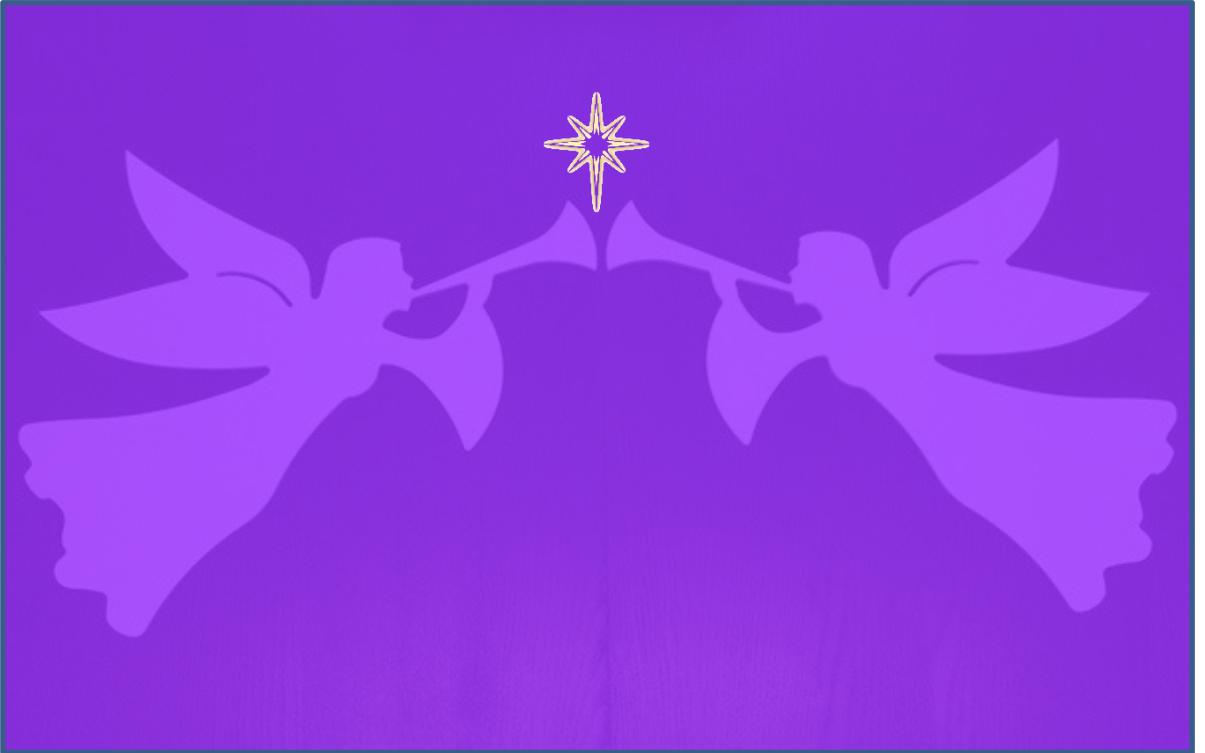


# *Waiting For The King!*



*Advent Devotional 2021*



*This advent devotional was developed by Cov Staff.*

## Advent Devotional 2021

Waiting is difficult. We live in a time where waiting is an underdeveloped skill, as we are able to satisfy our heart's desires and appetites with the push of a button. Pastor Joyce Berger is the editor of Reformed Worship magazine (a CRCNA publication), and wrote this, on waiting:

*I don't know anyone who enjoys waiting. We do whatever we can to avoid it. We scrutinize each checkout line to predict which one will be the fastest. We speed up to make it through the yellow light so we don't have to stop for the red. We use ATM machines, automated lanes, and Instant Messaging in hopes that we won't need to wait. But try as we might, waiting is unavoidable. Christians are a people living in advent—an in-between time, a time of waiting. We live during the "here but not yet" period; the time of promises yet to be completely fulfilled. The time between Christ's first and second coming.*

Yet, we are a people of Advent, living in a waiting time as we wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to return and finish what he started: to bring the Kingdom of God in its fullness. For the four weeks of Advent we're going to practice the spiritual discipline of waiting, as we build progressive Nativity Scene. While it's tempting to get the at-home worship kit and build the whole scene all at once, **wait!** Make the kit bit by bit and together we will peer more closely at each character and part of the scene. Let the waiting increase our longing for Jesus and grow in us eager anticipation of the arrival of the King of kings.

