



# Let Us Sing

2024 ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

Pulaski Heights United  
Methodist Church



# Let Us Sing

"Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: sing forth  
the honor of his name: make his praise glorious."  
- Psalm 66:1-2

Music is powerful. It speaks to us in ways simple words  
don't. Songs get stuck in our heads and they move our  
hearts.

This Advent and Christmas season, we will be celebrating  
music's power for our lives through our worship series  
"Let Us Sing."

Each week in worship, we will examine a different carol  
and what it teaches us about anticipating and celebrating  
the coming of Christ.

Within this devotional booklet are reflections written about  
different songs. Each day you are invited to listen to the  
song, read the devotional and reflect: How will you sing to  
God this season as you look towards the coming of Jesus  
and the power of his birth?



**PULASKI  
HEIGHTS**  
United Methodist Church

## FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT: DECEMBER 1

# Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus

We begin Advent with this hymn by Charles Wesley, brother of John and one of the founders of Methodism. He wrote this Advent hymn and printed it in his Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord in 1744. Like so many of Wesley's texts, "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" alludes to one or more Scripture passages in virtually every phrase. It begins with Advent prophecies in the Old Testament, speaks of Christ's birth and kingdom, and invites Christ to rule in our hearts.

Advent is a season of preparation but what I find so poignant and powerful each year is that it is also a season of longing, longing for the world to be better, longing for Christ to come into the world, to come to us. Advent recognizes that this world is not as it should be, yet invites us to hope for better. We have hope that in Christ its transformation has begun but isn't fully here yet. Advent looks to the birth of Christ but also to the full coming of Christ, the full transformation of the world. This song is one of my favorites because Wesley manages to capture this all. The promise, the longing, the hope, the waiting, the expectation... Christ is coming to change this world from the way it is, with its fear and sin and oppression, to joy and peace. How will we receive this coming Christ? How will we seek the promised transformation he comes to bring?



**Listen to the  
hymn here!**

**- Rev. Kathleen McMurray**

## DECEMBER 2

# Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates

*Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates;  
behold, the King of glory waits;  
the King of kings is drawing near;  
the Savior of the world is here!*

“Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates” was written by Georg Weisell, a teacher and minister who is known to have written about 20 hymns in the 17th century. In this hymn, Weisell draws parallels between the Old Testament and the New Testament, paraphrasing Psalm 24:7-10 and applying it to the Advent season as he commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ:

The relevant part of Psalm 24 begins as follows:  
Lift up your heads, O gates!  
and be lifted up, O ancient doors,  
that the King of glory may come in!  
(Psalm 24:7-8, NRSV)

King David, who wrote most of the Psalms (including this one), likely imagined a grand occasion as he wrote these words long before the birth of Christ. Weisell masterfully segues from this regal image into a more personal message—two verses that we can all apply to our lives:

*Fling wide the portals of your heart;  
make it a temple, set apart  
from earthly use for heaven’s employ,  
adorned with prayer and love and joy.  
Redeemer, come, with us abide;  
our hearts to thee we open wide;  
let us thy inner presence feel;  
thy grace and love in us reveal.*

Just as the royal procession imagined by King David opened a series of massive gates and doors for the entrance of the King, we too must open the gates and doors that can keep us from welcoming God into our hearts—and we can do this! Weisell is not claiming any entitlement to God’s grace or love, and we are not doing that either. However, it is available to anyone who requests it. All we have to do is ask!



**Listen to the  
hymn here!**

**- Ryan Eppinette**

## DECEMBER 3

# Emmanuel

*You are in the waiting  
You are in the pacing  
You are in the story unfolding  
You are in the mystery  
The Glory in the victory  
You are in the story unfolding*

*Emmanuel God with us  
You are the constant in the promise  
The everlasting One  
Emmanuel be lifted high  
Hope for the hopeless peace for the broken  
Emmanuel The Christ*

The older I've gotten, the more I have struggled with the month of December... The busyness, materialism, and endless social and work obligations left me feeling disconnected from the heart of the season. I was caught up in the hustle and bustle, forgetting that Christmas is about God coming to dwell with us. From that place of wrestling, I (alongside my dear friend David Williams) wrote "Emmanuel"—a song calling us to rest in God's presence, the Prince of Peace.

The Psalms of Ascent are a collection of psalms (Psalm 120-134) sung by the Israelites as they journeyed up Mount Zion to Jerusalem for worship during their annual festivals. These psalms are filled with themes of trust, hope, and dependence on God, especially in the face of challenges. In Psalm 121 we read, "I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:1-2). These words invite us, even in our busyness, to look to God for help and peace.

What if rest is actually part of the work this Advent? What if taking time to pause, to lift our eyes and hearts to God, isn't a distraction but the true purpose of the season? Just as the Israelites needed to trust in God on their journey, we too are called to rest in God's presence (especially in hectic seasons), knowing that Emmanuel—God with us—is where we find our strength.

