**Advent Reading (Week 1): Waiting**

**Reader #1:** The Bible says: Wait for the Lord. Be strong and let your heart take courage and wait for the Lord.

**Reader #2:** This is a hard saying. In this hyper-connected, hyper-active, hyper-driven world, we want things tomorrow; now; yesterday. Delayed gratification is almost a four letter world and speed is always of the essence.

**Reader #1:** But the Bible says: those who wait for the Lord will renew their strength, they will rise up on wings like Eagles, they will run and not be weary, they shall walk and not grow faint.

**Reader #2:** Waiting means trusting in, and relying on, and seeking after the one you’re waiting for. Maybe it’s no accident that patience is a virtue: it takes, after all, the deepest of faith, the strongest of hope and the purest of love.

**Reader #1:** The Bible says: The Lord is good to those who wait for him; to the soul who seeks them.

**Reader #2:** But it is hard to wait when this hurting and darkened world so much needs healing and light. How long, O Lord, how long till the sunrise?

[*Reader #2 begins to light the candle*]

**Reader #1:** This first candle of advent is the “waiting” candle. We light it to remind us that though we may sit in darkness, yet we are waiting for the coming light of Christ.

As it came once to those shepherds who found him lying in the arms of a scandalized virgin, we’re waiting for it. As it comes into our lives today, with all the joy and freedom that his salvation brings, we’re waiting for it; and as he promised it will come again, when we least expect it, like a thief in the night, we’re waiting for it.

**Reader #2:**

Come, Lord Jesus, Come. Amen

**Advent Reading (Week 2): Way-Making**

**Reader #1:** Along time before Jesus showed up on the scene,

God said this through one of his prophets:

**Reader #2:**

A voice is calling, “Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness

Make the way smooth and straight for him.”

**Reader #2:** This is a hard saying. We put many obstacles in God’s way, things that keep us from welcoming him fully into our lives.

**Reader #1:** We get busy. We get distracted. We are more interested in the things of this world than the things of God.

**Reader #2:** In these ways, we make God’s path to us uneven and crooked. And ironically, in this busy season of Christmas preparation, the busy-ness and worldliness seems to increase, rather than decrease, as we wait to celebrate his arrival.

**Reader #1:** He’s still coming; he won’t let these things keep him from reaching us.

**Reader #2:** He simply asks that we would make the way even and smooth. That we would be “way-makers” who clear all the clutter and distractions and stumbling-blocks from our lives, so that we are ready to welcome him when he arrives.

[*Reader #2 begins to light the candles*]

**Reader #1:** This first candle of advent is the “waiting” candle. We light it to remind us that though we may sit in darkness, yet we are waiting for the coming light of Christ.

The second candle is the “way-making” candle. We light it to remind us that we have work to do while we wait, to make the way ready for him to come.

Like the prophets who spoke about him a long time ago, we want to make the way ready; like John the Baptist who prepared the people in Jesus’ own time, we want to make the way ready; like the faithful Christians throughout the centuries who lived simply and honestly and fully for him, we want to make the way ready.

**Reader #2:**

Come Lord Jesus, Come. Amen.

**Advent Reading (Week 3): Worship**

**Reader #1:**  The Spirit of Christmas is really a spirit of worship. It is a spirit of adoration and celebration and thanksgiving to God.

**Reader #2:** The old Christmas carols remind us of this: O Come let us adore him, is how one puts it; Let every heart prepare him room, is how another one puts it. And another: Come adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord the newborn king.

**Reader #1:** The figures in the Christmas story remind us, too: “My soul magnifies the Lord,” is what Mary sang when the angel announced the miracle-child growing in her womb. “Glory to God in highest” is what the angel choir sang the night he was born. When the shepherds left their flocks and found their way to the manger, they worshiped when they saw him; the Wise men from the east, too, offered their gold and frankincense and myrrh.

**Reader #1:** Because the Spirit of Christmas is a spirit of worship.

**Reader #2:** In these days, some two thousand and thirteen years after the first noel, the spirit of worship takes work and care to cultivate. It takes the discipline to set aside time for Christ in our day-to-day; it takes the eyes to recognize God’s blessings in our lives; it takes an undivided heart, to receive them gratefully.

**Reader #1:** But perhaps more than ever we need a spirit of worship like this. In this self-magnifying age, we need souls that will magnify the Lord. In this cynical age, we need to learn how to sing “glory to God” with the angel choirs. In this self-assured age, we need to learn to bend the knee.

[*Reader #1 begins to light the candles*]

**Reader #2:** This first candle of advent is the “waiting” candle. We light it to remind us that though we may sit in darkness, yet we are waiting for the coming light of Christ.

The second candle is the “way-making” candle. We light it to remind us that we have work to do while we wait, to make the way ready for him to come.

The third candle is the “worship” candle. We light it to remind us that the spirit of Christmas is a spirit of worship. May God give us the stillness and rest, the quiet and peace we need, to freely and fully offer him our worship as we celebrate his birth this Christmas.

**Reader #1:** O Come, let us adore him.

**Advent Reading (Week 4): Wonder**

**Reader #1:** The Advent Season is a time for practicing the discipline of Wonder.

**Reader #2:** Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah foresaw his coming, and this is how he said it: 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 the Wonderful Counselor.

**Reader #1:** And in another place the Psalmist says, “The Lord has done this and it is wonderful in our eyes.”

**Reader #2:** We call things “wonderful” when they inspire unexpected feelings of awe, admiration and amazement in us. The ordinary is not wonder-full. The familiar is not wonder-full. The ho-hum stuff of everyday life is not wonder-full.

**Reader #1:** Or maybe it is *more* wonderful than we know.

**Reader #2:**  Because our Wonderful Counselor was born to a humble virgin and her shamed fiancé, wrapped in every-day swaddling clothes and placed in an ordinary manger in the ho-hum town of Bethlehem.

**Reader #1:**  And in coming to us like that, God showed us that he is fully and beautifully present to us in the ordinary, the familiar, the ho-hum stuff of our everyday lives. Any moment in Christ—and every moment *with* Christ—ought to inspire unexpected feelings of awe, amazement, admiration. Christ’s coming to us fills our everyday with wonder.

**Reader #2:** We so need the spirit of Wonder rekindled in us. In a world that has explained away every mystery with the cold-hard-facts of science; in a world that has forgotten how to hope for miracles; in a world where seeing is the only kind of believing worth the effort, we need our Wonderful Counselor to teach us the art of being amazed.

[*Reader #2 begins to light the candles*]

**Reader #1:** The first candle of advent is the “waiting” candle; the second candle is the “way-making” candle; and the third is the “worship” candle.

The fourth candle is the “wonder” candle. When the shepherds left the Christ-child and shared the good news, the Bible says: “Everyone who heard about it *wondered* at what the shepherds told them; but Mary treasured up all the events of that night, pondering them in her heart.”

**Reader #2:** May Christ’s birth inspire in us a spirit of Wonder like that this Christmas.