Journey to Bethlehem
Bethlehem is the place where are met by Emmanuel – God with us! This year, we take this journey in spirit, body, and mind as individuals and as a community of faith. It is a season where God invites us to “choose” hope, peace, joy, and love—the gifts we experience through Jesus—in the midst of a world clamoring for our attention and devotion.

“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21 NIV
The Lighting of the Advent Candles

How can we prepare ourselves to experience the real reason for the season in a world that tugs and pulls us in every other direction? We encourage you to gather with family or invite others to join you for the lighting of the Advent Candles and this special time of preparation for Christmas. On a Sunday or another day in each week, gather around your wreath and use the suggested service which we will be using each week for our Epworth Church family in worship.

You can also sing some carols and spend some time sharing what each message from the Prophet Isaiah means for you today.

The Meaning of Advent & the Origin of the Advent Wreath

The season of Advent is understood today to be a time of preparation for Christmas, the feast of the birth of Jesus. The name of this season is taken from the Latin adventus, which means “coming”, and in the early Church the word was used mainly for Christmas itself, the coming of Jesus, the Son of God, into the world. Gradually, however, adventus began to have a slightly different meaning and referred, as it does today, to the season of preparation for the feast of Christ’s coming to humanity. In the Middle Ages this meaning was extended and His coming was seen in three different ways: His birth at Bethlehem in the past; His second and future coming at the end of time; His present coming through grace into the hearts and souls of His people. And so in Advent we prepare to celebrate the past; we prepare to receive Christ into our lives in the present; and we prepare for the end of the world and the coming of Heaven.
The Advent wreath originated a few hundred years ago among the Lutherans of eastern Germany. The Advent wreath is a wreath of evergreens of various kinds, some with symbolic meaning. It can either be suspended from the ceiling or placed on a table. Fastened to the wreath are four candles standing upright. These candles represent the four weeks of Advent. A fifth candle may be added during the celebration of Christmas.

Every Sunday of Advent one more candle is lit, until all four candles shed their light to announce the approaching birthday of the Lord. All other lights may be extinguished in the room, so that only the glow of the live candles illuminates the darkness.

The traditional symbolism of the Advent wreath reminds us of Old Testament times when humanity was “sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death” (Luke 1:79); when the prophets, illumined by God, foretold a Redeemer; and when the hearts of men yearned for a Messiah who would save the world. The wreath - an ancient symbol of victory and glory - symbolizes the “fulfillment of time” in the coming of Christ and the glory of His birth.

★ The Many Symbols of the Advent Wreath

The symbols of the Advent wreath are meaningful and exciting. Most important is the symbolism of light. The progressive lighting of candles symbolizes the coming of the spiritual light of Christ into the world and anticipates the change in physical light which takes place at Christmas.

The wreath itself is round, a circle and is a symbol of the eternity of God, who, like a circle, has no beginning nor an end. The candles placed on the wreath remind us that in Jesus’ birth at Bethlehem, God entered into our world of time and change. Each candle on the wreath stands for a Sunday (and its following week) of the Advent season. Candles 1, 2, and 4 are blue or purple. Candle 3 is pink or rose.

In the ancient world purple dye was very expensive and could only be afforded by kings. The blue/purple candles tell us that the one whose birth we are preparing to celebrate is our true King. The rose candle (3rd Sunday) tells us that Advent is half over and Christmas is getting nearer and nearer. Its lighter color is a symbolic anticipation of our joy when we celebrate the birth of Jesus.
The Advent wreath is made of evergreens, which are symbolic of life itself and, since they last through the winter, point to God’s gift of life which comes to us even when the world is dark and threatening. Many kinds of evergreens can be used when we make the wreaths at home. Each has its own symbolic meaning:

**Holly**—its prickly leaves remind us of the Crown of Thorns. Its red berries remind us of the Blood of Jesus shed for us upon the Cross.

