Advent

gathering guide



TABLE OF CONTENTS

02	HOW TO PREPARE FOR WEEKLY GATHERINGS
03	WEEK ONE: THE THRILL OF HOPE
12	WEEK TWO: THE PROMISE OF PEACE
20	WEEK THREE: THE ANTICIPATION OF JOY
28	WEEK FOUR: THE GIVING OF LOVE
36	CHRISTMAS EVE: THE FINAL GATHERING

How to Prepare for Weekly Gatherings:

Connect with a few friends or family members once a week to enjoy community and encounter God together. The Candle-Lighting Liturgy takes around 20 minutes; the rest of the gathering is up to you.

Practice advent with your Small Group, friends or family:
Friends don't let friends do Advent alone.

Advent Candles:

Traditional: Advent wreath (your choice of greenery), a candelabra or candle holders, three purple candles, one pink, and one white.

Week 1: Purple (Hope)
Week 2: Purple (Peace)
Week 3: Pink (Joy)
Week 4: Purple (Love)
Christmas Eve: White

Non-traditional: Any candles will do. Add one candle each week leading up to Christmas Eve.

Host Homes:

Find a host: offer to host or share the honor of hosting with others.

Prepare food: plan to share a meal. Keep it simple or extravagant; the point is to be together in celebration and anticipation.

Have fun: play music and prepare a fun activity for the kids.

WEEK 1: THE THRILL OF HOPE

Enjoy yourselves when you gather. Eat. Talk. Laugh. Play. Just be sure to set a time before everyone leaves to take around 20 minutes to walk through this Advent Candle-Lighting Liturgy together. You'll read a Psalm together, have a couple of people read scriptures for the group, light a candle, sing a song, and pray together.

01 | Read Introduction:

HOST: "What kinds of words do we use when we're looking forward to something in the future? The restaurant we've been wanting to try, the trip we've been wanting to take, our wedding day or the birth of a child? *(Pause for answers.)*

Hope is not optional for healthy humans. We need hope to survive. Without hope, we're stuck in our circumstances and can't see our way out of the darkness.

Each of us is putting hope in something. It could be a new relationship status, something we want to purchase, or someplace we want to be. But true hope is different than this. Biblical hope is not about getting new things. Biblical hope is about a Person (Jesus) who makes us new. Real hope is a new heart with Jesus at the center, bringing us new wisdom, new community, and new life.

Tonight, we're going to explore that kind of hope together in Scripture, prayer, and worship. Let's begin."

02 | Read a Psalm:

HOST: "We'll start by reading the following selections from Psalm 42 aloud together. Let's read slowly, and let these ancient words be the prayer of our hearts tonight."

PARTICIPANTS: "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, 'Where is your God?' Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise Him, my salvation and my God."

03 | Create Silence:

HOST: "Now, let's take a few moments to be quiet in God's presence. Get comfortable. Close your eyes. See yourself offering anything that's troubling you to God. Allow your thoughts to rest on His care for you."

(Take 1–3 minutes. If you have young kids, this might just be a few seconds. That's okay! Break the silence with a short prayer about hope to conclude this section.)

04 | Read Scripture:

Choose a child *(if available)* and another reader for this section.

HOST: "_____ & _____ will be reading our next passages of Scripture tonight."

CHILD: "The eyes of God are on the ones who honor Him, who find their hope in His eternal love." *(from Psalm 33:18)*

READER: "This beautiful prophecy from Isaiah 9:2-7 reminds us of the hope God's people found in expressing their deep longing for their messiah to come:

'Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned. You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.'

This is the Word of God."

PARTICIPANTS: "Thanks be to God!"

05 | Light the Candle:

Choose one person (a child if available) to light the first candle (purple) and someone to read.

HOST: "Tonight, _____ is going to light our first Advent candle. This is the hope candle. The light of this fire represents the spark of hope. What does this hope represent for you tonight?" *(Pause for responses.)*

READER: "These verses tell us what happened when the light of hope invaded our world through Jesus. One of Jesus' closest friends poetically described it like this in John 1:9–14:

'The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.'

This is the Word of God."

PARTICIPANTS: "Thanks be to God!"

06 | Sing a Song:

HOST: "Let's sing an old, beautiful Christmas carol. Just like in your car on your morning commute or in the shower when you think no one else is listening, this is a safe space for loud singing, so sing!"