## Week 1: **Mary and Joseph: The Waiting Begins**

*Nativity Piece: Mary and Joseph*

**Read:** Deuteronomy 7:6, Matthew 1: 18-25 and Luke 1: 26-38

### **Reflect:**

A wonderful thing about Jesus' birth parents: they're so ordinary. They could be friends of ours! Solid, faithful believers in the Most High God, devoted to family and community, the Bible gives us wonderful details about this couple that endears them to us. Like us, their faith was pushed by what they didn't understand, and they were called to trust God and wait.

Both Joseph and Mary had doubts. Mary was greatly troubled at being called "highly favoured one"; this pushed at her identity and she wondered what sort of greeting was this? Joseph was troubled at a circumstance he found himself embroiled in, through no fault of his own. A difficult moment that led to disillusionment at what seemed to be a lost future. He misunderstood and needed divine guidance to gain understanding of a reality he didn't see.

Both responded to God in faith, even though God didn't give them more details or next steps. Christ calls us to the same response. Ordinary you and me, called to come and follow him. Next steps? We won't necessarily get those details. We'll have to wait and see how God's plan will unfold and our role in that plan. Waiting requires trust. That trust builds up our hope: Christ the Saviour of the world has come, and he will come again! Hallelujah!

### **Respond:**

1. What is God calling you to, right now?
2. What behaviors will you engage in to build up your trust in God and help you hear him call you "highly favored one"?

**Listen:** Breath of Heaven <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWo3qlgyW1c>

Joseph's Song <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5RLChQZz-M>

Advent wreath: we light the candle of hope, for Christ is the fulfillment of all hope.

## CovKids/CovYouth

In the reflection we learned about Jesus' birth parents Mary and Joseph. Both of them had quite the interesting family history (Matthew 1:18-25 & Luke 1:26-38). Yet it was through this very interesting group of people that God brought the long-promised Messiah- Jesus.

**Try it Out:** Go through your own family history. What are some really cool facts you can find about your relatives? What are some things that are not so great in your history? How does all of this point to God's faithfulness?

**Challenge:** Sometimes the people God has put in your family seem like a random roll of the dice or a very interesting hand of cards, but God has a bigger plan. We may not know the details or the timeline, but we can trust that God does.

This week collect dice and/or cards, to fill the take home math kits by the school for Belmead families!



## Week 2: **City of Bethlehem: Just You Wait You Little, Insignificant Town**

*Nativity Piece: Creche (Shoebox) and Manger*

**Read:** Psalm 2, Micah 5:2

### **Reflect:**

Deliverance will come from the least expected place. Bethlehem was the smallest and most insignificant clan out of the tribe of Judah. When it came to being powerful, and cosmopolitan, the city of Bethlehem was not a mover-and-shaker kind of place. Yet from here came David, Israel's great and beloved king! (*read that story in 1Samuel 16*). Out of this mustard seed of a people and place, would come the Power and Strength of God!

The first stage of the journey toward the Christ child has us visiting the very people and place that had waited more than 400 years for the prophecy about it to come to fulfillment! The power and strength of God goes with us on our life journey as we wait for Christ; it seems he's a long time in coming again! Yet Hebrews tells us *In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay. (Hebrews 10:37)*. The city of Bethlehem was unfazed at the coming of Christ: no festival or fireworks or ribbon cutting by city officials to mark the day and place of his birth. There was little expectation for this event! As we who have waited long for Christ prepare to celebrate his birth, it is with an open spirit that we can receive the unexpected and the wonder of what we cannot fully understand.

### **Respond:**

1. Vinita Hampton Wright, editor of Loyola Press Publications, wrote: "the essence of an open spirit is the willingness to let God love us." In quiet moments this week, ask yourself 'how have I let God love me right now?' What would that love look and feel like in your life, that you would recognize God's love?
2. What does wonder mean to you? Share an example with a friend or loved one.

**Listen:** What Child is This <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jroBAI3WW8>

Advent wreath: We light the candle of peace reminding us we need a Saviour who will forgive our sins and bring in his everlasting peace. For Roman Catholic brothers and sisters, the second candle of Advent is also known as the Bethlehem candle.

*\*ignatianspirituality.com. Cited 12 November 2021.*

## [CovKids/CovYouth](#)

As we reflected, Bethlehem was a small, insignificant town. And yet as we heard the prophet Micah 400 years earlier had prophesied that out of this town would come the long promised Messiah. On that night so long ago this town didn't even have a room for a weary couple named Mary and Joseph- they were shown to a cave for animals. But it was here Jesus was brought into the world.

