



Light of the World

2023 ADVENT DAILY DEVOTIONAL

RICHFIELD UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA
richfieldumc.org/devo

INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to a tradition of hope, peace, joy, and faith - the Advent daily devotional presented by Richfield United Methodist Church. You're invited to take in people's creativity as they were invited to explore the theme, **"Light of the World."** Contributors were asked to prayerfully consider how God brightens the shadow around them. What is an epiphany that sheds new light and gives fresh perspective? Who is the light of God in your life? Consider those questions for your own life, too.

"Light of the World" is also a biblical phrase of many meanings. Jesus uses this phrase to describe himself, proclaiming: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in shadow, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12) Jesus also uses this phrase to describe the people, proclaiming: "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden." (Matthew 5:14) What is it for God on Earth to proclaim himself - and us - both as light together? And, while no one is outright proclaimed as "light" in the Nativity narratives of Matthew 2 and Luke 2, we see light in the star that the Magi follow and in the glory of the messengers who share tidings of great joy with the shepherds.

This devotional booklet is assembled with rhythms and patterns to give you tether on your Advent journey. Sundays feature the Advent wreath liturgy for worship as we light the Candles of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Faith. They are inspired by the Psalms of the Advent scriptures for Year B of the Revised Common Lectionary curated by Vanderbilt University (lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu) and the classic Christmas carol, *Angels We*

Have Heard on High. You may see some familiar images or turns of phrase from these inspirational sources.

Each week features a mix of prose, poetry, and photography. As with recent devotionals, you'll find a list of suggested daily scripture readings from the Revised Common Lectionary curated by Vanderbilt University (lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu). There is no intended connection between the devotional and the readings. Rather, it's an opportunity to do daily thematic scripture reading and know many others around the world join you in reading the same scripture. The devotional booklet is available in print on campus, online at richfieldumc.org/devo, and as daily entries at facebook.com/richfieldunitedmethodistchurch. You're encouraged to share these posts and bless your friends with the creativity of your church.

God is devoted to you daily. May this daily devotional be a tether of hope, peace, joy, and faith for you in this season of Advent. Blessings to you!

In Christ,
Rev. Nate Melcher

P.S. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent on February 14, 2024. We will need 47 entries on the theme "Notable Narratives." We will focus on writing, recording, and sharing stories from our lives in that season, and you are welcome to get creative with this theme in mind.

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ADVENT DAILY DEVOTIONAL 2023

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Sunday, December 3, 2023
“Advent I - The Glory of God in Hope”
by Rev. Nate Melcher

As the season of Advent bids us to turn to Hope,
The LORD God of hosts draws near.

We hear the messengers from upon high,
and we listen with stirred hearts straining to be saved.
The plains and the mountains echo with sweet song,
and our tears dry at the touch of God’s hand.
The LORD God draws near.

On this first Sunday of Advent,
we light the Candle of Hope.
We call upon the name of God,
and God’s holy face shines.
May the God of Hope shine throughout the world.
Amen.

[Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19;](#)
[1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37](#)

Monday, December 4, 2023
"The Path Along Your Way"
by Rev. Kent Johnson

In this dark time of the year one of the strategies for keeping your hope up is to have a goal. This is not the daily list of things you are checking off but more like something down the road that you are really looking forward to. Maybe with that goal and the new hopefulness it creates you will see new light on the path along your way.



[Psalm 79; Micah 4:1-5; Revelation 15:1-8](#)

Tuesday, December 5, 2023
“Music Is My Light”
by Gertie Melcher

I never thought it would be so obvious until I sat down to think about it. My light, my world - who knew it would be something as simple as music? I like to listen to music often, which I am doing right now as I write. Music, in many ways, is what I would say is both my calling and my escape from reality. From listening and singing along to favorite songs like “DNA” by BTS or music by Avicii, music has always been there for me. I especially like to listen to music on my way to school. And let me say, being in middle school, music is a great break from school stress. I also find new ways to express myself through songs. One day, I could be a K-Pop fangirl, the next day, a diehard Swiftie. To put it simply, music is like opening a door to a whole new world, and I find that comforting.

