

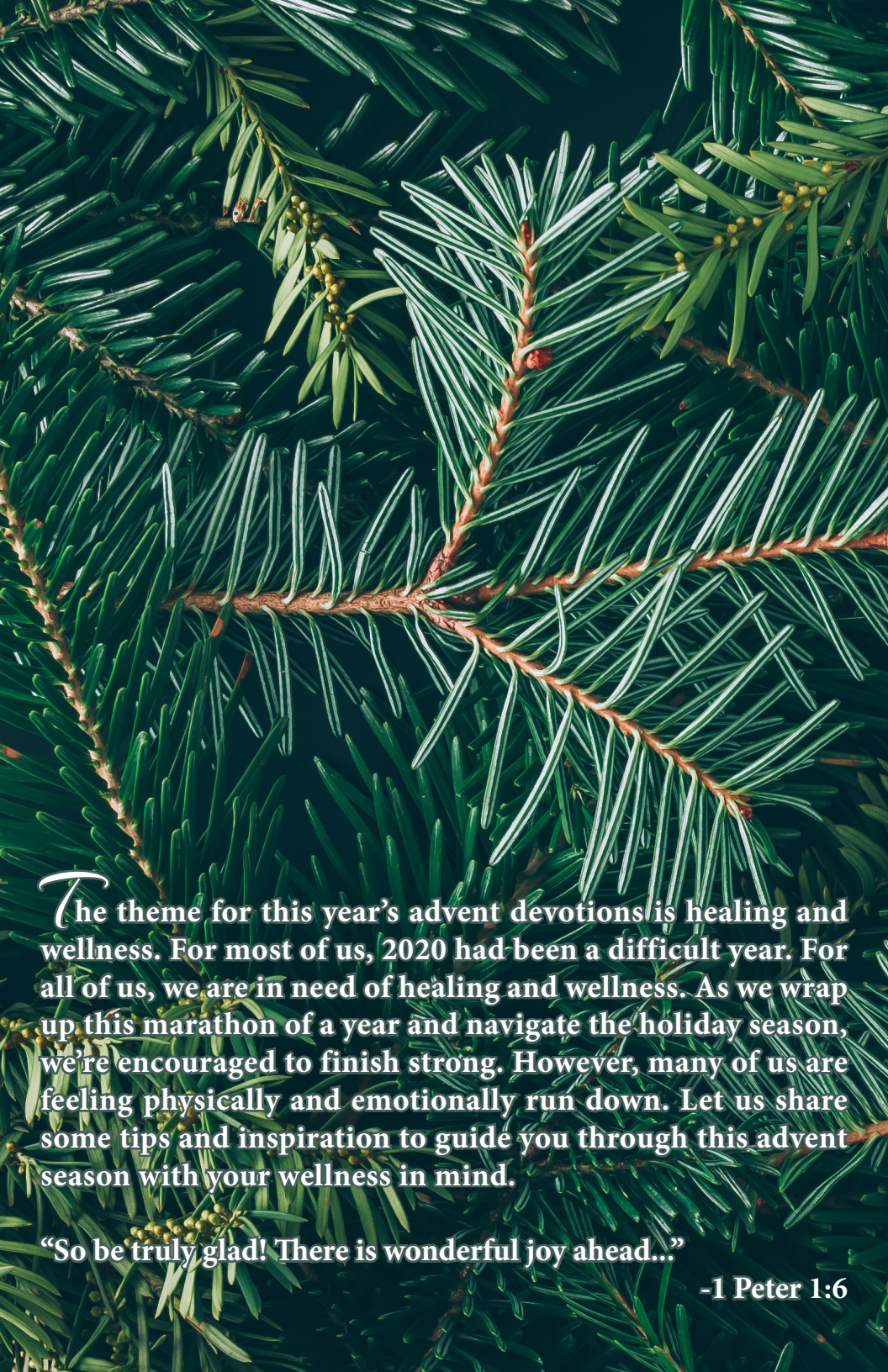
# There was Jesus

Advent Devotions for  
Healing and Wellness



Our Savior's  
Lutheran Church  
Helping people experience  
the love of God

Advent Devotional † 2020



The theme for this year's advent devotions is healing and wellness. For most of us, 2020 had been a difficult year. For all of us, we are in need of healing and wellness. As we wrap up this marathon of a year and navigate the holiday season, we're encouraged to finish strong. However, many of us are feeling physically and emotionally run down. Let us share some tips and inspiration to guide you through this advent season with your wellness in mind.