You see God has a way of working in the small and insignificant people, places, and moments, and He was going to take this little unimportant town of Bethlehem and bring the best news of all to all nations.

**Try it Out:** Put on your runners or winter boots and take a walk around your neighbourhood. As you walk, pray for your neighbours whether you know them or not. Pray that they may experience the peace of Christ this Christmas. Because even in your small neighbourhood God is up to BIG things!

**Challenge:** Imagine taking a walk in your neighbourhood without a warm pair of snow pants. It would be a cold walk. There are many in our city that don't have warm winter gear for this time of year. Collect pairs of snow pants for kids aged 5-12 and bring them to church!



## Week 3: **Shepherds: From Fear to Joy**

*Nativity Piece: Shepherd and Sheep*

**Read: Isaiah 35, Luke 2:8-14**

### **Reflect:**

It's been a fearful time. Just one year ago we were prevented from meeting together in worship, out of caution and concern for each other's health and wellbeing, as well as our own. We live now in the aftermath of an anxious year, and it's not completely over yet! And yet we live in the promise of great joy: A Saviour has been born to us! With great anticipation, we are eager for the feast of Christ. Are we also eager for the great joy that still awaits when Christ returns? Once a group of nameless shepherds received the best news ever, the good news that will cause great joy for all the people. This scene will play out again, for Revelation tells us: *Look, he is coming with the clouds (the glory of God), and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him...." (Revelation 1:7)*. The glory of God will shine over the whole earth and all will hear the Good News Christ himself will proclaim: *I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. (vs 8)*. With rejoicing we wait for that day: Come, Lord Jesus!

### **Respond:**

1. What prevents you from experiencing the joy of the Good News of salvation?
2. What can you do this week that will lead you to rejoice in the Lord?

**Listen:** Go Tell it On the Mountain <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=72LE487YZ-U>

Advent wreath: We light the candle of joy in celebration that the Saviour of the world has come and he will come again in glory!

## CovKids/CovYouth

We read that the shepherds were shocked and scared as a chorus of angels announced the birth of a Saviour. But what was the first thing the angels said? Don't be afraid.

There is lots in our world that makes us scared, afraid, and unsure- like a virus that doesn't seem to go away.

But what does God say? Don't be afraid!

He sent a Saviour that night in Bethlehem that would conquer all the sin and broken hearts in the world!

So, don't be afraid. God fixes what is broken. He wipes away tears and fears.

And one day God will make all things new!

**Try it Out:** Visit a sheep. Go to a farm or the Edmonton Valley Zoo. Do you notice that the sheep or other animals when you approach them they will back away? Wonder what it would have been like to be in the field with the shepherd and the sheep that night in Bethlehem. Would you have been afraid? What do you think the sheep did? Although shocking and scary, remember we don't need to be afraid because God is with us now and always!

### **Challenge:**

Sheep have wool that keeps them warm in the winter. And we use that wool to make socks and sweaters which keep us warm. Let's share some warm clothes with people in our community who don't have warm socks and mitts for winter. Bring socks and mittens to church this week!



## Week 4: **The Angels: Sing a New Song**

*Nativity Piece: Angel*

**Read:** Luke 2:9-15

### **Reflect:**

Angels are curious beings. God's special messengers given words from the throne room of heaven and bursting into our world with a bright glory reflected from God's radiance alone. Imagine receiving such a message, as those shepherds did that dark night, with no lead up to this, no warning this would occur; it's fair to say we too would have been terrified! How wonderful to be sent ahead with the news that the time has come for the Saviour of all creation to begin his work of salvation. Heavenly joy spilled out over the earth! While it would be wonderful (and terrifying) to be the recipients of an angelic message and witness an angel choir praising God, we are blessed with even more: the incredible joy of the whole story of salvation. This is but the beginning. Another angel will come with the good news of great joy, meeting some women at Christ's empty tomb proclaiming that salvation's work is finished: *Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he is risen!* (Luke 24:5b-6).

We look forward with eager anticipation for yet another angel choir, thousands upon thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand, who will burst out with good news of great joy: *Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.* (Revelation 5:12). Until that great day, we wait.

### **Respond:**

1. Because of God's great love for us, he sends us good news of great joy. God is full of surprises! How have you experienced God's love?
2. Like the angels, we are sent to tell out God's good news. What can you do to tell out the message that the reign of God has come?
- 3.

**Listen:** Angels We Have Heard on High <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=teSuDu84kMc>

Advent wreath: We light the candle of love to remind us of God's great love for us.

## CovKids/CovYouth

### Devotional

The angels in the story as we reflected are messengers from God bringing good news- the best news ever in fact.

