

ADVENT *with* CARMEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



Love Has Come

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ALL SCRIPTURE REFERENCES CONTAINED IN THIS BOOKLET ARE NIV
FOR QUESTIONS OR MORE INFO PLEASE CONTACT THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM.



Dear Carmel Pres,

And just like that, the season of Advent has begun again. Every year, we enter this space of joy and hope; of expectation and faith. Love and light come in the middle of a season of darkness both literally and figuratively. This is a season of waiting. Advent means “arrival” —we are waiting for the arrival of the baby Jesus. We light candles as part of our worship to mark the time while we wait. As the light of our Advent wreath grows brighter in the darkness—we experience the day of Jesus’ arrival getting closer. We know He is coming and we wait for Him to come again. God’s amazing **love has come** to us in Jesus Christ as our newborn King.

The angel told Joseph that Mary would give birth to a son and that he was to name him Jesus. “Because” the angel said, “he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Our savior is coming. Despite how it may sometimes feel, God has not forgotten the world that he loves. He has not forgotten you. Light the candles. Sing out with joy. Share the good news, be the good news. In Jesus, God’s love has come.

With our love,

Pastor Jennifer, Pastor Josh, and the CPC Staff

ADVENT GUIDE

A QUICK OVERVIEW OF WHAT EACH WEEK WILL LOOK LIKE:

Scripture, Reflection, Questions
Something for the Family
Prayer & Hymn
Opportunities for Engagement



CREATING A SYMBOL FOR THE SEASON:

FIVE CANDLES: Traditionally you can use three purple candles for the first three weeks of Advent symbolizing a season for prayer and preparation; a pink candle for the fourth Sunday (the Angel candle of love), a white candle to put in the middle to light on Christmas (Christ candle). Alternatively, you could use three white candles for the first Sundays and a purple one for the fourth, and a white candle in the middle.

CANDLE HOLDERS: Create a circle with the four candles and room for a candle in the middle. Be creative. You can use a variety of materials to make your wreath or buy a wreath and add candles to it, or use individual candle holders, place them in a circle.

GREENERY: Surround your candles with decorative greenery. Place your wreath where you can gather round it each week so it becomes a symbol of the season.

HOPE

week 1

1 John 4:9–10

God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Colossians 1:17

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Reflect

Love begins with God. God's love is always first. Even before the baby Jesus took his first breath in Bethlehem, or sounded his first cry in Mary's arms, the love of God in Christ Jesus filled and held our world together (Colossians 1:17). And then, at just the right time, God sent his one and only Son into our world. Amazing! God came to us in Jesus. He came into a place in our history, as a baby into the womb of Mary, into a feeding trough in Bethlehem in the chaos of life. This is love. In Jesus, God sends his unconditional, grace-filled, sin-defeating, life-giving love. When we had no clue how to love or be loved, God sent Jesus.

Light the candle of hope.

As we begin this Advent Season, take a deep breath. This is a season of hopeful waiting.

- *As you light the candle of hope, name your hopes and your fears as you enter this season and then offer them to God in prayer.*
- *Reflect to yourself and share how you see God as Love in the world around you. How might you be a person of love and light in the world—giving hope to others?*
- *How does this passage change your tangible idea of love?*

FOR THE KIDS:

Take some time to watch this short video by scanning the QR code or using the link:
<https://bibleproject.com/videos/yakhal-hope/>



1. What is the difference between how the world hopes and Biblical hope?
2. Talk about a time when you saw or experienced hope.
3. Do you feel hopeful about God's love for you in sending His son?
4. How does the arrival of Jesus bring relief and assurance?

Take time to discuss this and any other themes, questions, or key takeaways from what you learned together.

