prepare a throne
And ev'ry voice a song.**

CW12:1

Friday, December 21st

THE SORROW & JOY OF REPENTANCE



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

The wilderness will dance and the dry places will sing
praises to God.

**When we see the glory of the Lord revealed, we will be
strengthened and saved!**

God's gift of peace opens our eyes. God's gift of hope opens
our hearts.

With joy, we will praise the promised Savior of the world!

The Hope, Peace, and Joy candles are lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. Do you think of repenting of sin as a happy thing to do or
a sad thing to do?
2. What are some ways to show that you are joyful for the
forgiveness that Christ Jesus gave to you?

CLOSING

**He comes the captives to release,
In Satan's prison held.
The gates of brass before him burst;
The iron fetters yield.**

CW12:2

Saturday, December 22nd

JOY ON JUDGEMENT DAY



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

O God, let your blessing come upon us today.

Bless us and our time of meditation.

May the light that shines forth from these candles illumine our way as we journey towards Christmas.

May the light that shines forth from them illumine our lives as we wait in hope for the birth of the Christ Child.

The Hope, Peace, and Joy candles are lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. How do you feel when your pastor(s) talk about judgment day?
2. In the devotion, we were told that we look perfect to God. How can that be, when we sin every day?

CLOSING

**Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,
Your welcome shall proclaim,
And heav'n's eternal arches ring
With your beloved name.**

CW12:4



ADVENT: WEEK FOUR

THE GIFT OF LOVE

The gifts we give at Christmas are meant to be a token of love. You chose something you know that they will like because you love them. You sacrifice money to buy them a gift or time to make them a gift because you love them. Gifts are a sign of love.

Could there be any bigger gift that God the Father could give us than the gift of his Son? Could there be any greater gift for Christ to offer than his life as a payment for our sins? In this final stretch of Advent, we celebrate the gift of love that God has given to us. We respond by loving him back.

SHARING CHRIST THIS CHRISTMAS

Christmas Eve is just a day away! So if you have not yet done so, use today to make final arrangements with the people who agreed to join you on Christmas Eve. Attending a church you have never been to can be a terrifying thing. People have questions. *Where do I park? Where should I sit? Where are the bathrooms?* Attending with a friend can help alleviate those fears. So do whatever is necessary to help those people feel comfortable.

When Christmas Eve is over, be sure to thank them for coming. Yes, they should thank you for inviting them! But do not worry about that. Just let them know how much you enjoyed having them join you on that special night.

Sunday, December 23rd

THE BIRTH OF LOVE



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

We light four Advent candles remembering Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Mary. He loves us, so he came to share our humanity.

We remember Jesus, whose name means Savior. He came to save his people from their sins.

We hear his call to give him a place in our hearts.

We light four Advent candles as a sign of our love.

The Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love candles are lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. Think about your birth. How was Jesus' birth different from yours?
2. Name a struggle you experienced today. What encouragement does Jesus' birth give to face it?

CLOSING

**Wondrous birth! O wondrous Child
Of the virgin undefiled,
Though by all the world disowned,
Yet to be in heav'n enthroned!**

CW2:3

Christmas Eve: Monday, December 24th

LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM



LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

In the season of Advent, we celebrate God's love.

Tonight, celebrate that in love, God came to live among us.

We rejoice in our identity as beloved children.

In our homes and in our church we offer warm hospitality by welcoming those we do not know, those who are in need, and those who are different from us.

The Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love candles are lit. The Christ candle is lit if this devotion takes place after Christmas Eve worship.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. Why is the little town of Bethlehem so important today?
2. Before you open the first present, what gifts has God given that makes you very thankful?

CLOSING

**O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep The silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth The everlasting light.
The hopes and fears Of all the years Are met in thee tonight.**

CW65:1



THE CONCLUSION OF ADVENT

While there are always four Sundays in the season of Advent, the fourth “week” of Advent may be short, when Christmas Day falls early in the week, as is the case this year.

On the final day of Advent, believers would often gather together to hold a late night vigil. By candlelight, they would read Scripture and sing hymns and pray. This late night vigil is the forerunner of the Christmas Eve service.

At dawn on Christmas Day, believers would celebrate the Festival of the Nativity. The celebration included the Lord’s Supper, which was also referred to as “the Mass.” Jesus Christ took on human flesh. In the Lord’s Supper, he allows us to partake of that very flesh which was broken to pay for our sins. December 25th became the Mass of Christ—Christ’s Mass—Christmas.

While Advent is over, the Advent wreath is *not* put away. The four candles—Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love—are now joined by a fifth candle, representing the one who gives us those gifts: the Christ candle, white, tall, and placed in the center of the wreath. The wreath remains out for the Twelve Days of Christmas.

