



# Advent Prayers

*Written by Pittsburgh  
Theological Seminary  
Faculty Members*

*Alongside Lectionary Readings Year C (2015)*

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PITTSBURGH  
THEOLOGICAL  
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# SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT—NOVEMBER 29

## **FIRST READING Jeremiah 33:14-16**

14 The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 15 In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 16 In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

## **PSALM Psalm 25:1-10**

1 To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

2 O my God, in you I trust;  
do not let me be put to shame;  
do not let my enemies exult over me.

3 Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;  
let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

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

5 Lead me in your truth, and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
for you I wait all day long.

6 Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love,  
for they have been from of old.

7 Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;  
according to your steadfast love remember me,  
for your goodness' sake, O LORD!

8 Good and upright is the LORD;  
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

9 He leads the humble in what is right,  
and teaches the humble his way.

10 All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,  
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

## **SECOND READING 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13**

9 How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? 10 Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. 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. 13 And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

## **GOSPEL Luke 21:25-36**

25 "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. 26 People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

29 Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. 31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

34 "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, 35 like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

# PRAYERS FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT— NOVEMBER 29

**O** Lord,  
In the midst of Advent season, we  
turn our thoughts to you, in whom we trust.  
We long to know your ways and to walk  
along your paths.

We pray you to teach us your truth, O Lord  
of our salvation. We wait for you amid the  
busyness of this season with expectant hearts  
and willing minds. Our trust is in your mercy  
and faithfulness. We bless you that in your  
goodness you recall no longer the sins of our  
youth.

Teach us the way of humble faith and guard  
and guide us as, in the companionship of the  
Holy Spirit and the grace of the Lord Jesus,  
we keep covenant with you. In all things keep  
our eyes fixed upon Jesus, who is our Way,  
our Truth and our Life.

We pray through the same Jesus Christ our  
Lord. Amen.

*Written by*

*The Rev. Dr.  
Andrew Purves,  
Jean and Nancy  
Davis Professor of  
Historical Theology*

**H**oly God,

Your faithfulness is constant and your goodness exceeds everything we can imagine. Where else can we turn if not to you in our times of uncertainty? So often these days we see images of violence and destruction, nations in conflict and cities under attack, schools locked down and churches desecrated, children abused and women violated. Even the earth itself seems to cry “enough.”

What do these signs mean, O God? What do they tell us about ourselves and our deep longing for justice and peace on earth? What can we learn from the events of our time about the patience of your ways?

Speak to us, Holy God, as a voice that arises from the silence and the brokenness of our world. Speak to us again about how you come to us in Jesus, who entered a world just as broken as ours in order to enter again and again, coming quietly into every violent place and every broken heart, speaking of peace, bearing the pain, healing the wounded, taking our place.

Come, long-expected Savior. Come and fill the spaces in our hearts broken open by pain. Come, Emmanuel, God with us. Come, like a candle in the dark. Come, Lord Jesus.

*Written by*

*The Rev. Dr.  
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**L**ord open our eyes  
and we shall behold your glory.

Lord open our ears  
and we shall hear your call.

Lord open our hearts  
and we shall know your love.

Lord open our mouths  
and we shall announce your good  
news.

Lord open our hands  
and we shall show your generosity.

Lord open our lives  
and we shall reveal your glory.

Amen.

*Adapted by*

*Dr. Scott J. Hagley,  
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of Missiology*

# SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT—DECEMBER 6

## **FIRST READING Malachi 3:1-4**

1 See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight — indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. 2 But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; 3 he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. 4 Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

## **CANTICLE Luke 1:68-79**

68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,  
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed  
them.

69 He has raised up a mighty savior for us  
in the house of his servant David,

70 as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,  
71 that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of  
all who hate us.

72 Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,  
and has remembered his holy covenant,

73 the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,  
to grant us 74 that we, being rescued from the hands of our  
enemies, might serve him without fear, 75 in holiness and  
righteousness before him all our days.

76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people  
by the forgiveness of their sins.

78 By the tender mercy of our God,

the dawn from on high will break upon us,  
79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of  
death,  
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

### **SECOND READING Philippians 1:3-11**

3 I thank my God every time I remember you, 4 constantly praying  
with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, 5 because of your  
sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 I am confident  
of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring  
it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. 7 It is right for me to  
think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart,  
for all of you share in God’s grace with me, both in my imprisonment  
and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. 8 For God is  
my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ  
Jesus. 9 And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and  
more with knowledge and full insight 10 to help you to determine  
what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and  
blameless, 11 having produced the harvest of righteousness that  
comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

### **GOSPEL Luke 3:1-6**

1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when  
Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee,  
and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis,  
and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, 2 during the high priesthood of Annas  
and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in  
the wilderness. 3 He went into all the region around the Jordan,  
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, 4 as  
it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.  
5 Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth;  
6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”



## PRAYERS FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT—DECEMBER 6

**O** God of the wilderness,  
You come to us today like a voice  
crying out, seeking to wake us from our  
slumber. When we listen carefully, we can  
hear you calling us to prepare our hearts and  
our lives for your coming into the world.