Pray

Dear Unchanging and All Knowing God, Thank you for Your love. Even though our circumstances are always changing, thank you that You never do. Thank you God for sending Your Son at just the right time into the middle of the chaos to bring hope and peace for the world. Thank you that in Jesus we have a perfect picture of what love is. Fill us with your love God that we might embody hope in a weary world. Amen

Sing

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

*1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.*

Refrain:

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.*

*2 O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,*

*And death's dark shadows put to flight.
[Refrain]*

*3 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.
[Refrain]*

*4 O come Desire of nations, bind
All peoples in one heart and mind.
Bid envy, strife, and quarrels cease;
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
[Refrain]*

OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE THIS WEEK:

ENJOY WINTER WONDERFEST MONTEREY

Begins November 22 and runs through December 28, 2025

Lightshow, Holiday Market, and Holiday Treats.

CHRISTMAS ON THE CORNER

Friday, December 5 | 5–7PM | CPC Campus

Bless Carmel with cookies, conversations, cocoa & cider, Christmas caroling & more!

CONTRIBUTE TO THE CPY ANGEL PROJECT

Due back December 7.

Partner with the CPC Deacons and bless local children with Christmas gifts through Community Partnership for Youth (CPY). Pick up an angel on the patio & return your wrapped and labeled gift by Dec 7.

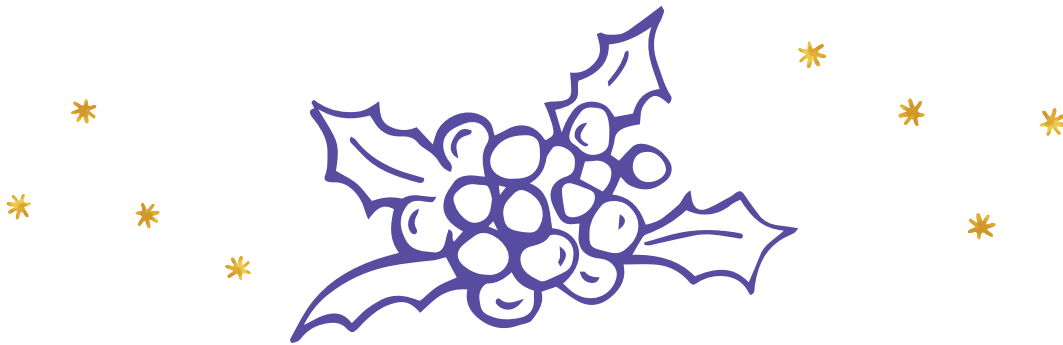
WRITE A LOVE NOTE:

Take some time with your family to write a love note. Think of someone in your life who has lost hope and write them a note reminding them that God loves them. Or perhaps write a love note to God—thanking Him for sending His son to rescue you from sin. Pick up a few cards while you're at church this week and give them away.

DECEMBER'S "ARK IN THE PARK"

Help our CPC team by donating blankets, beanies & hand warmers.

Contact Steve Stiles: stevestilesca@yahoo.com



German ancestry is an advantage when it comes to having a considerable number of delectable recipes to select and prepare, especially during the holidays. A recipe dear to my heart that I make for family and friends during Advent and holidays is a Christmas Almond Tort.

This recipe has been lovingly shared with several generations in our family. To my knowledge, it was first prepared during WWII by my grandmother Erna. Food was scarce during the war time. In advance of the holidays my grandmother would save up ration cards or barter for the ingredients she would need to bake the tort. Before serving the tort my grandfather Karl would share the story of Advent with the children and adults. My grandmother would lovingly present the almond tort as a reminder of God's blessings even in difficult times.

Carmel Presbyterian has become my extended family. You are now beneficiaries of my family tradition. We are all blessed because of His coming into the world.

*Frohe Adventszeit
"Happy Advent"*

Dear CPC Baker,

This recipe is not very difficult. You will be glad you gave it a try. Happy Baking!

Advent Almond Tort

Dee Goodkind



Heat oven to 350 degrees

Ingredients:

1 1/2 cups granulated sugar

1 1/2 cups unsalted butter (melt slowly, but not to the boiling point) cool slightly

2 eggs

1 1/2 teaspoon “real” vanilla (you can use imitation, but the real vanilla is better)

1 1/2 teaspoon almond extract (NOT imitation)

1 1/2 cups all purpose flour (like Gold Medal)

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup “sliced” almonds

Mixing Bowl #1: Combine the first 5 ingredients in the order they are printed. Using an electric mixer, mix the sugar and melted butter first. When adding the eggs, add 1 egg at a time and mix gently.

