

# ADVENT 2023

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ALL SOULS EPISCOPAL PARISH



*Be still, and know that I am God.*

- Psalm 46:10

## Introduction

Advent is a time of deep interiority. We turn inward to reflect, meditate, wonder, and wait.

At the same time, during Advent, we also look outward. We follow the rhythm of a liturgical calendar, embracing the songs, prayers, and rituals that communities have used for centuries. Our bodies feel the pull of seasonal cycles, embracing darkness, stillness, rest, and quiet as the winter deepens and the year wanes.

The theme of this year's Advent Booklet is *attunement*—a call to pay attention to the rhythms and patterns unfolding inside us and outside us. It's centered on four themes: darkness, waiting, stillness, and wonder.

In the pages that follow, you'll find examples of how these themes manifest in the outer world—through photographs, reflections, and poetry. And you'll be invited to turn these themes inward, entering willingly into areas of shadow, unknowing, and mystery.

We hope that these resources will help you bring a sense of ritual and intention into your home this Advent season.

Blessings,

- Reverend Emily B.

## How to Use This Book

In the following pages, you'll find four sections, one for each week of Advent.

**Week 1: Darkness** (*depth, interiority, shadow, night*)

**Week 2: Waiting** (*latency, trust, gestation, seasonality*)

**Week 3: Stillness** (*quiet, unchanging, pause, silence, calm*)

**Week 4: Wonder** (*mystery, awe, emergence, birth*)

Each section has four elements: Scripture, a poem, a reflection exercise, and a candle-lighting ritual with chant and prayer.

Throughout the week, we encourage you to explore these materials and take time for reflection, alone or in company.

Each evening, we invite you to light the candle(s) of your Advent wreath using the chant and prayer.

At the end of the booklet, you'll find a blessing that could be used to close each evening, and a Daily Examen practice should you choose to go deeper into the meditation of this time.

Finally, all of the photos in this booklet were taken by Emily B., on ordinary winter days in everyday places. If you're so inclined, we encourage you to make a practice of pausing to take (or draw) pictures, noticing unexpected layers of intricacy, beauty, and complexity in the outer world.

## I. Darkness

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. —John 1:1-5*

*Darkness is not dark for you, and night shines as the day. Darkness and light are but one. —Psalm 139:12*



Divinity Quadrangle, New Haven, CT

## Lines Written in the Days of Growing Darkness

Every year we have been  
witness to it: how the  
world descends

into a rich mash, in order that  
it may resume.  
And therefore  
who would cry out

to the petals on the ground  
to stay,  
knowing as we must,  
how the vivacity of what was is married

to the vitality of what will be?  
I don't say  
it's easy, but  
what else will do

if the love one claims to have for the world  
be true?

So let us go on, cheerfully enough,  
this and every crisping day,

though the sun be swinging east,  
and the ponds be cold and black,  
and the sweets of the year be doomed.

-- Mary Oliver

## Reflection

“My arm is so brown and so beautiful,” is a thought I have as I’m about to turn off the lamp and go to sleep. I look at it a moment in the soft glow, and see it, briefly, as though it belonged to someone else. A reddish kind of brown, like a toasted almond, only flecked with the fine, gold hairs of summer. And it occurs to me, that I have always loved the brownness of my skin, The way, just now, I stopped to admire my own thigh, its deeper tone against the crisp white of my cotton robe. As a girl, I wanted to be dark as my mother, whose skin shone against crimson, malachite, plum. I loved the way that gold gleamed against her neck, the way dark skin forgives the accumulation of our years and griefs—and still goes on, pliant and smooth and new. It made sense to me that others slathered their limbs with oil, with unguent, laid themselves out on roofs, on decks, on banks of sand, gave themselves to the mercy of the sun. Though when I seek a synonym for *dark*, I find *dim*, *nefarious*, *gloomy*, *threatening*, *impure*. Is the world still so afraid of shadows? Of the dark face of the earth, falling across the moon? The dark earth, from which we’ve sprung, to which we shall return? What we do not know lies in darkness. The way the unsayable rests at the back of the tongue. So let us sing of it—for the earth is a dark loam and the night sky an unfathomable darkness. And it is darkness I now praise. The dark at the exact center of the eye. Dark in the bell’s small cave. The secret cavity of the nucleus. The quark. How hidden is the sacred, quickening in the dark behind the visible world. O Yaweh, O Jehovah, henceforth I will name you: *Inkwell*, *Ear of Jaguar*, *Skin of the Fig*, *Black Jade*, *Our Lady of Onyx*. That which I cannot fathom. In whose image I am made.