So, as you move through the hustle and bustle of December, remember that God came to be with you. Let rest be part of your journey this Advent. Lift your eyes to God, and let the Prince of Peace guide and refresh you during this season.



**Listen to the  
song here!**

**- Brooke Sanchez-Hobbs**

**DECEMBER 4**

# People Look East

*People, look east. The time is near  
Of the crowning of the year.  
Make your house fair as you are able,  
Trim the hearth and set the table.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the guest, is on the way.*

Have you ever thought about it, but that every day begins in the East as does every night? And that every minute of every hour of every day does, too? It's also the direction where Eleanor Farjeon asked folks to look back in 1928 when she composed her new song for welcoming the season of Advent. A native of London, England, she was a devout Catholic who would also three years later compose the lyrics to the popular song "Morning Has Broken," which would also celebrate the dawning of each new day.

The East is the direction in Creation where God chose to plant His ideal Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:8). The East is also from where the Magi came to visit the newly born Christ Child, and the position in the sky from which they followed the star to visit Him (Matthew 2:1-21). Therefore, the East is pretty special.

As we look at the lyrics of "People Look East," we notice how the author is asking us to look forward to preparing for the setting of the new season of Advent, for the coming of the birth of our new Savior in Jesus Christ, to make way for the excitement that will be happening in the coming weeks when the promise of the Old Testament prophets will be finally fulfilled. As you read through the verses of Farjeon's words, how can you not be inspired to "make your house fair as you are able," "look east and sing today," "guard the nest that must be fulfilled," "the time is near of the crowning of the year," "keep the watch when night is dim," "announce with shouts of mirth Christ who brings new life to earth?!"

So, people, look East! Advent is here! God bless us all-everyone! Amen!



**Listen to the  
hymn here!**

**- Dr. Tyler Thompson**

## DECEMBER 5

# I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

*I want to walk as a child of the light  
I want to follow Jesus  
God sent the stars to give light to the world  
The star of my life is Jesus*

*I want to see the brightness of God  
I want to look at Jesus  
Clear sun of righteousness, shine on my path  
And show me the way to the Father (CHORUS)*

**CHORUS:** *In Him, there is no darkness at all  
The night and the day are both alike  
The Lamb is the light of the city of God  
Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus*

*I'm looking for the coming of Christ  
I want to be with Jesus  
When we have run with patience the race  
We shall know the joy of Jesus (CHORUS)*

This hymn was written by Kathleen Thomerson in 1966. A very simple, yet profound song. Almost through the voice of a child, "I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light" communicates a great assurance and a very personal sincerity. The first-person perspective invites us to join Jesus, the Light of the World, in discipleship - a journey of faith.

We deepen our commitment with each passing verse:

Verse 1: "I want to follow Jesus."

Verse 2: "I want to look at Jesus."

Verse 3: "I want to be with Jesus."

The hymn hints at sanctifying grace for Wesleyan Christians as we move toward perfection, becoming transformed in the image of Christ. Each verse adds more to the journey. In the first verse, "God sets the stars to give light to the world." Jesus, in turn, becomes the "star of my life" (remember, stars are important during Advent!).

Verse two expresses the desire to "see the brightness of God." The "Sun of Righteousness" illumines "the way to the Father." The final verse extends the journey toward the "coming of Christ," as we remember our hope for the future.

The simplicity of the music and text does not imply a simplistic faith. "I want to walk as a child" reminds us once again about the importance of a childlike faith.

When we have run, with patience, the race- we shall know the joy of Jesus. May God continue to bless you during this Advent season!

**Psalm 136:12:** *"Even the darkness is not dark to You, And the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You."*



**Listen to the  
hymn here!**

**- Rev. Jay Clark**

**DECEMBER 6**

# Hope Has a Name

*Breaking through the silence  
With glory in the highest  
The hope of all creation, resting in His mother's arms  
The song on the horizon, ringing through the heavens  
The long-awaited Savior, come to set the captives free  
Come to set the captives free  
Come set us free*

*Hope has a name, Emmanuel  
The light of the world  
who broke through the darkness  
All hail the king, Emmanuel  
The light of the world, the glory of heaven*

I love this song so much! I mean, how much gratitude and hope and promise can you even fit into three minutes? I am always blown away when I think of how deep the love of the Lord must be for him to wrap himself so humbly in humanity, step outside of eternity and walk out the human experience so that we could know him. What a bid for connection. It's hard to fathom.

I also think about how he didn't just want to have us sit idly next to him, he made a way to partner with us to bring his love and hope and healing to a world that so desperately needs it. I can't even count how many times over the years I've held my babies and thought about who they would be when they grew up. Over and over the thing I was the most excited to see develop was the unique traits of God that they would carry into the world around them. After all, we are made in his image. What an absolute honor to be the hands and feet of Love himself at this exact time.