But, we ask, How can we possibly do that?  
Our eyes seem too weak to behold your glory,  
and our bodies seem too feeble to make  
your paths straight. And yet, even so, the call  
continues, beckoning us beyond our human  
frailty and into your strength and power.

Lead us, we pray, into a season of  
repentance, that we might experience  
anew the assurance of your forgiveness.  
Transform our vision, that we might catch  
a glimpse of the world you desire to bring  
into being, where every valley is filled and  
every mountain and hill made low. Ignite our  
imaginations, that we might dream of a place  
where the crooked becomes straight and the  
rough ways are made smooth.

Help us, Living God, even now, to begin to  
see your kingdom breaking in all around us—  
the kingdom heralded by your servant John  
and embodied in your son, our savior, Jesus  
Christ. Amen.

*Written by*

*The Rev. Dr.  
Leanna K. Fuller,  
Assistant Professor  
of Pastoral Care*

O Lord,

When we were children, these weeks were filled with restless, joyful impatience! We couldn't wait until Christmas, and when Christmas Eve finally came, we could hardly sleep for our excitement about what the new day would bring!

Now, we confess that our enthusiasm has waned, and our zeal has flagged. Each day seems much like the one before. We are tired—worn out with waiting. We have become jaded and cynical, resigned to the way things are, unable to imagine anymore your new age.

Restore in us, we pray, just a little of that childlike awe and wonder. Set our hearts aflame, and our eyes alight, once more. Fill us with joyful anticipation, so that we may once again not only anticipate but also celebrate the in-breaking of your kingdom.

Maranatha—Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.

*Written by*

*The Rev. Dr.  
Steven S. Tuell,  
James A. Kelso  
Professor of Hebrew  
and Old Testament*

**E**ver-present Lord,  
How is it that we await your coming  
when you are closer to us than our next  
breath?

During Advent open our eyes  
to the ways you are present in our lives even  
now.

Open our ears to hear your presence  
through the laughter of our friends  
and the cries of the suffering.

Open our hearts to receive  
your presence even more deeply into our  
lives.

As we wait in Advent, help us to see  
that it might be *you* who are waiting for *us*  
to acknowledge and follow you here and  
now.

Through Christ our present-yet-coming Lord.

Amen.

*Written by*

*The Rev. Dr.  
L. Roger Owens,  
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Ministry*

# SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT—DECEMBER 13

## **FIRST READING Zephaniah 3:14-20**

14 Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;  
shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,  
O daughter Jerusalem!

15 The LORD has taken away the judgments against you,  
he has turned away your enemies.

The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;  
you shall fear disaster no more.

16 On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

Do not fear, O Zion;

do not let your hands grow weak.

17 The LORD, your God, is in your midst,  
a warrior who gives victory;

he will rejoice over you with gladness,

he will renew you in his love;

he will exult over you with loud singing

18 as on a day of festival.

I will remove disaster from you,

so that you will not bear reproach for it.

19 I will deal with all your oppressors at that time.

And I will save the lame

and gather the outcast,

and I will change their shame into praise

and renown in all the earth.

20 At that time I will bring you home,

at the time when I gather you;

for I will make you renowned and praised

among all the peoples of the earth,

when I restore your fortunes

before your eyes, says the LORD.

**CANTICLE Isaiah 12:2-6**

2 Surely God is my salvation;  
I will trust, and will not be afraid,  
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might;  
he has become my salvation.

3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

4 And you will say in that day:  
Give thanks to the LORD,  
call on his name;  
make known his deeds among the nations;  
proclaim that his name is exalted.

5 Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;  
let this be known in all the earth.

6 Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,  
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

**SECOND READING Philippians 4:4-7**

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**GOSPEL Luke 3:7-18**

7 John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

10 And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" 11 In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise."

12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him,

“Teacher, what should we do?” 13 He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” 14 Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

15 As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, 16 John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

18 So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

# PRAYERS FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT—DECEMBER 13

Lord our God,  
Often we feel confused about the many  
changes around us  
worried about a world that looks  
different  
church life so unlike what we knew  
before.

But then your Word reminds us that you are a  
God who seeks change  
because you are a God who seeks to  
remake us  
baptize us with the Holy Spirit and fire  
transform this world according to  
your reign.

Give us peace of hearts to recognize that in  
and through all change  
you are coming near  
to renew us in your love  
to gather all into your people  
for the great feast to come.

Amen

*Written by*

*The Rev. Dr.  
Edwin Chr. van  
Driel, Bicentennial  
Directors' Associate  
Professor of  
Theology*

ord,

As Christmas approaches, we again question in our hearts: Is Jesus truly the Messiah? Has he really changed the world?

You promised that he would take a winnowing fork to gather the wheat and burn the chaff, but we still see injustice and oppression. You declared that he would baptize us with the Holy Spirit and fire, yet our faith remains weak.

Forgive us. Renew us. Make every mountain low, and lift up every valley, that we and all creation may see your salvation. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

*Written by*

*The Rev. Dr.  
John P. Burgess,  
James Henry  
Snowden Professor  
of Systematic  
Theology*



O God,

We know that you who sit above the circle of the earth, for whom the nations are as a drop from the bucket, graciously come to us as Immanuel, "God with us." But like King Ahaz of old we refuse to receive the promise of your nearness.