“So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead...”

-1 Peter 1:6

## Tuesday, December 1

Assisting Minister Nadia Robb

*Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

-Isaiah 41:10

Sometimes, when we're really feeling the stress of life, we forget how much God is in control. This doesn't necessarily mean that God is going to solve our problems, however, it does mean that we're not going through it alone. God will strengthen your resolve. God will give you solace. God will hold you up God's righteous right hand. All you have to do is lean on God; put your faith in God.

There's a quote by the author Brene Brown that says it really well, "I thought faith would say, 'I'll take away the pain and discomfort,' but what it ended up saying was, 'I'll sit with you in it.'" When we begin a healing process, it's helpful to remember these words. God is with you as you grow and evolve and heal. You are not alone. Lean on God and you will be strengthened.

## Wednesday, December 2

Nadia Robb

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.*

-John 14:27

You don't have to take everything on yourself. The holidays are a stressful time. Often, it feels as though we need to take on much of the work to make a memorable and joyous Christmas season. You are not alone. Christ is on your side. He's on the side of peace and grace. You don't need to be perfect, but you will always be God's beloved, and that makes you pretty great.

So take a moment, and breathe in that peace...

## Thursday, December 3

Pastor Joe Johnson

*Heal your heart, break through the concrete walls of your past, and plant flowers in your scars. The flowers of forgiveness.*

*Alexandra Vasilin*  
author of "BLOOMING"

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to harvest what is planted (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2). The bible uses the imagery of planting to exemplify faith. The question is, what kind of seeds are we planting and allowing to grow?

At some point in our past, we have all been hurt. It is easy for that pain to grow into anger and resentment. When we have been hurt, the hope is to forgive and heal. That's not to say we should continue being hurt. Sometimes forgiveness is about setting boundaries to allow open wounds to heal into scars. In the Christmas season, if your heart is breaking, I hope it is breaking open. I hope we are able to plant seeds of hope, peace, love, joy, kindness, compassion and forgiveness. I hope our wounds heal into scars. I hope flowers grow from our scars.

## Friday, December 4

Nadia Robb

Let heaven and nature sing! Take in the beauty and joy of December. Dwell in the anticipation of Christ's birth!

"Joy to the World" is one of my favorite Christmas songs. It is filled with such praise and joy. And my favorite line in the song is, "Let heaven and nature sing." When I think about what it means for nature to sing, I am reminded of those mornings as a kid where you woke up to find out it snowed, and it's that heavy, wet, snowball making snow that makes the whole neighborhood look like a sparkling snow globe. How is that not a song of nature? It's a song that forces us to slow down and cozy up.

Today, let's remember to slow down and be mindful of all the joys that this season brings: all the picturesque

scenes, the way that a hot cup of coffee hits different when it's cold outside, and the whirl of anticipation for Christmas. When we spend more time thinking about the things we're grateful for, the things worth celebrating, we can begin to feel our souls become fed.

As heaven and nature sings this advent season, think about the joys of Christmas; think about what your favorite parts were as a kid. Finally, think about that story we're waiting to celebrate on Christmas, and the peace and grace that was brought into this world through Jesus Christ.

## Saturday, December 5

Education Minister  
Amanda Johnson

*Therefore, since we have been made righteous through his faithfulness combined with our faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*-Romans 5:1-11*

I have a favorite Yoga video series that always starts out with a short time for prayer and meditation. During one of these times of reflection the calming voice on the recording asks you to "Look at the supreme beauty within your heart..." The voice then continues on, asking you to thank the world for its goodness and to be thankful for the goodness in you.

Through stress and turmoil in our lives we can begin to put ourselves down

and forget to see the beauty within our hearts. How healing would it be to finally see ourselves the way God and Jesus see us? What if we saw ourselves as righteous as God intended?

My prayer for you on this day is that you know your worth, and that you feel the healing power of peace, because of your faith in Jesus Christ.

## **Sunday, December 6** Nadia Robb

*Kind words are like honey, sweet to the soul.*

*-Proverbs 16:24*

As a community, we are all still trying to heal from division exacerbated in the last few months. We are mending relationships and feeling vulnerable in the midst of that. Let us remember the words, “kind words are like honey, sweet to the soul.” Choosing to spread kindness and live out our call as Christians to love our neighbor

will heal your heart. Choosing grace will heal your heart. You are strong enough and wise enough to be a peacekeeper.