PARTICIPANTS: *O Holy Night*

O holy night, the stars are brightly shining; it is the night of the dear Savior's birth;

Long lay the world in sin and error pining, till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.

A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn;

Fall on your knees, O hear the angel voices! O night divine, O night when Christ was born; O night divine, O night, O night divine.

A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn;

Fall on your knees, O hear the angel voices! O night divine, O night when Christ was born; O night divine, O night, O night divine.

07 | Pray for One Another:

HOST: "Let's take a moment to pray for one another. These don't need to be long, eloquent prayers. But let's lift one another up by name before God in prayer."

08 | Consider the Future:

Choose one person from your gathering for the final reading.

HOST: "_____ will be doing our final Scripture reading tonight. This one comes to us from the book of Revelation."

READER: "The purpose of this reading is to turn our hearts from what has happened in the coming of Jesus and awaken our hopes for what will happen at Jesus' return. Come quickly, Lord Jesus.

'Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His servants will worship Him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

"And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."'

This is the Word of God."

PARTICIPANTS: "Thanks be to God forever."

09 | Final Prayer:

HOST: "Let's pray." *(Pray a closing prayer.)*

10 | Pronounce a Final Blessing:

HOST: "To end our time together, let's speak this priestly blessing over each other, found in Numbers 6, that has been spoken over the people of God for the last 3,500 years."

HOST (OR A CHILD): "Now may the Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace."

[End of Candle-Lighting Liturgy]

WEEKLY JOURNAL

Today's Date:

What was the highlight of your gathering?

As you look back on time spent with friends and/or family, what are three things you are grateful for in this moment?

Is there anything you would like to change for next week?

WEEK 2: THE PROMISE OF PEACE

Enjoy your meal and fellowship together. Set a time before everyone leaves to walk through this Advent Candle-Lighting Liturgy together. Before you get started, light the Hope candle (the first purple candle).

01 | Read Introduction:

HOST: "Last week, we started our Advent season talking about the theme of hope. This week, we're talking about another big idea connected to the Christmas story, and that's the idea of peace.

Does anyone remember what the angels sang when they appeared to the shepherd boys after Jesus was born? *(Pause for responses.)* That's right. They said, 'Glory to God in the highest! Peace on earth to those with whom He is pleased.'

At beauty pageants, sometimes contestants are asked, 'If you had one wish, what would you wish for?' What do we expect them to answer? 'World peace,' of course! Yes, that's a good answer, but what is peace exactly? In the Bible, it's the word shalom, and it does mean an end to war and conflict, but it also means 'complete' or 'whole'—maybe another way to say it is 'not broken.'

Our world is broken. It's interesting that the angels said that Jesus, the Messiah, would come to bring peace.

But how does Jesus un-break our world? How does He bring wholeness and completeness to God's good world? Tonight, we're going to explore that kind of peace together in Scripture, prayer, and worship."

02 | Read a Psalm:

HOST: "Let's begin by reading the following selections from Psalm 23 aloud. Make these ancient words the prayer of your heart tonight."

PARTICIPANTS: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

03 | Create Silence:

HOST: "Now, let's take a few moments to be quiet in God's presence. Get comfortable. Close your eyes. See yourself offering anything that's troubling you to God. Allow your thoughts to rest on His care for you."

(Take 1–3 minutes. If you have young kids, this might just be a few seconds. That's okay! Break the silence with a short prayer about hope to conclude this section.)

04 | Read Scripture:

Choose a child *(if available)* and another reader for this section.

HOST: "_____ & _____ will be reading our next passages of Scripture tonight."

CHILD: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'"
(from Isaiah 52:7)

READER: "These verses from Isaiah 53 tell us the ways in which God promises to give us peace through Jesus. Listen closely as I read:

'He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces, He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.
Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.
But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed.'

This is the Word of God."

PARTICIPANTS: "Thanks be to God!"

05 | Light the Candle:

Choose one person (a child if available) to light the second candle (purple) and someone to read.

HOST: "Tonight, _____ is going to light our second Advent candle. Last week, we lit the Hope candle. Tonight, we light the Peace candle *(second purple candle)*. Keeping in mind that peace is wholeness in every area of our lives, what would peace look like for you right now?" *(Pause for responses.)*

READER: "This passage also comes from Isaiah. Listen for the promise of peace from Isaiah 9:2, 6-7 as I read:

'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over His kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.'"

