

A photograph of a forest path with a purple overlay. The path is made of dirt and leads through a dense forest of tall, thin trees. The ground is covered with low-lying vegetation and fallen leaves. The sky is visible through the canopy of trees.

# Words for Waiting

Daily Devotions  
for Advent & Christmas 2021





# Words for Waiting

is provided by the UKirk Collegiate Ministries Association in partnership with the Presbyterian Mission Agency's Office of Christian Formation.



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# Are We There Yet?

To say the least, the path we've all been on for the last almost-two-years has had more than its fair share of twists and turns. In the classic road trip question and this year's Advent devotional theme, we hope you'll find room for everything we've encountered along the way — deep grief and exhausting uncertainty, cautious hope and commitment to work for a better future. As we journey toward the celebration of Jesus' birth and its promises of hope, peace, joy, and love, what questions are we asking along the way? What do we hope we'll find when we get there?

Welcome to *Words for Waiting*, a collection of reflections for the seasons of Advent and Christmas. On each of these pages you'll find a Scripture reading, a reflection, and a short prayer. This year's contributors represent 28 different Presbyterian-supported student faith communities on 37 college campuses, plus neighbors from other areas of the Church too. They use a variety of words to refer to God, and engage the world around us in a myriad of ways too.

These reflections are also available as daily blog posts at [ukirkadvent.org](http://ukirkadvent.org), and this year we're excited to add to our Advent resources a new companion guide that includes discussion questions and candle lighting liturgies for the four Sundays of Advent and Christmas.

As we imagine a way forward together, may there be reflections here that resonate with you, ones that challenge you, and maybe even some that do both.

In hope,

Rev. Allison Wehrung

Editor | Campus Minister, UKirk Ole Miss

# November 28

# Ministries Represented

**Read** Jeremiah 33:14-16.

“The days are coming” is a classic opener for a piece of prophecy. Jeremiah, more than any other prophet, heard the Lord speak this way and recorded it more than a dozen times in the book that bears his name. Poetically speaking, Scripture says that the days are “swift” or “past,” or they are “like an evening shadow,” or “like the grass which withers.” But prophetically, as well as chronologically, the days are coming.

For Jeremiah, the future was both dreadful and hopeful. The coming days would bring redemption and the growth of the Righteous Branch. But in the current days, Jeremiah is trapped in Jerusalem, besieged on all sides by an enemy, and God has already told Jeremiah that Jerusalem will fall.

For us, the future is many things, but probably most of all: unclear. We think that if we know what is coming, we will fare better. Jeremiah saw the future clearly, but still suffered.

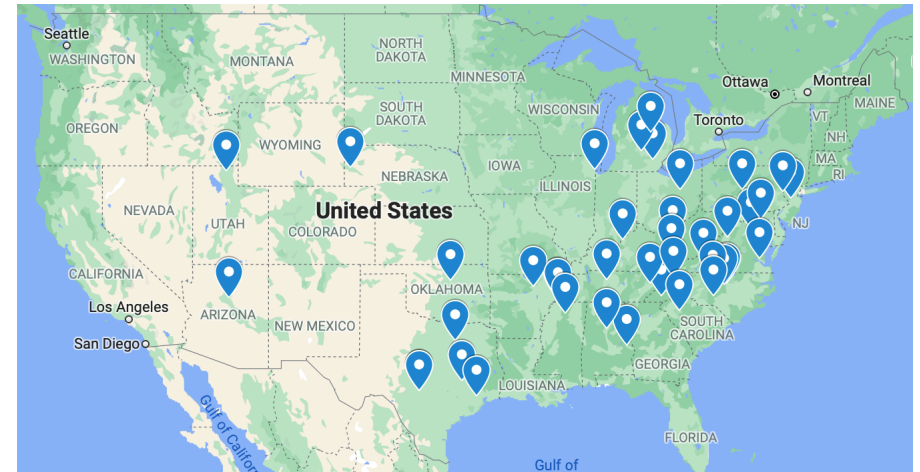
Just as it was with Jeremiah, we live in a world in which we suffer hardship, pain, and sin. But we also have in common the sure promise of fulfillment that is coming “in those days.” Beyond Jeremiah, we have seen Christ and we have already received the Gospel. We see the growth of the Righteous Branch which springs up from the stump of the tree, life emerging from death.

Are we there yet? Not yet, at least not fully – but the days are coming.

## Pray

God Our Righteousness, may your future become our present. Let us experience the joy of our salvation and the life of the Righteous Branch, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Rev. Noah McIntee  
Campus Minister  
UKirk WCU



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# Notes

## December 2

1. Buechner, Frederick. *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*. (London: Collins, 1973).

## December 6

2. Robert Frost. "Nothing Gold Can Stay." Poets.org. Academy of American Poets. Accessed October 31, 2021. <https://poets.org/poem/nothing-gold-can-stay>.

## December 29

3. Campbell, Charles L. *1 Corinthians*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018).

## January 2

4. Mitchell, Anaïs. "Shepherd," track 9 on *Young Man in America*, Wilderland Records, 2012.

## January 4

5. Dana, MaryAnn McKibben. *God, Improv, and the Art of Living*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).

## Cover Image

Original photo by Sharissa Johnson from Unsplash.com.

# November 29

Read Psalm 90.



Pray

*We are a people of dust.  
Made for the Morning and the Evening.  
We are a children formed in You.  
Still Growing.  
Still Grieving.  
Still Laboring.  
We rejoice in your steadfast love.  
We rejoice all our days.  
Everlasting.  
You are our God.  
Amen.*

Ellen Keyser  
Student  
Chicago Theological Seminary

# November 30

**Read** 2 Samuel 7:18-29.

By the time we get to chapter seven, David has experienced the death of his friend, become King, participated in war, and is shouldering the responsibility of leadership for all of Israel. Each of these events reads like yet “another thing” for David. Only when he finally has a chance to rest, God tells Nathan to wake him up with, “Hey, I’m not done with you yet.”

David offers up a prayer to God with the question: “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?” I imagine him asking this question in a posture of exasperation, fatigue, and desire for stability. To paraphrase verse 25: “Come on, God. Do what you promised! Let’s get there already.”

David longs for rest and the struggle to be over, and so do we. After 18 months of a pandemic, how long until we can comfortably gather in our communities and masks become relics of this COVID-era?

David’s faith is an anchor, keeping him buoyed in a sea of change and challenge. What does it take to have a faith like that, especially when things are hard and exhausting, and all we can do is ask, “Are we there yet?”