## **Monday, December 7** Nadia Robb

*Healing comes in waves  
and maybe today the wave hits the rocks  
and that's okay,  
that's okay, darling  
you are still healing  
you are still healing.*

*Ijeoma umebinyuo  
- Author of “Be Gentle  
with Yourself”*

This poem is a reminder that, when we are going through a tough time, some days are better than others. Maybe yesterday you were fine, but today you are on the edge. That's okay. Healing takes time. Micah 7:8 says, “For though I fall, I will rise again. Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light.”



When you fall, God is with you; and God's not with you for you to feel shame or guilt or to make you change who you are. God is with you to be a light. There is warmth to light, and there is direction and learning that is illuminated with light. Healing doesn't happen in a day, and healing usually means you go two steps forward and one step back, but you are still healing. And God is there with you, lighting the way, giving you warmth and compassion.

## **Tuesday, December 8**

Amanda Johnson

I love the person I am becoming. I deserve good things. I believe in myself and my abilities.

*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!*

-1 John 3:1

If the first line you read today made you feel silly or uncomfortable that is understandable. Self-care, and self-affirmations can be hard to get

used to. They can also be a stepping stone to seeing yourself as one of God's beloved children. Try saying this next line knowing that God sees all the good in you.

I am enough. I am loved beyond measure.

## **Wednesday, December 9**

Nadia Robb

*She is clothed in strength and dignity. She laughs without fear of the future.*

-Proverbs 31:25

This verse is so empowering. It doesn't say "she is perfect" or "she can do everything," it says that she is strong and dignified. Your dignity does not depend on your success. Your strength is not measured by what you can overcome. These things are shown through your ability to keep going whether you've got it all together or not. It may seem like there's so much to get done this month, but you are clothed in strength and dignity, and you will keep going.



## Thursday, December 10

Nadia Robb

May I release all energies that are less than love. Help free my mind and body of all that no longer serves me. I send back any energies that aren't mine with love. I anchor into myself and the present moment.

As we shift from healing to wellness, this is a cleansing prayer for us to keep on our hearts. At times, it can feel like there are more things to worry about than to praise in our lives. In the midst of so much change, there's a lot of talk of things we can't do or can't talk about, and that can weigh on our hearts. However, as Philippians 4:8 says,

*"Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."*

Let us turn our eyes to the Lord, turn our eyes to what is good and pure and lovely. Release all energies that are less than love and God will heal your heart. Trust in God and anchor yourself on the present. Fix your eyes on the good in the world as well as the good in your life.

## Friday, December 11

Amanda Johnson

As we focus on health and wellness during our Advent journey there are some tools and changes you can make

towards these goals. Making big changes to our life and schedules can be daunting, so let us suggest instead that you try something small, yet new. You can add this new idea or practice to your life today, or in the coming weeks. A new wellness habit can be as simple as drinking an extra glass of water each day, to getting up ten minutes earlier on busy days to have time for prayer and reflection. Some other ideas you can try are taking a moment each day to note something you are grateful for or maybe make a mindful effort to reduce social media time by setting limits on your phone or devices.

Whatever you choose to implement into your life, know that you can find longevity in the process, or you can cast it aside when the time feels right with no guilt or failure. In the act of trying something new you have betted yourself and taken steps in the journey towards self-care.

*Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers*

-3 John 1:2

## Saturday, December 12

Pastor Joe Johnson

### Physical Wellness

*Today I make a choice to treat my body as a gift. It was bought with a price, and I will glorify God in the choices and actions I make when it comes to my body.*

-1 Corinthians 6:19-20

There is an incredible connection between our physical wellness and our spiritual wellness. There are aspects of our physical wellness that we cannot control, but there are also aspects of our physical wellness we can control.

Here are some ideas;

- Eat something healthy
- Drink something healthy
- Go for a walk
- Go for a run
- 15 minutes of Yoga
- 15 minutes of Pilates

## **Sunday, December 13**

Nadia Robb

### **Emotional Wellness**

*When you take time to replenish your spirit, it allows you to serve others. You cannot serve from an empty vessel.*

*-Eleanor Brown*

Have you ever heard of the story of The Giving Tree? It's this story about an apple tree who loved this boy so much, she gave the boy everything. She first gives apples and branches for the boy to climb, but, as the boy gets older, he takes more and more until all that's left of her is a stump which he sits on at the end of his life.

