



#59250

**FROM THE MANGER  
TO THE MOUNT**

**Six Programs for the Major Festivals  
of the Church Year**

**Advent Devotion  
Songs of the Nativity  
An Epiphany Devotion  
The Cross: What Does It Mean to You?  
Easter Is...  
A Word to the Disciples**

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## ADVENT DEVOTION

For Use with an Advent Wreath

In this Advent season, which prepares us for Christmas, let's take some time to find out more about Advent, its origin and the meaning of the Advent wreath.

We begin in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Sing:** "Hark the Glad Sound! The Savior Comes" Stanza 1 *TLH 66, LW 29*

**Reader 1:** Advent is a period of preparation and reflection before the celebration of Christmas. In the early church, Easter was the major Christian festival. However, in about the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Advent was universally recognized as the beginning of the church year. Originally, as in Lent, Advent was 40 days long. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century, however, it was shortened. Advent, now four weeks in length, begins on the Sunday nearest St. Andrew's Day (November 30) and continues until Christmas Eve. Advent should not be confused with Christmas. The Advent spirit of anticipation, as characterized in the liturgy, hymns, Scripture readings and preaching, should be preserved.

**Reader 2:** The purpose of the Advent wreath is to heighten our anticipation of Christmas. From the first Sunday in Advent to Christmas Eve, the wreath grows in beauty and light until the crèche and the Christmas tree replace it. The Advent wreath came to us by way of Germany and Scandinavia. Historically, the Advent wreath is traced to pagan sources. During the shortest days of the year, people lit candles in a wheel. They prayed to the god of light to turn the wheel of the earth toward the sun again and lengthen the days. The Christian church adapted this custom. The Christian Advent wreath tells in a dramatic way of the dark and waiting world and the first dawning of light, which grows brighter and brighter as the weeks pass until its brilliance merges at last with the star over Bethlehem.

**Reader 3:** The lit candles point to God's Son as the Light of the World. Traditionally, three of the Advent candles are purple, with a pink or rose-colored candle used for the third Sunday in Advent. The Christ candle in the center is white. We give the following names to the candles:

The Prophecy Candle (purple) – 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent  
The Judgment Candle (purple) – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent  
The Joyful Candle (pink) – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent  
The Shepherd's Candle (purple) – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent

**Reader 1:** Prophecy Candle: Read Isaiah 60:1-3

**Reader 2:** God's plan is to be fulfilled. The prophets had foretold the coming of One who would bring light and dispel darkness. In this season of Advent, we emphasize God's promises to His people and the fulfillment of these promises in God's Son.

**Reader 1:** Judgment Candle: Read Malachi 3:1-5 and Luke 21:25-36

**Reader 3:** In Advent, besides meditating on our Lord's first coming, we contemplate His future coming as judge. God warns us in the Bible that one day all people will be called into the heavenly courtroom to give an account of what they have done with their lives. In Jesus' own description of this event (in Matthew 25), we find that God will divide the people into two groups: those intimately related to Him in faith and love, who acted in that love toward others, will inherit the kingdom of Glory, and those who were not related to Him as Savior and did not reflect His love toward others will be condemned.

**Reader 1:** Joyful Candle: Read Philippians 4:4-8

**Reader 2:** Readings for the third Sunday in Advent usually imply "rejoicing" or "joy." The pace quickens in anticipation as we look forward to the promise fulfilled. This third candle is sometimes referred to as the Angel's Candle. The angel's message was one of "great joy." Just think of what it meant to those who longed for the fulfillment all their lives.

**Reader 1:** Shepherd's Candle: Read Luke 2:8-20

**Reader 3:** The waiting is almost over. God is faithful; the Son awaits us. The Shepherd's Candle typifies the act of sharing Christ with others. The shepherds were the first evangelists (v. 17); they told others. We take an opportunity on this last Sunday of Advent to contemplate how we too may further share Christ with others and, like the shepherds, praise God for His immeasurable gift to us – the Lord Jesus.