## **Pray**

*Holy God, in this season of Advent, may we find rest in the comfort of your faith in us, even when we find it difficult to have faith in you. Help us reflect on our hopes, longings, and dreams for a better world, and feel the assurance that all of it is possible. Grant us space for rest as the radical act of self-love it is. Amen.*

Rev. Erin Guzmán  
Chaplain & UKirk Advisor  
UKirk Wooster (The College of Wooster - OH)

# January 6

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

I sometimes wonder if  
The magi couldn’t help being a little disappointed.

It was Jerusalem they went to first,  
After all, into Herod’s own house.

They came for a holy city and glorious  
Tidings, not some backwater,

Not some poor craftsman  
And his young not-yet-wife.

And yet it was there that they found Christ  
And knew Him, and

I can’t help but wonder if  
We would be able to do the same.

You ask me, “Are we there yet?” and I  
Answer, “Not yet.”

Not until we stop dining at the tables of Empire,  
Expecting to find God seated at the head.

## **Pray**

*Incredible, expectation-defying God, we marvel at all of the ways in which You show up in our lives. As we enter into a new year, open our eyes, ears, and hearts to Your workings in the world, so that we would never fail to show Your lovingkindness to our fellow travellers. Amen.*

Feagin Hardy  
Student  
UKirk Ole Miss



# January 5

**Read** John 1:10-18.

What comes next? We have reached the end of the Christmas season. Tomorrow is Epiphany and the story expands. It goes beyond this one family and the nearby shepherds.

It goes past the walls of this makeshift delivery suite with braying and lowing animals. The story gets told and like the ripples of a stone in a pond, the Word makes its way into the world.

It will bring the wise leaders of its world and then the wrath of a scared, angry ruler. It will see a family take their child for a blessing in the temple and then flee to escape danger. It will become a story of a young boy who goes into the temple and teaches people much older. It will become a moment of baptism where two men, called by God, connected by the faith of their mothers, will hear God's proclamation of Love for Christ and Love for the whole world.

It will become the story of a teacher, a healer, and all the people following him. It will include moments around tables, but especially the story of one night when this teacher, this healer, this friend to many will take bread and wine and bless it, share it with those beloved friends, and tell them that it was their job to remember and their job to tell the story.

It will be the story of how a sinless person was convicted for crimes never committed and how the world grew dark when everyone thought his death was the final word.

## **Pray**

*We know how it starts, we are made in the image of the one who came to earth at Christmas, and now it is our job to decide what comes next. Amen.*

Rev. Beth Olker  
Pastor  
Macedonia Presbyterian Church

# December 1

**Read** Luke 11:29-32.

As a child, I would read every sign we passed on the road during a long car ride. It didn't matter if it was a familiar route, I literally read every sign. This peculiar habit stayed with me until high school. During a field trip, a teacher asked me why I read the signs on the road. I responded by saying that I just like to know where I'm going if I need to get back home. I needed to know all the places I'd been to feel secure that I could find my way back.

As a clamoring crowd presses Jesus to provide them with a sign to prove his power, he calls them back to the signs that they and their ancestors have encountered along their life's road. He calls them to remember Jonah's 72 hours of wet sleep and the journey that the Queen of the Sheba makes to affirm all she heard about King Solomon's wisdom. If a Prophet and a King provide hope to Nineveh and a Queen from Arabia, then surely Jesus, the son of God, would provide hope to this crowd, calling them to God's word.

There have been a multitude of signs to read over the past season and yet they call us back to the secure place where hope is found. In God's abiding word.

## **Pray**

*God of hope, help us to embrace the signs of your presence in our life's journey. Grant us the awareness to remember all the ways we've experienced you in our past as a sign of how our present is leading us to our desired destination. Ashe.*

Rev. Tamika Nelson  
Executive Director  
United Campus Ministry of Greater Houston

# December 2

**Read** Philippians 1:12-18a.

I haven't lived very long, but I am sure of something: no one seems to get through unscathed. As each of us goes on living and loving and bumping right up against each other, we tend to get a little weathered and worn. Rough around the edges. The world around us is a little harsher than we thought it would be.

"Beloved, what has happened to me has actually spread the gospel," Paul writes from a prison cell. This man knows wilderness: wandering, stoning, persecution. The "what" that has happened to him is no small feat.

I don't know anything about you except that you are a fellow human being, and by extension, you carry what has happened to you — that we meet in our own particular wildernesses. And I am also sure of this: there is a God in the grief, the fear, the hopelessness. The three-in-the-morning stare at the wall in the dark. When we circle the drain and fall off the wagon. There is a God in the prison cell and the city streets. A God for whom the "what" is never too much.

For that we will rejoice, not despite what has happened to us, but because of it. For the God-with-us, the God-revealed-in-us. Then we'll go on lighting the candles around the wreath because somehow, we will keep on rejoicing. Because we are still here and because we will go on.

It is a blessing to go on indeed.

## **Pray**

*"I can't prove a thing, but there's something about his eyes and his voice...the way he carries his head, his hands, the way he carries his cross – the way he carries me."<sup>1</sup> Amen.*

Jessica Joshi  
Student  
UKirk Memphis

# January 4

**Read** Acts 7:44-53.

At UKIRK Greensboro we're spending time this year reading *God, Improv, and the Art of Living* by MaryAnn McKibben Dana. We're learning to look at how God is living and moving and breathing in the world in ways that we might not even have initially considered to be God's actions. We're looking for the grace in plans completed and plans gone awry.

In verse 48 Stephen tells the church that God doesn't dwell in the spaces we create. College ministry may mean experiencing church outside of a steepled building for the first time in our lives, an idea that can be jarring. (I recall worshipping with a congregation in a school gym for the first time in my life while I studied abroad during college. I had to adapt my thinking about what church is, and therefore, God, during that time away from my big-steeple building.)

And yet, the idea that God doesn't just dwell inside the walls of the churches we build is freeing. There is hope in the freedom that God isn't contained in the spaces and thoughts and decisions of our creation. Dana quotes actor Amy Poehler, who offers, "We all think we're in control of our lives, and that the ground is solid beneath our feet, but we are so wrong. Improvising reminds you of that over and over again."<sup>5</sup>

May we find grace in the things we can't control or didn't create...because God is most certainly there, too.

## **Pray**

*God of Surprises, shake us up. Leave the building and push us out the doors, too. Open us to the wildness of your freedom. Make us improvise so that we may truly live. Amen.*

Rev. Katie Barrett Todd  
Campus Minister & Executive Director  
UKIRK Greensboro



# January 3

**Read** Job 42:10-17.

It's funny to me that people often speak about "the patience of Job" in the midst of all his suffering and loss. He was anything BUT patient, demanding an account from the Lord about the injustice of his suffering. Then the Lord speaks in chapters 38-41 and lays out the awesome beauty and mystery inherent in creation. Job is silenced. He realizes that suffering and loss cannot be reduced to simple answers. Perhaps the restoration of Job's fortunes doesn't erase his pain and loss, but he embraces the present, and therefore life does appear abundant and good.

