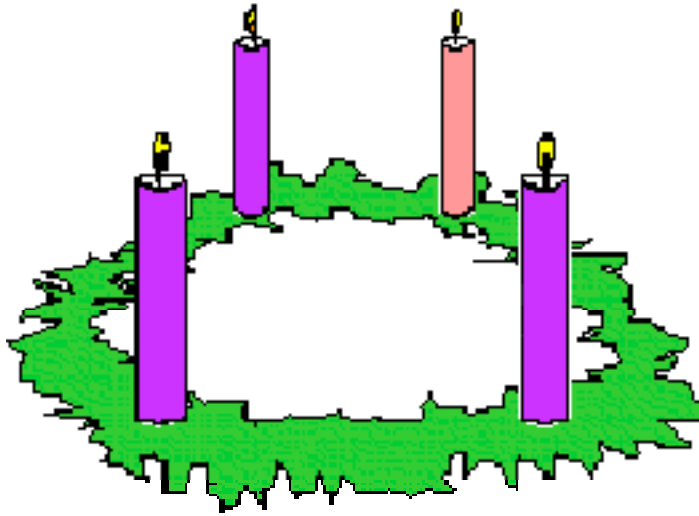


# Advent



We wait together for the Lord.

Resources for  
Discussion and Reflection  
Lutheran-Catholic Covenant Commission

## *Lutheran - Catholic Covenant Commission*

Dear Colleague in Ministry,

As part of the implementation of the Lutheran-Catholic Covenant, the action plan suggests that congregations which already collaborate in a geographic area consider extending their relationship into a framework of prayer and dialogue within the seasons of Advent and Lent.

Enclosed are resources for the study and discussion of the Advent Readings, Cycle B. As you plan parish faith formation activities for the season of Advent, and in the spirit of the Covenant, you are encouraged to consider inviting a neighboring congregation to form a joint study group to reflect on the Advent readings. It is the Commission's hope that these materials will be helpful both on your parish Advent journey, and in fostering the goals of prayer, study, and action of the Lutheran-Catholic Covenant. We would like to thank Commission members, Mrs. Geri Jacquet of St. Brendan Parish in Youngstown, Pastor Frank Podolinski of Emmanuel Lutheran Church, New Springfield, and Mr. Ken Welch of Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Canfield, for preparing these resources.

Please feel free to contact us if the Commission can be of assistance. Other materials related to the implementation of the Covenant can be found at [www.lccovenant.org](http://www.lccovenant.org). Materials for the Lenten season are currently being prepared and will be sent to parishes in January.

In our shared hope and prayer for Christian unity,

The Co-conveners of the Lutheran-Catholic Covenant Commission

Sister Mary Brendon Zajac, SND  
Executive Director  
Department of Pastoral & Educational Services  
Diocese of Youngstown

Rev. Constance Mentzer  
Pastor, Lord of Life Lutheran Church  
Canfield

**STUDY GUIDE**

**1st Sunday of Advent**

Cycle B

Isaiah 63: 16-17; 64: 2-7

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Mark 13:33-37

**Leader** The gospel passage suggests that the disciples "be constantly on watch" and "awake".

1. In our lives today, what does it mean to be "awake" or ready for the Lord when he comes?

In the gospel Jesus talks of a servant who is on watch for the master's return. He forsakes his plans and agendas for those of the master. He is open to the master's will.

2. What am I holding onto that reduces my ability to have such a surrender to Jesus?

**Leader:** Take a moment to think of the image of an orchestra with a group of very talented and competent musicians. What would happen if they choose to remain individuals tuning themselves to a pitch they believe to be correct and start the musical piece whenever they want? The gospel suggests that "to watch and be ready" for Jesus means to be constantly attuning ourselves to him the way a musician attunes one instrument to another, to listen to the note we have just played (the thought we have just had, the desire just felt, the words just said, the decisions we have just made) and then "bounce it off" the Heart of Jesus, listening for the echo, to see if our hearts are in harmony with his. In this way, like a conductor has control over a musical piece, Jesus would have control over our lives.

3. Think of 3 areas in your life over which you do not feel you have sufficient control. Can you share one area?
  
4. Like a competent musician what are some gifts you have that Jesus can enhance by you "being in tune" with him?

## 2nd Sunday of Advent

Cycle B

**Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11**

**2 Peter 3:8-14**

**Mark 1:1-8**

**Leader** "...John the baptizer appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance which led to the forgiveness of sin..." This gospel is about change. John is saying that only change can lead to forgiveness of sin. And only change can lead us deeper into relationship with Jesus Christ. Only change can free us from what holds us back from the fullness of life. Only change can open us to the clarity Jesus' light gives to our lives, to the joy his love brings to us and our families. Only change can make peace possible in the world. Change is the price we pay for really living.

1. As you look clearly at your life, what do you think is missing?

Sometimes change is sudden and dramatic. Often change is gradual and appears ordinary.