**Reader 2:** The Christ Candle (center white candle) is lit on Christmas Eve. The waiting is over. We welcome the King, Lord Jesus. May we reflect the Light of the World as we journey to the manger with our gifts. We love because He first loved us.

**Reader 1:** Let us pray: Heavenly Father, we thank and praise You for sending Your Son, Jesus, whose birthday we are preparing to celebrate. In this Advent season, help us to prepare our hearts to receive You and not let worldly busy-ness and distractions lead us away from You. May we ever focus our minds and hearts on Your great gift to us, that all our thoughts, words and actions may please You. In Jesus' precious Name we pray. Amen.

**Sing:** "On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry" Stanzas 1,3,5 *TLH 63, LW 14*

*Written by Janet Reinhart*

## SONGS OF THE NATIVITY

**Sing:** “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” *TLH 94, LW 49*

**Narrator:** While the Scriptures do not state that angels sang, but rather that they spoke messages, it has seemed natural for Christendom to break forth in exuberant melodies when considering the remarkable events surrounding the Nativity.

**Reading:** Luke 1:11-17

**Narrator:** The angel’s announcement echoed the prophecies in Isaiah 40:1-4 and Malachi 4:5-6. The words of the next hymn bring us this expression of God’s great compassion for His erring people.

**Sing:** “Comfort, Comfort, Ye My People” *TLH 61, LW 28*

**Reading:** The Annunciation – Luke 1:26-38

**Narrator:** Gabriel was God’s divinely appointed messenger to announce the birth of the Savior to Mary. Can you imagine the wonder and amazement of the humble maiden of Nazareth when this shining emissary from heaven stood in her presence to proclaim such glorious news?

**Sing:** “Hark the Glad Sound!” *TLH 66, LW 29*

**Narrator:** After receiving this glorious news from the angel Gabriel, Mary expressed her joy, quoting freely from Psalms and the prophets, in the words found in Luke 1:46-55. These words are called the *Magnificat*, so named after the first word in the Latin translation. We use this in the order of Vespers. Mary then hurried to the hill country of Judah to tell her cousin Elizabeth, wife of Zechariah, and mother-to-be of John, who was to be the Savior’s herald. Before Mary could share her news, Elizabeth praised God for allowing the mother of her Lord to visit her.

**Sing:** “Magnificat” *TLH pg. 43, LW pg. 228*

**Narrator:** Zechariah, who had first doubted Gabriel’s message, is left mute until John is born and named. We chant the words that he spoke, after regaining his speech, in the Order of Matins and know them as the *Benedictus*. Luke 1:67 records that Zechariah, being filled with the Holy Ghost, prophesied and praised God, saying:

**Reading:** Luke 1:68-79

**Narrator:** Three months after the birth of John came the event which changed all history... yes, even eternity...the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Again, the angel appeared to men; this time, lowly shepherds. After the message, the sky over the hills of Bethlehem was radiant with the light of heaven, and the air was filled with glorious sounds as the angels announced the Savior's birth. We refer to it as the *Gloria in Excelsis*.

**Reading:** Luke 2:8-14

**Narrator:** Some of our loveliest carols imply that their good news was truly music to the ears of the hearers then, even as it still is today. The next song reminds us, in part, of that Gloria.

**Sing:** "Angels We Have Heard on High" LW 55

**Narrator:** The 17<sup>th</sup> century hymn writer, Paul Gerhardt, gave us the joyous words of "Come, Your Hearts and Voices Raising" (*TLH 90, LW 48*). This hymn and the lilting "Now Sing We, Now Rejoice" (*TLH 92, LW 47*) are based on 14<sup>th</sup> century melodies.

Probably the best known song of the 1700's is "Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful" (*TLH 102, LW 41*). The author is unknown and it may have been sung long before appearing in any hymnal. In 1719 Isaac Watts wrote the inspiring "Joy to the World" (*TLH 87, LW 53*), using a rousing tune by Handel.

