



ADVENT 2022

*A Transformational Journey Through
Hope, Peace, Joy & Love*



UNION
GOSPEL
MISSION

WELCOME TO ADVENT 2022

With the season of Advent upon us, may this gift offer you renewal in the embodiment of hope, peace, joy, and love – as you discover and rediscover the greatest Gift of all in the person of Jesus. – Rob McKinley, Manager Church Relations, UGM

Welcome to the UGM Advent Reflection. Why do we do this? The whole notion of celebrating Advent seems almost counterintuitive in relation to our hurried world.

I don't have time to slow down during the busiest season of the year!

This is precisely *why* Advent is so important. Many of us work endlessly to purchase gifts to give to people that in many cases, don't want or need them. Many of us prepare our homes yet neglect the preparation of our hearts. We're seemingly pulled in every direction yet have lost our way towards the One direction that matters most. In the Divine, upside down economy of God's Kingdom, where the last shall be first and our 'treasures' are found where our hearts are... Advent recalibrates our hearts desires and redefines where the *ultimate* Treasure is found.

Awaiting us are both the Giver and the Gift. As the hurriedness of life vies for your devotion at every turn... As consumerism does what it does best, consume... As the noise of the world plants seeds of anxiety and restlessness... May you find new life and a place of sanctuary each day as we move towards celebrating the greatest Gift ever given to humanity – the person of Jesus Christ.

Advent: The Background

The story starts with Zachariah (Jesus' Uncle), a 'most high' priest being given a job that he will only get once in his lifetime. A job that he has waited his whole life to do. He's to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. But this job has more in store than what he could have imagined, for when he arrived an angel was waiting for him to tell him that his wife Elizabeth was pregnant... you know, the wife that couldn't get pregnant? Not only was she pregnant but it was with a baby that would help lead the coming of the Christ. And in his state of confusion, overwhelm, disbelief and probably some classic cognitive dissonance, the angel took his voice from him until the child was born.

In today's culture, Elizabeth would be classified as being a "geriatric pregnancy". Flattering right? She had made it past the "normal" childbearing years and thought that pregnancy would never happen. And in her grief of lost dreams, she was presented with something greater than she had ever expected.

Unlike her husband Zachariah, when she received the news of her pregnancy, she was overcome with the gifts of the Spirit.

Much like pregnancy, advent is a time of waiting, of anticipating something that is going to change *everything*... and often in ways that we don't see and can't understand. It may be messy, at times you might feel bloated, or completely at ease in the wonder of it all. And through it

all the Spirit is present, both in the *not* knowing and in the anticipating... Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. These are the same gifts we hold for our communities in the constant unknowing, oppression, successes, sorrow, and questioning where we fit in. Let's dig a little deeper into Advent.

Advent means "coming" or "arriving" (derived from the Latin word *adventus* and the Greek word *Parousia*) because we're celebrating the coming of Christ to earth. Advent readings, wreaths, music, and prayers help us in remembering the deeper meaning - and profound impact of Christ's human arrival.

The meaning of Advent has changed over the course of history. The first records we have of Advent go back to Christians in Spain and Gaul during the 4th Century. For them, the meaning of the advent season wasn't connected to Christmas but to Epiphany - when new Christians prepared to be baptized through fasting, confession of sins, and prayer.

It was the Romans in the 6th Century who developed the understanding of the Advent season as celebrating the coming of Christ in history, but it was his *Second Coming* which they had in view. It's only within the last few centuries that many Christians have approached the meaning of Advent as a time to appreciate the *First Coming* of Christ and emphasized recalling the Bible stories surrounding Jesus' birth, like those that feature Mary, Joseph, angels, shepherds and sheep, and (as tradition holds) the three magi. Some traditions use faith rather hope. Others have varying orders of the themes. Regardless of theme, order, or colour

symbolism, all point to the person of Jesus.

It was the Romans in the 6th Century who developed the understanding of the Advent season as celebrating the coming of Christ in history, but it was his *Second Coming* which they had in view. It's only within the last few centuries that many Christians have approached the meaning of Advent as a time to appreciate the *First Coming* of Christ... with an emphasis on recalling the Bible stories surrounding Jesus' birth, like those that feature Mary, Joseph, angels, shepherds and sheep, and (as tradition holds) the three magi. Some traditions use faith rather than hope. Others have varying orders of themes. Despite the variations in tradition: first or second coming, theme, order, or colour symbolism, all point to the person of Jesus.