Now, I'm not sure if this is a happy story or a sad story, a story about love, or a story about abuse. What I am sure about is that this is not a sustainable way for us to serve others. We cannot give this much of ourselves without

taking time to replenish our energy and spirit. If we neglect our own needs in the pursuit of serving others, we will not be able to serve others very well or for very long. You cannot serve from an empty vessel.

It is not selfish to take care of yourself as well. It is not selfish to set boundaries. Your wellness is just as important as everyone else's. Remember that you are God's beloved. Honor yourself accordingly.

## **Monday, December 14**

Nadia Robb

### **Wellness**

*Quiet the mind and the soul will speak*

*-Buddha*

Advent is a time for excitement and anticipation. We have all felt a sense of wonder during this season in our lives. We can also feel overwhelmed, trying to do too much in a short amount of time. Check in on yourself. What are you feeling and where do you feel it? Challenge yourself to a short meditation today. Relax, close your eyes, and breathe...

## **Tuesday, December 15**

Pastor Joe Johnson

### **Intellectual Wellness**

*For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding*

*-Proverbs 2:6*

The definition of theology is "faith seeking understanding." One of the



greatest attributes is a willingness to learn. Although there are aspects of faith that surpass understanding, to be a disciple is to be a student. What contributes to your intellectual wellness? What sparks your curiosity? What would you like to learn more about? What questions do you have about God? What questions do you have about Jesus? What questions do you have about the Holy Spirit? What questions do you have about the bible? What questions do you have about faith? What questions do you have about life?

Here are some ideas to contribute to your intellectual wellness:

- Read a book about something you are interested in
- Have a conversation with someone who shares a particular interest
- Have a conversation with someone

- who has a different viewpoint
- Learn about a culture different from your own
- Dig deeper into deep theological questions
- Read scripture

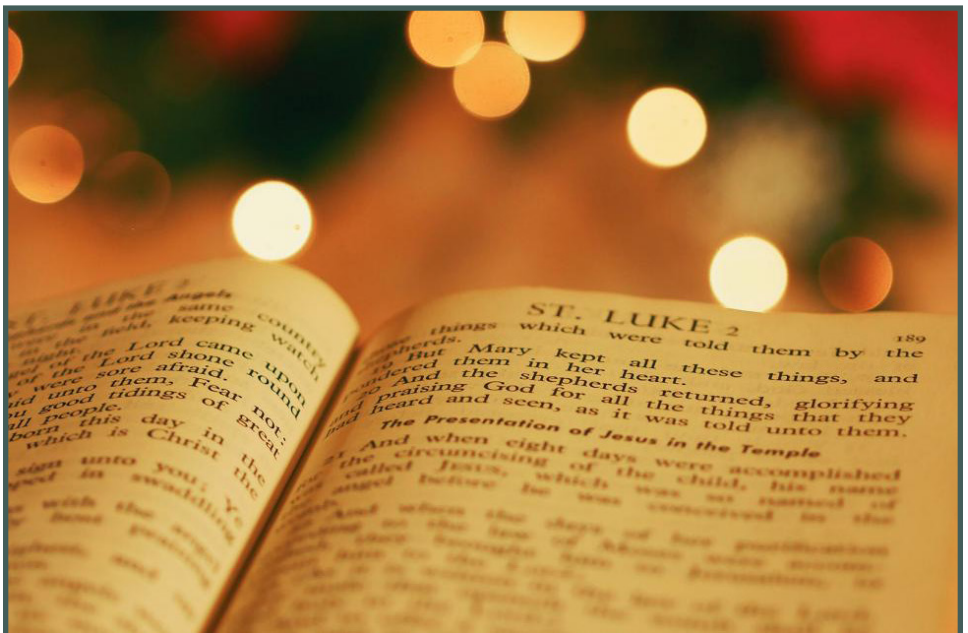
**Wednesday, December 16**  
Nadia Robb

### Intellectual Wellness

*Let's do what we love and do a lot of it.*

*-Marc Jacobs*

One really fun aspect of intellectual wellness is that it includes the practice of creative thinking. I love to knit, especially when I'm feeling anxiety throughout my day, so, in my commitment to the intellectual wellness dimension of my wellness journey, I am going to practice knitting more this advent season.