Mixing Bowl #2: Mix the flour and salt together. Add the flour and salt mixture to the wet ingredients a little at a time using the electric mixer. The batter should appear smooth and a little on the thicker side.

Using an 8” round cake pan spray lightly with PAM (nonstick baking spray). Don’t overspray, otherwise the crust will burn. Pour the batter into the pan and spread with a spatula. Spread about 1/2 cup of sliced almonds evenly (one layer) on top of the batter and then sprinkle about 1/8 cup of granulated sugar over the nuts. This gives the top of the tort a nice crunch.

Bake approximately 45-50 minutes or until a cake tester or toothpick comes out clean when testing. Cover the top of the cake with foil (lightly placed) for the last 10 minutes of baking, otherwise the nuts start to brown too much and then they will taste like you burned them. TRY NOT OPENING THE OVEN DOOR UNTIL THE LAST 10 MINUTES OF BAKING WHEN YOU COVER IT WITH FOIL.

When completely baked, take it out of the oven and let it rest on the countertop for about 20 minutes. Then invert the cake onto another plate. You might need to tap the bottom of the baking pan a couple of times to loosen the cake from the pan after you have inverted it. Let the bottom side cool another 15 minutes and then flip it back over onto a nice serving cake platter.

You may serve it as it is, or with a spoonful of whipped cream and a few berries for color. Happy Baking!

Matthew 1:1-17

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah, Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon. After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, Akim the father of Elihud, Elihud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah. Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

Reflect

Matthew begins his gospel by tracing Jesus' lineage back to Abraham. Some of these names we recognize. Many we do not. Each name in Jesus' family tree represents a story. Jesus' birth into our world marks his in-the-flesh beginning with us, but Matthew wants us to start with Abraham's story. Through twenty-eight generations, we follow God's faithful working out of our redemption long before Jesus took his first breath on earth. Our introduction to Abraham comes in Genesis 11. We learn that he is married to Sarai, and that "Sarai was childless because she was not able to conceive" (11:30). The genealogy of Jesus begins with a childless couple and finishes with the birth of son who would be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). From barrenness comes our Prince of Peace: a two-thousand-year miracle in the making.

Light the candle of peace.

Read the passage together

- Have someone read this passage out loud. It's okay to stumble over name pronunciation! Is there a particular name or story in Jesus' family tree that reminds you of God's love?
- Review your December calendar with your family or trusted friends. Notice how you feel as you talk through the month. Is God inviting you into a different pace? Or to rethink your commitments? Or maybe to release your control of this season so He can surprise you with His love?

FOR THE KIDS:

Use the QR code or link to watch this short video together:

<https://bibleproject.com/videos/shalom-peace/>



1. Why do you think we focus on the topic of Peace during advent?
2. Read Ephesians 4:1–3. How can humility, gentleness, patience, and love help maintain the unity Jesus calls his followers to? What happens to unity when one of these virtues is missing?
3. The biblical story shows how humanity often chooses a way of life apart from God and suffers as a result. Read Colossians 1:19–23. What did God want to do to remedy this pain, and how did he accomplish his desire through Jesus?

Pray

Prince of Peace, it can be hard, if we're honest to look at the state of the world and bear witness to all the heartache and trust in your peace for the world. Help us to trust your promise for peace where we only see pain, shalom in the midst of suffering, and reconciliation where we have wreaked havoc. In a world filled with sin and sadness—You sent your only Son to save us. As we reflect on the king baby Jesus, so at peace in a messy stable—we praise you and we pray that you would make us people of peace in this messy world.

O 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.

For Christ is born of Mary;
and, gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King,
and peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of His heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive Him still,
the dear Christ enters in.

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!

OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE THIS WEEK:

BREAKFAST IN BETHLEHEM

Saturday, December 13 | 9AM | CPC Campus

A family friendly event. Join us for an interactive re-telling of the birth story of Jesus paired with some pancakes. This event is free!

