

# Advent 2018 Devotions

*The branch from Jesse*

**11**

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;

from his roots a Branch will

*2The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and*

## New Shoots from Old Roots



I've sat a long time with the image of a stump growing a new shoot. I love that it visualises the Christian realities of new life springing out of death; of something that looked impressive (but maybe wasn't too healthy) giving way to start something new; of deep roots continuing to nourish the new shoot.

I can think of few better images to describe the hope of Christmas: a hope that recalls the deep roots of faith grown in God's people, the hope of the removal of dying and rotting things to make way for new growth, and the hope of flourishing life springing forth in its place. These are after all the results of God coming among us.

The devotions contained here speak to all these realities. They are shared by our brothers and sisters in Christ here at Trinity with the hope that new life will continued to be nourished among us.

I encourage you to use these devotions in the most meaningful way for you. They are dated but you don't have to follow the schedule: you may want to linger on some devotions longer than others, you may want to do a few in one sitting, or as life gets busy you may miss a few.

May your Advent preparations be blessed by these devotions. May they help you put down deep roots of faith; may they encourage you that where there is unhealthy or dead things in your life that God can bring health and new life; may they challenge you to flourish into good future God has for you and for us as His people at Trinity!

*Pastor J-M*

*What part(s) of your life does God need to bring forth new life that you can flourish and grow?*

## First Sunday of Advent: Dec. 2

**Read:** Isaiah 6:8-13

Read the passage twice through. As you do, what is God speaking to you? Write that the word, sentence, picture, or idea that is impressed in your heart:

Take some time to ponder what that means for your life; how can you put that into practice today?

**Pray:** Father, forgive us for the times that we have forgotten You. Turn our hearts to You that we may love and serve You in newness of life to the honour and glory of Your holy name. Amen.

## First Monday of Advent: Dec. 3

**Read:** Proverbs 3:5

God will make a way when there seems to be no way.  
He works in ways we cannot see. He will make a way for me.  
He will be my guide, hold me closely to His side.  
With love and strength for each new day, He will make a way,  
He will make a way.

The words to this song continually jump out at me, seemingly when I need them most. Not so much to be convinced as to be reminded. Right, right - remember you can trust God to figure this out. Because I have learned repeatedly that God does find a way when I think there is no possible way for this to work out. Years ago, John-Mark gave us the verse “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.” Proverbs 3:5. That little verse was leaning against my calculator at work at a time I most needed to remember this.

Trust, trust in God. He’s got this, no amount of worry or planning is going to help you because the script you have written is not His plan. We so often plan our lives out but it is only hindsight that shows that when God is making the way, it often plays out far better than we ourselves had planned. And often done in a way we’d never have imagined.

God works in ways we are oblivious or blind to until the pieces fall together and we see that yes, He has been guiding us, silently perhaps by our side all along. Trust – for me it all comes down to trusting in God for He is most certainly trustworthy. Proverbs goes on in verse 6 – submit your ways to Him and he will make your path straight. No spinning in circles in worry and fret, which accomplishes nothing anyway. Simply trust.

**Pray:** Dear Lord God – Help us to trust in your provision for our lives. Help us to see you at work and even when it seems impossible, to trust in your ways as the best ways for us. Teach us to trust. Amen.

*Roxana T.*

## First Tuesday of Advent: Dec. 4

**Read:** *2 Corinthians 9:15*

*Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"*

Stuff! We all have lots of stuff. As Christmas approaches, I admit, I too will be tacking the malls to find the perfect gift, but as I do I'm reminded of the greatest gift ever given—Jesus! God sent his son to the earth as a baby just for us, for me!

Do we need more stuff? No, but when we think about it Jesus is enough! He provides all our wants and needs.

**Pray:** Jesus help me to have a heart of gratitude for what I have and to know that the greatest gift you've given is not material but eternal. Amen

*Rita A.*

## First Wednesday of Advent: Dec. 5

### **Read: Hebrews 12:1-3**

You have most likely heard the story about Gayle and myself (Wanda) coming upon a farm accident. We stopped a passing farmer to call an ambulance. While we tended to a badly injured elderly farmer, and comforted his brother who was standing by.

Our focus was on staying calm as we covered Lyle, the injured farmer, saying prayers and reassuring him of God's love.

When I looked up, I saw a row of farmers quietly watching and waiting.

I immediately thought of verse 1, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the races that is set before us."