-- Danusha Lameris

### Reflection (continued):

In this poem, Lameris observes many of our common associations with darkness—dimness, impurity, gloom, fear—and reclaims these words in light of her own embodied experience.

What are the images—sights, sounds, feelings, concepts—that come to mind when you think of “darkness”?

Imagine: could these images have several possible dimensions, connotations, or meanings?

In your own life, are there areas of inner shadow that feel fertile or inviting? Areas where there’s a darkness that feels scary and unknown?

What resources—inner or outer—would you need to go willingly into your inner darkness, examining what might want to be brought to light?

## Light One Candle

*As you light the candle, we invite you to chant this song.*



### Within Our Darkest Night

With - in our dark - est night, you kin - dle the fire that nev - er dies a -  
way, that nev - er dies a - way. With - in our dark - est night, you kin - dle the  
fire that nev - er dies a - way, that nev - er dies a - way.

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of three systems of music. Each system has a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a bass clef staff. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

### Closing Prayer

God of small beginnings,  
you bring strength out of weakness  
and hope out of fear.  
By the power of your Spirit  
make us, your children, followers and partners  
in the grand design of your kingdom of love,  
rooted and revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.



## II. Waiting

*For everything there is a season,  
and a time for every matter under heaven:  
a time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;  
a time to kill, and a time to heal;*

*a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;  
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;*

*a time to seek, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;  
a time to tear, and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
a time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time for war, and a time for peace.*

—Ecclesiastes 3:1-8



Bald Hill Nature Preserve, Corvallis, OR

## Snowdrops

Do you know what I was, how I lived? You know  
what despair is; then  
winter should have meaning for you.

I did not expect to survive,  
earth suppressing me. I didn't expect  
to waken again, to feel  
in damp earth my body  
able to respond again, remembering  
after so long how to open again  
in the cold light  
of earliest spring--

afraid, yes, but among you again  
crying yes risk joy

in the raw wind of the new world.

--Louise Glück

## Reflection

Be patient with all that is unresolved in your heart,  
And try to love the questions themselves,  
As if they were locked rooms  
Or books written in a foreign tongue.  
Do not now seek the answers,  
Which could not be given you  
Because you would not be able to live them.  
And the point is, to live everything.  
Live the questions now.

-- Rainer Maria Rilke

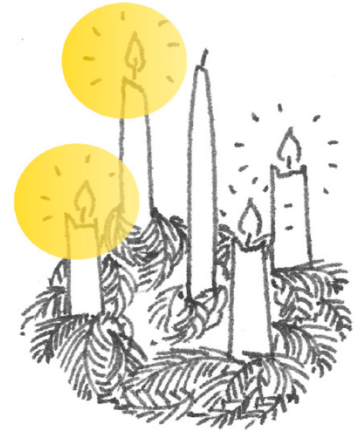
Both of the above passages—the poem by Glück, and the quote by Rilke—speak about patience. They describe the necessary time of gestation and process before new things can come to light.

How do you experience the act of waiting? What feelings and adjectives come to mind?

What are the living questions for you right now? What answers are you awaiting?

## Light Two Candles

*As you light the candle, we invite you to chant this song.*



### Wait for the Lord

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.

Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart!

A musical score for the song 'Wait for the Lord'. It consists of two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a bass clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The first system contains the lyrics 'Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.' and the second system contains 'Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart!'. The piano accompaniment features chords and single notes that support the vocal melody.

Text: Isaiah 40, Philippians 4, Matthew 6:33, 7:7; Taizé Community, 1984  
Tune: Jacques Berthier, 1923-1994  
© 1984, Les Presses de Taizé, GIA Publications, Inc., agent

### Closing Prayer

God of small beginnings,  
you bring strength out of weakness  
and hope out of fear.  
By the power of your Spirit  
make us, your children, followers and partners  
in the grand design of your kingdom of love,  
rooted and revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

### III. Stillness

*Be still, and know that I am God.*

- Psalm 46:10

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

- Philippians 4:6-7



Mill River, East Rock Park, New Haven, CT

## Sometimes

Sometimes  
if you move carefully  
through the forest,

breathing  
like the ones  
in the old stories,

who could cross  
a shimmering bed of leaves  
without a sound,

you come to a place  
whose only task

is to trouble you  
with tiny  
but frightening requests,

conceived out of nowhere  
but in this place  
beginning to lead everywhere.