[Psalm 79; Micah 4:6-13; Revelation 18:1-10](#)

Wednesday, December 6, 2023
“Light of the World”
by Scott Clarke

I am very fortunate. I was raised in a home where love was prevalent. I met a young woman 43 years ago who said yes when I asked her to dance. We quickly took a fancy to one another, and we have loved each other ever since. We have two daughters who I loved as soon as I held them in my arms and who have loved me since they were first able to express such an emotion. One of those daughters chose a wonderful young man to add to our family. We are now blessed with the opportunity to repeat the experience that we had with our daughters with two small grandsons.

I love them so very much, and they show their love to me each time I see them. Without the love of my family, life would be very much different for me. There would be no one with whom to share laughs, remember life stories, or look forward to future adventures. There would be no one to listen to my complaints, fears, or dreams. Love is necessary for happiness, and to me, the love of my family is the light of my world!

[Psalm 79; Micah 5:1-5a; Luke 21:34-38](#)

Thursday, December 7, 2023
“Open Our Eyes”
by Lynne Alexander

Open our eyes to the light! God is our light!
Open my eyes to the light! God is my light!

When we all open our eyes to the light of God, we
find a brilliant brightness.

God is Light!

For example, I have always loved candles and the
light that they bring to a room.

I love campfires. I love the bright sunshine.

All are just some of God's gift of light in the world!

God has provided so much light in so many ways.

We just need to look for it and welcome it!

Open our hearts to the power of God and the light
will shine through.

It is there for us.

[Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; Hosea 6:1-6;](#)
[1 Thessalonians 1:2-10](#)

Friday, December 8, 2023
“Healing”
by Pat Norton

Psalm 46:10: He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

Like the fallow garden, resting beneath the leaves, I am resting at home following surgery on my foot and ankle. It feels a bit disorienting, like I am underwater, the world muffled and distant. There will be no shopping sprees, no going out to concerts or parties this Advent. The dormant trees have their vitality restored in the rest of winter, though we cannot see the process happening. My tissues are healing beneath the cast that encircles them. Like the predawn silence, awaiting a new day, I anticipate the renewal in life and function to come. God’s Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, an Advent to His ministry. May we seek out quiet times of renewal, rest and listening for God’s Spirit to lead us. May this time of Advent heal our hearts and bring us God’s peace.

[Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; Jeremiah 1:4-10; Acts 11:19-26](#)

Saturday, December 9, 2023
“My Friend Bette”
by Merry Rendahl

My friend Bette shines the light of God into my life. I met her when I was twenty-one. She has been to both my weddings, my mom’s funeral, my dad’s funeral -- a claim only she and my family can make. She is now closer to 90 than 80. She doesn’t walk so well anymore, but she prays good and smiles a lot.

I see her weekly, so God’s light comes through her to me like a lighthouse beacon: a’round, a’round, a’round, a’round. It both beckons and anchors me.

Often when we meet, we have tea. Sometimes with a fish sandwich from McDonald’s. But our favorite accompaniment is lemon cake with lemon pudding and a swirl of Redi-Whip (spraying from the can with a *fffft*). *My favorite part is the grace and God’s Grace within it. “Our Father,” Bette prays, “we thank you for this time we have together... Bless us...”*

We’ve been through a few things. Bette reminds me that God has been and will be with us.

[Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; Ezekiel 36:24-28;](#)
[Mark 11:27-33](#)

Sunday, December 10, 2023
“Advent II - The Glory of God in Peace”
by Rev. Nate Melcher

As the season of Advent bids us
to make paths of Peace,
God the LORD who gives draws near.

We are filled with joyful strains of jubilee,
for the LORD is forgiving and filled with salvation.
These gladsome tidings inspire our every song,
for faithfulness and righteousness
dwell in the lands.
God the LORD draws near.

On this second Sunday of Advent,
we light the Candle of Peace.
We hear the voice of God,
and God's holy voice speaks.
May the God of Peace speak throughout the world.
Amen.

[Isaiah 40:1-11](#); [Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13](#);
[2 Peter 3:8-15a](#); [Mark 1:1-8](#)

Monday, December 11, 2023
"The Shadow of Egret"
by Rev. Kent Johnson

I shot this photo of an egret in bright sunshine with a sand dune in the background. It was only when I looked at it later that I saw the perfect shadow on the sand. All of us have a shadow side of ourselves that we try not to show others. But it is a part of us, nonetheless. Finding a safe small group or counselor that we can reveal our darkness to is a step toward learning to live in the light.