Lyle passed away there but I hope our presence was somehow a comfort.

This advent season may our words, and actions be a positive witness for Christ.

**Pray:** Dear Jesus, wherever you send us, whatever we do and say, may our lives be a positive witness of Your love. Amen.

*Wanda S.*

## First Thursday of Advent: Dec. 6

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 5: 14-21

“He became sin, who knew no sin  
That we might become his righteousness  
He humbled himself and carried the cross  
Love so amazing, love so amazing”

These words are from the worship song – Jesus Messiah. His love for us is so amazing!!!! God desires for us to be reconciled to him. Because of the sin in our lives, we are separated from God. But God sent his son, Jesus to come to earth and go to the cross – for me – for you. That is love so amazing!!! What’s more, He has made us into a new creation – the rescue for sinners. As we accept Jesus, He dwells within us, changing us from the inside, out.

We hear a lot about “the power of positivity” in the world around us – but just like every other idol in our lives, this idol is a lie too. Yes, our words do matter. But if the only power we are relying on to change us is ourselves, then that power is only as good as our motives and ambitions.

So, what about the power of the cross? What about living our lives for Jesus instead of for ourselves? In John 6:53, we read that without accepting Jesus, *you have no life in you*. I grew up knowing ABOUT Jesus, but not ever really knowing Him. But since accepting Him as my Lord and Savior, I know I have life in me! I am a new creation! Because I live, I no longer live for myself, but I live for Him. I cannot do that by own desires or ambitions. I live for Him because He lives in me. He is the power that has made me a new creation.

**Pray:** Dear Jesus, your love for us truly is so amazing. Thank you for making me a new creation and giving me life – making me alive in YOU. Continue to change my heart, that I might become more like you each and every day. Thank you that you are reconciling me to yourself. Without you I am walking in death. Thank you. You are love so amazing! Amen.

*Marion A.*

## First Friday of Advent: Dec. 7

**Read:** Ephesians 2:8

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the grace of God.*

The summer that I was 11 years old was a difficult one. My parents had recently separated, and I found myself spending much of my time off school watching daytime TV alone. My mother had a friend at work, who lived near a Christian summer camp. She suggested that maybe I could spend a week there, that it would be good for both my mother and for me.

My mother's initial response was to say no. We didn't have the money. And we didn't have a vehicle to get there. I was a shy kid, and I didn't know anyone. But I really, really wanted to go! A phone call to the camp put us in touch with some donated money that was used to pay my way. My mom's friend graciously offered to drop me off and pick me up at week's end. And that week of camp changed my life forever. While I was there, God met me and called me, and I began a relationship with Him.

I received many unexpected gifts that summer, in the middle of the heartache of a fractured home. The gift of suggestion and transportation from my Mom's friend. The gift of funds donated by strangers to send kids in need to camp. The gift of camp itself, which became a crucial safe space for me over the next decade of my life.

But most importantly, the gift of God's grace and salvation. That week of camp set me on a new path, and I am forever grateful for the gifts I received that summer. There will be many gifts given this year, no doubt, but as we enjoy this advent season, I am reminded of the unlikely gift that set the entire world on a new path.

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, thank you for humbling yourself and coming to earth. May each gift we give and receive this Christmas remind us of the gift we were given that night, and draw us nearer to you. Amen.

*Cassy B.*

## First Saturday of Advent: Dec. 8

**Read: Philippians 4:6-7**

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. Let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Jesus Christ.*

During our times of trouble in the hospital with Emmett, there were many times that we were overwhelmed with fear and anxiety. There were times where hope seemed grim. In these dark times, we would turn to the Lord in prayer. Praying would fill us with peace and hope, and the fear and anxiety would subside, knowing that God was in control. We didn't always understand why we were on this path or where it would lead us, but one thing we did know was that God was with us every step of the way.

**Pray:** Lord, help me not to lean on my own understandings but in everything turn to you so you can direct my words, thoughts and actions. In Jesus Name, Amen.

*Michelle A.*

## Second Sunday of Advent: Dec. 9

**Read:** Luke 1:69-79

Read the passage twice through. As you do, what is God speaking to you? Write that the word, sentence, picture, or idea that is impressed in your heart:

Take some time to ponder what that means for your life; how can you put that into practice today?