Requests to stop what  
you are doing right now,  
and

to stop what you  
are becoming  
while you do it,

questions  
that can make  
or unmake  
a life,

questions  
that have patiently  
waited for you,

questions  
that have no right

to go away.

-- David Whyte

## Reflection

“At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God.”

– Thomas Merton

There is a thread you follow. It goes among  
Things that change. But it doesn't change.  
People wonder about what you are pursuing.  
You have to explain about the thread.  
But it is hard for others to see.  
While you hold it you can't get lost.  
Tragedies happen; people get hurt  
or die; and you suffer and get old.  
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.  
You don't ever let go of the thread.

—William Stafford

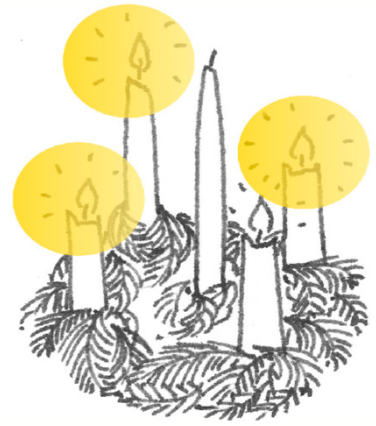
Beneath the exterior noise of our lives—obligations, identities, achievements, expectations—there is a layer of self that's quiet and unchanging. Some people would call this the “true self” that exists beneath the “ego.” It's the part of the self that remains when who we thought we were is called into question, when our outward identity is stripped bare.

Can you recall a time in your life when you were forced—or invited—to tap into this still and steady center? What did you find there? What was that experience like?

If you had to give it words, how would you describe the central “thread” of your life? Where are the obstacles that distract from following it? What kind of practices do you use to reorient yourself?

## Light Three Candles

*As you light the candle, we invite you to chant this song.*



### Nada Te Turbe (Let nothing disturb you)

Musical score for the hymn "Nada Te Turbe". It consists of two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (bass clef). The first system has the lyrics: "Na-da te tur - be, na-da te es-pan - te, quien à Dios tie - ne na-da le fal - ta." The second system has the lyrics: "Na - da te tur - be, na - da te es-pan - te, so - lo Dios bas - ta." The music is in common time (C) and the key signature has one sharp (F#).

*Nothing disturb you, nothing frighten you; those who seek God lack nothing.  
Nothing disturb you, nothing frighten you; only God is enough.*

### Closing Prayer

God of small beginnings,  
you bring strength out of weakness  
and hope out of fear.  
By the power of your Spirit  
make us, your children, followers and partners  
in the grand design of your kingdom of love,  
rooted and revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.



## IV. Wonder

*A voice cries out:*

*'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

*Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.*

*Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'*

-- Isaiah 40:3-5



Asilomar Beach, Pacific Grove, CA

## Miracle Fair

Commonplace miracle:  
that so many commonplace miracles happen.

An ordinary miracle:  
in the dead of night  
the barking of invisible dogs.

One miracle out of many:  
a small, airy cloud  
yet it can block a large and heavy moon.

Several miracles in one:  
an alder tree reflected in the water,  
and that it's backwards left to right  
and that it grows there, crown down  
and never reaches the bottom,  
even though the water is shallow.

An everyday miracle:  
winds weak to moderate  
turning gusty in storms.

First among equal miracles:  
cows are cows.

Second to none:  
just this orchard  
from just that seed.

A miracle without a cape and top hat:  
scattering white doves.

A miracle, for what else could you call it:  
today the sun rose at three-fourteen  
and will set at eight-o-one.

A miracle, less surprising than it should be:  
even though the hand has fewer than six fingers,  
it still has more than four.

A miracle, just take a look around:  
the world is everywhere.

An additional miracle, as everything is additional:  
the unthinkable  
is thinkable.                      -- Wislawa Szymborska

## Reflection

“Wonder is unknowing, experienced as pleasure...  
Wonder is like grace. It’s not a condition we grasp; it grasps us.”

-- David James Duncan, *My Story As Told By Water*

“Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery it is. In the boredom and the pain of it, no less than in the excitement and gladness. Touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it, because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace.”