Basically, my thoughts of this song leave me in a puddle. I am so wildly grateful to be so loved that Emmanuel came for me. And, I am so filled with hope when I look around me at all of the other representations of him I see. Hope has a name, (insert your name here). You, too, are a sign of hope for a world that needs in now.



**Listen to the  
hymn here!**

**- Sarah Bunker**



## DECEMBER 7

# Hail to the Lord's Anointed

*Hail to the Lord's Anointed,  
great David's greater Son!  
Hail in the time appointed,  
his reign on earth begun!  
He comes to break oppression,  
to set the captive free;  
to take away transgression,  
and rule in equity.*

*To him shall prayer unceasing  
and daily vows ascend;  
his kingdom still increasing,  
a kingdom without end.  
The tide of time shall never  
his covenant remove;  
his name shall stand forever;  
that name to us is love.*

As I write this, I am now two months 'out' from back surgery and two months ahead of Christmas. I am impatient that I am not yet able to walk without the use of a cane even knowing that it has been only two months! I am also impatient to have to wait to see the faces of my grandchildren at Christmas - whether in person or via Facetime or Zoom.

Yet, we wait! We wait for the coming of 'the Lord's Anointed' in many different ways. I think about the work of the Church, as He calls us - for helping those who are wronged, those who are poor and in need, those whom we can pray with and support. I am grateful to be part of that Church!

The vision of Christ coming "down like showers upon the fruitful earth; love, joy and hope, like flowers spring in the path to birth" is so refreshing in these times. We need this reassurance and expectation of God's peace.

This is my prayer: "The tide of time shall never his covenant remove; His name shall stand forever, that name to us is love."



**Listen to the  
hymn here!**

**- Bev Villines**

## SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT: DECEMBER 8

# O Come, O Come Emmanuel

*"O Come, Desire of nations bind all peoples in one heart and mind. From dust thou brought us forth to life; deliver us from earthly strife. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel."*

It feels hard to rejoice this Advent season, given the state of our world. When the nations are plagued with war, oppression, famine, climate change, violence, and so much more, it can feel counterintuitive - dishonest, even - to sing songs of rejoicing. We look around and we do not recognize the world around us. Like the Psalmist, we cry "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" But then, the lyrics remind us that the same God who created this earth and is the ruler of all nations is the God who breathed life into you and me from the dust of the ground.

We know this is not the world we want to live in, and yet the impending arrival of the Christ child in our midst reminds us that God cares enough about the world God created to be here physically with us in the person of Jesus. Emmanuel will come, and with it glimpses of the Kingdom of God and an end to earthly strife.

Activist Lilla Watson wrote: "If you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." And so we come this Advent season, desiring to be of one heart and mind, because we know that the liberation of all nations is found at the foot of the manger, where we all rejoice that Emmanuel has indeed come.



**Listen to the  
carol here!**

**- Rev. Katye Chambers**

**DECEMBER 9**

# Blessed Be the God of Israel

*Blessed be the God of Israel, who comes to set us free,  
who visits and redeems us, and grants us liberty.  
The prophets spoke of mercy, of freedom and release;  
God shall fulfill the promise to bring our people peace*

This hymn is based on Luke 1:68-79. In Luke we are told of Zechariah, a priest living some years before the birth of Christ. Zechariah was visited by the angel Gabriel who announced that Zechariah's wife, Elizabeth, would bear a son and was to be named John. Zechariah asked Gabriel, "How can this be? We are too old." Gabriel responded that because of his lack of belief, Zechariah's ability to speak would be taken from him until the child was born. This passage is Zechariah's first speaking after Elizabeth delivered her child who would come to be known as John the Baptist.

Zechariah focuses on God as the strong protector of "a Branch of David's Tree." God swore to Abraham that He would turn back the enemies to set His people free that all might worship without fear and live lives of praise in holiness and righteousness. The concept of God's protection is deeply rooted in our belief that God is not only a loving and compassionate Creator but also a mighty shield and fortress for His people.

The third stanza declares that John will prepare the way and assures us that by God's mercy, we are saved from "sin's eternal sway."

The hymn was adapted from Luke by Carl P. Daw, Jr., the son of a Baptist minister and Episcopal priest. In other denominations the prophecy of Zechariah is also known as "Benedictus (The Song of Zechariah)".