**Ivy**—since it is frequently used as a decoration, has always been a symbol of joy and festivity.

**Pine**—the most common evergreen, points to Everlasting Life.

**Laurel**—(Bay) which was used to crown those who won in the games, signifies victory.

**Cedar**—because it is long lasting and aromatic, is symbolic of strength and healing.

**Juniper**—holly, and rosemary. By legend these plants provided shelter and help for the Holy Family when they fled from Bethlehem to Egypt. The fragrance of rosemary, it has been said, began when the Virgin Mary laid out the Infant Jesus’ clothes to dry on this plant. The rose-mary bush responded by perfuming the Christ Child’s clothing.

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ADVENT BEGINS SUNDAY – December 2
Choosing Hope… Choosing Peace …Choosing Joy… Choosing Love
December 2, 2012

1st Sunday of Advent: Choosing Hope

As you gather around the Advent Wreath we encourage you to use different persons to read and participate in this devotional time. Later you will light the first blue candle.

Sing together Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus UMH 196

Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free; from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee. Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art; dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King, born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring. By thine own eternal spirit rule in all our hearts alone; by thine all sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.

Read Jeremiah 33:14-16 The Righteous Branch

“The day will come, says the LORD, when I will do for Israel and Judah all the good things I have promised them. “In those days and at that time I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David’s line. He will do what is just and right throughout the land. In that day Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this will be its name: ‘The LORD Is Our Righteousness.’

Sing O Come, O Come Emmanuel (verses 1 & 2) UMH 211

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, thou Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh; to us the path of knowledge show and cause us in her ways to go. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.
**Read Luke 21:25-36  The Coming of the Son of Man**

“And there will be strange signs in the sun, moon, and stars. And here on earth the nations will be in turmoil, perplexed by the roaring seas and strange tides. People will be terrified at what they see coming upon the earth, for the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then everyone will see the Son of Man coming on a cloud with power and great glory. So when all these things begin to happen, stand and look up, for your salvation is near!”

Then he gave them this illustration: “Notice the fig tree, or any other tree. When the leaves come out, you know without being told that summer is near. In the same way, when you see all these things taking place, you can know that the Kingdom of God is near. I tell you the truth, this generation will not pass from the scene until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear. “Watch out! Don’t let your hearts be dulled by carousing and drunkenness, and by the worries of this life. Don’t let that day catch you unaware, like a trap. For that day will come upon everyone living on the earth. Keep alert at all times. And pray that you might be strong enough to escape these coming horrors and stand before the Son of Man.

**Light the First Advent Candle**

As we go on a Journey to Bethlehem, we await with great anticipation for the coming of Jesus. God is already here with us (Emmanuel) and He desires for us to embrace the life that He will send in His one and only Son, Jesus Christ--the one that brings us hope, peace, joy and love to the world and to each of us.

We light the first candle, the candle of Hope, with great expectation of the coming Messiah. The day of salvation is here and now. The world that we live in can be unkind and unloving. Sometimes life seems to go all wrong. Today let us not allow the world to bring us down, but rather choose hope -- a hope in a Savior that will bring light and life to a broken world.

**Take some time to share with one another some of these questions:**

Share a story of a time when you had to wait for something special and exciting to happen.

How did it make you feel when that something special finally happened?

What are some areas that you need to trust in God to bring a hope for the future?
Prayer
Jesus, as we wait for your coming, help us not to be afraid and to trust in you. As we light this candle, we remember that you bring the light of hope into our lives. May your Word be always in our minds, on our lips, and in our hearts. Amen.

Sing together I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light (verse 1) UMH 206

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

{Refrain}
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.

December 9, 2012

2nd Sunday of Advent: Choosing Peace

As you gather around the Advent Wreath we encourage you to use different persons to read and participate in this devotional time. Later you will light the second blue candle.

Sing together I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light (verse 2) UMH 206

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

{Refrain}
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.
**Read Luke 1: 68-79**  
**Zechariah’s Prophesy**

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

**Sing together**  
**Blessed Be the God of Israel (verse 1)**  
UMH 209

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

**Read Malachi 3: 1-4**  
**The Coming Messenger**

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight – indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fuller’s soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.
Sing Together  
**O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (verse 7)**  
*UMH 211*

O come, Desire of Nations bind, all people in one heart and mind.  
From dust thou brought us forth to life; deliver us from earthly strife.  
{Refrain} Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

**Read Philippians 1: 3-11  The Deep and Constant Peace of God**

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God’s grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

**Pray as you light the Second Advent candle.**

Lord, let us find peace – deep, lasting peace - in this holy season and guide us on our Journey to Bethlehem along with all of the members of our Epworth family and the world. We ask you to help us in choosing deep and lasting peace this second week of Advent, symbolized by lighting the blue candle of PEACE and preparation.