There has been so much loss the last two years, and perhaps beyond that in your life. Many wonder about the fairness, and worry about the uncertainty of the future. The wisdom I gain from Job is to trust that there are possibilities we have not imagined, and to recall the mystery and awe of life and the world we inhabit. To set aside our anger and cynicism about who or what is to blame and embrace our circumstances with thanksgiving for all the beauty and goodness that is present. This neither denies the losses and grief, nor accepts simple explanations of blame. Embrace the people and opportunities that affirm and nourish you wherever you find yourself, and whatever challenges or hardships that come your way this new year.

## **Pray**

*God of infinite mystery, open our hearts and eyes to the possibilities that are before us this new year, that we may be part of Your ongoing creation and transformation of our world. We pray this in the name of the One you sent with the Good News of Your abiding love and grace.*

Rev. Kathleen Day  
Campus Minister  
Campus Ministry Connection at Northern AZ University

# December 3

**Read** Philippians 1:18b-26.

On any road trip, if you're the one asking the question, "Are we there yet?," you are probably not the one driving. Instead, you're in the passenger seat, eating snacks and setting the playlist, blissfully unaware of what mile marker you've passed. You're not in control, but just along for the ride.

Paul is no stranger to a life where he is not in the driver's seat. As he writes to the Philippians, he is imprisoned and awaiting trial. He is uncertain what the outcome will be — further imprisonment, freedom, or even death. He faces powers and people that will impact what happens to him next. Paul is not in control of the outcome of his own life.

Like Paul, our lives are often guided by forces beyond ourselves: the responsibilities of everyday life, the expectations of others, and the limitations of a sinful and imperfect world, to name a few. We might wish we were in total control, but sometimes it feels as if we are in the passenger's seat wondering: are we there yet? And where are we even going?

And yet, from the passenger seat, Paul rejoices. It's not that he has given up, but he recognizes that no matter what, God is with him. We rejoice in this too. When we celebrate at Christmas, we rejoice that God is with us, in all things, even the circumstances beyond our control.

## **Pray**

*Dear God, even when I feel helpless, you are with me. Help me to rejoice in your presence, find hope in unusual places, and be supported by my community, so that wherever we go, we might get there together. Amen.*

Rev. Caroline Barnett  
Campus Minister, UKirk Auburn  
Associate Pastor, First Presbyterian Church (Auburn, AL)

# December 4

**Read** Luke 9:1-6.

Our passage today reminds us that as children of God we are empowered, equipped, and called to bring healing into our broken world. Many times it might not look the way we expect: a smile, a wave, a quick text to check in. Other times it will be bigger than we imagined, as we stand up against racism, discrimination, hatred. Whatever it looks like, I hope you remember that you are called to be a healer now, in whatever culture and context you find yourself. So go and spread the good news — healing for our world is at hand.

Death, sickness and pain  
Everywhere we look dark  
Broken hearts and weary souls  
Blood smeared faces and tears  
abound

Where O Lord is light?  
Where O Lord is life?  
How long O Lord must we  
journey?

*Are we there yet?*

Prayers echo unanswered  
Filling hospital hallways and  
darkened bedrooms

Injustice rages on  
We can't hold on we cry

*Are we there yet?*

Suddenly, unexpectedly — a visitor  
Whispered words of blessing  
Warm hands tightly intertwined  
The fragrant oil of shared tears

Here O Lord is light!  
Here O Lord is healing!  
Good News declares — You are not  
alone!

*We are here*

## **Pray**

*Great Healer of the world, may I remember the glorious vocation to which I am called. Embolden me to act as healer in our broken world; to bring good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim release for captives, and liberation for prisoners, to comfort all who mourn. In doing so, bless me that I find my own healing in you as I seek to heal others. Amen.*

Rev. Brenna Overland  
Head of Staff  
First Presbyterian Church (Bay City, MI)

# January 2

**Read** Jeremiah 31:7-14.

January 2nd is a day that I will always think of as the day Montreat College Conference starts. It is true for today, returning from a pandemic hiatus. The theme this year is, “What’s Next?.” I am sure it will be different this year. As I write this devotion at the end of October, seeing there is still conference housing available at a time when it usually is all filled up is a reminder that the “next,” the “Are we there yet?,” is still in the distance. How true this must have been for Jeremiah in our text today.

The writing was on the wall for Jeremiah, and he gave voice to what was clear. Despite his truth-speaking clinging on to what he knew was good, the people didn’t want to hear it. The arrogance of the people to think their actions didn’t matter, well...they would have about 50 years to think about it, as they too would wait to come back. Maybe a couple “are we there yet?” being mumbled by the exiles heading to the land of Babylon? Possibly similar questions being asked by those already there, curious if a new faithfulness would satisfy their return? Not yet...not yet...wait.

I came across a song the other day that closes with this line: “and the shepherd’s work was never done...”<sup>4</sup> How encouraging to the lost sheep to have a Shepherd who, like the one he had union with, did not slumber until all were brought back. Who turns mourning into joy!

## **Pray**

*Lord, thank you for leading us back. Amen.*

Rev. John Rogers  
Director  
Presbyterian Collegiate Ministries of North Carolina (PCMofNC)



January 1

**Read** Ecclesiastes 3:1-13.

### **The In-Between**

Ecclesiastes declares, “there’s a season for every time.” Yet, every New Year’s Day, I find myself feeling stuck between times. The previous year has ended, but the new year has barely begun. Christmas has passed, but Epiphany is still days away. The baby Jesus has been born, but he has not taken yet his first steps. We spend much of our lives in the liminal space between times. The time between graduating school and finding a job, meeting someone and falling in love, discerning what God is calling us to do and doing it. We often would rather rush to the next season or step than waste time in the in-between. After all, we are busy people with expiration dates, and we do not have time to waste. But what if the in-between times are a gift from God? What if God gave us in-between times to encourage us to pause? To pause, remember, and give thanks for all the blessings we have received. To pause, rest, and be present in the moment. To pause, hope, and pray for what lies ahead. How is God calling you to embrace the in-between times in your life?

### **Pray**

*Eternal God, who danced before the planets spun and time began, Merciful God, who looks graciously upon us in every season, Generous God, who gives us life and invites us to enjoy it, be present with us as we say goodbye to one year and enter the next. Teach us to pause, remind us to rejoice, encourage us to rest, and inspire us to hope, so that we may seek You always, even in the in-between times. Amen.*

Emily Sutphin  
Student  
Princeton Theological Seminary

December 5

**Read** Luke 1:68-79.

This surely can’t be our destination!

For we long for a world of peace.