THE NUTCRACKER AT THE SUNSET CENTER

December 12-14 | Sunset Center, Carmel

A wonderful opportunity to experience some festive ballet this season.

SHARE A PRAYER FOR PEACE

Find a close friend and take some time to pray for peace around the world.

God's Grace and Peace in all Seasons and Celebrations

John Scherer

I'm an identical twin (I'm the elder twin by 3 minutes) and our birthday is on Christmas (of all days)—so, our Christmases aren't typical!! My late wife Janis always separated our Christmas from my birthday. We were members at the local Christian Reformed Church in Delavan, WI. They always have a service on Christmas morning, regardless of the day of the week. We would start Christmas morning by going to church (once the kids were older). After Church, we would open Christmas presents before noon. After lunch in the afternoon, it would be time for our Birthday celebration and gift time. My twin brother Jeff would come over to our house in Delavan, WI—we lived 2 miles apart—later in the day and enjoy dessert. Pictured below



are Jeff and me (I can't tell us apart!), Next one is Jeff (L) and me on Christmas Day 2013.

I'm eating on my 'special plate' for my birthday. Next is Janis's last Christmas in 2016 at Ann's house in Vienna, VA. We didn't know at the time, but it has become a bittersweet memory. Janis died on June 27, 2017 during surgery at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. Bottom left photo is our first Christmas after Janis died, a year later December 2017 at Jacksonville Beach, FL. Our whole family travelled there and stayed near the beach. My mom had passed away in August

2017, only 6 weeks after Janis passed. We celebrated memories on that trip. It was joy and sadness side by side. Bottom right is at Palo Alto Christian Reformed Church (Christmas 2023). I'm enjoying being grandpa watching Abel while my daughter and son in law are leading the service. God has been good to our family through the grief of losing a wife/mother/sister/grandmother/great grandma all in one year. God's grace and our faith in Him has always helped us get through the sadness and mourning.

ADVENT CALENDAR

Short scriptures for daily reading. Consider adding one activity to each day based on the questions in the daily reflections (bake some cookies for a neighbor, or drop some canned food at the food bank)

1 *The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying:*
"I have loved you with an everlasting love. I have drawn you with unfailing kindness."
Jeremiah 31:3

Psalm 36:5
 Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.

"And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus."
Luke 1:31

Matthew 2:1
"In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem,..."

Luke 1:30
 "The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary for you have found favor with God.'"

Luke 2:7
"She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them."

Isaiah 7:14
"THEREFORE THE LORD HIMSELF WILL GIVE YOU[A] A SIGN: THE VIRGIN[B] WILL CONCEIVE AND GIVE BIRTH TO A SON, AND WILL CALL HIM IMMANUEL."

"Where is this child who has been born the king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage."
Matthew 2:2

"And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus."
Luke 1:31

Luke 1:32
 "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High..."

Luke 2:12 "This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."

Isaiah 9:6
For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Luke 1:32

"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High..."

4

"Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'"

Luke 1:38

5

Psalms 23:6

"Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

6

10

Lamentations 3:22

BECAUSE OF THE LORD'S GREAT LOVE WE ARE NOT CONSUMED, FOR HIS COMPASSIONS NEVER FAIL.

"In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night."

Luke 2:8

11

12

Luke 3:17

And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

16

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

Luke 2:14

"so they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger."

Luke 2:16

17

18

1 John 4:19

"We love because he first loved us."

"Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh." **Matthew 2:11b**

22

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

23

"Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"

2 Corinthians 9:15

24

Matthew 1:18-25

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 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."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Reflect

Matthew preserves for us the incredible story of Joseph. He is a quiet hero in the Christmas story. He doesn't speak a word, but his actions tell us everything we need to know about his way of life and his commitment to Mary, Jesus and the work of God in history. In striving to live a life faithful to the law, he plans to quietly end his pledge to his intended wife once he learns of her pregnancy. The baby is not his, but he wants to preserve Mary's dignity. But unexpectedly the Lord meets Joseph in a dream and reveals the truth of what is happening in Mary: the savior of the world is being knit together in her womb by the Holy Spirit. He is to take Mary as his wife and name the child 'Jesus.' Joseph wakes up and obeys the Lord.