On Christmas Eve, 1818, the little village of Oberndorf lay snowbound in the Bavarian Alps. Franz Gruber, church organist and village schoolmaster, discovered that mice had eaten at the bellow of the church organ so it would not play. He told the young priest, Joseph Mohr, "We shall have no music for Christmas." Mohr set about writing a simple song and Gruber agreed to compose a melody for his guitar. When the congregation gathered for worship, they heard what may be the best loved of all carols, "Silent Night, Holy Night" (*TLH 646, LW 68*).

About the same time that "Silent Night" was written, a young lad, Edmund Sears, began writing verse while working in his father's farm near Sandisfield, Massachusetts. A special verse was inspired by the reading of Psalm 19 at breakfast. He read the lines to his family that evening, and when they doubted he had written them, he composed another stanza. This gift never left him, and in later years after becoming a minister, he wrote the lovely carol, "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" (*LW 62*).

In 1865, Phillip Brooks, beloved pastor of Holy Trinity Church in Philadelphia, visited the Holy Land. On Christmas Eve he went with others out into the fields about Bethlehem and saw the shepherds as of old keeping watch over their flocks by night. Three years later, as he was preparing a Christmas service, the memory

of that little town flooded his mind. He then penned the words of the well-known carol, “O Little Town of Bethlehem” (*TLH* 647, *LW* 59, 60). Louis Redner, Sunday School superintendent and church organist, composed the melody.

It was not an angel, but the Holy Spirit, who brought the news of Christ’s coming to Simeon. We are not told of Simeon’s vocation but simply that he was just and devout and had the Spirit’s promise that he would not die without seeing the Messiah. Coming into the temple, he found the baby Jesus in the arms of Mary and said the words that we use in the Order of Vespers (*TLH* pg. 43, *LW* pg. 230) and the Communion Liturgy (*TLH* pg. 29, *LW* 11). As God’s people who seek Him in His sanctuary and receive Him in their hearts, let us join in the Nunc Dimittis... may the Holy Spirit reveal to us anew the great joy of His Salvation.

**Sing:** “The Nunc Dimittis”

*TLH* pg. 29, *LW* 11

*Combined and Adapted from:  
“Songs of the Nativity” by Rhoda Bergmann  
“Advent Worship” by Ruth Thies*

## AN EPIPHANY DEVOTION

**Sing:** “Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning” Stanzas 1,3,5 *TLH 128, LW 86*

**Reading:** Matthew 2:1-12

**Leader:** The Wise Men had spent many hours in study and research before they set out on their long journey. They came from a distant land and traveled a difficult, dangerous way in order to find the King whose star they had seen in the East.

So may the light of God’s Word shine in our hearts and be our guide, a well-lit path for all our days of joy as well as our days of sorrow.

**Group:** *Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.* Psalm 119:105

**Leader:** The Wise Men rejoiced when they saw the star that would lead them to Jesus.

So, too, God’s Word will lift our spirits, give us strength and brighten our lives. May the joy found in His promises of forgiveness, redemption and glory be evident in each of us.

**Group:** *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.* Romans 15:13

**Leader:** When the Wise Men at last came to Jesus, they knelt down and worshiped Him. They had found the Savior, the first Gentiles to come to faith in the Savior. They presented Him with their most precious gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh.

This is the meaning of Epiphany – God has sent His Son to all people. So we are reminded that our gifts – which include our mites – will bring word of that Savior to all people everywhere.

**Group:** *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.* Ephesians 2:13-16

**Leader:** After the Wise Men had worshiped Jesus they were warned not to return to Herod, so they returned home another way.

God's Word can be an instrument for change in our lives. From that Word we can learn to turn our worries over to the Lord. When we give Him our problems, we have taken a step on that "other way."

**Group:** *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever."* 1 Peter 1:23-25

**Sing:** "As With Gladness Men of Old"                      Stanzas 1,3,4                      TLH 127, LW 75

All Scripture is from NIV.