[Psalm 27; Isaiah 26:7-15; Acts 2:37-42](#)

Tuesday, December 12, 2023
“Everyday Ritual”
by Rev. Nate Melcher

I created a morning ritual during the pandemic. It wasn't on purpose, but once I noticed it, I took delight in it. Every morning, I opened the curtains.

I started in the front room, pulling open the blackout curtains. The wide window faces east toward the rising sun, and the fresh morning light cascaded onto the hardwood. I'd go to the dining area on the south side and pull up the horizontal blinds to brighten the table for breakfast. I entered the kitchen to pull a small curtain from the window over the sink. Finally, I pulled the vertical blinds from the west-facing window, noticing the lighting contrast between the front yard and backyard.

At the end of the day, I did it all again, in reverse order. As I did, I took a breath, a quiet moment with the Holy Spirit, and knew today was enough for today and tomorrow brought tomorrow.

Before the pandemic, I'd opened the curtains. There was something special about this everyday act becoming an intentional ritual, one that I laced with holy meaning. As we've edged from that time, I continued to open the curtains, though I admit the “specialness” of it had worn away a bit. This fall, however, the holiness of the ritual crept back in for me. I notice it. And for that, I'm grateful.

How can you make an everyday act into a ritual, a daily moment with the Holy Spirit?

[Psalm 27; Isaiah 4:2-6; Acts 11:1-18](#)

Wednesday, December 13, 2023
“What Brings Light to My Life?”
by Ann Johnson

As a life-long lover of music, it is no surprise that God brightens my days through music. God’s light also comes through praying, meditation, journaling, readings, nature, art, Scripture, exercise, and my community. All of you are a part of that community.

In Chancel Choir, we recently sang a piece called “Even When God Is Silent” by Michael Horvit. The words weren’t his. They were written on basement walls by someone hiding from the Gestapo in Germany. “I believe in the sun even when it is not shining. I believe in love even when feeling it not, I believe in God even when God is silent.”

When singing words, for choir members, it is like we are praying them. We sing the words and then the words speak to us during the week... a beautiful message to lift our spirits and bring light.

Recently Pastor Nate spoke on “The Great Commandment.” “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. Love your neighbor as you love yourself.” What if you can’t love yourself? Is it enough to know that God Loves YOU? We all make mistakes in our lives. The person I find hardest to forgive is ME. And yet, “Jesus loves me, this I know” keeps me going. It brings light to my spirit, knowing that God’s light lives in and through me even with my failings. It gives me courage to spread Light to the world. I know that all of you are lights shining in this world!

[Psalm 27; Malachi 2:10-3:1; Luke 1:5-17](#)

Thursday, December 14, 2023
“The Coming of the Light”
by Mary Marth Butler

The world had been longing, longing,
for the darkness to be lifted.
It was waiting, waiting,
for a new light to dispel the shadows.
Many were hoping, hoping,
for the birth of something new in their hearts.
At last, at last, the birthing began,
bringing the longed for new Light into the world.
Angels were singing, singing,
of the Wondrous birth of new Light/Life.
Each Advent we are singing, singing,
to celebrate the birth of this Light
who came to show us the Way of Love.
Each Christmas we celebrate the sparking of new Light
in the stable of our hearts.

[Psalm 126; Habakkuk 2:1-5; Philippians 3:7-11](#)

Friday, December 15, 2023
“Lighting the Way”
by Orlean Kovach

Not yet Thanksgiving
Christmas lights are shining bright
lining roofs and trees

Is it too soon for this I say
or do I need them now
to light the way
As I prepare for Christmas day

[Psalm 126; Habakkuk 3:2-6;](#)
[Philippians 3:12-16](#)

Saturday, December 16, 2023
“Lyrics of Advent”
by Rev. Wayne Albertson

Many preachers offer a prayer at the beginning of a sermon. It is a recognition of the preacher's humble position speaking of God and matters of holiness in life in the face of the temptations of one's ego in that moment. Most commonly the prayer is from Psalm 19, “May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God”. With a different sense of God's leading, I often use verse two of the hymn, “Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart” (#500 in the UM Hymnal).