2. Are there things you see in Scripture today that you never understood before? What do you think has happened to you? What do you think causes this experience of insight?

Sometimes change approaches us in positive ways which can be easy to embrace. But change can come in negative or even painful life experiences which are harder to accept. At times we may feel comfortable and like the status quo. We may not want to change. Sometimes we refuse to look at areas of our life because to do so might initiate change.

3. What are some things you do (or neglect to do) to avoid looking at your life?

## Third Sunday of Advent

Cycle B

Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11  
1Thessalonians 5:16-24  
John 1:6-8, 19-28

**Leader:** In the first reading Isaiah seems to presuppose that there will be brokenhearted, captives, prisoners, and problems. After two thousand years of Christianity there are still brokenhearted, captives, prisoners and problems. As a messiah, Jesus was a disappointment. More than that he was a disillusionment. The people came to realize that Jesus was not going to use divine power to save them from their oppression; to establish peace, justice, and economic equality on earth. Then their hope in him turned to rage and they rejected him. Is it not the same for us today? Where was Jesus on September 11, 2001? Where is the messiah's power in the violence and economic insecurities happening in our nation?

1. Early Christians gave testimony in court for their belief in Christ. Is there still reason to argue our faith in Christ amid our disappointments? Why?

**Leader:** Jesus taught that the meek would inherit the earth. We know from history and contemporary observation that the meek have always been the first to be dispossessed. It is not the gentle and forgiving who succeed in the world's sense.

2. When has it been difficult in your life to respond with gentleness and forgiveness in response to an act of aggression or injustice (personal or global)?

3. How has our church congregation witnessed to Jesus' way of life as the answer to human problems?

**Leader:** But if we accept Jesus as the one God sent to establish "a kingdom of justice, peace, and love", then we have to apply his teachings to the public sphere as well as the private one. He needs to be Savior of the economic and political parts of our lives not just our religious situations. The world would be saved without force but through Christ's gentleness.

## Fourth Sunday of Advent Cycle B

2Samuel 7:1-5, 8-11, 16

Romans 16: 25-27

Luke 1:26-38

**Leader:** Why was the angel sent from God to the virgin called Mary? Why precisely to this young girl among all the young women of Israel? Every girl in Israel might have wanted to be the mother of the Messiah. But Mary wanted it most deeply and passionately. With all her heart, Mary hungered for holiness and God fulfilled her aching desire. In the measure of her desire it was given to her: full measure, pressed down, overflowing, overwhelming, everlasting.

1. Have you ever felt called to serve God? Describe the situation. Was your response similar to Mary's in our Gospel?
2. Where am I on my spiritual journey? Are my desires for God merely mediocre or are they passionate enough for God to do (as the Magnificat suggests) "great things for me and holy is his name"?

**Leader:** A family from the United Kingdom was in the United States eating at a local McDonald's. The children were all excited that they could keep getting refills of coke for free. For these children the coke overflowed their cups. God's grace is like this. It is filled and refilled and never runs out. It will slake the thirst of all who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall have their fill.

1. How often do I limit the power of the Holy Spirit? How often do I stop God after the first cup of grace?
2. What are the obstacles, distractions, and other desires that I try instead of full participation with God?

**Leader:** From experience we know that there are three levels of commitment to Christ. We can commit to a relationship with Jesus. We can go to a second level and also commit to congregational involvement and ministry. And we can go still deeper by choosing to work for the cause of Jesus and live the lifestyle of Jesus. Mary was committed to this third level. She stayed the course. She experienced a personal commitment to God. She began a life-long journey that involved her service to others (service to Elizabeth) and ended with the long difficult journey to the foot of the cross at Calvary.

1. Where is your advent journey taking you? Can you make a list of your current priorities at work and at home? Where is God in this equation?

## WEEKLY ADVENT GOSPELS

### First Week of Advent

**Monday:** Matthew 8:5-11

**Tuesday:** Luke 10:21-24

**Wednesday:** Matthew 15:29-37

**Thursday:** Matthew 7:21,24-27

**Friday:** Matthew 9:27-31

**Saturday:** Matthew 9:35 to 10:1,6-8

### Second Week of Advent

**Monday:** Luke 5:17-26

**Tuesday:** Matthew 18:12-14

**Wednesday:** Matthew 11:28-30

**Thursday:** Matthew 11:11-15

**Friday:** Matthew 11:16-19

**Saturday:** Matthew 17:10-13

### Third Week of Advent

**Monday:** Matthew 21:23-27

**Tuesday:** Matthew 1:1-17

**Wednesday:** Matthew 1:18-24

**Thursday:** Luke 1:5-25

**Friday:** Luke 1:26-38

**Saturday:** Luke 1:39-45

### Fourth Week of Advent

**Monday:** Luke 1:57-66

**Tuesday:** Luke 1:67-79

**Wednesday:** Christmas