*Written by Lois Bartelt*

## **THE CROSS: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?** A Candlelight Devotion

*(Tall candles are lit behind a crude cross made of branches and tied together with twine. Each person is to have a small candle with paper holder to catch melted wax.)*

**Reader 1:** The cross. What does it mean to you?

**Group:** It is a reminder and a symbol of Jesus' suffering and death.

**Reader 2:** *Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.* Isaiah 53:4-5

**Sing:** "Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted"                      Stanza 1                      *TLH 153, LW 116*

**Reader 1:** The EMPTY cross. What does it mean to you?

**Group:** Christ overcame the death on the cross for the lowliest sinner. The empty cross is the victorious cross.

**Reader 2:** *For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.* Romans 6:9

**Sing:** "Jesus Christ is Risen Today, Alleluia!"                      Stanzas 1,4                      *TLH 199, LW 127*

**Reader 1:** The BURDEN of the cross. What does it mean to you?

**Group:** First, that Jesus willingly bore His cross for me, and second, that I must willingly bear the cross He gives me.

**Reader 2:** *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.* 1 Corinthians 10:13

**Sing:** "Be Still, My Soul"                      Stanza 1                      *TLH 651, LW 510*

**Reader 1:** The SHADOW of the cross. What does it mean to you?

**Group:** It is my refuge from the storms around me, my haven of rest, and my retreat from a world that is sometimes too much for me to handle.

**Reader 2:** *God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, ... Be still, and know that I am God; ... The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.* Psalm 46:1, 2, 10a, 11

**Sing:** “If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee” Stanza 1 TLH 518, LW 420

**Reader 1:** The LIGHT of the cross. What does it mean to you?

**Group:** It is a light for my life, a light that never goes out, but leads and guides my every step.

**Reader 2:** *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. ...because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.* Psalm 119:105 and Luke 1:78-79

**Sing:** “Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies” Stanzas 1,3 TLH 359, LW 480

**Reader 1:** The LOVE of the cross. What does it mean to you?

**Group:** My poor, human mind cannot possibly fathom the height, the breadth and the depth of God’s love for me. His great love compels me to love others, whoever and wherever they are.

**Reader 2:** *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. Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”* John 3:16 and Matthew 22:37-39

**Sing:** “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” Stanzas 1,4 TLH 175, LW 114

**Reader 1:** Let’s take a few moments now for silent reflection...

*(Lights are turned off, except for candles on the altar.)*

**Reader 1:** Think about one problem or one sorrow that is a heavy burden to you. We have just read the cross is a refuge and a symbol of God’s love. Bring your burden to the cross on the altar – and leave it there! As you do so, light your candle. Think of the flame as your prayer reaching heavenward.

*(A silent time until ALL have lit their candles.)*

**Reader 2:** We pray together:

**Group:** Dear Jesus, let the cross of your death be the cross of my life, and the light of that cross be a lamp for me to follow. Make me a reflector of Your light, so that Your love will shine through me toward others – Your love that is not a duty but a privilege and a joy! May Your love motivate me to live near the cross, now and forever! Amen.

All Scripture is from NIV.

*Written by Ruby Maschke*

## EASTER IS...

*And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

1 Corinthians 15:17 & 20

Almost 2000 years ago a man named Jesus was born into this world. After a short ministry of teaching and healing, He was tortured, executed and within three days afterwards He rose from the dead. That's history. Christ did live and die. But He IS alive!

Easter is not just a memorial of an event in obscure history. EASTER IS today, in our lives, the same life-giving force of that first resurrection morning.

Each new day brings us countless Easter reminders: the sun appearing above the horizon after the blackness of night...every blade of grass or green sprig that sprouts from dead-like branches...our own awakening from the unconsciousness of sleep to live a new day...the beginning of life with each human birth...the awakening of health and strength after the weakness of illness...the joyous passing of a fellow Christian to life in heaven. These are daily resurrections – small foretastes of the life everlasting.

Easter Is - The power of God who brings life from death!