The hymn was written by George Croly, a conservative Church of Ireland clergy in 1867. Verse two addresses our Advent theme this year in these words:

“I ask no dreams, no prophet ecstasies,
No sudden rending of the veil of clay,
No angel visitant, no opening skies,
But take the dimness of my soul away.”

The tune is simple and warm; the words humble and prayerful. We may not think of this hymn as in the same league as our Advent and Christmas carols, but I invite you to let the words settle into a repetitive resource for you in this season. They may well be in harmony with the unspoken prayers of magi, shepherds, and Simeon - about whom we have read and heard.

[Psalm 126; Habakkuk 3:13-19; Matthew 21:28-32](#)

Sunday, December 17, 2023
“Advent III - The Glory of God in Joy”
by Rev. Nate Melcher

As the season of Advent bids us to shout with Joy,
The LORD who does great things draws near.

We come to the House of Bread to see,
while we sowed with tears, we shall reap with joy.
We come with newborn adoration,
While fortunes are restored among the nations.
The LORD draws near.

On this third Sunday of Advent,
we light the Candle of Joy.
We laugh and rejoice,
and God’s holy greatness restores.
May the God of Joy restore throughout the world.
Amen.

[Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126 or Luke 1:46b-55;](#)
[1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28](#)

Monday, December 18, 2023
"The Vulture"
by Rev. Kent Johnson

The church I was serving in Duluth had a yard sale and for some reason, probably boredom, as we engaged shoppers we asked them to guess who was the pastor among the 15 of us working the sale. No one selected the little guy turning 40 with the receding hairline to be the leader. We make judgments about people when we are in the dark about them. This beautiful soaring bird with the featherless head that cleans up our environment has been stuck with the judgmental name "vulture." Advent is a good time to think about who in our lives we should get to know better. Where should we spend a little time and spread a little light?



[Psalm 125; 1 Kings 18:1-18;](#)
[Ephesians 6:10-17](#)

Tuesday, December 19, 2023
“The Calendar”
by Bea Melcher

One time, I was going through a tough time in my life. I was in my bedroom and I asked God for guidance. I usually do that a few times a week. I looked around my room and saw my bumblebee wall calendar. Every month has different artwork of bumblebees and a message to read. That month, the message was “Bee creative.” I thought that was God telling me to be creative. I took that sign with me and kept being creative all week and that helped me. When I’m creative, I can write stories, make games, and have an active mind and body. It means a lot to know God is listening and responds.

[Psalm 125; 2 Kings 2:9-22; Acts 3:17-4:4](#)

Wednesday, December 20, 2023
“Hope in the Darkest Times”
by Diane Mills

Last year, I was commissioned to do a painting for the Third Sunday in Advent. The theme for each of the paintings was connected to a popular song. The song I was assigned was “Cold is the Night” by the Oh Hellos.

Many years ago when our daughter was still living at home and working on her Bachelor’s degree at the U of M Twin Cities, Bob Was experiencing very bad sore throats. He went to an Ear, Nose, and Throat specialist and received the devastating news that his left tonsil was malignant. It was operable. We took many walks in the evening and on weekends discussing what the future held while we waited for the surgery date.

On one of the walks down by Bassett’s Creek, we were sitting on a bench when suddenly, the clouds parted and beautiful sun rays shone down from the cloud onto the field by us. We all felt it was a sign from God, giving us hope in our despair.

[Psalm 125; Malachi 3:16-4:6; Mark 9:9-13](#)

Thursday, December 21, 2023
“Eternal Light”
by Orlean Kovach

Daily sunlight
Stars at night
weary travelers
seek the light

Light to guide
light to grow
through the darkness
there's a glow

God's promise
the light of the world
leading the way
for all to behold

[Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; 2 Samuel 6:1-11;](#)
[Hebrews 1:1-4](#)

Friday, December 22, 2023
"Send the Light"
by Jim Vetsch

I am light.
Some say I was born in a long ago Bang.
Some say God said "Let there be light!"
I am God's light.