This is the Word of God."

PARTICIPANTS: "Thanks be to God!"

06 | Sing a Song:

HOST: "Let's sing an old, beautiful Christmas carol. Just like in your car on your morning commute or in the shower when you think no one else is listening, this is a safe space for loud singing, so sing!"

PARTICIPANTS: ***Hark! The Herald Angels Sing***

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King;

Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"

Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;

With the angelic hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Son of Righteousness!

Light and life to all He brings, risen with healing in His wings.

Mild He lays His glory by, born that man no more may die,

Born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

07 | Pray for One Another:

HOST: "Let's take a moment to pray for one another. These don't need to be long, eloquent prayers. But let's lift one another up by name before God in prayer."

08 | Consider the Future:

Choose one person from your gathering for the final reading.

HOST: "_____ will be doing our final Scripture reading tonight. This one comes to us from the book of John."

READER: "The purpose of this reading is to turn our hearts from what has happened and awaken our hopes for what is to come. These are the words of Jesus found in John 14:

'These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. You heard Me say to you, "I am going away, and I will come to you." And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on Me, but I do as the Father has commanded Me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.'

This is the Word of God."

PARTICIPANTS: "Thanks be to God!"

09 | Final Prayer:

HOST: "Let's pray." *(Pray a closing prayer.)*

10 | Pronounce a Final Blessing:

HOST: "To end our time together, let's speak this priestly blessing over each other, found in Numbers 6, that has been spoken over the people of God for the last 3,500 years."

HOST (OR A CHILD): "Now may the Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace."

[End of Candle-Lighting Liturgy]

WEEKLY JOURNAL

Today's Date:

What was the highlight of your gathering?

As you look back on time spent with friends and/or family, what are three things you are grateful for in this moment?

Is there anything you would like to change for next week?

WEEK 3: THE ANTICIPATION OF JOY

Enjoy one another's company, but take at least 20 minutes during your time together to walk through this Advent Candle-Lighting Liturgy. Before you get started, light the Hope and Peace candles (first two purple candles).

01 | Read Introduction:

HOST: "The Christmas season is generally a happy time, isn't it? The lights, the colors, the music, the food, the gifts, and the Christmas movies just put us in a good mood. Most of us would say some of our best memories are Christmas memories. Spending time with the people we love and enjoying the good things life has to offer just tend to give us joy.

But for some, Christmas is not a happy season. In fact, Christmas can be the loneliest season for some people. All the lights, and music, and parties remind them of someone they don't have with them anymore—a spouse, a child, a mother or father, a dear friend. Christmas, for them, may have some good memories, but mostly it makes them sad.

Joy is a theme that runs through the whole Bible. Sometimes, joy is connected to beauty, or being with kids, or to a friend. But the Bible also talks about a kind of joy not based on happy circumstances but based on the promise of God's presence. In tonight's Candle-Lighting Liturgy, together we're

going to consider the anticipation of joy in God's promised, yet completely unexpected, arrival in the form of a baby born in the lowliest of places."

02 | Read a Psalm:

HOST: "Let's all read the following verses from Psalm 16 together. Make these ancient words the prayer of your heart tonight."

PARTICIPANTS: "Preserve me, O God, for in You I take refuge. I say to the Lord, 'You are my Lord; I have no good apart from You.' The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; You hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let Your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

03 | Create Silence:

HOST: "Now, let's take a few moments to be quiet in God's presence. Get comfortable. Close your eyes. See yourself offering anything that's troubling you to God. Allow your thoughts to rest on His care for you."

(Take 1–3 minutes. If you have young kids, this might just be a few seconds. That's okay! Break the silence with a short prayer about hope to conclude this section.)

04 | Read Scripture:

Choose a child *(if available)* and another reader for this section.

HOST: "_____ & _____ will be reading our next passages of Scripture tonight."

CHILD: "Don't be so sad; the joy of the Lord is your strength." *(from Nehemiah 8:10)*

READER: "Tonight's reading comes to us from Isaiah 12:1–6. Let's listen for the anticipation of joy in the coming Messiah:

'In that day you will say: "I will praise you, Lord. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me. Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord Himself, is my strength and my defense; He has become my salvation." With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. In that day you will say: "Give praise to the Lord, proclaim His name; make known among the nations what He has done, and proclaim that His name is exalted. Sing to the Lord, for He has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you."'