**Listen to the  
hymn here!**

**- Allen Bird**

## DECEMBER 10

# Light of the World (Sing Hallelujah)

*Light of the world, treasure of Heaven  
Brilliant like the stars, in the wintery sky  
Joy of the Father, reach through the darkness  
Shine across the earth, send the shadows to flight*

*Sing hallelujah, sing hallelujah  
Sing hallelujah for the things He has done  
Come and adore Him, bow down before Him  
Sing hallelujah to the light of the world*

*Light of the world, from the beginning  
The tragedies of time, were no match for Your love  
From great heights of glory, You saw my story  
God, You entered in, and became one of us*

“Light of the world, crown in a manger, born for the cross, to suffer, to save.” As I hear this lyric, I wonder what it was like to be in Bethlehem the night Jesus was born.

If we were there, would we have noticed the stories the stars told? Would we have recognized the sounds of creation crying out, rejoicing at this event separating time and space to save humanity? Would we have shouted “Hallelujah” in expression of praise bridging the earthly and heavenly realms, or would we have missed it altogether? Distracted by life and missing a sacred moment occurring in an unlikely place.

Can you imagine peering into a manger, only to meet the eyes of God looking back at you lovingly from the cradle? Would we have recognized Him? As we gathered around to see the plan that God had birthed, would we have noticed His tiny hands, yet fallen to our knees in awe when we realized their infinite power had created the universe? Or would we have missed it?

And as the silent night was pierced by a tiny baby’s cry, would we have even felt the significance of the privilege of hearing the voice of God weeping in a manger? Would we have recognized the weight of the glory of Him who was born for the cross, to suffer, to save? Or would we have missed it?

Let us not get so distracted by life that we miss sacred moments occurring in unlikely places. “Sing Hallelujah to the Light of the World,” bridging the earthly and heavenly realms, and capturing sacred moments to be shared in unlikely places this Christmas Season.



**Listen to the  
song here!**

**- Shane Frazier**

**DECEMBER 11**

# In the Bleak Midwinter

*In the bleak midwinter  
Frosty wind made moan  
Earth stood hard as iron  
Water like a stone  
Snow had fallen  
Snow on snow, snow on snow  
In the bleak midwinter, long, long ago*

So often we forget the role of grief in our experience with Christ. “In the Bleak Midwinter” introduces us to an unchanging, bleak landscape of winter. We often associate darkness with fear, or lack of faith—but it is precisely in this scene that our hymnist introduces the saving grace of the world.

God creates out of darkness, out of death, and out of hopelessness. Sometimes we feel guilty that we are closest to God when things go wrong—that during Christmas joy we forget to put the “Christ in Christmas!”--but there is no shame here friends. There is only a small, yet potent thing happening in the landscape where we expect nothing but the harshness of the elements. How many times in our lives have we expected nothingness, and yet God made a way? This is our witness to the gospel: that we are either empowered to believe in the way God is making, or we are busy helping God make a way for hope in the life of another.

Which are you today?

The gospel tells this story over and over—that in the impossible, God makes a way. Through the red sea. Through the desert. Through a pregnancy in an unlikely womb. Through a wrestling match and an injury. Through a boat in a flood. Through a prophet with a loud voice. Through the rise and fall of an unlikely and imperfect king. Through a dreamer baptizing in the wilderness.

And a baby crying out in bleak “midwinter”.

Where is God making a way today?



**Listen to the  
hymn here!**

**- Rev. Ellen Rowland**

**DECEMBER 12**

## © Little Town of Bethlehem

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

Jesus said, "Peace, I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, and neither let it be afraid."

John 14:27 (NKJV)

In a world where there is chaos there is also peace. Jesus is our peace and before he left to be with our heavenly father, the holy spirit entered into the hearts of his people. And Jesus' words above are as true today as they were long ago.

Peace is what the lyricist, Phillip Brooks, felt when he visited Jesus's birthplace, Bethlehem. And when he arrived in Bethlehem, he went to what was believed to be the exact place where Jesus was born in the manger. It was a peaceful, quiet night with the stars shining bright. He was so moved by the experience. The tour of this town inspired him to write this beloved Christmas carol.

Its four verses tell of Jesus' birth to his mother, Mary, on the still and quiet night he was born. This carol reminds us of what the true meaning of Christmas is about. The joy his life would bring, his teachings, and his sacrifice.

When I sing this carol or hear someone else sing it, my heart is filled with joy and the peace that only Jesus can give. As I reflect on Jesus' love and compassion, it touches the deepest part of my soul. Oh what a wonderful night in Bethlehem when Christ was born. So with all of the love in my heart, that I have to give, I wish you and yours a Merry Christmas.



**Listen to the  
carol here!**

**- Dominique Holloway**

**DECEMBER 13**

# Angels From the Realms of Glory

*Angels from the realms of glory,  
wing your flight o'er all the earth;  
ye who sang creation's story  
now proclaim Messiah's birth*

*Come and worship, come and worship,  
worship Christ, the newborn king.*

Scottish born James Montgomery (1771-1854), author of Angels from the Realms of Glory, was the son of Moravian parents who died in the West Indies mission field while he was in boarding school. During his lifetime Montgomery contributed greatly to English hymnody by authoring volumes of poetry and 400 hymn texts. A man of deep religious faith, Montgomery also supported a number of social causes during his lifetime, including the abolition of slavery. He was editor of the weekly Sheffield Register in London for 31 years.