**Take time to share with one another using one or more of these questions:**

When we find ourselves in times of strife and conflict, how can we seek God’s peace?  
Take several small pieces of paper or post-it notes: Write down one conflict in your life, or those which concern you in our world – only one per each piece of paper; now write the word “peace” on the back of each and pray over them. Is there anything you can do to help bring peace to any of the conflicts about which you’ve written?  
Is it time to call or pray for a friend or family member with whom you have had a problem or conflict and ask for God’s peace?
Choose to make peace a part of your day – every day. 
Peace on your journey, today and always!

Prayer in Song  It Came Upon the Midnight Clear  (verses 1 & 4)  UMH 218
It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, 
From angels bending near the earth, to touch their harps of gold: 
“Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heaven’s all-gracious King.”
The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.

For lo! The days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old, 
When with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold
When peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling, 
And the whole world send back the song which now the angels sing.

December 16, 2012
3rd Sunday of Advent: Choosing Joy

As you gather around the Advent Wreath we encourage you to use different persons to read and participate in this devotional time. Later you will light the third candle—the pink candle.

Sing together
I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light  (verse 3)  UMH 206
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.
{Refrain} 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.
Read Isaiah 12:2-6  
**Song of Thanksgiving and Praise**

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth. Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst in the Holy One of Israel.

**Sing together**

**First Song of Isaiah (refrain)**

{Refrain}  Surely it is God who saves me; I will trust in him and not be afraid.

For the Lord is my strong-hold and my sure defense, and he will be my Savior.

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Read Zephaniah 3:14-20  
**A Song of Joy**

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem!
The Lord has taken away the judgments against you,
he has turned away your enemies.
The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more.
On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak.
The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival.
I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it.
I will deal with all your oppressors at that time.
And I will save the lame and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.
At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you;
for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord.

**Sing Together**

**O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (verse 6)**

6. O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thy justice here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death’s dark shadows put to flight.
{Refrain}  Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.
Read Philippians 4:4-7  Pray about everything

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice!
Let your gentleness be known to everyone.
The Lord is near.
Do not worry 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
your minds in Christ Jesus.

Light the third advent candle – the pink candle

This holy season we are on a Journey to Bethlehem with others from our Epworth
family. We ask you to consider choosing joy this third week of Advent, symbolized by
lighting the pink candle of JOY.

Take time to share with one another using one or more of these questions:
In the midst of troubles and pain, how does God remind us of God’s love?

Make two columns on a page of paper:
one column, list some of the things that rob you of joy;
second column, list some things that give you joy …
Which column reflects the condition you find yourself in most often?

Share a story of a time when you felt God’s care for you during a difficult time.
Does singing help you rejoice and be glad?

Prayer in Song
Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates (verses 1 & 3)  UMH 213

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!
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.
Thy Holy Spirit lead us on until our glorious goal is won;
eternal praise, eternal fame be offered, Savior, to thy name!
December 23, 2012

4th Sunday of Advent: Choosing Love

As you gather around the Advent Wreath we encourage you to use different persons to read and participate in this devotional time. Later you will light the fourth candle—the last blue candle.

Sing together I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light (verse 1)  UMH 206
I want to walk as a child of the light.
I want to follow Jesus.
God set the stars to give light to the world.
The star of my life is Jesus.
{Refrain}  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.

Read Micah 5:2-5a  The Ruler from Bethlehem

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from old, from ancient days.
Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel.
And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

Sing Together O Come, O Come Emmanuel (verse 7)  UMH 211
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.
Read Luke 1:39-45  

Mary Visits Elizabeth

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”

Read the Poem aloud together  
A Basque Carol

For know a blessed mother you shall be, all generations praise continually,  
Your Son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold. Most highly favored lady, Gloria!  
Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head, “To me be as it pleases God,” she said, “My soul shall laud and magnify God’s holy name”  
Most highly favored lady, Gloria!