### EASTER IS – ROLLING AWAY THE STONE

*When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. Mark 16:1-4*

What is your stone? What comes between you and Christ? Are you so busy that you have no time for the resurrection? Do the daily frustrations of existence crowd Him out? Or do you feel more comfortable if you can roll a stone across that part of your mind that says you need more than material things? Do you put stones between you and Easter? Or how many times have you faced what seemed to be an insurmountable problem, a stone you thought could not be rolled away, only to find after fruitless fretting and concern that it really wasn't that big at all or that it just wasn't there?

Easter Is - Your stone is rolled away!

## **EASTER IS – BREAKING THE LOCKS**

*On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” John 20:19-20, 26*

The disciples were behind locked doors and Jesus stood among them. The locks were broken, because fear was the real lock. The resurrection took away their fear.

Fear locks the door of our hearts, making us suspicious, afraid, hesitant to be part of our world, to live and relate to fellow human beings. But Christ has broken the locks!

His resurrection makes me as redeemed as everyone else; it makes everyone else as redeemed as I am. His love flowing down into our hearts breaks those barriers of reserve, of pride, of fear, and lets our love flow back to Him spilling out in all directions: to our family, our neighbors and our friends. Our love can flow even to those less fortunate whom we secretly despise and those more blessed whom we resent and envy.

Easter Is - His love casts out our fear!

## **EASTER IS – SHARING HIS PRESENCE**

*As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going father. But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening, the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” Luke 24:28-32*

Even when the disciples did not recognize Him, Christ was there! Are we always aware of His presence?

Remember, it’s not the suffering man, Jesus, whose presence fills our lives. It is the resurrected, glorified Lord of heaven and earth who shines in us to lift us from boredom and humdrum, to help us over the rough spots, to conquer pain and suffering, doubt and despair. We are not alone!

Easter Is - The everlasting presence of our Lord!

## EASTER IS – TELLING OUR JOY

*The angel said to the women, "... Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Matthew 28:5a, 7-8*

As resurrected Christians, we live in joy! Our whole lives are a telling of the resurrection story. We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard. We cannot but live in the joy of the resurrection! It radiates from us – to everyone around us – to the whole world!

*Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The Lord has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. Psalm 98:1-2*

*Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. Psalm 96:2-3*

The early Christians greeted one another with the words, "He is risen", to which the reply was, "He is risen indeed!" We close our meditation with this greeting – a reaffirmation of EASTER in our hearts and lives today.

**Leader:** He is risen!

**Group:** He is risen indeed!

**Leader:** Hallelujah!

**All Sing:** "Jesus Christ is Risen Today, Alleluia!" Stanzas 1,4 *TLH 199, LW 127*

All Scripture is from NIV.

*Written by Louise M. Mueller*

## A WORD TO THE DISCIPLES

**Reader 1:** The events of Holy Week are familiar to all of us: Christ's entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper with His disciples, His arrest, trial and crucifixion. Most likely, you who are worshiping here could even list the seven words spoken by Jesus as He hung on the cross suffering for the sins of the world. Yet, do you remember the words that Jesus spoke to His disciples on the night previous to His crucifixion? While with the twelve, Jesus gave them the bread and wine proclaiming, "Take, eat; this is My body. Drink ye all of it; this is My blood." But after Judas left to betray Jesus, our Lord spoke for one last time to His eleven remaining disciples. We will focus on some of His statements to this small group of followers as recorded by the apostle John in chapters fourteen and fifteen of his Gospel.

**Narrator:** *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* John 14:6

**Reader 2:** Throughout our earthly life we travel many roads and often there are several ways to reach our destination. On our heavenward journey, however, there is but one way which will bring us to the place we desire. Jesus Christ is that way. Because of our sinfulness we deserve only the wrath and punishment of God. By His death on the cross, Christ provided a way for us to be reconciled to God our Father. Only through believing this truth, that He died for our sins, will we know the way to everlasting life.