**Pray:** Father, provide us hope in the midst of our struggles as we wait with expectant hearts this Advent season.

## Second Monday of Advent: Dec. 10

### **Read: Isaiah 11:1 & Hebrews 11:1-2**

The Bible I use was my mom's. The 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Hebrews was an important one for her. The word "faith" is circled, time and again, in her Bible.

From the roots of her life, lived by faith, the branches she nurtured—namely her family have borne fruit.

Who in your life has faithfully lived a life of faith and has so nurtured you?

**Pray:** Dearest Lord, Keep our faith strong, and help us to bear much fruit for Your Kingdom. Amen.

*Wanda S.*

## Second Tuesday of Advent: Dec. 11

### **Read: Isaiah 11:1-10**

The strength and courage of our ancestors to move to a new land with a different language, to start communities, build schools and churches took incredible faith. I'm amazed at the hard work required to not only survive, but thrive. In some ways, we live in easier times, but in other ways, our faith is challenged, and under attack.

Verse 10 reassures us that our faith in God will stand as a banner, to encourage us in our struggles.

During this busy Advent season, let's say thanks—in person and through prayer—to those in our church and community who were pioneers in building this fellowship of believers which binds us together.

**Pray:** O come to us, abide with us. Our Lord Immanuel. Amen. (LBW 41)

*Wanda S.*

## **Second Wednesday of Advent: Dec. 12**

**Read:** Psalm 72:4-7

*In his days may the righteous flourish, and peace abound, till the moon be no more!*

In this Psalm, Solomon prays for the people of Israel, for wisdom to govern wisely and to defend the poor and needy. He also prays that the people would fear God as long as the sun endures and that righteousness and peace would prevail.

As we celebrate the birth of Christ this Christmas season let us take time to pray for our nation and for all people that all may know the peace and hope that comes from knowing Christ.

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, may you rule in our hearts, our country, and our world that all may know You. Amen.

*Randy A.*

## **Second Thursday of Advent: Dec. 13**

**Read: 2 Peter 2:1-9**

Our theme this Advent talks about our roots, the faith of our fathers, and our Christian continuity through the ages.

Verse 9 of today's reading says we are part of a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.

This seems unbelievable! But what a gift!

We praise you Lord, that we are yours and that you called us out of darkness into your marvelous light.

**Pray:** O come, let us adore Him. Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Wanda S.*

## Second Friday of Advent: Dec. 14

### **Read: 2 Timothy 1:3-9**

In my Bible, the heading for this passage of Scripture is: “Encouragement to be Faithful.”

We all need encouragement—through stress, through loss, through pain and fear.

In our reading today, this encouragement to be faithful reminds us that we serve as our forefathers did, by God’s power Him who has saved us, and called us to a holy life.

If this concept makes us seem important the next phrase brings us back to reality... “not because of anything we have done, but because of His own purpose and grace.”

During this precious Advent season, may God’s power and grace remind us of the faith we learned from our parents and grandparents; faith through generations of time—a gift of love from God.

We are never alone. In the end, all we have is faith. But in the end, faith is all we need.

**Pray:** Dearest Lord, our lives are Yours. You have named us and claimed us. Help us to be strong in faith, generous in love, and humble with gratitude. Joy to the world. Amen!

*Wanda S.*

## Second Saturday of Advent: Dec. 15

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

I have trouble believing the truth that God speaks about me. When life is easy, it is easy to believe that God has my back but when I face challenges in life there are times that I wonder. This wondering often comes out as me trying to fix the problem or maintain control of the situation.

As I reflect on various times when I have questioned, doubted, or struggled to maintain the appearance of control I've come to realize all of these are rooted in my own insecurities; insecurities that whisper, "You're not good enough," "you don't have what it takes," "are you *sure* about that?" and the like. I've struggled for much of my life with these thoughts (even when I was doing everything right).

It has only been the past few years that I have finally been able to trust the promise of God and to drown out the lies of the enemy, lies that are so easy to believe. There are still situations and days that I struggle but God is growing in me a heart that is convinced of His presence with me and the promise that I am loved by Him; I am a new creation in Jesus. Just as He came at Christmas to make the world new again, so He continues that process in me each day. I thank God for His love, patience, and work in my life!

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, as you came at Christmas with the promise of making all things new continue your good work in my life.  
Give me a heart that trusts and longs for you alone. Amen.