As we celebrate the season of Advent, may we be mindful that Jesus, as illustrated in the book of John (*the Bread of Life, Light of the World, Gate, Good Shepherd, Resurrection & Life, Way/Truth/Life, and the True Vine*)... entered our world in the humblest of all circumstances to redeem, reconcile, and offer us not only life... but redeemed, restored, and renewed life to the full!

When all is stripped away... the lights, tradition, disappointment, wrapping paper, loneliness, indulgence, distractions... may we find that one true gift, the gift of life and renewed wholeness in the person of Jesus, the greatest treasure of all.

LECTIO DIVINA (DIVINE READING)

Why Lectio Divina?

In our hurried, distracted world with a constant stream of stimuli, silence and practicing the art of listening are rare, sometimes non-existent. Lectio Divina is an ancient spiritual practice for listening to a scripture passage with the *ear of the heart*. It is not the same as bible study. In Lectio Divina we focus less on our intellectual, studious, or effortful ways of reading the scripture and enter a state in which we are quiet and receptive to God's word. We let go of our own words, and let God speak to us. In this practice, the words of scripture become very alive and touch the heart in spontaneous ways that lead us more deeply into relationship with God.

Application

Feel free to read the passage aloud or silently. It may be helpful to quiet your heart and sit in silence for a few minutes before reading. Throw off any and all distractions and simply focus on the words of life spoken to you. *Don't allow your mind to wander or project how this may speak to someone else*. This is a holy time - just between you and your Creator. What is the passage saying to you right here, right now?

Read through it 3 times. Leave a few minutes of silence between each reading and focus on each question individually for each reading. Notice if any phrase, sentence or word stands out and gently begin to repeat

it to yourself, allowing it to touch you deeply. Respond spontaneously as you listen. Notice any prayerful response that arises within you, for example a small prayer of gratitude or praise. Take time to rest in God's presence even beyond your thoughts and reflections. Just be.

- **1st reading:** *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
- **2nd reading:** *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life today relates?*
- **3rd reading:** *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*

Helpful Suggestions

- Journal your reflections
- Pray right after each reflection for God to open your senses to that day's scripture and how it may 'dwell richly' within you during your day's interactions
- As your day unfolds, recall what the Holy Spirit impressed on you earlier with that day's scripture - and welcome that place of sanctuary and guidance to direct your state of mind, actions, and words of the day

The intent of these readings is for inner transformation that leads to outer impact. Enjoy, rest, find peace, be transformed!

HOPE

Hope! The word hope is found 180 times in the Bible. In the book of Matthew, Jesus is spoken of through the eyes of the prophet Isaiah - about 700 years before Jesus' birth. Chapter 12 verse 21 says, 'In His name the nations will put their *hope*'. It's easy to pass by such a statement but the treasure and beauty of *where hope is found* is contained within this text... In Christ, all nations, all peoples... will find hope!

Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky said, '*To live without hope is to cease to live.*' Early Christian writer and apologist Tertullian defined hope as '*Patience with the lamp lit.*' Author Tim Keller said, '*Biblical hope is life changing certainty about the future... in a way that affects how you live now.*' Soren Kierkegaard was a Danish theologian, philosopher, poet, social critic, and author. He aptly observed that, '*Our life always expresses the result of our dominant thoughts.*'

As we reflect on hope over the next 7 days, may we be mindful of what our lives express. What are my dominant thoughts? What does Matthew 12.21 mean to me personally? How am I offering hope to others?

This week, may hope be ever-present in all circumstances. May it be discovered and re-discovered as we turn our hearts to the source of all hope, in the person of Jesus Christ.



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27TH

(Romans 12.12)

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer."

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*



MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28TH

(Proverbs 23.18)

"There is surely a hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off."

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29TH

(Phillippians 1.6)

“Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ’s personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30TH

(Romans 5.3-4)

"Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*





THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1ST

(2Corinthians 4.18)

"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2ND

(Isaiah 40.31)

“But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ’s personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3RD

(Revelation 21.8)

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*



PEACE

Peace! With so many anxieties gripping our world and factionalism wreaking havoc, we long for biblical peace. Peace in the bible is much more than the absence of conflict. It's proactive. It seeks restoration from brokenness with an outcome of wholeness and completeness.

The primary Hebrew word for peace in the Old Testament is *shalom*. Shalom refers to relationships - between people, nations, and God. It's often associated with a covenant or promise.

In the New Testament, the primary word for peace is *eirene*. This definition refers to rest and tranquility. A prime focus of peace in the New Testament is the Advent of Jesus Christ as announced by the angels in Luke (peace on earth). Isaiah had predicted the Messiah would be the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) and He is called the Lord of peace in 2Thessalonians 3.16. It's through Christ's work of justification that we can have peace with God (Romans 5.1).