But we are stuck —

Trapped in our own darkness and all that divides us.

We are unable to seek joy;

we have lost our love for our neighbors.

As we continue to spiral in the pool of chaos,  
we wonder — is this really our fate?

No, for you promised us mercy and goodness.

Shine your light on us once more.

Direct our tired and achy feet in the way of peace,

That even in our exhaustion,

we may prepare ourselves for your coming reign —

for your great joy and love

this day and forevermore.

### **Pray**

*God of peace, in a broken and hurting world we long to be made whole. Show us signs of your love — shine your light upon our darkness. Bind us to one another, reminding us of our connectedness. May you guide our steps back to one another and to you this day, that we may prepare our hearts to welcome Christ. Amen.*

Rev. Maggie Alsup  
Chaplain  
Lyon College

# December 6

**Read** Isaiah 40:1-11.

Nature is beautiful and fragile, impermanent and fleeting. Robert Frost's poem "Nothing Gold Can Stay" speaks to the brevity of natural glory.<sup>2</sup> Within the blink of an eye, the season changes and what was once beautiful wilts and fades away. Frost's poem mourns the loss of youthful vigor and vitality, which chronological time overcomes.

Though Isaiah uses similar imagery to depict the fragility of the world, the prophet's tone is hopeful. How can this be, when Isaiah writes from exile? How can this be, when the Babylonians have banished the people of Israel from their homeland and imposed a social death upon them? How can Isaiah find comfort within this marginalized existence?

As grass and flowers die with the changing of the season, they return their nutrients to the topsoil. Organic matter decays and produces new life. Though the people of Israel suffered under the rule of the Babylonians, year after year yearning for their return to their homeland, they still felt the comfort of the presence of God. God had gone with them into exile, and was active in the process of liberating them from captivity. The Lord of the Covenant of Sinai and the Lord of the Covenant of David had remained steadfast to the people of Israel. And the prophet Isaiah saw that the time of restoration was at hand.

## **Pray**

*God of Creation, may we be heralds of the Good News, that the kin-dom of God is drawing near. May we run boldly through our times in the wilderness with hopes of restoration. Amen.*

John Golden  
Campus Minister  
UKirk ETSU

# December 31

**Read** John 8:12-19.

The Gospel according to John is where we find a number of "I am" statements spoken by Jesus, like the one found in verse 12: "I am the light of the world." The many "I" statements throughout this passage tell the truth about who Jesus is, and this "I am" statement also tells a truth about who we are. "Whoever follows me won't walk in darkness but will have the light of life." During this time of year, when it feels easy to get caught up in the darkness — the actual darkness of these longer nights and the various darknesses of our mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical beings — we are reminded that darkness isn't too dark for our Lord who is the light of the world (Ps. 139:12). When we choose to follow Jesus, the darkness won't be too dark for us, either.

## **Pray**

*Light of the World, thank you for the light of life. Grant us, whenever we find ourselves in a darkness of this life, reminders that the darkness is not too dark for you, and that by following you we share in your light. Amen.*

Rev. Jenny Hardin  
Campus Minister, UKirk Stillwater  
Associate Pastor, First Presbyterian Church (Stillwater, OK)



# December 30

**Read** Mark 13:32-37.

## **Is He Here Yet?**

The parable of the landowner concludes with this seemingly threatening series of statements. The gospel writer essentially says, “No one knows when Jesus is coming — it is so secret that only God knows. You better look out and pay attention. You don’t want Jesus to come back and catch you doing something you shouldn’t be doing. Or worse — not doing what he asked you to do in the first place!” I don’t find that particularly comforting. The return of Jesus sounds like it brings more retribution rather than relief.

As the first gospel in the canon, the writer wants to communicate urgency to the second generation of Christ followers listening to or reading accounts of Jesus and his teachings. These disciples would have been facing much uncertainty and persecution. Mark’s message is straightforward: be faithful, no matter who is or isn’t watching you.

During Advent, Christians celebrate the incarnation; we joyfully proclaim the arrival of Jesus in our midst. Whether we are waiting for Jesus to arrive as a vulnerable infant or as a resurrected judge, Mark’s words for us are clear. Jesus has commissioned us to live in faithful expectation of his arrival and his return. Jesus is not “there yet,” but we are here. So how shall we live in the already and the not yet?

## **Pray**

*Holy God, we long for you to arrive and we long for you to return. We experience both desires at the same time. Fill us with your Spirit that we may more deeply know and trust you. Give us faith to boldly live the way you call us to live. Amen.*

Rev. Michele Ward  
Associate Pastor  
Brown Memorial Park Avenue Presbyterian Church

# December 7

**Read** Psalm 126.

## **Remember When?**

All the people of the world have been through so much, and the author of Psalm 126 could probably relate. The psalmist wrote this during a difficult time, as they describe many people sowing tears and weeping due to some hardship and suffering. Throughout the past eighteen months, there has been much weeping across the globe because of so much pain. The COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, racial and social injustice, war, mental stress, and other tragedies are only some of the problems we currently face.

The psalmist implores their audience to remember when God returned them to Zion rejoicing. In our time, many of us are in pain waiting while asking, “When can we rejoice?” and “Are we there yet?” When we are going through the most challenging times, the psalmist calls us to remember when we have felt God’s presence. When we doubt, may we remember an experience when the love of the Holy Spirit enveloped us. When we as a community hurt, may we remember Jesus right before His betrayal and arrest, calling His disciples to remember Him through the Eucharist. In the act of remembering, we find hope. Hope for the present and hope for the future. It doesn’t take away the pain of the present, but in remembering Christ, we find hope that the love of God will never leave us.

## **Pray**

*Dear God, during this Advent season, as we journey through difficult times, may we remember You and the ways You have shown up for us in the past. May those memories bring us hope for a tomorrow filled with joy, peace, and love.*

Arise Campus Ministry  
George Mason University & NOVA Community College

# December 8

**Read** Isaiah 35:3-7.

As a Utahn, I dig Isaiah's creation imagery. Waters springing up in the desert? A thirsty ground? Awesome! Last year, Utah didn't receive the precipitation it typically sees, and our state experienced historic drought conditions. The governor issued drought-related executive orders, a Twitter campaign ensued (#slowtheflow), and in July, the Great Salt Lake reached its lowest levels on record. Sometime in the midst of this water crisis, the rain poured and poured one day, and my infant son crawled over to the window and pointed outside before turning to me, clearly mystified and excited by what he was seeing and hearing. He sat quietly, watching and listening as the rain splattered on the deck and nourished the plants and trees in our backyard.