Angels from the Realms of Glory first appeared as a poem in Montgomery's newspaper on Christmas Eve in 1816. This Christmas and Epiphany hymn text expresses an almost cosmic sense as it begins with Christ's incarnation to the final great day. The text incorporates all creatures in the call to "come and worship Christ, the newborn King!": stanza one—the angels; stanza two—the shepherds; stanza three—the wise men (sages); stanza four—all nations (saints).

The hymn's invitation to "come and worship Christ, the newborn King!" is a reminder to us all that our annual celebration of Christ's birth is a wake-up call. It's a reminder that we, too, are invited to be born again. For Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection is a gift for each of us, if we only accept it fully. No matter what we have done in the past, no matter what we have failed to become thus far, there is a new life with new possibilities when we fully embrace our Lord and Savior's love. And that is a worthy celebration every year!



**Listen to the  
hymn here!**

**- Dr. Frode Gundersen**

**DECEMBER 14**

## Once in Royal David's City

*Once in Royal David's city  
Stood a lowly cattle shed  
Where a mother laid her baby  
In a manger for his bed  
Mary was that mother's mild  
Jesus Christ, her little Child*

When I was asked to reflect on this hymn & write a devotional, my first thought was "I am so not qualified for this." I still consider myself a baby Christian. Someone who needs to learn much more before sharing my own thoughts.

As a tap dancer, I loved going to classes and learning new combinations from super talented teachers. But once I became the teacher, I grew to be a better dancer by learning how to teach and lead. Maybe this is what God has in mind. For me to be a leader from humble beginnings even when it's uncomfortable. (Luckily,) This song was written for children (and baby Christians like me), to help them learn and understand Jesus's story and life progressions all the way up to His ascent into heaven to sit at God's right hand.

Sometimes it's hard to grasp the meaning of something in the moment, but when we have time to look back and reflect, we can better understand. Case in point: while Jesus was on earth, he wasn't seen as the son of God. It wasn't until he died that people started to make sense of it all. As we say, hindsight is 20/20. But the concept of Jesus being fully human and fully God is still extremely hard to comprehend. The good news is, we don't need to understand every detail to relate to the story. The core concept of this hymn is humility. Jesus comes from very humble beginnings. Subpar conditions at birth and complete dependence and vulnerability. It's a vivid visual written as a poem. He lowered himself from the heavens to our earthly level as a mere human to show us the way. To lead us. To get out and do it with us.

There is no doubt the entire life of Jesus is the biggest gift we have ever received. Let's not unwrap it and leave it on the shelf. Put on your tap shoes and learn to lead. We all do it differently. How low are we willing to dive to walk through life with the people around us who need us? When we open ourselves up to be a leader, we will learn more than we ever imagined. With humility and grace as our compass, we can teach about the life of Jesus in our own ways.



**Listen to the  
hymn here!**

**- Amanda Craven**



## THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT: DECEMBER 15

### 🎵 Come All Ye Faithful

We underestimate the magnitude of our faith far too often. “Oh come all ye faithful” speaks of inviting all the faithful Christians to rejoice in the birth of Jesus Christ. People so often associate being faithful with going to church every Sunday morning or praying all hours of the day, but faith is so much more than that.

The first verse of the hymn invites all the “faithful, joyful and triumphant” Christians to celebrate Jesus’ birth. However, these can be difficult attributes to fit all the time, even during the holidays. Despite the joy of the Christmas season, sadness and mourning do not leave our lives. Triumph is often associated with victories, but loss does not walk out the door during Advent. Faith can be exhibited in so many ways, and it changes as we change. There is no reason to feel any sort of guilt if we think we don’t fit in all of these categories because, whether we feel like it or not, we do.

Galatians 5:14 says “All the law has been fulfilled in a single statement: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” We all show our faithfulness in different ways - big and small. Through patience. Through kindness. Through love. By accepting and loving those who are close to us, despite their flaws. By praying and thanking God. By having patience when we don’t want to. By being kind to people who aren’t like us. By forgiving those who have wronged us.

As you go about your daily lives, how are you going to make time to be the “faithful” Christian you want to be?



PHUMC.COM/ADV

**Listen to the  
carol here!**

**- Maddie Anderson**

**DECEMBER 16**

# Angels We Have Heard on High

"Angels We Have Heard on High" is a beloved Christmas carol! This traditional French carol melody is sung to the tune "Gloria." The theme is the birth of Jesus Christ, as narrated in the Gospel of Luke 2: 8-14. It relives the scene outside Bethlehem where shepherds encountered many angels singing and praising the newborn child. Its most memorable feature is its chorus, "Gloria in excelsis Deo," where the "o" of "Gloria" is sustained through 16 notes of a rising and falling unusually sweet sound.