You might not even think much about what makes you a creative person. Creativity is sometimes a thing we take for granted. However, creative thinking teaches us problem solving and self-expression. There are so many different ways for you to be creative, and the first step is to think about things that you love to do. If you are a writer, write. If you are a singer, sing. If you are a baker, bake. Do something that makes your heart happy and gets your creativity flowing. Our God is a creator. God created the heavens and the earth. Jesus Christ was a maker too. There is something spiritually nourishing about making and creating. It's meditative; it connects us with God and ourselves. So, in the following days leading up to Christmas, let's be mindful of our own creativity and do the things we love.

be intentional about tending our most important relationships. Be patient with each other. Communicate what you are feeling and thinking. Listen to each other. Set intentional date nights, game nights, or meals. Make an effort to do something special for the other. These can be simple things like; lighting a candle, pick the other persons television show or movie, or order a simple gift for the other.

Let this be a reminder to get in touch with our most cherished people. A short text message, mailing a note, or making a phone call can lift your spirits, as well as those you reach out to. Don't forget to show your love, in return you will feel love.

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.*

*-1 Corinthians 13:4*

**Thursday, December 17**  
Amanda & Joe Johnson

### **Social Wellness**

What does love look like? How do we show our love?

As we socially distance, stay home and miss out on cherished traditions this year, we can feel disconnected from our loved ones, including our spouse (if applicable). What we have experienced in the past year can cause discomfort and conflict in our marriages and relationships. In difficult times, it is important to



**Friday, December 18**

Pastor Joe Johnson

### **Social Wellness**

The past eight months of this pandemic has changed the way we gather with friends and family. It has changed the way we communicate and connect with each other. It has changed the way we fellowship. It has changed the way we support each other. In an era of social distancing, social wellness continues to be an important aspect of health. Perhaps we just need to connect in a new way. Here are some ideas:

- Call someone you appreciate or are inspired by. Tell them what a gift it is to know them.
- Text someone and let them know you are thinking about them or that you miss them.
- Write a hand written note or post card to an old friend.
- Mail a letter to someone retelling an old story or memory that makes you smile.
- Send a random gift to a family member.
- Don't forget that you are appreciated and inspiring.

**Saturday, December 19**

Nadia Robb

### **Spiritual Wellness**

NAMASTÉ

My soul honors your soul. I honor the place in you where the entire universe resides. I honor the light, love, truth, beauty and peace within you, because it is also within me. In sharing these things, we are united, we are the same, we are one.

The word "Namaste" is a customary non-contact form of a Hindu greeting. In a year where we are wanting to know all sorts of new ways to greet people without shaking hands or touching, Namaste may be a good word to learn. But Namaste is more than just hello, it is a spiritual greeting. It's not just "I see your face," it's "I see your soul, and my soul honors yours."

Perhaps we all need to remember this deeper meaning to the word Namaste. It requires us to recognize that everyone has light, love, truth, beauty, and peace in them just as we know it is within us. We are all God's beloved, and that makes us united. Being so loved by God is a purifying experience. Namaste reminds us that, whoever we greet or meet, there is light and truth and beauty in their soul just as there is in your own.

**Sunday, December 20**

Nadia Robb

### **Spiritual Wellness**

*God writes the Gospel not in the Bible alone, but also in trees, and in the flowers, and in clouds and stars.*

*-Martin Luther*

On this final Sunday before Christmas, it is spiritually nourishing to appreciate God's creation. See the Gospel in nature, in your child's face, in your love's eyes. See the grace and mercy of God in your life. You are so loved...

**Monday, December 21**

Pastor Joe Johnson

### **Environmental Wellness**

*We have a beautiful mother. Her hills are buffaloes. Her buffaloes hills. We have a beautiful mother. Her oceans are wombs. Her wombs oceans. We have a beautiful mother. Her teeth the white stones at the edge of the water the summer grasses her plentiful hair. We have a beautiful mother. Her green lap immense. Her brown embrace eternal. Her blue body everything we know.*

*-Alice Walker*

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. God looked at all he created and it was very good. We are part of this creation. We have been created to live in and with the world. We are called to be stewards of the world. What is God communicating through creation?

- Have a cup of coffee and watch the sunrise.



- Watch the sunset with a beverage of choice.
- Where is the moon? How full is the moon?
- Pay attention to the wind direction. Pray for a loved one who lives in that direction.
- Notice a living creature.
- Listen the sounds of nature.

## Tuesday, December 22

Nadia Robb

### Environmental Wellness

*But ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being.*

-Job 12:7-10

God has created for us a beautiful masterpiece. The earth in all of its intricate and unique details is an amazing creation, and an amazing place for us to call home. Every detail of life is a potter's thumb-print of God's hand in the world. As this verse says, everything with legs, wings, or fins, everything that grows from the ground, every drop of water on this earth will tell you about God. They will tell you about God's compassion, God's wisdom, God's nurturing presence, and God's power to bring life into existence.

