

Love is
Born



ADVENT 2022

UNIVERSITY
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

*'To be human in an aching world is
to know our dignity and become people
who safeguard the dignity
of everything around us.'*

Cole Arthur Riley,
*This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation,
and the Stories That Make Us*



A REFLECTION AS WE BEGIN :

"For many of the churchly, the life of the spirit is reduced to a dull preoccupation with getting to Heaven. At best, the world is no more than an embarrassment and a trial to the spirit which is otherwise radically separated from it. The true lover of God must not be burdened with any care or respect for His works. While the body goes about its business of destroying the earth, the soul is supposed to wait for Sunday, keeping itself free of earthly contaminants. While the body exploits other bodies, the soul stands aloof, free from sin, crying to the gawking bystanders: 'I am not enjoying it!' As far as this sort of 'religion' is concerned, the body is no more than the lusterless container of the soul, a mere 'package' that will nevertheless light up in eternity, forever cool and shiny as a neon cross. This separation of the soul from the body and from the world is no disease of the fringe, no aberration, but a fracture that runs through the mentality of institutionalized religion like a geological fault. And this rift in the mentality of religion continues to characterize the modern mind, no matter how secular or worldly it becomes.... And yet, what is the burden of the Bible if not a sense of the mutuality of influence rising out of an essential unity, among soul and body and community and world?

-Wendell Berry, *The Body and the Earth*

Advent

A T U N I V E R S I T Y U M C



WEEK ONE

S U N D A Y , N O V 2 7 T H

Worship with us in person at 8:30 or 11:00 AM

Worship online at 11:00 AM

Advent Wreath Workshop in the Fellowship Hall 2:00 - 4:00 PM

W E D N E S D A Y , N O V 3 0 T H

Labyrinth Walk in the Fellowship Hall 12:00 - 1:00 PM

Advent Writing Workshop in the Fellowship Hall 5:30 - 6:30 PM

WEEK TWO

S U N D A Y , D E C 4 T H

Worship with us in person at 8:30 or 11:00 AM

Join us for our Children's Recital 9:45 AM in the Fellowship Hall

Worship online at 11:00 AM

W E D N E S D A Y , D E C 7 T H

Labyrinth Walk in the Fellowship Hall 12:00 - 1:00 PM

Advent Writing Workshop in the Fellowship Hall 5:30 - 6:30 PM

F R I D A Y , D E C 9 T H

Parent's Night Out in the Fellowship Hall 6:30 - 9:30 PM

WEEK THREE

S U N D A Y , D E C 1 1 T H

Join us for our *Lessons & Carols* Service

In person at 8:30 or 11:00 AM & online at 11:00 AM

W E D N E S D A Y , D E C 1 4 T H

Labyrinth Walk in the Fellowship Hall 12:00 - 1:00 PM

Advent Writing Workshop in the Fellowship Hall 5:30 - 6:30 PM

WEEK FOUR

S U N D A Y , D E C 1 8 T H

Join us for our special *Home for the Holidays* service

In person at 8:30 or 11:00 AM & online at 11:00 AM

Gather for a birthday party for Jesus 9:45 AM in the Fellowship Hall

M O N D A Y , D E C 1 9 T H

The Longest Night Service 6:30 PM

This service is crafted specifically for those who are grieving their way through Christmas.

Together we will sing and light candles in honor of those empty spaces at our tables.

W E D N E S D A Y , D E C 2 1 S T

Advent Writing Workshop in the Fellowship Hall 5:30 - 6:30 PM

S A T U R D A Y , D E C 2 4 T H

Join us for on Christmas Eve

Online or in person at 5:00 PM & in person 11:00 PM



Gather with us online at 10:00 AM on Christmas Day for a short worship service celebrating the birth of our newborn King of Kings!

A D V E N T W E E K O N E

S U N D A Y , N O V 2 7 T H



Love is Born in Me

READ & REFLECT:

READ MATTHEW 24:36-44

Holy God, Word made flesh, clear our minds and soften our hearts as we prepare to read Your sacred text. Rid us of our agendas, cast out our assumptions, and eliminate our expectations so that we might be truly grounded in your presence and guided by your light.

Amen.

What word, image, or phrase sticks out to you from this passage? If you are with a group, spend some time sharing what you hear in this passage, what you wonder about it, or what feels like an invitation to you somehow.

In a few words or sentences write a response to this time of reflection to God. This could be a word of gratitude, a question, or a specific request for some kind of hope.

LIGHT YOUR ADVENT WREATH

A Prayer for the lighting of the first candle of Advent, the purple candle of Hope.



O Lord in the darkness of my own numbness and disintegration, send out your light and your truth, that they may lead me and bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling in this and every season.