Perhaps we refuse because we know that trusting you as Immanuel requires us to open ourselves to what you might make of us. Most days we prefer to remain as we are. We are comfortable with our fears and anxieties. We are comfortable with you at a distance. Embracing your "with us"-ness would mean accepting your love that defies our imagination.

Help us to let down our guard, to risk your coming near and making us new. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Immanuel, we pray. Amen.

Read also Isaiah 7:1-14; 40:15, 22; Matthew 1:23.

*Written by*

*The Rev. Dr.  
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Robert C. Holland  
Professor of Old  
Testament*

# SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT—DECEMBER 20

## **FIRST READING** Micah 5:2-5a

2 But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,  
who are one of the little clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me  
one who is to rule in Israel,  
whose origin is from of old,  
from ancient days.

3 Therefore he shall give them up until the time  
when she who is in labor has brought forth;  
then the rest of his kindred shall return  
to the people of Israel.

4 And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord,  
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.

And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great  
to the ends of the earth;

5 and he shall be the one of peace.

## **CANTICLE** Luke 1:46b-55

46b My soul magnifies the LORD,  
47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
48 for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.  
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.

50 His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.

51 He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;

53 he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.

54 He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,

55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

### **PSALM Psalm 80:1-7**

1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,  
you who lead Joseph like a flock!  
You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth  
2 before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.  
Stir up your might,  
and come to save us!  
3 Restore us, O God;  
let your face shine, that we may be saved.  
4 O LORD God of hosts,  
how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?  
5 You have fed them with the bread of tears,  
and given them tears to drink in full measure.  
6 You make us the scorn of our neighbors;  
our enemies laugh among themselves.  
7 Restore us, O God of hosts;  
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

### **SECOND READING Hebrews 10:5-10**

5 Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,  
"Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,  
but a body you have prepared for me;  
6 in burnt offerings and sin offerings  
you have taken no pleasure."  
7 Then I said, "See, God, I have come to do your will, O God"  
(in the scroll of the book it is written of me)."  
8 When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure  
in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings"  
(these are offered according to the law), 9 then he added, "See,  
I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to  
establish the second. 10 And it is by God's will that we have been  
sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for  
all.

### **GOSPEL Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)**

39 In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town  
in the hill country, 40 where she entered the house of Zechariah and  
greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the

child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit 42 and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43 And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? 44 For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

46 And Mary said,  
"My soul magnifies the LORD,  
47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
48 for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.  
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.  
50 His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.  
51 He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.  
52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;  
53 he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.  
54 He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

## PRAYERS FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT—DECEMBER 20

Lord God,

**L**You who are without beginning or end, whose ways are as far from ours as the east is from the west, who spoke the words and everything that was made came into being, we are thankful that in our longings to know you better, you visited us.

Although Lord of Lords and Parent of all, you came to us as a babe in a manger. Although you know no bounds and cannot be contained, you took on flesh and dwelt among us. Although you are the source of all life, you journeyed with us through death, showing us how it gives way to the life to come.

And as you came to us before, you are with us now, and you always shall be—so we give you joyful thanks. For now we are able with great assurance to proclaim to all that you are Immanuel, “God with us.”

Amen.

*Written by*

*The Rev. Dr.  
R. Drew Smith,  
Professor of Urban  
Ministry*

**O** LORD, our Sovereign,  
*how majestic is your name in all the  
earth!*

*You have set your glory above the heavens.*

*When I look at your heavens, the work of  
your fingers,  
the moon and the stars that you have  
established;  
what are human beings that you are  
mindful of them,  
mortals that you care for them?*

*(Psalm 8:1, 3-4)*

Come, Lord Jesus, to continue the work of  
your revelation of God's glory in our midst.  
Cause our hearts to embrace your generosity  
of Spirit and Presence. Cause our lives to  
reflect your mindfulness and care toward all  
whom we meet.

May we live Psalm 8. Amen.

*Written by*

*The Rev. Dr.  
David Esterline,  
President and  
Professor of Cross-  
cultural Theological  
Education*

**F**ather in heaven,

We thank you for shining light into our dark hearts through the gift of your Son. We join myriads of angels, the heavenly army, in praising you for this gracious demonstration of your faithfulness to your promises of ages past. We know that apart from your acting on our behalf and at such cost to yourself we would be lost and bereft of hope.

Thank you, Jesus, Lamb of God, for revealing the Father so fully to us through your life and for making amends for our sin through your faithful death. Thank you, Jesus, for inaugurating a new humanity through your life-giving resurrection and sharing that new life with us already through the powerful gift of your Spirit.

Father, forgive us our wayward thoughts and make it our deepest desire that your Son be more fully formed in our hearts today. May your Advent in the world be attested by your Advent in our lives. This we pray in the blessed name of Jesus. Amen.

*Written by*

*Dr. Robert A. J.  
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Testament*

# PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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