Advent is a season for childlike wonder. It's a time of anticipation in which God leaves us speechless, inviting us to watch and wait as the promise of salvation unfolds. Isaiah's words are an encouraging message for us, but they're also a message to us. The coming Christ will keep us from the exile of feeling weak or fearful, because those who seek to live with Christ will themselves offer the ministry of strengthening and comforting. In Christ, our vision will be clarified anew, and our worldview expanded as our ears are continually opened to new perspectives and experiences. Formerly speechless, Christ followers will rejoice in the new creation. Rejoicing might take the form of a singing tongue, but it might also be a relationship restored, or a new experience of God's presence. It will be extraordinary, though it may seem as ordinary as rainfall outside your window.

## **Pray**

Breathe in *Emmanuel*, breathe out *be with me as I watch and wait*.

Rev. Meghan Vail  
Associate Pastor  
First Presbyterian Church (Logan, UT)

# December 29

**Read** 1 Corinthians 3:10-17.

In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Charles Campbell writes, "Ministry is a bold and risky adventure in which Christians build as faithfully as we can without fully knowing the quality of our work. Most of us wonder from time to time, 'what if I'm wrong?' 'What if I do the wrong thing or speak the wrong word?'"<sup>3</sup>

Coming back to campus after a pandemic has left me asking those questions on a daily basis. I wonder if I am building a ministry using gold and silver or hay and straw. I long for a master blueprint that will tell me what needs to be done to bring back the energy and vitality that we had before COVID. We all are languishing as we try to resume life as we knew it.

Paul reminds us that the foundation has been laid in the foolish wisdom of our God who became flesh and lived among us. That foundation is God's great love for us and for all people. Build on that – students' worth is not measured by grades or by successful projects or internships. Our worth is being beloved children of God. That is a bold and risky message on a college campus. But in the end, that message is what will enable us to survive the fire of these difficult days.

## **Pray**

*Holy and loving God, fill us with your Spirit that we might proclaim the bold and risky message of your great love for us. Amen.*

Rev. Kathy Carpenter  
Presbyterian Campus Minister  
UKirk Ministry at Virginia Tech

December 28

**Read** Revelation 21:1-7.

The old is gone  
The new has come  
All is done  
All is one

Let love be  
Let love renew  
Let love grow  
Let love restore

I will wait for it  
I will pay for it  
I will hope for it  
I will pray for it

May thirst be quenched  
May hunger be satisfied  
Spring of Life  
Spring to Life

One World  
One People  
One Land  
One Love

**Pray**

*Gracious God, help us say goodbye to old endings and hello to new beginnings, as we prepare for the coming year. Amen.*

Rev. Evans McGowan  
Assistant Pastor of Campus Ministries  
UKirk@UMich

December 9

**Read** Isaiah 12:2-6.

**Trust**

The past year-and-a-half has been difficult and challenging for all of us, each in our own ways. Some of us have lost loved ones. Some of us have lost jobs. Some of us have struggled with mental health issues. All of us have had to make difficult decisions about how best to balance the health risks to ourselves and our families as we go about our lives. But, as I read Isaiah 12, I am struck by how uplifting the passage is. It is so full of hope and joy that I cannot not smile as I read it. The hope and joy expressed in this passage requires only one thing: trust.

In the Common English Bible, Isaiah 12 has the header “Hymn of trust.” While we are not through this pandemic yet, and the road ahead of us will continue to be difficult, we can still trust that God is our salvation, just as this passage proclaims. We can trust that God is our strength and our shield. We can trust that we will one day be able to draw water from the springs of salvation. This passage reminds me that trust in God is never misplaced, regardless of what else is going on.

**Pray**

*God, help us to trust that you have a plan, even when we feel afraid and uncertain about the future. Help us to trust that Jesus Christ will be with us as we navigate these challenging times, even when we feel alone. Help us to trust that the Holy Spirit will guide us, even when we feel lost. Put simply, Lord, help us to trust in you. Amen.*

Andrew Pinches  
Student  
UKirk at Michigan State

# December 10

**Read** Amos 8:4-12.

There's a lot of human talk that isn't the word of God. In Amos's time, people talked about extending the market week, encroaching on holy days with buying and selling. They talked about "making the ephah smaller and enlarging the shekel"—charging more for a scantier serving of wheat — even as people starved. People spoke lightly about exploiting the vulnerable.

God's word rises strongly against this kind of talk. Amos's prophecy sounds like a curse. God would not forget the people's exploitation of their neighbors. God would cause the land to tremble, the skies to darken, and the people's joy to evaporate. Even worse, God promised a famine, and one of a particularly devastating kind: "neither a hunger for bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the LORD's words." It's not a good idea to talk over God; God might leave the conversation. And when God is silent — we are lost. The question ceases to be, "Are we there yet?" Without God, it's "Where on earth are we?"

This scripture is sobering — even a little scary. What does it have to teach us? To me, it's a reminder that justice is not secondary to my faith. It's less about shekels and ephahs now, but compassion, fairness, and respect still matter deeply and ultimately to God. So should they matter to us, and be reflected not only in our words, but in our actions. How do we show up for justice? This is a question worth living today.

## **Pray**

*Just and merciful God, today may we not only hear your word, but find ways to act on it in love. Amen.*

Rev. Claire Berry  
Campus Minister  
UKirk Nashville

# December 27

**Read** Psalm 148.

This year has been difficult for many of us. In between the "new normal" we must adapt to, the losses we have experienced, and the yearning for what was, we find ourselves exhausted and longing for the new year and what it will bring. Are we there yet? It feels as if the days have slowed down and we just can't see the light at the end of the tunnel. Good news... We have made it! We are in the final stretch! The last mile of the marathon we have been running.

Before we end this race, I want you to join me in thinking of all the good, and all the times we saw God in the midst of the uncertainty, exhaustion, and changes this year brought us. Praise God! For He has been with us throughout it all. He cheers us on from the sidelines, He hands us water when we need to calm our thirst, He carries us when we feel like we can no longer run this race. Glory be to God for sustaining us during our trials and giving us hope and strength to carry on!

## **Pray**

*Dear God, as this year comes to an end we lift our praise to you. Thank you for being our light at the end of the tunnel. Thank you for giving us the strength to get to the finish line. We praise you for everything you did for us this year and what you already have in store for us next year. Help us continue to praise you at all times and for all things. Praise be to God! Amen.*

Monika Ruiz Garcia  
Alumna  
UKirk at Schreiner



# December 26

**Read** Colossians 3:12-17.

As a kid I loved playing in the snow! As an adult I still enjoy it, yet now I do not play as long. Once my gloves and socks are wet, my brain says, “time to tap out!” Yet as a kid, my heart screamed, “time for more clothes!!”