As shepherds were guarding their flocks against predators in the darkness of night, suddenly, an angel of the Lord stood before them; a glorious light surrounded them, and they were terrified! The angel calmed their fears and delivered good news of great joy for the entire world. Today, born in the city of David is a Savior, the Messiah, the Lord. You will know you have found Him when you see a baby, wrapped in a blanket, lying in a manger. At that moment, the first angel was joined by thousands of angels singing, Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace among those he favors on earth!

After the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds went to Bethlehem to see what the Lord had made known to them and the world. So, they quickly found Mary and Joseph and saw Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ lying in a manger. Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo! ("Glory to God in the Highest!")

*See him in a manger laid,  
Whom the choirs of angels praise.  
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid  
While our hearts in love we raise.*

Prayer: Thank you, God, for the precious gift of your only son, Jesus. May the world continue to receive him into our hearts daily. Amen.



**Listen to the  
carol here!**

**- Dr. Jeffery B. Hampton**

**DECEMBER 17**

# The First Noel

*The first Noel the angel did say  
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay,  
in fields where they lay keeping their sheep,  
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.*

*Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,  
born is the King of Israel*

The First Noel is an English hymn with roots in the oral tradition of the fifteenth century. It was first published in 1823 and is thought have originated in Cornwall. In many early editions, the title was The First Nowell (English word rather than French). I believe it is a favorite hymn because the melody is approachable by everyone. It reminds us that no matter what may be happening in this world today, the message of hope provided by the birth of Christ continues.

One of my brothers, Dan, loved Christmas music to the extreme. He shaped our joy in Christmas music. He wasn't allowed to play it on the stereo until Thanksgiving Day (Mom's rule), but once Advent began, Christmas was the only music on the stereo. The Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Mormon Tabernacle choir, etc. were the performances we listened to. As the youngest child, I thought this was the music everyone listened to during the season.

Dan just had to share his music. Whether teaching or performing, he had to share. He began making compilations of his favorite Christmas music to give to family and friends. Some of you have CDs he shared and might even remember Dan playing here at PHUMC.

The last conscious thing Dan did was select music for the 2019 CD. The recording I have linked to this is an oboe, English horn duet with Forum Sinfonia. Dan is the oboist. I hope you enjoy it and remember to share the hope that Christmas brings to us.



**Listen to the  
carol here!**

**- Cindy Beuhling**

**DECEMBER 18**

# Away in a Manger

*Away in a manger  
No crib for a bed  
The little Lord Jesus  
Laid down His sweet head  
The stars in the bright sky  
Looked down where He lay  
The little Lord Jesus  
Asleep on the hay*

When I began to consider the themes of this beloved Christmas carol, three came to mind: 1. Overcoming functional fixedness 2. Finding purpose in the mundane 3. Humble entry.

“Overcoming functional fixedness” is a term I first encountered during a high school leadership seminar. This creative problem-solving approach involves using an item for something beyond its familiar function. For example, using an ink pen as a letter opener or as a chip clip are ways to expand the versatility of this established writing utensil. Using a manger as a baby bed is another genius example.

This creative re-purposing not only demonstrates expert critical thinking skills but also a propensity to find purpose in the mundane. The Biblical characters in the nativity scene are indeed short on resources but also divinely inspired. They act as agents ushering in the New Covenant, ensuring that the Christ child has an adequate place to rest his sweet head.

By transforming this commonplace object - the manger - into a divine resting place, the nativity crew demonstrates the fact that holiness and humility can coexist. Christ humbly and creatively enters this world in the form of a baby, inviting new life and shattering our universal hierarchy.

How can we get creative in our lives of faith? How can we discover newfound joy and purpose in the mundane features of modern-day life? How can we cultivate humility as naturally egocentric human beings, striving daily to emulate Christ more fully and to perpetuate the principles of the New Covenant?



**Listen to the  
carol here!**

**- Kat Wright**

**DECEMBER 19**

## What Child Is This?

*What child is this,  
Who, laid to rest,  
On Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthem sweet,  
While shepherds watch are keeping?*

*This, this is Christ the King,  
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing  
This, this is Christ the King,  
The Babe, the Son of Mary.*

As we gather during this Advent season, the hymn "What Child Is This" invites us to take a moment and reflect on the holy mystery of the nativity. The lyrics, written by William C. Dix in 1865, prompt us to contemplate the humanity of Christ as a child in a manger. While each verse takes the singer deeper into revealing who Christ is as a humble infant, but also who Christ is as the Savior of the world. The tune, GREENSLEEVES, which dates to the 16th century, is one of the most beautiful and beloved melodies associated with the season.