CHRISTMAS

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

You are probably familiar with the carol *The Twelve Days of Christmas*. While that carol is not religious, its title does capture the fact that on Christmas Day the Christian Church begins a twelve day celebration.

Historically, the celebration of Christmas didn't begin until the evening vigil on December 24th. That was the night homes were decorated with trees and tinsel. (It is the secularization of Christmas and the desire to have a longer shopping season that has pushed the “beginning” of Christmas back into November.)

The Christmas Eve vigil, either at church or in the home, was typically a quieter celebration. “Cradle hymns” —like ones used to sing a newborn to sleep—were the norm. Then, come Christmas Day, all Christians would gather in church as a joyous celebration began. Families would continue to worship (and, yes, give gifts) for twelve straight days.

The celebration of Christmas would end with the Festival of the Epiphany, marking the appearance of the Wise Men. This year, Epiphany falls on Sunday, January 6th.

SHARING CHRIST THIS CHRISTMAS

If your family was able to get a friend or neighbor to join you on Christmas Eve, be sure to invite them back to church soon. Let them see that gathering with believers around Word and sacrament is something you and your family feel the need to do weekly. Tell them why! And then invite them back.

Tuesday, December 25th

A CHRISTMAS SONG



GATHERING

Unto us is born a son,
unto us a son is given,
and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty
God
the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

The Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Christ candles are all lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. What is your favorite Christmas hymn?
2. What made Mary so happy that makes you want to sing with her?

CLOSING

Oh, that birth forever blessed
When the virgin, full of grace,
By the Holy Ghost conceiving,
Bore the Savior of our race,
And the babe, the world's Redeemer,
First revealed his sacred face
Evermore and evermore.

CW35:2

Wednesday, December 26th

LOVE IS NEVER AN AFTERTHOUGHT



GATHERING

The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad.

Let the distant shores rejoice.

Now we declare your glory, Lord.

We proclaim your kingdom to the ends of the earth,
your love to the highest mountain,
your forgiveness to the depths of the sea.

The Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Christ candles are all lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. What did God do (in Luke chapter 2) to prepare for Jesus' coming?
2. Recount something from your life that proves God's loving plan for you.

CLOSING

Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,
Prepare a bed, soft, undefiled
Within my heart, made clean and new,
A quiet chamber kept for you.

CW38:13

Thursday, December 27th

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE



GATHERING

Glory to God in the highest!

And hope to every discouraged heart.

Glory to God in the highest!

And joy to every downcast spirit.

Glory to God in the highest!

And love to everyone.

The Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Christ candles are all lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. What names were given to Jesus? What makes each one so valuable?
2. Which name of Jesus means the most to you. Why?

CLOSING

Hail, the heav'nly Prince of Peace! Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, Ris'n with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, Born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us from the earth, Born to give us second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

CW61:3

Friday, December 28th

LOVE MAKES US EAGER TO HONOR



GATHERING

I bring you good news of great joy for all the people.
Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you.
He is Christ.
He is the Lord.
Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.

The Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Christ candles are all lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. Why does believing in Jesus make you want to “be good”?
2. How does living for Jesus show others that you belong to him?

CLOSING

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King; Let ev'ry heart prepare him room
And heavn' and nature sing, And heavn' and nature sing,
And heavn', and heav'n and nature sing.

CW62:1

Saturday, December 29th

LOVE OVERCOMES DARKNESS



GATHERING

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Those who dwelt in the land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.

We have seen Christ's glory.

For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given.

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

The Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Christ candles are all lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. What do the powerful images of dark and light illustrate for us at Christmas?
2. Why is it okay to let your Christmas light shine year-round?

CLOSING

**Praise the one who breaks the darkness With a liberating light;
Praise the one who frees the pris'ners, Turning blindness into sight.
Praise the one who preached the gospel, Healing ev'ry dread disease,
Calming storms and feeding thousands With the Father's word of peace.**

CW353:1

Sunday, December 30th

WORTH CELEBRATING



GATHERING

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us,
full of grace and truth.
To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his
name,
he gave the right to become children of God.

The Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Christ candles are all lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. What is the greatest gift you've ever received? What was so special about it? How is the gift of Jesus similar?
2. When you receive a really great gift, how do you react? How is the gift of Jesus similar?

CLOSING

Down in a lowly manger The humble Christ was born;
And God sent us salvation That blessed Christmas morn.
Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills, and ev'rywhere,
Go, tell it on the mountain That Jesus Christ is born.

CW57:3

Monday, December 31st

FINALLY



GATHERING

Sing praises to God on high,
for glorious are God's works.

Sing praises to the ends of the earth.

Shout and sing for joy, O people of God,
Great is the Holy One in our midst.

Blessed is the One who comes to dwell among us.

The Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Christ candles are all lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. Share a time when you had to wait for something.
2. Share a time when having Jesus at your side has helped you.