It is funny how our perspective can change. Today Saint Paul invites us to have a new perspective, a heavenly one (v. 1). He says that we must cast off our old self (v. 9), and now we are to cloth ourselves with a new attire that is united by love (v. 14). Christ fashions these new clothes which make known His peace and His name.

Because we are chosen, holy, and dearly loved, we have a new way of experiencing life. No longer are we to shower the world with the biting cold of greed, lust, and rage, rather we are people who forgive as the Lord has forgiven us. Our very attire is unifying, dignifying, and gratifying because we are focused on being members of one body.

Today as you slip on your extra winter layers, remember to clothe yourself with the virtues of Christ and allow the gratitude which comes from His love to dwell within you so that whatever you do, you are making His name known.

## **Pray**

*Forgiving Lord, today I ask you to remove any garments of my old nature and clothe me with your peace, forbearance, gentleness. Grant me a new passion for the world and fill me with your word. May my life be marked by gratitude and praise as I seek to make the world a kinder place. I offer you my all, amen.*

Rob Musick  
Chaplain  
University of Pikeville

# December 11

**Read** Amos 9:11-15.

What does it mean to restore, to repair breaches, to raise up ruins?

There are many stories of restoration in the Bible. Here in Amos, the prophet has focused on social justice and the power of God as he walks us through the judgment and punishment of Israel, and concludes here with images of the restoration of David’s kingdom. How lovely to think about rebuilt cities and thriving vineyards and gardens!

Here’s the thing: the kingdom of Israel as Amos discussed it has yet to be restored — at least in the ways of the “days of old.” People are living in that part of the world today, with cities inhabited and gardens growing. But it’s not quite what Amos envisioned. Things change. As well they should! Amos has spent this whole book calling for justice. Let it roll down like waters! And if we want to seek justice, we can’t go back to the way things were.

So how do we rebuild and restore our world with an eye toward justice for our all of our neighbors? The end of this passage tells us to be planted in our land and never plucked up. In other words: grounded. We have a long way to go until all of creation is repaired. As we work toward that restoration, let us remember to be aware of our surroundings, and strive toward stability within our place. The restoration starts with us, where we are.

## **Pray**

*Eternal God, help us feel grounded where we are as we work for the restoration of your kingdom. Guide us as we repair and rebuild, that we might raise up all of creation. Amen.*

Rev. Colleen Earp  
Director of Programs  
Massanetta Springs Camp and Conference Center

# December 12

**Read** Luke 3:7-18.

John the Baptist emerges among the expectation of rebellion and uprising within the context of Roman occupation. The people of Israel are actively looking for someone to lead them against their oppressors, and John is seen as a possible candidate for this role. However, we see that John actively rejects this responsibility.

Even further, John pushes against their expectations of such a figure ever emerging. Like other prophets before him, he instead pushes the crowd (and, us) to look inward for release from these oppressive forces. John's call to repentance is both simple and subversive. Those with excess are called to give to those without. Those with power should not abuse their authority for personal gain.

The ethic John presents is not groundbreaking. These are straightforward ideas of what caring for your neighbor and community should look like. But, they are subversive in the critique they offer of their occupiers. Empire is inherently exploitative, and those who are coming to be baptized are participating in these systems of oppression, despite their Hebrew identity.

In this sense, John is making the point that their heritage means nothing if it does not bear the fruits of compassion and community. Like John, we eagerly look to Christ as the full embodiment of God's love bearing this fruit of compassion.

## **Pray**

*Gracious God, continue to subvert our expectations during this season of anticipation. Remind us that baptism is not a passive ritual, but an active calling that pushes us to examine and dismantle the ways we participate in oppressive systems. By your Spirit, guide us to live into the example of love and compassion made apparent in the coming Christ. Amen.*

Rev. Chris Bailey  
Campus Minister  
Marshall UKIRK

# December 25

**Read** John 1:1-14.

“Is that it?!”

One Christmas Day, my husband and I were mortified when one of our three young children uttered these three words after opening several generous gifts from their grandparents: “Is that it?!” All the hype leading up to Christmas day made the actual day a serious let down for our little one. We certainly worked harder after this experience to keep the commercialism in check and focus on the miracle, meaning, and mystery of the birth of Jesus, “the Word became flesh.”

Those of us who are “adulting” feel that way sometimes too. Many times, we reach a point that we thought was going to be an inflection point: passing a test, finishing an internship, getting your own place, or reaching your 21st birthday, but we find ourselves wondering, “Is that it?!”

John 1:1 mimics Genesis 1:1, “in the beginning,” reminding us of the eternal nature of the Word, of Jesus as Divine Creator. By verse 14, we are firmly planted in the earthly reality that God chose to share with us in a physical body, Jesus Christ.

The birth of Jesus was another beginning in the covenant relationship where God is always faithful, despite the many times we fail to be and do that which reflects our Christian faith. By the power of the Holy Spirit, God is STILL with us, and every milestone, every significant event, is a new beginning.

On this Christmas Day, if the words “is that it?” ring true for you, know that the Word made flesh, the Light of Life, STILL shines in the darkness and the darkness does NOT extinguish it.

## **Pray**

*Lord of life and light, thank you for coming to us in the beginning and always being with us. Open our hearts and minds to welcome you and believe in your name. In every situation, enable us to know your presence, full of kindness and divine truth. Glory to God! Ashe. Amen.*

Rev. L. British Hyrams  
Campus Minister  
Presbyterian Campus Ministry at NCCU

# December 24

**Read** Luke 2:1-20.

A canceled flight, a lost connection.  
A winter storm, a season for reflection.  
A family that has cut them off,  
a line in the sand which cannot be crossed.  
No place to go but where we are,  
A journey home is much too far.

An inn that cannot take them in,  
sent to the barn to breathe and begin.  
They welcome God to life on earth,  
Love and grace flow from this birth.  
No place to go but where they are,  
God has come under a star.

All our lives, we journey on.  
But on this night, we pause and yawn.  
We rest in God's sincere embrace,  
Trusting that this is the case:

God has come so we are never alone.  
God has come so that love is known.  
God has come to live with the people,  
not to reside inside a steeple.  
God has come so that our care  
extends to neighbors everywhere.  
God has come to show us peace,  
and free us from all certainty.

The journey home is not too far,  
For God has come, right where we are.

## **Pray**

*God who has come, draw us into your embrace. On this night of nativity, light the sky with your stars of promise. Remind us that we are all home in your love. Amen.*

# December 13

**Read** Isaiah 11:1-9.

Our family adopted a dog during the summer of 2020. Due to the pandemic, the rescue organization had a backlog of requests. The process took a long time. While we waited, I wondered: "Would the dog like our family? Would my dog-averse husband grow to love the dog?" High on my list of worries was whether or not the two cats in our household would get along with the new dog. Thankfully, the answer to all of these questions turned out to be YES.