Amen

From Psalm 43:3-4

*Keep awake therefore,
for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming...*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

In this week's passage we are reminded that Christ is coming and urged to "stay awake," remaining vigilant in our anticipation of his arrival in a way akin to keeping watch for an unexpected burglar or a thief. What are some ways that we might do this?

Wakefulness and sleeping are both bodily states that imply a certain physical posture and level of alertness. Can we be awake spiritually and mentally and alert to the incoming presence of Christ, while asleep to the very bodies we inhabit? Or are these things inextricably linked?

What are some habits, practices, thought processes, or activities that might awaken and ready us in preparation for Jesus' arrival?

PRACTICE: *Awakening*

Reflect on one habit that you regularly engage in that might cause you to fall asleep to yourself and to the incarnate presence of Jesus. Some examples of these practices might be tech use, various forms of online or televised media, video games, shopping, compulsive eating, or alcohol use.

Pick a day or a block of time this week to intentionally disengage from that activity or practice. Use that time to go outside, observe and interact with creation, and move your body.

What did you notice about this practice?

What was difficult?

What was lifegiving?

A D V E N T W E E K T W O

S U N D A Y , D E C 4 T H

Love is Born in Us



READ & REFLECT

ISAIAH 11:1-10

Holy God, Word made flesh, clear our minds and soften our hearts as we prepare to read Your sacred text. Rid us of our agendas, cast out our assumptions, and eliminate our expectations so that we might be truly grounded in your presence and guided by your light.

Amen.

What word, image, or phrase sticks out to you from this passage? If you are with a group, spend some time sharing what you hear in this passage, what you wonder about it, or what feels like an invitation to you somehow.

In a few words or sentences write a response to this time of reflection to God. This could be a word of gratitude, a question, or a specific request for some kind of help.

LIGHT YOUR ADVENT WREATH

A Prayer for the lighting of the second candle of Advent, the purple candle for Love.

God of Love, we confess that we are limited in our knowledge of how your Love is alive and active in this world. We admit that at times we struggle to trust in Your promises and provision. May we be a people who remember You in all things and may that remembrance mark us as a community of hope in the here, but not yet arrival of Your Kingdom.

Amen

*'for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.'*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What do you find most compelling about the vision of redemption painted by the prophet Isaiah in this week's reading?

What do you find most difficult to find hope in or believe?

What kind of implications do you think the incarnation and embodiment of Jesus has on our relationships with our neighbors, our enemies, our communities, and the world.

PRACTICE: *Presence*

Find a period of time this week when you can commit yourself to being fully present to another person. Set aside all technology and devices. Take a moment ahead of time to center yourself, casting aside any noise or distractions that you might be carrying. Focus on listening twice as much as you speak, pausing at the end of each of this person's sentences before responding or adding something to the conversation. Be attentive to and observant of their non-verbal clues.

As you practice being present to them make a note of all the ways that they reflect and embody Christ.

Afterwards reflect on this practice, noticing what came out of it that was a gift and what you felt resistance to or struggled with.

Now imagine doing this same practice with someone you find hard to love. What are three words that come to mind when you consider doing this?

A D V E N T W E E K T H R E E

S U N D A Y , D E C 1 1 T H



Love is Born in Song and Story

Join us this Sunday for our *Lessons & Carols* service and experience the story of love being born through Scripture and song!

READ & REFLECT:

MATTHEW 11:1-12

Holy God, Word made flesh, clear our minds and soften our hearts as we prepare to read Your sacred text. Rid us of our agendas, cast out our assumptions, and eliminate our expectations so that we might be truly grounded in your presence and guided by your light.

Amen.

What word, image, or phrase sticks out to you from this passage? If you are with a group, spend some time sharing what you hear in this passage, what you wonder about it, or what feels like an invitation to you somehow.

In a few words or sentences write a response to this time of reflection to God. This could be a word of gratitude, a question, or a specific request for some kind of help.

LIGHT YOUR ADVENT WREATH

A Prayer for the lighting of the third candle of Advent, the pink candle of Joy.

God of wonder and delight, as the dawn of Christmas light draws nearer to us, rouse us with an invitation to deeper gratitude for the gifts received by humankind in the person of your Son, Jesus Christ. May we seek in him and find the embodiment of love and joy enfleshed in human skin. Humble us with a lasting impression of his goodness so that we too might find in his presence, power, and example, a way to be in this world as love with skin on.

Amen



*The blind receive sight, the lame walk,
those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear,
the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

What is one personal or familial story that you could use to respond to John as Jesus did?

What hymn do you think best explains the message of the power and presence of the incarnate Son of God?