**Sing:** "You Are the Way; to You Alone" Stanzas 1,4 LW 283

**Narrator:** *"If you love me, you will obey what I command."* John 14:15

**Reader 3:** God showed His love for us in sending Jesus to be our Savior. If we believe this, then we must respond to this loving act of God. Jesus here tells us just what our response should be: to keep His commandments. Keeping His commandments will not give us eternal life, for we cannot earn heaven. However, in gratitude for what Christ did for us, we can show our love to Him by doing His will.

**Sing:** "May We Your Precepts, Lord, Fulfill" Stanzas 1,3 TLH 412, LW 389

**Narrator:** *"Because I live, you also will live."* John 14:19b

**Reader 4:** Most likely the disciples didn't understand this statement which Jesus made, for at the time He made it He was alive, and they didn't realize that in just a few hours He would be crucified, would die and be buried. How could they know that Christ was talking to them not about earthly life, but about eternal life in heaven? We, however, know the true meaning of Christ's words, for we know

that as Christ was the first to be raised from the dead, so we also shall be raised through the power of God to a new and eternal life in His heavenly kingdom.

**Sing:** “Jesus Lives! The Victory’s Won” Stanzas 1,2 TLH 201, LW 139

**Narrator:** *“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”*  
John 14:26

**Reader 5:** By ourselves we cannot believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior. It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Counselor whom Jesus promised to send to His followers, that we can know the one true Triune God. Through the power of this Holy Spirit we can also respond to God’s love. This Spirit is the enabler who creates faith in our hearts, teaches us of God and empowers us to live a life of service to Him and others.

**Sing:** “Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling” Stanzas 1,3 LW 164

**Narrator:** *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.”* John 14:27a

**Reader 6:** God’s peace is different from the peace of the world. It doesn’t mean there will be an absence of conflict in our lives, but that we will have an inner peace despite the troubles and turmoil we may be facing daily. This peace, which passes all understanding, assures us that indeed our Lord is in control.

**Sing:** “Drawn to the Cross” Stanzas 1,3 TLH 390, LW 356

**Narrator:** *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”* John 15:5

**Reader 7:** Jesus tells His disciples clearly that their power to respond to God comes not from themselves, but from Him. In order to bear fruit they must abide in Him, that is, continue faithfully in His Word. It is necessary to read God’s Word daily, to seek His forgiveness daily and to partake of the Lord’s Supper frequently. As all living plants need nourishment to grow and produce fruit, so Christians, too, must be nourished by the vine, so that they may be able to bear fruit for their Savior.

**Sing:** “My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less” Stanzas 1,3 TLH 370, LW 368

**Narrator:** *“Love each other as I have loved you.”* John 15:12b

**Reader 8:** The love of Christ for us was demonstrated when He died on the cross in payment for our sins. Though He asks us to love others as He loves us, He is not asking us to suffer crucifixion or even physical death as He did. He is asking us to give up our own will in service to those whose lives touch ours. He is asking

very little of us when we consider that, as the sinless Son of God, He was willing to take upon Himself the punishment which we sinners deserve.

**Sing:** “Son of God, Eternal Savior” Stanzas 1,2 *LW 394*

**Narrator:** “*You did not choose me, but I chose you...*” John 15:16a

**Reader 9:** As Jesus chose the twelve who followed Him closely during His three years of earthly ministry, so He has chosen us to be His disciples. Our sinful nature does not seek Him, yet He reached out to us and called us to be His own. What a comforting thought this is when we are faced by trials and tribulations. Knowing that we are His because of His will, not ours, we are confident that He will never forsake us, but will keep us steadfast in faith until that glorious day when He calls us to be with Him in His heavenly kingdom.

**Sing:** “How Can I Thank You, Lord” Stanzas 1,2 *TLH 417, LW 385*

**Narrator:** We have heard some of the words that Jesus spoke to His disciples on the night before His crucifixion. Although He spoke that night to a small group of eleven, the apostle John recorded these words for all of us who would be disciples of Christ. As we return to our homes, may we meditate on these promises and commands of Christ, our Savior and Lord. By the power of the indwelling Spirit of God, may we pattern our lives according to these words of Jesus.

All Scripture is from NIV.

*Written by Barbara Hamm*