This is the Word of God."

PARTICIPANTS: "Thanks be to God!"

05 | Light the Candle:

Choose one person (a child if available) to light the third candle (pink) and someone to read.

HOST: "Tonight, _____ is going to light our third Advent candle. So far, we have lit the Hope and Peace candles. Tonight, we light the Joy candle *(pink candle).* Where do you experience joy the most in this season?"
(Pause for responses.)

READER:"This passage comes from John 15:11–15. Listen to what Jesus has to say about how joy works:

'These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.'

This is the Word of God."

PARTICIPANTS: "Thanks be to God!"

06 | Sing a Song:

HOST: "Okay, we're going to sing 'Joy to the World' together. Just like in your car, on your morning commute, or in the shower when you think no one else is listening *(they are and they love you anyway)*, this is a safe space for loud singing, so don't hold back. Let's sing."

PARTICIPANTS: ***Joy to the World***

Joy to the world! The Lord is come;

Let earth receive her King;

Let every heart prepare Him room,

and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

He rules the world with truth and grace,

And makes the nations prove

the glories of His righteousness,

and wonders of His love, and wonders of His love, and wonders, wonders of His love.

07 | Pray for One Another:

HOST: "Let's take a moment to pray for one another. These don't need to be long, eloquent prayers. But let's lift one another up by name before God in prayer."

08 | Consider the Future:

Choose one person from your gathering for the final reading.

HOST: "_____ will be doing our final Scripture reading tonight. This is from the book of Revelation."

READER: "The purpose of this reading is to turn our hearts from what has happened and awaken our hopes for what is to come. These are the words of Jesus in Revelation 21:1–5:

'Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And He who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."'

This is the Word of God."

PARTICIPANTS: "Thanks be to God!"

09 | Final Prayer:

HOST: "Let's pray." *(Pray a closing prayer.)*

10 | Pronounce a Final Blessing:

HOST: "To end our time together, let's speak this priestly blessing over each other, found in Numbers 6, that has been spoken over the people of God for the last 3,500 years."

HOST (OR A CHILD): "Now may the Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace."

[End of Candle-Lighting Liturgy]

WEEKLY JOURNAL

Today's Date:

What was the highlight of your gathering?

As you look back on time spent with friends and/or family, what are three things you are grateful for in this moment?

Is there anything you would like to change for next week?

WEEK 4: THE GIVING OF LOVE

Enjoy one another's company, but take at least 20 minutes during your time together to walk through this Advent Candle-Lighting Liturgy. Just before you get started, light the Hope, Peace, and Joy candles (two purple, one pink).

01 | Read Introduction:

HOST: "In this Advent season thus far, we have considered the Christmas themes of Hope, Peace, and Joy. Tonight, we will light the fourth of our Advent candles *(last purple candle)*, the Love candle.

Jesus told us love is the meaning of life. The greatest commandment, He says, is a commandment to love. But there's a problem. In English, we use the word love for a whole lot of things. It's not a very precise word. We love our friends. But we might also love a particular sports team. We love our family, but we also love Netflix. We love God, but we also love tacos and ice cream. See the issue? If love is the greatest commandment, what does love actually mean?

The word love in the Bible is often associated with breathtaking acts of trust and sacrifice. In fact, the first time the word love is used in the Bible, God puts Abraham's love to the test by asking him to make an unthinkable sacrifice. He says, 'Take your son, your only son, whom you love, and offer him as an offering.'

Of course, we know Abraham passed the test. But the point is that in the Bible, love is not just a feeling. Love is an act, a sacrifice you make, a gift you give.

Tonight, we're going to explore the theme of the giving of love."

02 | Read a Psalm:

HOST: "Let's all read the following selection from Psalm 116 aloud. Make these ancient words the prayer of your heart tonight."

PARTICIPANTS: "I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. Because He inclined His ear to me, therefore I will call on Him as long as I live. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; our God is merciful. For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling; I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord! I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord."

03 | Create Silence:

HOST: "Now, let's take a few moments to be quiet in God's presence. Get comfortable. Close your eyes. See yourself offering anything that's troubling you to God. Allow your thoughts to rest on His care for you."

(Take 1–3 minutes. If you have young kids, this might just be a few seconds. That's okay! Break the silence with a short prayer about hope to conclude this section.)