*Pastor J-M*

## Third Sunday of Advent: Dec. 16

**Read:** Isaiah 11:6-10

Read the passage twice through. As you do, what is God speaking to you? Write that the word, sentence, picture, or idea that is impressed in your heart:

Take some time to ponder what that means for your life; how can you put that into practice today?

**Pray:** Thank you Heavenly Father, for the gift of Your Son Jesus

### Third Monday of Advent: Dec. 17

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

My heart goes out to Mary. I can't imagine giving birth to my first child in a barn.

A teenager with her first child would be over-whelming, let alone her surroundings, no baby provisions to dress or care for him, and people all around. Her privacy would be a frustrating issue.

I often wondered how she felt caring for her first child: the feeding, changing, and holding Him when He cried. She would be caring for her Lord and Saviour as well as ours.

I am glad she was obedient to God to bring into our lives as well as hers our Saviour and Lord.

Mary did you know that your baby boy  
would one day walk on water?

Mary did you know that your baby boy  
would save our sons and daughters?

Did you know that your baby boy has  
came to make you new?

This child that you've delivered,  
will soon deliver you.

**Pray:** Father, thank you for entrusting us with the gift of Your Son Jesus. May we treasure Him and be obedient to all you ask of us. Amen.

*Nora S.*

## Third Tuesday of Advent: Dec. 18

**Read:** Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11

One evening as I was driving, the moon was rising in front of me. It was huge! So perfectly round and white. It was right in the center of the highway, and I felt like I could just drive into it. In my moment of admiration, I wondered if this looked similar to what the three wise men saw? They followed the star to worship the King. How exciting that must have been for them. This was a great history in the making. Promises were being fulfilled right before their eyes – the time had come!

I can't help but reflect on our day. It is now the end of 2018, and I would encourage you to ask yourself "What am I following?"

We follow the rules, laws, maps, popularity, sports, money, greed, lust and addictions. What about the Bible? Just as the star led people to Jesus when He was born, the Bible leads us to Him today. Jesus calls us to "Follow Him."

The wise men courageously followed the star. Mary and Joseph followed God's plan for their lives despite the difficulty.

How about you? Will you accept His call? May you have the courage also.

**Pray:** Father God, thank you for the gift of your Son and sending Him to be with us. Thank you for all the ways You reveal Yourself to us. Open our eyes to the wonder that surrounds us this season. Help us to hear Your voice, celebrate You and follow You. Amen

*Lynne R.*

## Third Wednesday of Advent: Dec. 19

**Read: Luke 12:13-21**

One of my (Wanda) mom's warnings was, "Don't be greedy or you may lose what you have."

In our Bible reading today, verse 15 admonishes us as well not to be greedy.

As an example to our children and grandchildren and community, may our emphasis at Christmas not to be what we 'get' but what we can share with others; our time, our love, and compassion.

**Pray:** Dear Jesus, show us your way. As you are abundantly generous to us, help us to reach out to those in need around us. Amen.

*Wanda S.*

### Third Thursday of Advent: Dec. 20

**Read:** Psalm 25:4-5

It was a Sunday School verse – and I had committed that fall to learning more verses because I was ready to instill more of God’s word to memory. I wasn’t trying to compete with those who quote chapter and verse continually. I don’t even find that all that helpful. But to know a few more verses myself and to have a few that spoke to me being the ones that directed me. I find words pop out at me sometimes – I say that’s one way that God speaks to me. Like the word lavished in 1 John 3:1a – what a word picture. Love that the Father has lavished on us His children. That was one of the first verses I tried to commit to memory. The Sunday School verse was Psalm 25:4-5. “Show me your ways O lord, teach me your path, guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Saviour and my hope is in you all day long.”

There was a poster colouring sheet where the SS children were to colour some of the key words. It was a small class so I coloured a poster page too – I like to colour and it seemed like a good teacher/student activity. When it came home I tacked it to my wall. I like that verse I found myself saying and soon I had that one memorized too. I started out with good intent to learn more but was lagging in some of the follow through when John-Mark began to give us a verse a month. It seemed like God was agreeing with the idea of knowing His word and used John-Mark (and the kids) to keep me doing that. The Bible is an old book but new and fresh thoughts and direction are there for all of us every day.

**Pray:** Show me your ways O Lord . . . guide me . . . teach me. You are my God, my Saviour. Without you there is no hope. Thank you that I can learn from your word, that you continually want to show me and teach me your ways. Amen.