David sang that the unfolding of our words gives light,
and that God's word is a light to my path.
John told us to walk in the light as he is of the light.

Jesus told us "I am the light of the world.
Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will
have the light of life."

A Christian named Dixon wrote a song over a hundred
years ago, "This Little Light of Mine.
I'm gonna let it shine."

That we all have an invitation into the light is without
doubt.
The glow is there in the eyes of the believers.
A holy luminescence.
It's there in our hearts to show us our way.

We let our light shine by the kindness we share with one
another.
We let it shine to illuminate the paths of the lost.
We let it shine the way the moon reflects the brilliance
of the sun.

We have that little light because of our unconditional
acceptance of the love of god.
In the instant of our birth, when we squint at the
radiance of this world, we are beneficiaries of goodness,
love and light.

I'm gonna let mine shine!

[Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; 2 Samuel 6:12-19; Hebrews 1:5-14](#)

Saturday, December 23, 2023
“When Noise Disappears”
by Rev. Wayne Albertson

When noise disappears
we turn inside, attentive
to searchings and imaginings
propped up by fears and hopes
of unknown importance, to random
memories and fantasies
intruding in those streams
of neurons flowing as thought
into awareness from the dark
wherevers of mystery,
all unplanned foci of the mind
in the absence of distraction,
de facto entertainments de moment,
unless a habit, a rhythm
of discipline purposed into being
provides a destiny of openness
towards what might emerge to
immerse our lives in hope or meaning,
gratitude or serenity,
the freedom of meditation
that comes when
noise
disappears.

[Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; Judges 13:2-24;](#)
[John 7:40-52](#)

Sunday, December 24, 2023
“Advent IV - The Glory of God in Faith”
by Rev. Nate Melcher

As the season of Advent bids us to proclaim in Faith,
The LORD of covenant draws near.

Gloria in excelsis Deo,
in steadfast love for all generations.
Glory in the highest to God,
in faithfulness firm as forever.
The LORD draws near.

On this fourth Sunday of Advent,
we light the Candle of Faith.
We declare our devotion to God,
and God establishes a holy vision.
May the God of Faith establish holy vision
throughout the world.
Amen.

[2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16](#); [Luke 1:46b-55](#) or
[Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26](#); [Romans 16:25-27](#); [Luke 1:26-38](#)

[Isaiah 9:2-7](#); [Psalm 96](#); [Titus 2:11-14](#);
[Luke 2:1-14, \(15-20\)](#)

Monday, December 25, 2023
“Christmas - The Glory of God in Christ”
by Rev. Nate Melcher

As the arrival of Christmas bids us to exalt the Christ,
The LORD is here.

Gloria in excelsis Deo, Glory in the highest to God,
with clouds and lightning comes the heavens.
Gloria in excelsis Deo, Glory in the highest to God,
with fire and light dawns righteousness.
The LORD is here.

For Christmas, we light the Christ Candle.
We rejoice with God, and God is the holy guard.
May Jesus the Christ guard throughout the world.
Let us rejoice! Amen.

[Isaiah 62:6-12](#); [Psalm 97](#); [Titus 3:4-7](#); [Luke 2:\(1-7\), 8-20](#)

MERRY CHRISTMAS



“Light of the World.”

How has God brightened the shadow around you? What has been an epiphany that shed new light and gave fresh perspective?
Who is the light of God in your life?

The 2024 Lent Devotional theme is “Notable Narratives.” What are the key moments of your life? What are your funniest memories? When was there a tough time, but you made it through? Use this space to reflect on your life’s stories.

**Sundays in Advent
Worship at 9:30 am**
In-Person, Online, and by Phone
December 3, 10, 17



CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP
Sunday, December 24
In-Person, Online, and by Phone

9:30 am Family Worship with musician Victor Zupanc, Highland pipe, and Time with Children.

4:00 pm Traditional Worship features organ, Chancel Choir, and a string quartet.

You can worship in-person, online at youtube.com/richfieldumc, or by touchtone phone, 1-888-650-5835.



Online-Only Worship
New Year's Eve
Sunday, December 31, 2023
youtube.com/richfieldumc or
888.650.5835

Richfield United Methodist Church
5835 Lyndale Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55419
richfieldumc.org (612) 861-6086