"What Child Is This" speaks to the wonder of the shepherds and the wise men, who were drawn to this extraordinary event. The hymn reminds us that the birth of Christ is not just any ordinary birth. The hymn's lyrics illustrate the fulfillment of prophecy and a turning point in God's great narrative of redemption. "The King of kings, salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone him." This child, lying in a manger, is the King of kings, and is destined to bear our burdens, and redeem humanity.

It is easy to overlook the miracle of Christmas in our busy lives. Yet, this hymn calls us to slow down and reflect on the significance of Christ's birth. As we think about who this baby is, let us remember that he is our hope, peace, joy, and love this season. As we sing these words, may we open our hearts to the wonder of the incarnation. Let us embrace our call to worship this child who brings light into our darkness. And so, this Advent, we will celebrate not just a holy moment at the manger, but the very essence of who we are as Christians.



**Listen to the  
carol here!**

**- Trenton Teegarden**

**DECEMBER 20**

# Breath of Heaven

*I have traveled many moonless nights  
Cold and weary with a babe inside  
And I wonder what I've done  
Holy father, you have come  
And chosen me now to carry your son*

*Breath of heaven, hold me together  
Be forever near me, breath of heaven  
Breath of heaven, lighten my darkness  
Pour over me your holiness for you are holy  
Breath of heaven*

*I am waiting in a silent prayer  
I am frightened by the load I bear  
In a world as cold as stone  
Must I walk this path alone?  
Be with me now, be with me now*

Amy Grant's song "Breath of Heaven (Mary's Song)" is not the typical song I think of during the Christmas season.

It is filled with questions and wonder from Mary, but in this comes the beauty of God. The interpretation that songwriters Amy Grant and Christopher Eaton bring of what Mary could have been thinking and praying leading up to the birth of Jesus are what many of us may think in our everyday life.

One of my favorite parts of the song simply says, "Help me be strong, help me be, help me." I feel like that is a prayer I have said many times in my life. Help me be strong in what I am doing. Help me be understanding to all those around me. Help me.

We all need help and this song gives me comfort that no matter what, there is always a "breath of heaven" saved for you. I have someone who will listen to my worries and help lighten my load in God, all I have to do is ask.



**Listen to the  
song here!**

**- Emily Burris**

**DECEMBER 21**

## *O Holy Night*

*O holy night! the stars are brightly shining;  
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth.  
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,  
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.  
A thrill of hope- the weary world rejoices,  
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!  
Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!  
O night divine, O night when Christ was born!  
O night, O holy night, O night divine!*

As we look ahead to the coming of Christ, we continue to wait with excitement and hope. The manger will not be empty for too much longer. Christ is coming!

If you're like me, when you think about popular songs of the season, the song "O Holy Night" quickly comes to mind. I can't even count the number of times I've heard this beloved song during Christmas Eve services. With as many times as I've heard this song in United Methodist churches, I was surprised to learn that this song is not in our United Methodist hymnal. This song premiered on stage with an opera singer performing it in the 1840s. From then on, this song has resonated from generation to generation with all who have heard it.

It provides us with such a unique perspective of the birth of Christ from the Gospel of Luke. Can't you just hear the excitement throughout the song?

"A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn! Fall on your knees, o hear the angel voices! O night divine, o night when Christ was born!"

As we listen to this song, I hope that it will continue to inspire us to embrace the hope that this season brings. May we all open our hearts to the transformative power of Christ that will equip us to share Christ's love with a weary world. "Let all within us praise His holy name!"

Blessings on the journey.



**Listen to the  
carol here!**

**- Rev. Daniel Curry**

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT: DECEMBER 22

# Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

“Hark! The Herald Angel Sings” functions as a joyful proclamation of Christ’s arrival on earth. As we move through this season of Advent, we find ourselves declaring Christ’s incarnation. But what does that mean to us who live in an age without Christ in human form?

The song, “Hark! The Herald Angel Sing” calls us to join the angelic hosts in proclaiming the presence of Christ. In our vows of membership, we covenant to be faithful in our witness. This can take the form of proclamation or it can be embodied, as we live out God’s goodness through our actions.

Charles Wesley, who wrote this hymn, understood that Jesus’ arrival brought “peace on earth and mercy mild.” As modern Christians, we are invited to witness places in our communities lacking that peace and act to usher peace into them. As you hear this song throughout your Christmas season, let it serve as a reminder to join the angels in proclaiming God’s presence through acknowledging the acts of God in your own life, and seeking to be the presence of God in others’ lives.

**Reflection:** Throughout your day, take time to reflect on how God has moved throughout your life: how has God’s love brought you peace? Search for moments in which God can move through you: how can I bring God’s love to others?