The news of a Saviour being born was so exciting! The people of Israel had waited for centuries for this messiah to come. The news was bigger than a big, bold headline on a news website and this news was not just for a select few people- it was for everyone.

We have the good news of Jesus in our hearts and like the angels long ago, we are to share the good news with our friends and neighbours and well everyone!

**Try it Out:** Let Your Creativity Flow- I imagine the sight it must have been as the angels appeared to the shepherds in the field. Find a medium of art you enjoy using (watercolour, pencil, crayons, paint, etc.) Create a piece while thinking about what that night must have looked like, be as realistic or as abstract as you want.

### Challenge

Bringing good news like the angels- our Bible says this is Isaiah

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Speaking of feet, your challenge this week is to bring in boots for 5-12 year olds in our community who need them!



## **Week 5: Hallelujah to the King!**

*Nativity Piece: Baby Jesus*

**Read: Isaiah 9:6, Luke 2**

### **Reflect:**

The wait is over! Today may you make time to celebrate that Jesus *who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*(Philippians 2:6-7)With these words the Apostle Paul celebrates Christ's birth, and has us pondering these things in our hearts as well. The incredible gift of God: his own Son, sent because God so loved the world. Promises of a Deliverer who would bring God's salvation once and for all, fulfilled. While the world enjoys a moment to give and receive gifts, God's people remember with great rejoicing, God's great gift of his very self.

Hallelujah, we've been found

A child is born to save us now!

Hallelujah, light has come

A Saviour who will set us free!

A promise for those who believe. (Hallelujah Light Has Come by Barlow Girl)

### **Respond:**

Thank God for the gift of His Son today!

**Listen:** Imagine <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z35CZzDpjrA>

Today we light the Christ Candle with great rejoicing for the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace!

Devotional

A pair of ordinary parents called to extraordinary measures, a sleepy city that hadn't seen action in many years, a ragtag bunch of shepherds in a field and an angelic chorus culminate in a scene at a stable amongst farm animals. But this is no ordinary moment, this is the moment God came to earth to dwell among us- Emmanuel! Hallelujah Christ is born!

Try it Out: Spend time with your family or friends celebrating the Saviour's birth and God's faithfulness!

Challenge: Go outside and in the snow write out: Jesus is born! Hallelujah!



## **Week 6: The Wise Men**

*Nativity Piece: Wise Men*

**Read:** Matthew 2:1-12

### **Respond:**

Drawn by a light, like a moth to a flame, these educated leaders and the entourage that came with them from foreign countries searched for a new king. A very important king, to be heralded by the starry skies! It's not clear from our Scripture reading if these Magi understood whom they worshiped, but they discerned a new era was unfolding and a time of change was upon them.

In our own time of change we are reminded of the Apostle Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 5:7 *For we live by faith, not by sight.* While our own path may not be lit up by a bright star, God gives us direction for the way he wants each of us to follow him. He leads us right where he wants us to go: moving ever closer toward Christ Jesus. Whether we have heard the story of Christ's birth many, many times, or hearing it for the first time, the bright glory of God's salvation come to us beckons us to a joyful life lived close to Jesus. The Magi responded by deciding to follow, by persevering and changing their course when necessary and by bringing gifts to honour the King. Decide again for the first time, to respond as Christ calls us out of darkness and into his wonderful light. Recommit to persevering in faithful obedience, paying attention to where God lights the way forward, and bringing the good gifts of our hearts, minds, and bodies to be offered as a living sacrifice for his Kingdom purposes. So that the light of Christ will shine through us, lighting the way for others!

### **Reflect:**

1. What draws your heart toward God, like a moth to a flame?
2. What is God calling you to now, as he lights the way?

**Listen:** Adore Him [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgAmGXcab\\_s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgAmGXcab_s)

Advent wreath: Throughout the 12 days of Christmas light all four Advent candles and the Christ candle each day as we remember and rejoice in Jesus' words: *I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.* (John 8:12)

## CovKids/CovYouth

As we reflected, the Magi may have not known who they were following or who they were going to bring gifts and worship, but they trusted and followed. We too are called to follow God in the path that he leads us.

“Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.” Psalm 119:105

**Try it Out:** Go outside at night and look at the stars. Imagine what the wiseman saw long ago.

**Challenge:** Wintertime can be a dark season as the sun sets in the late afternoon. Brighten up your home and place a candle outside for a few hours each night. If your neighbour ask why you are doing it you can explain that Jesus is the light of the world.



**Notes:**