Read Luke 1:46b-51  

Magnificat

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my Spirit rejoices in God, my Savior. for he took notice of his lowly servant, and now generation after generation will call me blessed. For He, the Mighty One, is holy, and He has done great things for me. His mercy goes on from generation to generation, to all who fear him. His mighty arm does tremendous things! He scatters the proud and exalts the lowly. My soul magnifies the Lord, and my Spirit rejoices in God, my Savior.

Light the last advent candle  
We rejoice in lighting the blue candle of Love this fourth and final Sunday in Advent:

Take time to share with one another using one or more of these questions:

The fourth Sunday in Advent celebrates in a special way Mary, the mother of Jesus. Though she was only 14 years old God choose her to bring His son into the world. God showed us, through Mary, that even the youngest of people can do amazing things with God!

What kinds of things do you see young people doing to help in our world today? What kind of things could we do to help young people in the world today?
Prayer

Dear Jesus...you come into the world through the love and the faithfulness of a young woman. Help each one of us always and everywhere to keep our eyes and our ears focused on the needs of the young. All over the world young people are making a difference in the lives of others...and all over the world young people need our help, our prayers, and our attention to help them through the difficult situations they have to face every day! Help us follow Mary’s example and allow you, Jesus, to be born in the world today through us. AMEN

Prayer in Song  O Little Town of Bethlehem (verses 1 & 4)  UMH  230

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.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.

CHRISTMAS EVE OR CHRISTMAS DAY
December 25, 2012

On this night the lighting of the four Advent candles and the center white Christ candle takes place in the service during the reading of the gospel lesson. Just prior to the reading, light the four Advent candles.

Sing together  Joy to the World  UMH 246

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King;
let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.
Joy to the world, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ;  
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains  
repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

Read Isaiah 9:2, 6-7  The Righteous Reign of the Coming King

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined.  
For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of  
David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness  
from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Sing  Away in a Manger  (verses 1 & 2)  UMH 217

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.  
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay, the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes;  
I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky  
and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Read Luke 2:1-20  Birth of Jesus

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world  
should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius  
was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also  
went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called  
Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.
In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you:

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.’ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

**Light the Christ Candle**

This holy season we have been on a Journey to Bethlehem with others from our Epworth family. We have chosen hope, peace, joy and love these past four weeks so that we could prepare ourselves for the advent, the coming, of Jesus. Today, Christmas, we read and sing about Jesus who comes to live with us and among us. He is Emmanuel – God with us. Christmas awakens us to this gift. We do not need to look for God! God has come to us, and continues to come, through the Spirit of Jesus.

**Take time to share with one another using one or more of these questions:**

How do you experience the presence of God? How is Jesus real to you day by day? Share stories with one another about how you see and experience Emmanuel – God with you!

What difference will it make in your life knowing Jesus is with you...in you into the future?
Prayer  This can be a time when you pray for special people in your lives and Church family. Perhaps there are person unable to be with you this Christmas. Share these with one another and then use the words of the 3rd stanza of Away in a Manger, sung or spoken, as your prayer.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay close by me forever, and love me, I pray; bless all the dear children in thy tender care, and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

Sing together Hark! the Herald Angels Sing  (verses 1 & 3)  UMH 240

Hark! the Herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King; peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies; with th’angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”
Monday, December 24, Christmas Eve
Join us this Holy Night as we welcome the gift of Christ! All services will be candlelight and celebrate Holy Communion.

5:00 p.m.  Family Service with children & youth leading our worship
7:30 p.m. Lessons and Carols featuring Chancel Choir & Bells
9:30 p.m. Contemporary led by our Praise! Team
11:00 p.m. Contemplative with special music and time for prayer and reflection

Sunday, December 30, Red Rose Sunday
10:00 a.m. Combined worship - We'll celebrate our Lord's coming and give thanks for the extraordinary witness of many members who are serving our larger community through the Red Rose Celebration.

December 2012
Written by the Worship Staff at Epworth in gratitude to the Epworth Church Family
Julie Fair, Judy Moore, Pat Loughlin, Doug Yetter, Jonathan Baker