Light the candle of joy.

Read the passage together

- Joseph's story does not begin in a place of joy. For him initially, the coming of Mary's baby was not a good story. How did the arc of the story change for Joseph?
- Share your faith story. How did you come to know Jesus as your savior?

FOR THE KIDS:



Watch this short video together as a family:

<https://bibleproject.com/videos/chara-joy/>

1. Read Luke 2:9–11. Why were the shepherds afraid? What reasons did the angels give for them to rejoice instead?
2. Read Matthew 5:11–12, Acts 13:50–52, and Hebrews 12:1–3. According to these passages, what specific truths about God can sustain joy even through painful or dire situations?
3. What do you think the difference is between a "good mood" and God's deep rooted joy?
4. Talk about a time when you experienced the same kind of joy as the shepherds.

Pray

Heavenly Father, you are our one true source of joy—thank you for that gift. Please fill our hearts with your presence during this season of advent that we may experience even a taste of your deep and abiding joy regardless of our circumstances. Sustain us oh steadfast Father that we may be reminded that your joy is our strength. Give us eyes to see the good and to be grateful for the gifts you've given us. May Your joy overflow from us that we might bless and encourage those around us. Amen.



Joy to the World

*Joy to the world! the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King.
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.*

*Joy to the world! the Savior reigns;
Let men their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.*

*No more let sin and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground.
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found.*

*He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love
And wonders, wonders of His love.*



OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE THIS WEEK:

THIS DARK DECEMBER - A LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE

Tuesday, December 16 | 7PM | CPC Sanctuary

A contemplative service as an offering of light in the darkness. This service will be also be livestreamed for you to participate from the comfort of your home.

CPC KIDS CHRISTMAS PARTY

Wednesday, December 17 | 3:30-5PM | CPC Campus

CPC Kids celebrating Christmas and the end of school

CHRISTMAS CAROLING AT FISHERMAN'S WHARF

Saturday, December 20 | 2PM | Fisherman's Wharf Monterey

Join the choir in singing Christmas carols to our community!

A Joy-filled Tradition

Meghan Buder

It's been fun to think about traditions as we have a lot of them in our house (I just love them!). It was hard to pick just one, but I thought I'd share about one of my favorite holiday traditions which happens to also be one of our newest: homemade gingerbread houses.

With a new baby and two young toddlers, I was a bit weary about committing myself to making gingerbread houses from scratch. However, what unfolded was a slow, joyful process filled with anticipation and excitement. Building a gingerbread house from scratch is an exercise in patience—small steps over several days. First, we made the dough, then let it rest for a day. After rolling and baking, we waited for the dough to harden—several days in the making. Next, we cut out the pieces, decorated the faces of the houses, and waited again for the frosting to dry. Then came the final assembly, where we glued the walls together with frosting (praying all the while that the walls don't collapse), again waiting for it to harden before you add final touches. I expected the girls might get frustrated with the slow pace—but, it turned out, that was part of the magic. They loved learning each step, delighted in the process, looked forward to what was next, and were endlessly proud of their houses once built.



Matthew 1:21-25

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." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Reflect

There is almost nothing better than holding a tiny baby and snuggling the soft skin against your cheek. This is love. God's love. God comes as a newborn babe, vulnerable, dependent and lying in a manger. Joseph names him Jesus because this baby will save us from our sins. In the naming of Jesus, Joseph stitches together the past, present and future. Matthew ties the birth of Jesus to the prophecy of Isaiah: the promise that a virgin would give birth to one called Immanuel (which means "God with us"). In Jesus, God came to us. In Jesus, God is with us. In Jesus, love has come. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

Light the Candle of Love

Read the passage together

As you reflect on the past 24 hours:

- When did you sense connection with God?
- When did you sense disconnect from God?
- Offer these observations and experiences to God in prayer.