In Isaiah's song of hope, we hear of unexpected relationships between natural foes. This is a word of grace during our polarized era. Many of us spend the holidays with family members or friends who don't act or think like we do. How do we reconcile spending time in their company during this holy season?

A dear friend, Rev. Mariclaire Partee Carlsen, pastors St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Philadelphia. She tells this story: "A child placed a small plastic wolf in our church's nativity scene sometime years ago. When our Sexton packed the nativity up at the end of the season, the wolf got packed up too. So now every Advent it goes out with the other animals."

Whether it is a housecat falling in love with a yellow hound dog, a toy wolf nestled in with the sheep at the crib of the baby Jesus, or your Uncle Jeff trying to get along with your college roommate at Christmas dinner, God is in the midst of these blossoming relationships.

## **Pray**

*God, be with us as we journey together to your kingdom. We aren't there yet, but we see glimpses of your grace along the way. Amen.*

Rev. Dr. Alexandra M. Hendrickson  
College Chaplain and Director of Religious & Spiritual Life  
Lafayette College (Easton, Pennsylvania)

# December 14

**Read** Acts 28:23-31.

## **Are We Really Listening?**

Ouch. When Paul quotes the prophet Isaiah to the Jewish leaders of Rome, he minces no words in telling them that they do not understand the good news. It's a good thing that we Christians did listen and understand, right?

Or maybe not.

What if Isaiah's words still apply to us today? What if we still do not understand what we hear? This Advent, let us consider what voices we may be overlooking — the voices of those oppressed because of their skin color, disability, gender, sexuality, or another aspect of themselves that was created by God and yet is scorned by some of God's beloved children.

Listening to these voices is uncomfortable sometimes. It is often easier not to recognize our own privilege and the injustices in our society. But this passage claims that something good will come out of it — healing. Listening, perceiving, and understanding do not guarantee healing, but they do make it possible. And so in this Advent season, may we learn to live with this discomfort. May we open our eyes, ears, and hearts to the voices we have ignored. And may we take this crucial first step towards healing.

### **Pray**

*God of mercy, we confess that we have prioritized comfort over justice. We have closed our hearts to the cries of Your beloved. Help us to open our eyes, ears, and hearts to the voices we have ignored. May we seek Your healing this Advent. Amen.*

Sarah Rutherford  
Student  
United Campus Ministry of Aggieland (Texas A&M University)

# December 23

**Read** Luke 1:39-55.

When Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth, Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit! She cannot help but blurt out in a loud voice a blessing upon Mary. And Mary concurs — she then launches into a song of praise for God. As someone who grew up in East Coast culture, I too often cannot help but blurt out in a loud voice when something is on my heart. During this season of asking “Are we there yet?,” I am trying to lean more toward blurting out my joy and praise, like Elizabeth and Mary. When there is so much sorrow in this world, we need to celebrate whenever we can. Elizabeth and Mary were celebrating the big Advent! Jesus' arrival! As we today wait for the coming of Christ, we can celebrate mini advents every single day. Any time the kingdom of God breaks forth, we can blurt out our praise. Any time the lowly are lifted up — celebrate! Any time the hungry are filled and the rich are sent away — celebrate! Any time you connect with a friend — celebrate! Any time you listen to your body — celebrate! This Advent season I invite you to lower your standards for celebration. Celebrate everything that makes you feel whole and authentic and connected to God and to your community. Do not be picky about what brings you joy, but rejoice like your life depends on it.

### **Pray**

*God who calls us good, help us to rely on one another to multiply our joy and divide our sorrow. Grant us senses to perceive your Kingdom breaking forth among us, and grant us hearts to celebrate advents every single day.*

Rev. Beatrix Weil  
Chaplain  
Rhodes College



# December 22

**Read** Ephesians 2:11-22.

I've heard it said that most driving accidents happen within five miles of home. Perhaps the person telling me that was just trying to teach me extra caution, but it makes some sense. As we get near home, we become comfortable. Things are familiar. We let our guard down.

But letting down our guard isn't necessarily bad. We are nearing home on our Advent journey. Christmas is close at hand. Most of our preparation is done. And soon we can let down our guard and simply enjoy the holidays.

In Ephesians 2, Paul writes, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." (NRSV) The birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus were about bringing us nearer to God and tearing down walls. Through Jesus, the Gentiles who were once far from God are brought near. Suddenly, in Christ, the walls of inequality are torn away and everyone has the same access to God.

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, we remember how the lowly shepherds and the princely magi were both invited to celebrate the coming King. And how this baby, born in a humble manger, would grow to eat with sinners and Pharisees alike. May this serve as a reminder not to construct walls that hinder others from drawing near to the coming King. But let us be like the shepherds and angels, proclaiming the good news of great joy to the entire world!

## **Pray**

*Gracious Lord, thank you that everyone no matter their race, sex, or status can come to worship and adore you. May your name be ever praised! Amen!*

Rev. Jeffrey Fiet  
Co-Pastor  
First Presbyterian Church (Scottsbluff, NE)

# December 15

**Read** Luke 7:31-35.

"To what will I compare the people of this generation?" Jesus asked. "What are they like?"

As a foster parent I had the unique perspective of having raised a "quarantined" baby. Her world was so small, made up of me and my husband right up until she entered daycare at the end of 2020. I worried about how this different world had already impacted my baby and how this transition would further affect her, but I was unprepared for one of the most noticeable things. One of her favorite toys was a *Doc McStuffins* doctor kit, which included an otoscope. This toy, though made to look in ears, in her hands, was always placed on foreheads. I repeatedly tried to get her to use it properly, still she persisted. Four months in, I realized that she was recognizing that tool as one used for the daily temperature checks we were both subject to at the daycare. I worry for her and what she's missing out and how she might be traumatized in some way. Meanwhile she's adapting her tools to meet her present circumstance and filling our lives with such joy.

What are we like? "Children," came the answer in the text. A second year into a pandemic, we might be childish in our fatigue, in our complaining, even in our exasperation. But if we are like children, hopefully we also possess the resilience we often see in them as well.

## **Pray**

*Dear God, on this difficult road please give us the strength to arrive at the end of this uncertainty, just as you came to Earth, in the hopefulness of a child.*

Jessica Maudlin Phelps  
Associate for Sustainable Living and Earth Care Concerns  
Presbyterian Hunger Program

# December 16

**Read** Psalm 80:1-7.

“Restore us, O God of hosts...”

In the early days of the ongoing pandemic, when live sports were no longer on television, I found myself watching a lot of HGTV. Shows like *Fixer Upper*, *Home Town*, and *Good Bones* filled my apartment as I quarantined and practiced social distancing. Shows where older, sometimes run-down, damaged houses were restored, and given new hope and beginnings. There was something deeply comforting about seeing the finished product, perhaps because I was longing to see that same restoration in the world around me. I was longing for my “normal” to be restored.