We are called to and created for **both** - *shalom* and *eirene*.

In the book of Philippians, we are reminded not to worry but rather to pray. Prayer is a conversation, an abiding state of being... a conforming of our will to God's. There's deep assurance and hope in that. The writer, Paul, then goes on to say that we should tell God what we need - and to do so thankfully. There is a promise to this... We will experience God's

peace which exceeds anything that we can understand; and that peace will guard our hearts and minds as we live and abide with Jesus.

As we meditate on peace over the next 7 days, may our reflections of peace become *who* we are. May we be drawn beyond an 'absence of conflict' into being conduits of restoration - pointing ourselves and others towards the transforming and sustaining life found in the Prince of Peace.



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4TH

(John 16.33)

"I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*

MONDAY, DECEMBER 5TH

(2Corinthians 13.11)

“Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.”

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*



TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6TH

(Psalm 4.8)

"In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety."

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*





WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7TH

(Philippians 4.9)

**"Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me
- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."**

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8TH

(Colossians 3.15)

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful."

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9TH

(Romans 8.6)

"The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace."

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10TH

(Matthew 5.9)

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*



JOY

Joy! Joy is a fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23. It's the sibling of kindness, love, patience, peace, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, and goodness. If joy is a fruit of the Spirit, then why do we so often feel a void of joy in our lives? Possibly, we too often make joy contingent on our own feelings or circumstances.

Joy in the truest sense transcends our circumstances and is tied to our faith. It's entirely dependent on who Jesus is and what He's done. *Our faith in the unseen affects our perception of the seen.* In Acts 16, a scene unfolds where the Apostle Paul and Silas are stripped down, beaten with rods, and thrown into prison. After being flogged, their feet were put in stocks, and they were guarded by a jailer. Their response? Singing hymns at midnight! Where does such joy emanate from?! Not only for themselves but flowing through to the other prisoners and even to those who jailed them! This is the wellspring of lasting joy that's infectious. In the 4th verse of the classic hymn written by Charles Wesley, *And Can It Be That I Should Gain*, he so beautifully describes this everlasting joy. It reads:

*Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;*

I rose, went forth and followed Thee!

May this joy, the fruit of the Spirit that transcends all circumstances, that walks hand-in-hand with Hope, Peace, and Love lead you to back the Source of all joy! May it infill you, be infectious to others, and may this joy overflow in all you do and reflect upon!



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11TH

(Luke 2.10)

"But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.'"

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*



MONDAY, DECEMBER 12TH

(Psalm 94.19)

"When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy."

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13TH

(Philemon 1.7)

“Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord’s people.”

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ’s personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14TH

(Luke 15.7)

"I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*





THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15TH

(John 15.11)

"I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!"

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16TH

(Psalm 19.8)

"The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes."

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17TH

(Philippians 4.4)

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*



LOVE

Love! Theologian CS Lewis wrote a book entitled, 'The Four Loves', dealing with the four classical loves, usually spoken of by their Greek names; Eros (romantic, sexual), Storge (familial affection), Philia (friendship), and Agape (the deepest, purest, most altruistic love, unconcerned for self). As humans, we have our own definitions and understandings of what love is and how it's expressed. Often, our (or society's) definitions are anything but love; sentimentality and lust are the most common substitutes, but neither of them is love. Love is unreciprocated in its origin and outflow. It's patient, kind, doesn't envy or boast, isn't proud, never dishonors, isn't self-seeking, isn't easily angered, keeps no records of wrongs, rejoices in the truth - never in evil, always protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres. This is love.

Jesus illustrated love as a verb, an action. Here are 7 examples: He healed the sick in love (Matthew 14.14). He raised the dead in love (John 11.35,38). He fed the hungry in love (Matthew 15.32). He preached the Kingdom in love (Mark 6.34). He cast out demons in love (Matthew 8.16). He interceded for His disciples and the Church in love (John 17.20-21). He gave His life for the world in love (John 3.16). God is love (1John 4.16) Jesus, love incarnate... is sacrificial. Nothing is more beautiful, and yet, love costs. It's compassionate.

