

HOPE

Advent Intentionally

Before we begin: For many people, Advent is a time of extreme busyness and stress. For others, it might be a time of sadness, grief and withdrawal. Or, ironically, it might even be both at the same time. The expectations of what this time is supposed to be can put anxiety into any of us. This year we will strive to live these days proactively and as simply as possible. We will start each day with the intention of finding something good in our lives. We will see God in God's creation and in God's people.

Invocation

God of Hope, we are looking for you as we start this new church year. We intend to look for you in your creation and in your people. We intend to listen and see and taste and feel your goodness, and not get distracted by what's happening around us. Be with us, hold us, accompany us and bring us hope.

Confession

God, we need to get serious here. Deep down, we believe we can do it all by ourselves. We are gearing up to slog through this season on our own, by our own power and with our own strength. But in our heart of hearts, we know we cannot do anything well without you. Help us to look for you in the small things around us. Then we can relax and know that you are with us and will walk with us and that we can lean on you. Please be patient with us and our intentions.

Psalm 25:4

Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.

1 Thessalonians 3:12

And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you.

Prayer

Leader: Creator God, restore our hope so that if we look for you, we will see you in your creation. Create in us a feeling of closeness to you.

All: Help us to live this day intentionally with you.

Leader: Christ, give us hope that if we set our minds and hearts to look for you in all people, we will see you.

All: Help us to live this day intentionally with you.

Leader: Spirit, give us the curiosity and imagination and strength to see you through the clouds of our cultural messiness. Help us to see more clearly and live more fully.

All: Help us to live this day intentionally with you. Amen



Paths



Teach



Quantity



Birds



Reflections



Feet

A time of silence

You are invited into a time of silence. Take a deep breath and exhale slowly.

This year we are focused on living intentionally. Take this time to talk to God about your intentions for this Advent.

What does it feel like to do something intentionally?

Try this: Clench your toes. Feel them clenched. Then release them. Clench your fist. Hold it tight. Now release it. Try this with other muscles in your body – your jaw, your thighs, your arms. Tell yourself that this body is made by God and you are a child of God.



This week's intentions

Day 1 – Today I will notice **paths**. Sidewalks, streets, walking paths – how do they meet? What do they feel like under your feet? How about the path that raindrops take down a window? Or ants moving food? Or birds following an invisible path in the air? Amazing! (Psalm 25:4)

Share – Make a map? Give someone directions? Tell a story about 2 roads that diverged in a yellow wood?

Day 2 – Today I will marvel at our ability to **learn and teach**. Scientists tell us that these are instincts that humans have. I will strive to learn something new. I will teach someone what I learned. I will be aware all day of the miracle of learning. (Psalm 25:4)

Share – Social media? Write a letter? Volunteer to mentor at a school?

Day 3 – Today I will ponder our ability to understand **quantity**. How many? How much? More or less? Is it growing or shrinking? How saturated is the color? It is incredible and important that we can distinguish quantity. This is a good time of year to think about how much. (1 Thessalonians 3:12)

Share – Make a chart? Build a tower of boxes with someone? Share a recipe? Give a little more?

Day 4 – Today I will notice and delight in **birds**. Are there any bird calls in the morning? Are birds flying? Walking? Big? Small? What are their colors? What about pictures of birds symbolizing hope or the Holy Spirit? (Matthew 6:26)

Share – Take a photo? Start a list of bird sightings? Volunteer at a bird sanctuary?

Day 5 – Today I will be aware of **reflections**. In mirrors, in windows, on the sides of cars, in puddles of water...how is the light dancing? What do you see? How are the reflections the same as what you perceive? How are they different? (Proverbs 27:19)

Share – Tell what you found at the dinner table? Give a mirror to charity? Be a reflection of Christ in the world?

Day 6 – Today I will be aware of my **feet**. Feet have as many as 20,000 nerve endings on the soles! What are my feet feeling? Are they hot? Cold? Is the floor smooth? Bumpy? Can I wiggle my toes or flex my foot? (Luke 1:79b)

Share – Give a foot massage? Make a wet footprint on the floor? Give a pair of shoes to charity?

A blessing

May we see the hope of God in all of creation.

May we see the hope of God in all people.

May we see the hope of God in all the moments of our days.

May we live life with hope and on purpose.