As followers of Christ we believe in restoration. Each Sunday we confess our sins to God, and proclaim our belief that God hears us and cleanses us. Through God’s forgiveness we are made new! Our belief in restoration gives us hope. We know that there is a better way, and believe that there are better things to come. We see the pain and brokenness in the world around us. We feel the sting of losing loved ones, and hear the pleas of tired, burned out front line workers: “Are we there yet?” And yet, we have hope. We have hope in a God who deeply loves us; a God who we believe is making all things new. I don’t know about you, but I’m excited to be a part of that work.

**Pray**

*“Create in me a clean heart O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.” (Ps. 51:10)*

Robert Newman  
Steering Team Co-Chair  
UKirk Birmingham

# December 21

**Read** Romans 8:18-30.

Take a deep breath. Inhale. Exhale.  
Give yourself a break from the shallow breathing  
We have grown accustomed to,  
When our bodies are desperate for air,  
Desperate to release the stress that constricts our lungs  
And our hearts.

Take a deep breath. Inhale. Exhale.  
And let the Spirit move.  
Interceding in the sighs from the depths  
From our rage,  
From our disappointment,  
From our exhaustion,  
From our loneliness,  
Speaking breath into the places we have long ignored.

Take a deep breath. Inhale. Exhale.  
And remember the movement of air you were made from,  
That you were made for.  
Open yourself up to the Spirit as she searches your heart  
And finds you  
Even when you feared no one ever would  
She will always find you  
She will always wrap you up,  
So you feel safe enough to take a deep breath  
And come home.

**Pray**

*God of our breath, fill the space between our lungs and flow through our bodies with the Spirit of gentleness and justice. Remind us with each breath that you are with us and calling us into this wide world. Amen.*

Rev. Rachel Penmore  
Campus Minister  
UKirk University of Tennessee

# December 20

**Read** Genesis 25:19-28.

God is often a mystery to us. We pray for something, and God answers us in unexpected ways. Just when we think we have God figured out, God does something surprising. We see this happen in our passage today. God's promise to Abraham that his descendants will number the stars (Gen. 15:5) seems to be in jeopardy after one generation. Isaac – Abraham's son – and Rebekah are unable to have a child. So, Isaac prays for a child. And...it's a miracle! They conceive and are expecting twins. What joy is this! God answered their prayers!

God then does something unexpected. In a topsy turvy way, God turns a simple prayer request into a stage for division – one that will appear throughout the remainder of the Old Testament story. Isaac and Rebekah are given no explanation for why God answers their prayers in this way. It is simply a mystery.

God is a God of mystery. A God who turns the world inside out for reasons only God knows. A God who displays power in the form of a baby born in a manger under Roman rule. God uses these unexpected mysteries to further God's will in the world. Here is the good news: even when we do not understand God's actions, God does! God uses our prayers and even us in startling ways to bring about God's plan.

This Advent, are you ready for God to move in unexpected ways? Are you preparing for God's ultimate unexpected mystery – the birth of Christ?

## **Pray**

*God of surprising mysteries, ready me for the unexpected this Advent. Prepare my heart to be receptive to your mysterious will. Amen.*

Will Delaney  
Director of Christian Education  
First Presbyterian Church (Laurens, SC)

# December 17

**Read** Hebrews 10:32-39.

Often, when our eyes are opened to God's love encompassing ALL – not regardless of but inclusive of – all of who we are, all of who anyone else is, our lives are changed. God invites us to the truth that following Jesus Christ shows us the way to a faith that brings life, and a different way of dealing with life whether things are going well or not. The amazing news is that the new life we receive also ripples out through us to our friends, communities, and world, as we live out our faith in Christ and become co-workers with God for justice.

It can absolutely be discouraging, though, to hold onto the treasure we have in Christ, when all around us our beliefs are suspect, the politics of the day are “whoever screams loudest wins,” and stories of injustice fill our screens. Advent is a time when we can remember that Christ will again show up, for “in a very little while, the one who is coming will come and will not delay.” May this truth encourage us to keep tending the light of faith, and keep living out a life of faith no matter what.

## **Pray**

*God, your love touches our lives and joy, grace, and hope ground us again in your presence that does not leave no matter what happens. When we get overwhelmed at all that demands our attention and allegiance, help us to persevere in faith, remembering that Christ walks beside us and the Holy Spirit goes ahead of us to guide the way. Amen.*

Rev. Gini Norris-Lane  
Executive Director  
UKirk Collegiate Ministries Association

# December 18

**Read** Luke 13:31-35.

I must confess that our passage today is one that I was originally unfamiliar with, although now it might be one of my favorites as we get to encounter “spicy Jesus” (you know — the Jesus who is ready to flip some tables and such!). Jesus has more than a few words to share with “that fox” Herod Antipas. He foretells of his death and resurrection, lamenting that he will die as so many prophets before him have died. Yet he ends with words of worship and adoration that will be his in the end: “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.”

During this season of anticipation and waiting, I wonder if Jesus grew wearied of waiting for his time to come? If he grew tired of wondering, “Am I there yet? Has my time come yet?”

Where are you asking, “Am I there yet?” What is “there” for you?

Take heart, beloved, that you are not alone in your waiting. Christ stands alongside you, wondering with you, “Am I there yet?” Christ laments with you in this season just as much as Christ celebrates with you in those small moments of adoration as well.

## **Pray**

*Loving God, we are grateful that while we might not be “there” yet — wherever “there” is for each of us — we ground ourselves in the certainty that waiting will not last forever, and that you will arrive on Christmas morn. Blessed are you who is coming, O Lord. Amen.*

Rev. Rachel Hébert  
Campus Minister  
UKirk Williamsburg

# December 19

**Read** Micah 5:2-5a.



The backdrop for this passage is destruction and hopelessness. Picture a section of land deforested, trunks of trees roughly chopped and all life they supported scattered. Yet, in the midst of the destruction there is a sprout, a hope for new life and a sign of a fresh start. It will take time to grow, but the waiting will be worth it, for it will bring the shelter of a tall shade tree, the nourishment of your favorite fruit tree, and peace in abundance.

## **Pray**

*Holy Renewer, we sit in the midst of injustice, social inequity, and a changing climate that can feel overwhelming. In this we are grateful for the steadfastness you offer. Guide us to see the signs of the ways you are working toward restoration through your love, so that we might be inspired to hope for the peace you promise. Amen.*

Rev. Allison Maus  
Associate Pastor for Campus Ministry  
State College Presbyterian Church  
Presbyterian Student Fellowship at Penn State