04 | Read Scripture:

Choose a child *(if available)* and another reader for this section.

HOST: "_____ & _____ will be reading our next passages of Scripture tonight."

CHILD: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." *(from John 3:16)*

READER: "Tonight's Scripture reading comes to us from Psalm 13:

'How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken. But I have trusted in Your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because He has dealt bountifully with me.'

This is the Word of God."

PARTICIPANTS: "Thanks be to God!"

05 | Light the Candle:

Choose one person (a child if available) to light the fourth candle (purple) and someone to read.

HOST: "Tonight, _____ is going to light our last Advent candle before Christmas Eve. We've already lit the candles for Hope, Peace, and Joy. Tonight, we light the Love candle. In what ways have you received or given love this week?"
(Pause for responses.)

READER: "This passage comes from 1 John 4:7–12. Listen for the biblical definition of love as I read these verses:

'In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.'

This is the Word of God."

PARTICIPANTS: "Thanks be to God!"

06 | Sing a Song:

HOST: "Okay, it's time to sing! Just like in your car, on your morning commute, or in the shower when you think no one else is listening, this is a safe space for loud singing, so don't hold back. Let's sing."

PARTICIPANTS: ***Oh Come All Ye Faithful***

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!

O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!

Come and behold Him, born the King of angels;

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,

Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:

Glory to God, all glory in the highest!

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!

For He alone is worthy, for He alone is worthy, for He alone is worthy, Christ the Lord.

07 | Pray for One Another:

HOST: "Let's take a moment to pray for one another. These don't need to be long, eloquent prayers. But let's lift one another up by name before God in prayer."

08 | Consider the Future:

Choose one person from your gathering for the final reading.

HOST: "_____ will be doing our final Scripture reading. This is from the book of Revelation."

READER: "The purpose of this reading is to turn our hearts from what has happened and awaken our hopes for what is to come. These are the words of Jesus in Revelation 5:1–11:

'Then I saw in the right hand of Him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more! Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that He can open the scroll and its seven seals." And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."'

This is the Word of God."

PARTICIPANTS: "Thanks be to God!"

09 | Final Prayer:

HOST: "Let's pray." *(Pray a closing prayer.)*

10 | Pronounce a Final Blessing:

HOST: "To end our time together, let's speak this priestly blessing over each other, found in Numbers 6, that has been spoken over the people of God for the last 3,500 years."

HOST (OR A CHILD): "Now may the Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace."

[End of Candle-Lighting Liturgy]

WEEKLY JOURNAL

Today's Date:

What was the highlight of your gathering?

As you look back on time spent with friends and/or family, what are three things you are grateful for in this moment?

Is there anything you would like to change for next week?

CHRISTMAS EVE: THE FINAL GATHERING

This may be the most meaningful Advent gathering of this season. During the past four weeks, you've been celebrating with close family and friends, but for Christmas Eve, we will be gathering as a church family for the culmination of the Advent season as we light the Christ candle together.

How to Prepare: Plan to join us in person as we come together at our New Palestine Campus to celebrate Christmas as one Church.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22
6:30 & 8:00 pm

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23
6:30 & 8:00 pm

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24
2:30, 4:00 & 5:30 pm

If you are unable to join us in person, feel free to gather with your family and reflect on your Advent journey together. How was it meaningful to you, and what parts stood out the most?

If you are celebrating from home, prepare your five candles. Thus far, we've lit the Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love candles. Finally, you will light the Christ candle together *(the large white candle in the center of your wreath)*.

Pray for Your Church Family: As you and your friends and family prepare to join us, pray for all the people who will gather at our New Palestine Campus and all the homes tuning in as the body of Christ is united in celebration, anticipation, and participation in the Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love of our Savior.

Stay tuned to Realife Church's social media pages or realifechurch.org for more details.

APPENDIX: THE CHRISTMAS STORY

If you'd like to read the Christmas story from Scripture with family or friends, here are passages from the Gospels surrounding the birth of Jesus.

MARY'S GOOD NEWS: Luke 1:26–38
JOSEPH'S DREAM: Matthew 1:18–25, Luke 2:1–7
SHEPHERDS WORSHIP: Luke 2:8–20
WISE MEN WORSHIP: Matthew 2:1–12
JOSEPH'S WARNING: Matthew 2:13–23

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