-- Frederick Buechner

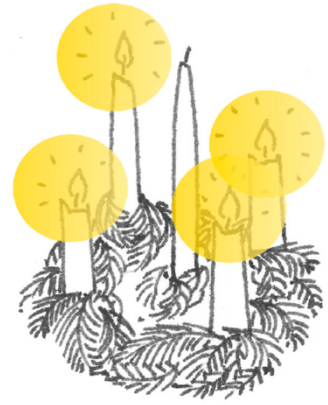
For many of us, the progression of Advent-into-Christmas is so familiar, so well-known, that we’ve lost the sense of mystery and unknowing. We forget to marvel at the things that feel wonderful, nearly impossible: angels, guiding stars, the coming of God in human form.

Consider revisiting the Nativity Story (perhaps from Luke 2) and reading it slowly. Note the parts that surprise you or make you curious. Do you remember the first time you read or heard this, perhaps as a child? How did it make you feel?

Following Buechner: As a practice during Advent, how might you seek or create more moments of wonder in your life?

## Light Four Candles

*As you light the candles, we invite you to chant this song.*



## In the Lord I'll Be Ever Thankful

*♩ = 69*

Dm C F B♭ C Dm C F C B♭ A 3

In the Lord I'll be ev-er thank-ful, in the Lord I will re-joice! Look to God, do not be a-

Dm C F B♭ C Am Dm B♭ C *fine* F Dm C

fraid; lift up your voic-es, the Lord is near; lift up your voic-es, the Lord is near. In the

A musical score for the song 'In the Lord I'll Be Ever Thankful'. It consists of two systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system has a tempo marking of quarter note = 69. The key signature has one flat (Bb). The first system's lyrics are 'In the Lord I'll be ev-er thank-ful, in the Lord I will re-joice! Look to God, do not be a-'. The second system's lyrics are 'fraid; lift up your voic-es, the Lord is near; lift up your voic-es, the Lord is near. In the'. The score includes various musical notations such as chords, rests, and a 'fine' marking.

## Closing Prayer

God of small beginnings,  
you bring strength out of weakness  
and hope out of fear.

By the power of your Spirit  
make us, your children, followers and partners  
in the grand design of your kingdom of love,  
rooted and revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

~In Closing~

**The Inner History of a Day**

No one knew the name of this day;  
Born quietly from deepest night,  
It hid its face in light,  
Demanded nothing for itself,  
Opened out to offer each of us  
A field of brightness that traveled ahead,  
Providing in time, ground to hold our footsteps  
And the light of thought to show the way.

The mind of the day draws no attention;  
It dwells within the silence with elegance  
To create a space for all our words,  
Drawing us to listen inward and outward.

We seldom notice how each day is a holy place  
Where the eucharist of the ordinary happens,  
Transforming our broken fragments  
Into an eternal continuity that keeps us.

Somewhere in us a dignity presides  
That is more gracious than the smallness  
That fuels us with fear and force,  
A dignity that trusts the form a day takes.

So at the end of this day, we give thanks  
For being betrothed to the unknown  
And for the secret work  
Through which the mind of the day  
And wisdom of the soul become one.

-- John O'Donohue

## The Daily Examen Prayer

*A daily examen prayer can be a powerful way to help you pay attention to how God is working through you this Advent season. Usually done for 15 to 20 minutes at the end of a day, the prayer was popularized by St. Ignatius Loyola in his classic text The Spiritual Exercises. Use these five steps to pray the examen every day, and soon you'll begin to notice God's presence more easily.*

**1. Presence:** Remember that you're in the presence of God in a special way when you pray. Ask God for help in prayer.

**2. Gratitude:** Recall two or three things that happened today for which you are especially grateful. Savor them. Then thank God for these gifts.

**3. Review:** Review your day from start to finish, noticing where you experienced God's presence. Notice everything from large to small: from an enjoyable interaction with a friend to the feel of the sun on your face. When did you love? When were you loved?

**4. Sorrow:** You may have sinned today or done something you regret. Express your sorrow to God and ask for forgiveness. If it's a grave sin, pray about seeking forgiveness from the person offended, or the sacrament of reconciliation.

**5. Grace:** You may want to return to a meaningful part of your prayer and speak to God about how you felt. At the close of the prayer, ask for God's grace for the following day.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.



Black Butte, Central Oregon



# ALL SOULS PARISH

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