Pray

Finish your time by praying together this verse of 'O Little Town Of Bethlehem':

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!

FOR THE KIDS:



Watch this short video together using the QR code or link:
<https://bibleproject.com/videos/agape-love/>

1. Your love for God is expressed by your love for people. Do you believe this to be true? How have you seen love (in action)?
2. Read Mark 12:29–31. How does loving God relate to loving other people?
3. After reading 1 Corinthians 13:1–7, consider how Jesus loves us. How is Jesus patient, kind, humble, and selfless toward us?
4. Talk about some ways you've experienced love from others in your life or how you are challenged to love others differently now?

Sing

Love Has Come

Love has come, a light in the darkness!
Love explodes in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it.
Hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior!
Love! Love! Glory to God on high!

Love is born! Come share in the wonder.
Love is God now asleep in the hay.
See the glow in the eyes of His mother.
What is the name her heart is saying?
Love! Love! Love is the name she whispers.
Love! Love! Jesus, Immanuel.

Love has come, He never will leave us!
Love is life everlasting and free.
Love is Jesus within and among us.
Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.
Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas.
Love! Love! Praise to You, God on high!

Connect

OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE THIS WEEK:

CHRISTMAS WITH GOSPEL FLAVA

Sunday, December 21 | 4PM | First Baptist Church of Pacific Grove

Enjoy some extra festive flava with the Monterey Peninsula Gospel Community Choir

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SERVICES

Wednesday, December 24 | 3, 4:30, & 7PM | CPC Sanctuary

Please join us for family-friendly candlelight Christmas Eve Services.

Love from Mexico

Susan Diallo

My grandfather's family immigrated from Mexico to Texas when he was very young, and my grandmother (Scotch-Irish) celebrated all the traditions that she could around Christmas to honor his culture. In past years as a family (all 16+ of us including cousins, aunts and uncles) we would make tamales, Mexican wedding cookies and a pinata each year for Christmas eve and bunuelos for Christmas day in addition to singing carols (many in both languages). Most of our traditions were built around generations gathering, preparing and eating good food, and church services. My aunt shared the family recipe with us before she passed away, so nostalgic and what a treasure! Bunuelos can be made like a flat disc or with an iron similar to a rosette iron mold. They are deep fried and sprinkled with cinnamon or powdered sugar.

In a bowl combine:

2 Cups flour (can be gluten free!)
1 Tablespoon sugar

Stir in:

3 eggs
2 Cups milk (can be alternative)
Batter will be thin

Oil should be heated to 380 degrees.
After briefly heating iron in hot oil,
partially dip iron mold into batter
and shake off excess.

Dip iron in oil and once batter is
slightly cooked remove iron.
Turn once when golden brown.
Remove from oil and drain.

Once cooled, sprinkle with
powdered sugar or cinnamon sugar.

Caution: highly delicious and addictive.
Buen Provecho!



CHRISTMAS EVE

Light the Christ Candle

Read the passage together.

Isaiah 9:1-7

But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

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.

You have multiplied exultation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.

For the yoke of their burden
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

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.

Great will be his authority,
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 onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Silent Night

*Silent night, holy night,
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and Child.
Holy Infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.*

*Silent night, holy night,
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar;
Heavenly hosts sing alleluia.
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!*

*Silent night, holy night,
Wondrous star, lend thy light.
With the angels let us sing
Alleluia to our King.
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!*

*Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth,
Jesus Lord at Thy birth.*

FOR THE KIDS:

ATTEND WORSHIP TOGETHER

Sing your favorite Christmas Hymns

The Savior is Born!

*Recreate the story of Jesus' birth from the perspective of the shepherds.
Imagine you are a shepherd watching and caring for your flock when you
see an angel! Wow!*

What do you see, hear, smell, and feel?

*Go around the house and tell others what you hear, see, smell, and feel.
Then read Luke 2:14. Those who were living when Jesus was born gave
thanks for what God had done.*

What has God done for you?

Thank God for sending the most perfect gift.