Let us honor God's work, God's care, and God's wisdom by honoring this beautiful earth. Sometimes that's hard because it means we have to make sacrifices or change our habits, but, when we take better care of the earth, she will return the favor by taking better care of us.

## Wednesday, December 23

Nadia Robb

### Occupational Wellness

*In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*

-Acts 20:35

You are called to something. No matter how big or small it may seem, God has a plan for you and your abilities are valuable. May your work bring you a sense of purpose, doing something that you are passionate about. Whether you are an essential worker, working from home, or your job is to take care of your family, may God grant you a sense of fulfillment and joy in your work on this day and the days to come.

**Thursday, December 24**

Nadia Robb

**Blessing**

May knowing Jesus bring you PEACE to bless each day, HOPE for each tomorrow, and JOY in every season. As we conclude our Advent season together, take a moment to reflect on your growth and transformation, on your healing and wellness journey. May you take on the new year with the grace and light of Jesus Christ, whose birth, life, and resurrection we celebrate tomorrow.

**Friday, December 25**

Pastor Joe Johnson

*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 onto us tonight, a child has been born, a son has been given.*

*-Isaiah 9:2-3*

There is something magical about Christmas. The lights, greens, traditions, food, family, friends, and faith. This, of course, is what Christmas is all about; Family, friends, and faith.

We have been watching, waiting & preparing for Christmas. Today, what we have been waiting for has arrived. The in-breaking of God, Immanuel the Great I Am, the Son of God, the Son of Man. The birth of Jesus Christ; Savior, servant, Redeemer, and Friend. A light in the darkness.

For most of us, 2020 has been a difficult year, but there is hope! The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. A son is given! A savior is born!

Merry Christmas,  
Pastor Joe

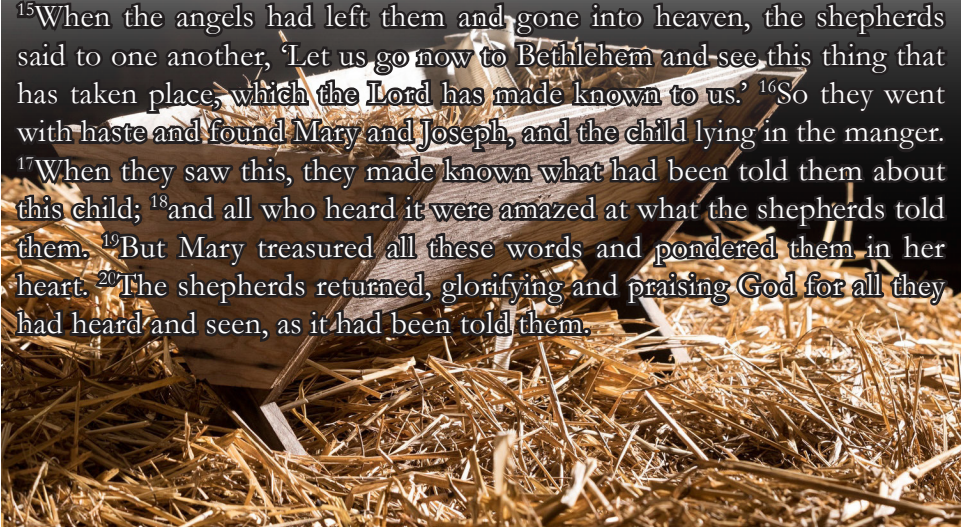
## The Gospel of Luke

<sup>1</sup>In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>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.

<sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>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: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.’ <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup>‘Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!’

<sup>15</sup>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.’ <sup>16</sup>So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.



## **Contributors:**

**Senior Pastor Joe Johnson**

**Education Minister Amanda Johnson**

**Assisting Minister Nadia Robb**

## **Editor & Designer:**

**Beth Christianson-Melby, *Local Missions***

**“There was Jesus, Advent Devotions for Healing and Wellness” is a publication of Our Savior’s Lutheran Church, Hillsboro, North Dakota**

**To order copies of “There was Jesus, Advent Devotions for Healing and Wellness”, please contact Our Savior’s Lutheran Church, Hillsboro, ND at 701-636-5701 or visit [OSLCHillsboro.com](http://OSLCHillsboro.com).**



**Our Savior's  
Lutheran Church**

*Helping people experience  
the love of Christ*

**[OSLCHillsboro.com](http://OSLCHillsboro.com)**