*Roxana T.*

## Third Friday of Advent: Dec. 21

**Read:** Matthew 1:18-25

Immanuel – “God with Us”

I don't know what it's like for you, but for me, the Christmas story never gets old. In fact, the older I get, the more I am able to glean from this story. For several weeks now, I sense God speaking to me “God with us”. How does that look for you? What is God saying to you in that statement?

As we are focusing this year on Leading Others to Know Christ, I know that we cannot do that on our own. We need God with us. And He is. Isn't that great news? Alleluia, thank you Lord Jesus!

As I reflect on my life, there are so many times, too many to count, where I can see God with me. Most surprising to me, are the times when I was living my life as far away from God as I could get – or so I thought. It is in those times that He continued to seek me out. Just like He said to Adam and Eve in the garden, many times He called to me, “Where are you?”

During this Advent season, I encourage you to look for Him; for God is with us. He came as a babe many years ago, as verse 23b states, “because he will save his people from their sins.” He is with us in the midst of our worship, but He is also with us in the midst of our struggles. When we are walking in sin, He is calling to us “Where are you?” He came to save us, to save you from your sin. Invite Him into whatever you are going through today. No matter what that may be. Hold fast to the hope you have in Jesus for He is “God with us”.

**Pray:** Father God, we thank you today that your love for mankind was and is so deep that you sent your son to save us from our sins and to walk among us – God with us. We praise you Lord. Amen.

*Marion A.*

### Third Saturday of Advent: Dec. 22

**Read:** Romans 12:1-9

A few weeks ago, Pastor John-Mark said “you are what you eat” encouraging us to think about what we “feed” on. If I were to speak on this passage today, I might say “you are what you think” or “what goes in, must come out”. How we live really does matter. Verse 2 states, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

As we focus on death and new life this advent season, Jesus is our only hope in the darkness of this world. He is the one who can and does renew our mind. As the passage states, we each have been given a measure of faith and we are given different gifts, or talents and abilities according to God’s grace. What are you doing with what you have been given? Are you allowing Jesus to transform you and renew your mind according to the measure of faith you have been given? It’s easy for us to see the potential of others. We look to others and see how God has blessed them and given them certain gifts. But do we look to ourselves and see that He has done the same for us?

Take some time today and sit with God and this passage. Are there areas in your life where you are conforming to the pattern of this world? Are there areas in your life where you have not allowed Jesus to transform you? Are you allowing Him to renew your mind? As you wrestle with these questions, invite Jesus to change how you live, change what you do, and change how you think. Allow Him to transform you by renewing your mind.

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, as you come among us, renew our minds to set them on you. Amen.

*Marion A.*

## Fourth Sunday of Advent: Dec. 23

**Read:** Revelation 22:1-7

Read the passage twice through. As you do, what is God speaking to you? Write that the word, sentence, picture, or idea that is impressed in your heart:

Take some time to ponder what that means for your life; how can you put that into practice today?

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, even as we wait for your new birth at Christmas, may we be watchful for your return when all will be made new in Your Kingdom which extends forever. Amen.

## Christmas Eve: Dec. 24

**Read:** Revelation 22:12-13

*Christ is our Protector from beginning to end. He is coming soon to take His loved ones home with Him.*

Daniel 3:21-25

*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into the furnace. There were four men walking in the furnace and one looked like the Son of God.*

I for one am sure glad that God has got our lives protected. He goes before us and behind us. He knows what trials we will go through.

I am sure glad he doesn't send us through the fire and shut the door of the furnace.

Instead, He goes through the fire with us. We can rest that He will protect us from the beginning to the end and shower us with blessings all the way through.

**Pray:** Thank you Lord as you 'take us through the fire again.' Amen.

*Nora S.*

## *Christmas Events at Trinity*

Mon. Dec. 10	6:30 p.m.	TLW Christmas Supper
Fri. Dec. 14	7:00 p.m.	Ministerial Barn Service @ Trautwein's with coffee after at United Church
Sun. Dec. 16	11:00 a.m.	Sunday School Christmas Program during Worship
Tues. Dec. 18	7:30 p.m.	Community Choir Cantata <i>"Come Celebrate Christmas"</i>
Mon. Dec. 24	8:00 p.m.	Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
Tues. Dec. 25	11:00 a.m.	Christmas Day Worship at WSCH

*Thank you to everyone who  
contributed devotions!*