CHRISTMAS DAY

Light all the advent candles

Sing _____

O Come, All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful,
joyful, and triumphant;
O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem!
Come and behold Him -
born the King of angels!

Refrain:

O come, let us adore Him!
O come, let us adore Him!
O come, let us adore Him -
Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels;
sing in exultation;
O Sing, all ye bright hosts of heav'n above,
Glory to God, all glory in the highest!
[Refrain]

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be glory giv'n:
Word of the Father,
now in flesh appearing! [Refrain]

Go Tell It on the Mountain

Refrain:

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

1 While shepherds kept their watching
O'er silent flocks by night,
Behold! thro'out the heavens
There shone a holy light. [Refrain]

2 The shepherds feared and trembled
When lo! above the earth
Rang out the angel chorus
That hailed our Savior's birth. [Refrain]

3 Down in a lowly manger
The humble Christ was born,
And brought us God's salvation
That blessed Christmas morn. [Refrain]

Reflect

Read the passage together.

Luke 2:1-20

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Connect

OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE THIS WEEK:

5TH SUNDAY ALL CHURCH WORSHIP SERVICE

Sunday, December 28 | 10:30AM | CPC Sanctuary

Join us as we worship as a whole church to close out 2025. Worship will begin at 10:30AM.

GRATITUDE & GOODIES

Sunday, January 4, 2026 | Patio between services

Celebrate CPC turning 72 and start the new year fresh. Cake on the patio and an opportunity to write your gratitudes and joys from the year behind us.

WELCOME HOME MEMBERSHIP CLASS

Saturday, January 14, 2026 | 5:30-8PM | FIRESIDE ROOM

Consider taking the next step to learn more about what it means to become more invested at Carmel Pres by becoming a covenant partner.



Hess Family Holiday

April Hess

We don't have a photo of it, but EVERY year, we go buy a live tree the day after Thanksgiving or the day after that. Then, we decorate the tree while watching the movie "White Christmas." We all know a lot of the songs and sing right along with the characters as we decorate.



Write down some ideas about what this phrase means to you and your life in this next season & new year. Then cut it out and put it somewhere you'll be reminded of what God is calling you to.

LOVE

LIKE

JESUS

1 John 4:9-10

GOD'S LOVE WAS
REVEALED AMONG US
IN THIS WAY:
GOD SENT HIS ONLY SON
INTO THE WORLD
SO THAT WE MIGHT
LIVE THROUGH HIM.
IN THIS IS LOVE,
NOT THAT WE LOVED GOD
BUT THAT HE LOVED US
AND SENT HIS SON
TO BE THE
ATONING SACRIFICE
FOR OUR SINS.

MERRY CHRISTMAS! *We hope this season of Advent gave you time to experience renewed hope and God's deep and unending love for you through the fulfilled promise of a newborn King.*

We hope that it inspired your faith and restored a sense of peace in your lives in light of God's precious gift to us! Our hope is for you to carry these truths with you into this new year.

A NEW YEAR BEGINS, *we praise God for His faithfulness in the year that's gone by. Regardless of our circumstances (good, terrible, or otherwise), we believe in His promise that He is always with us and will never leave us or forsake us. May you pause in this promise for a moment or two.*

As you begin to contemplate the year to come hold it with an open hand, offering it to God as He leads and guides your steps. If you find it helpful, use the questions found on this page for some personal reflection or a time of sharing with your small group, family, or close friends.

- Was God's presence evident in your life this year?
- How did you grow in your love for Christ?
- What was the most important lesson you learned?
- How are you experiencing community in your life?
- Who do you want to thank for their role in your life?
- What have been a few highlights of the past year?
- What have been the hardest things you have faced?
- What did you accomplish that you are proud of?
- What obstacles did you overcome?
- What are your hopes for this New Year?
- What's one word to describe how God is impressing you to live in the next year?
- What is one thing you plan to do next year that will matter most in ten years?
- How can you be God's presence in ordinary places?
- How can you better serve others?
- What are ways CPC can support you?
- What do you want to pray for in the coming year?





CARMEL *Presbyterian* CHURCH

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