CLOSING

The old year now has passed away;
We thank you, O our God today
That you have kept us through the year
When danger and distress were near.

CW7:1:1

Tuesday, January 1st

A BROTHER LIKE NO OTHER



GATHERING

Show us the right path, O Lord;
point out the way for us to follow.
Lead us by Your truth, and teach us,
for You are the God who saves.
To You, O Lord, we lift up our hearts!
In You we trust!

The Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Christ candles are all lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. What are some things a good big brother would do?
2. What are some things our brother, Jesus has done and still does for us?

CLOSING

Let us all with gladsome voice
Praise the God of heaven,
Who, to bid our hearts rejoice,
His own Son has given.

CW64:1

Wednesday, January 2nd

OUR BROTHER FREES US FOREVER



GATHERING

The world was once in darkness.

Now we have God's Light, Jesus to shine on us.

The words and promises of God are all true!

God has given us the best gift of all!

Rejoice! God is with us!

Praise be to God!

The Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Christ candles are all lit

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think people are afraid to die?
2. Why does knowing Jesus help us face the end of our life?

CLOSING

To this vale of tears he comes,,
Here to serve in sadness,
That with him in heav'n's fair homes
We may reign in gladness.

CW64:2

Thursday, January 3rd

A LASTING JOY



GATHERING

We come from a world of darkness.

Into Christ's world of light.

We come from a world of weariness.

Into God's strength and hope.

We come from a slumbering world.

**Strengthened by the Spirit, we come to awaken our souls
and watch for the return of Christ.**

The Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Christ candles are all lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. What will you miss most about Christmas?
2. What are some ways Jesus' birth continues to bless us even when Christmas is over?

CLOSING

**We are rich, for he was poor;
Is not this a wonder?
Therefore praise God evermore
Here on earth and yonder.**

CW64:3

Friday, January 4th

A PROMISE KEPT



GATHERING

We gather in the darkness of evening,
to celebrate the newborn Light.

Lift up your hearts in thanksgiving,
for Christ has been born.

We gather to worship him and welcome his kingdom.
His reign shall have no end!

The Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Christ candles are all lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. Do you have any New Year's resolutions?
2. What are some promises God has made about your future?

CLOSING

O Lord Christ, our Savior dear,
Bless us and be near us.
Grant us now a glad new year.
Amen, Jesus, hear us!

CW64:4

Saturday, January 5th

THE PERFECT CHRISTMAS PRESENT



GATHERING

Christmas has come to its end.

**Sovereign LORD, as you have promised, you now dismiss
your servants in peace.**

Our eyes have seen your salvation,

Which you have prepared in the sight of all people.

A light for revelation to the Gentiles,

And glory for your people Israel.

The Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Christ candles are all lit.

PRAYER (see page 5)

LISTEN TO WELS ONLINE DAILY DEVOTION

QUESTIONS

1. What gift were you especially waiting for this Christmas?
2. What are some gifts God promises us in the future that you are especially excited for?

CLOSING

**Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
And take us to heaven to live with you there.**

CW68:3

DEVOTIONAL SURVEY

For well over a decade, WELS online daily devotions have been enjoyed by thousands of people every day. The addition of this supplemental material, intending to help families use the online daily devotions as part of evening family worship, was somewhat of an experiment. It has not been decided whether or not to provide supplemental family devotional material for future online devotions.

Do you think that is something that would be beneficial for you or others? Have you enjoyed using the online daily devotion together as a family? Or did you just continue to use it as an individual, personal devotion? Let us know these things. It will help us make an informed decision about how to utilize WELS online daily devotions in the future.

You can fill out a brief online survey by going to this link.

<https://tinyurl.com/c18survey>

Or you can scan the QR code below into your smartphone.



Thank you for your feedback!



OUR PERSONAL MISSION FIELD

DECEMBER 2 THROUGH DECEMBER 8

Each day, one member of the family take turns adding a name or two to the list on page 51. Think of the people you know who do not seem like they have a church they attend regularly. Include those individuals in your prayers during the devotion.

DECEMBER 9 THROUGH DECEMBER 15

You can add additional names. But in this week, begin to invite the people on page 51 to join you on Christmas Eve: by phone, email, or face-to-face. See page 16 for examples of what to say or write.

DECEMBER 16 THROUGH DECEMBER 22

Continue to invite the people you have listed on page 51. Continue to pray that they accept your invitation. If multiple people accept, plan how things will work on Christmas Eve. Will you meet them at church or pick them up?

AFTER DECEMBER 25

Contact those who accepted your invitation and thank them for attending. Invite them to join you again in the future.



Some of the rites in this booklet are from *Christian Worship Occasional Services*; Copyright 2004 Northwestern Publishing House.