Compassion is the outflow of love. The profound sense of compassion is the *passion* part. The word *passion* literally means suffering. It comes

from the Latin for suffering. What we most value about compassion is when it costs people something. 'Com', meaning with... suffering *with* somebody. Com-passion. Compassion is really just empty sympathy unless it's shared. This compassion is at the heart of Jesus in how He lived the truest definition of love. As we reflect on love over the next 7 days, may we be ever mindful that to experience the beauty of love in all its splendour, it does come with a cost. The greatest Gift of all, the embodiment of love, paid that cost for all of humanity - past, present, and future. And in the beauty of it all, it's the gift of sheer Grace. May this grace be infused on every reflection of love over this week.



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18TH

(1 Corinthians 13.4-5)

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no records of wrongs.”

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*

MONDAY, DECEMBER 19TH

(John 15:12)

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*



TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20TH

(Isaiah 54.10)

“For the mountains may move and the hills disappear, but even then my faithful love for you will remain. My covenant of blessing will never be broken,” says the LORD, who has mercy on you.”

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
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3. *What is Christ’s personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*





WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21ST

(Ephesians 2.4-5)

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.”

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ’s personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22ND

(Romans 8.38-39)

“And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ’s personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*

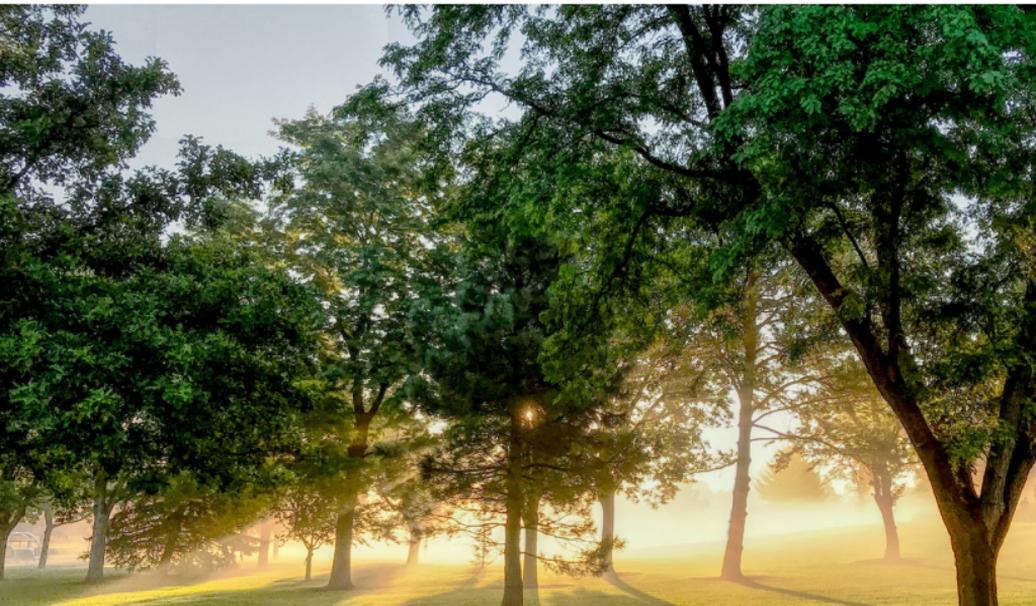
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23RD

(Lamentations 3.22-23)

“Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ’s personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24TH

(1John 4.9)

"This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him."

Lectio Divina

1. *What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you?*
2. *What do you feel? What specific situation in your life relates?*
3. *What is Christ's personal invitation to you from the Scripture?*



CHRIST

Today, we celebrate the *Light* that the Son brought into the world. John 1.9 says, "The One who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world."

Jesus is the culmination of all hope, peace, and joy. He is *the* embodiment of love. This day recognizes that the old things have passed away and all has been made new through the arrival of Jesus!

He is the source of all our **HOPE** and the hope of the world (Romans 8.24-25). He is the one called Prince of **PEACE** (Isaiah 9.6). He is the One who promises that from His **JOY** being in us, our joy is full (John 15.11)! He is the one and true definition of **LOVE** (1John 4.7-21).

May these scriptures offer you a fresh perspective and renewed hope for an inner (and outer) world of peace that abounds with joy, shining the light of His love in all you see and do. May the gift of Jesus be a treasure worth forsaking all for and discovering that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25TH

Union Gospel Mission has been feeding hope and changing the lives of men, women, and children for over 80 years. Through its seven locations in Metro Vancouver and the City of Mission, UGM provides outreach, meals, alcohol and drug recovery, and housing to those struggling with poverty, homelessness, and addiction. The heart of the mission is to demonstrate God's transforming love, ease the burden of the most vulnerable, rebuild the lives of the broken, and offer dignity to those who feel cast aside.

TO FIND OUT MORE, VISIT UGM.CA



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