What is one daily habit or practice that helps you to remember your "why" of the incarnation?

PRACTICE: *Sabbath*

Practice Sabbath beginning on Friday evening through Saturday night this week.
Spend this time singing songs, sharing stories, and celebrating God's provision.

What gifts did you experience as a result of this practice?

What struggles or tensions did you have in response to this practice?

"In the midst of our culture's tendency to embrace constant revelry that leaves us feeling hung-over and empty, we are people in training, together learning to wait.

We practice ways of waiting, hoping, slowing down, preparing,
and - because of all of that - truly celebrating."

-Tish Harrison Warren

A D V E N T W E E K F O U R

S U N D A Y , D E C 1 8 T H



Love is Born in Creation

READ & REFLECT

MATTHEW 1:18-25

Holy God, Word made flesh, clear our minds and soften our hearts as we prepare to read Your sacred text. Rid us of our agendas, cast out our assumptions, and eliminate our expectations so that we might be truly grounded in your presence and guided by your light.

Amen.

What word, image, or phrase sticks out to you from this passage? If you are with a group, spend some time sharing what you hear in this passage, what you wonder about it, or what feels like an invitation to you somehow.

In a few words or sentences write a response to this time of reflection to God. This could be a word of gratitude, a question, or a specific request for some kind of help.

LIGHT YOUR ADVENT WREATH

A prayer for lighting the fourth candle of Advent, the purple candle of Peace.

God of Creation, you turn famine into feast. Out of nothing you brought all things into being - sun, moon, land, water, trees, flowers, birds of the air, fish of the sea, and all of the animals who walk alongside us on dry land. Humble us so that we might be for all creation, people whose presence yields peace. Restore us to right relationship with all that you have so wonderfully made. Awaken us to our heavenly vocations as stewards of this planet and

renew in us an ongoing commitment to live and move and have our

being as agents of your perfect Love.

Amen



'and they will call him Immanuel, God is with us.'

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

What does Jesus' physical birth say to you about God's posture towards all creation?

In what ways might our own numbness or disembodiment affect our response to or relationship with creation?

In what ways does the incarnation affect or inform the way you move and respond to the created world?

PRACTICE: *Creation Care*

Consider one area where you are presently supporting environmentally exploitive practices through what you buy, do, or eat. If you are struggling to think of something ask God for help.

Commit to a fast of this particular thing. This might mean spending one day intentionally off the roads and finding creative ways to adjust your transportation habits to consolidate trips.

It might mean going a week without purchasing or consuming factory farmed meat or industrial food crops. It could also mean narrowing your gift giving to responsibly sourced goods, clothing, and textiles. Or it could be something else completely.

Write about what you noticed, enjoyed, or struggled with through this practice below.

Christmas Day



READ LUKE 2:1-20

Holy God, Word made flesh, clear our minds and soften our hearts as we prepare to read Your sacred text. Rid us of our agendas, cast out our assumptions, and eliminate our expectations so that we might be truly grounded in your presence and guided by your light.

Amen.

What word, image, or phrase sticks out to you from this passage? If you are with a group, spend some time sharing what you hear in this passage, what you wonder about it, or what feels like an invitation to you somehow.

PRACTICE: *Celebration*

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."

- Luke 2:10-11

Feast with gratitude for the gifts you have been given. Sing songs of praise. Celebrate Jesus' humanity by making a birthday cake for him complete with candle to signify his presence in the world. Light all of the candles on your Advent wreath as a reminder of God's goodness and mission on behalf of us and all the Earth!

A PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

for the gifts we have been given

OUR INCARNATE KING, JESUS

Write a few words or sentences giving thanks for the person of Jesus, specifically acknowledging the impact his birth has had on the world.

Add a word or line requesting help as you seek to develop a deeper love, respect and appreciation for this great gift in the year to come.

THESE BODIES WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN

Write a few words or sentences giving thanks for your physical body, acknowledging what the incarnation has done for it.

Add a word or line requesting help as you seek to develop a deeper love, respect and appreciation for this great gift in the year to come.

FOR CONNECTING WITH OTHERS

Write a few words or sentences giving thanks for the bodies of others, acknowledging how the incarnation must impact our relationship with and responses to them.

Add a word or line requesting help as you seek to develop a deeper love, respect and appreciation for these great gifts in the year to come.

FOR THE GIFT OF CREATION

Write a few words or sentences giving thanks for all of creation, acknowledging how the incarnation must impact our responses to everything that God has made.

Add a word or line requesting help as you seek to develop a deeper love, respect and appreciation for this great gift in the year to come.



*For unto us
a child is born
unto us
a Son is given*



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