**A Prayer:** God, in this season of hope, help me to be steadfast in my acknowledgement of your presence in your life. In small moments of peace or healing, help me to take a breath, and be strengthened by the knowledge that You are with me. God, open my eyes to the ways in which I can join You in Your work to bring peace and healing to all. Help me to embody your love in the world. Amen



Listen to the  
carol here!

- Meredith Gadberry & Caiah Dunlap



**DECEMBER 23**

# Go, Tell It on the Mountain

*Go, tell it on the mountain  
Over the hills and everywhere  
Go, tell it on the mountain  
That Jesus Christ is born*

*While shepherds kept their watching  
O'er silent flocks by night  
Behold throughout the heavens  
There shone a Holy light*

Although no one can surely say who was originally published, most people agree that it was written by John Wesley Work Jr. This song is an African-American spiritual and a song sung at Christmas. Also, it has been sung in advent season and recorded and arranged by many people.

Original lyrics are very simple and clear, "Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere. Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born." Entire three verses are saying about all occasions during when Jesus is born in Bethlehem. Refrain parts keep emphasizing that we need to tell the Nativity of Jesus to people and celebrate. This song is perfect music for our Advent season and United Methodist Hymnal has also included this as hymn.

And its tune? It is definitely joyful because lyrics are glorious and joyous! Jesus is born in the earth for our salvation, and we know it and need to tell this all people! Rhythmical and bright music make us excited. This song also can be sung with a dotted rhythm.

I think this hymn's message is as powerful as very popular hymn "Joy to the World." Very important mission of our life is to invite and encourage to the people to know Jesus Christ is born for our salvation and this hymn has solely emphasized us that Jesus is born. Simple message is very powerful!

I love to play this music arranged by Richard Elliott who is the principal organist of Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square. Let's sing together and go, tell our friends, "Jesus Christ is born!"



**Listen to the  
hymn here!**

**- Sungyun Kim**

## CHRISTMAS EVE: DECEMBER 24

# Silent Night

As I sit listening to Silent Night, my heart, full of memories, is drawn to the transcendent and unifying experience of singing the hymn with others on Christmas Eve. On that night, though separated by differences in location, language, and beliefs, congregations around the world are one in spirit and mind as they share flames from candle to candle and lift the familiar song to God.

Instead of drawing from a traditional Advent passage, I'm inspired to turn to Paul's words of wisdom to the Philippians.

"Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:4-5)

That mind is expressed perfectly in the early hymn he then recites about Jesus:

who, though he existed in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped,  
but emptied himself,  
taking the form of a servant,  
assuming human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a human,  
he humbled himself...

(Philippians 2:6-11)

On that silent night, that holy night, Christ the Savior was born in a manner that displayed his spirit and mind from the start, encouraging his followers to be united in sharing his humility and love for others.

I pray during this advent season, and especially as we share our flames and sing Silent Night together, that we may feel united with all our siblings in Christ and share the same humility and love with those around us.



**Listen to the  
carol here!**

**- Adam D'Achille**

**CHRISTMAS DAY:  
DECEMBER 25**

# Joy to the World

If there is any hymn that people associate with a certain time of year in the life of the church, it is “Joy to the World.” Written by British Congregational minister Issac Watts in 1719, it has arguably become the most popular Christmas hymn of all.

“Joy to the World” declares that the Lord, Jesus Christ has come among us, and as a result, both heaven and earth have much to sing about. What makes this song so meaningful is that it proclaims we have received our King, and every heart should prepare him room.

During this Advent season, in the midst of the parties, shopping, and decorating, are you preparing room for the Christ child to be front and center? It is so easy this time of year to think more about Santa Claus and elves, hot chocolate and presents, than it is to remember a tiny newborn who entered the world in a manger in Bethlehem who is King of all kings.

For some reason, even those who don’t know many hymns by heart tend to know the words to Joy to the World. For many, singing this beloved hymn conjures up fond memories and past experiences of times with loved ones at Christmas. So sing it!

I encourage you to sing “Joy to the World” time and again in the days of Christmas. We declare to everyone, Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King; let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing!



**Listen to the  
carol here!**

**- Dr. John Robbins**

# Advent

@ PHUMC

## **DECEMBER 1**

Hanging of the Greens | Sanctuary | 5 PM

## **DECEMBER 8**

Service of Hope & Healing | Sanctuary | 5 PM

## **DECEMBER 15**

Lessons & Carols | Sanctuary | 9 & 11 AM

Readings & Songs | Wesley Hall | 9 & 11 AM

## **DECEMBER 24**

Modern Candlelight & Communion | Wesley Hall | Noon & 6 PM

Classic Candlelight & Communion | Sanctuary | 2, 6, 8 & 11 PM

Family Service | Argue Great Hall (Gym) | 4 PM

## **DECEMBER 29**

Holiday Schedule

Classic Worship | Sanctuary | 9 AM

Modern Worship | Wesley Hall | 11 AM

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