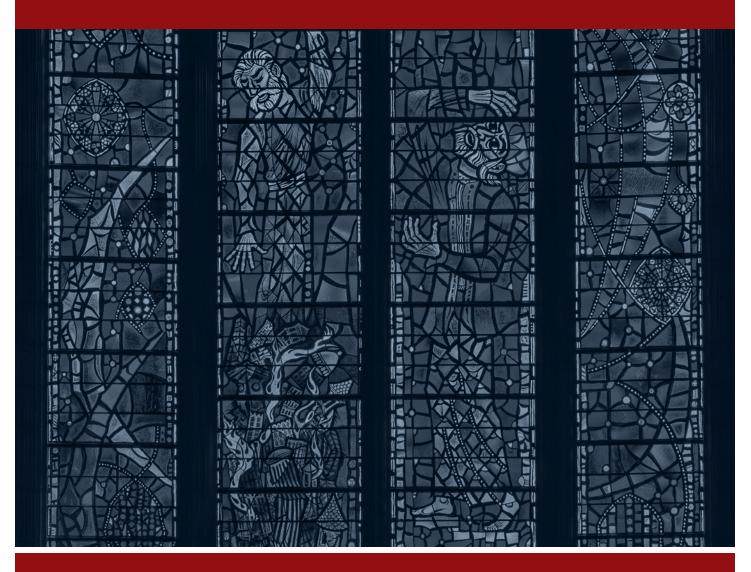


PREPARE YE THE WAY: AN ADVENT COMPANION



WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL

God of timeless grace, you fill us with joyful expectation. Make us ready for the message that prepares the way, that with uprightness of heart and holy joy we may eagerly await the kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ, who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.



DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

The season of Advent is one of waiting and preparation, designed to cultivate our awareness of God's actions—past, present, and future. In Advent we hear the prophecies of the Messiah's coming as addressed to us—people of faith who wait for the Second Coming. We continue to anticipate Christ's entrance into our lives and our world on a daily basis.

This year, Advent comes amid a time unlike any in recent memory. The Advent messages of hope, faith, joy, and peace are needed more than ever.

Our Advent services are framed by the words of the prophet Isaiah. Journey with us as we travel from darkness to light, using this guide to reflect upon weekly readings and prayers. If you are so inclined, gather with members of your household or online with friends, family, or a church group to reflect on the readings and related questions.

Just as Isaiah calls to us, let us call out to one another in this unusual Advent season, reminding those around us that God's good tidings will soon arrive among us.

Christ is coming,

Greeman, Dunca

THE REVEREND CANON ROSEMARIE LOGAN DUNCAN, DMIN PHD CANON FOR WORSHIP



The theme of Advent is one anticipation. We live into the experiences of God's Old Testament people and anticipate the hope he brings to us through the Messiah. We must make the necessary preparation, or we may miss his entrance. On the first Sunday of Advent, we follow the lead of Isaiah in noting that the purpose of God's entrance is to bring comfort to his people.

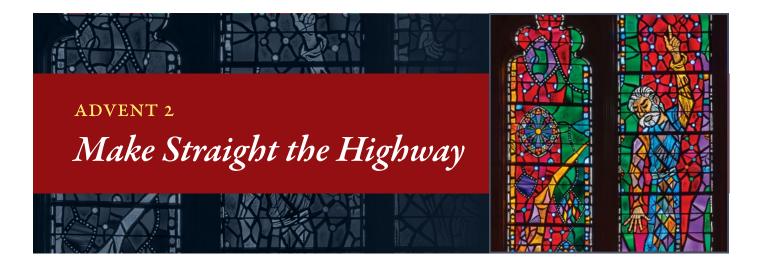
ISAIAH 40:1-2

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

COLLECT FOR ADVENT I

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen*.

- 1. How might God's entrance into the world bring comfort to you, your loved ones, and your community this year?
- 2. During this time of waiting, how can you nurture hope within yourself and those you love?



God's gracious action is his willingness to break into human history and our lives to bring comfort and hope. However, it is possible to impede his coming and create obstacles to his arrival. And so the prophet Isaiah not only announces that God will come, but he also calls God's people to prepare the way of his coming. We examine our hearts so that the coming of God's Messiah will be without impediment or hindrance.

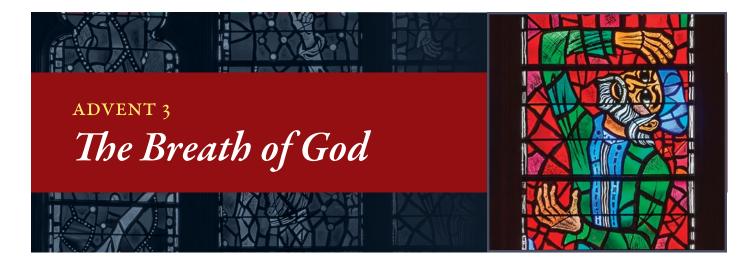
ISAIAH 40:3-5

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."

COLLECT FOR ADVENT 2

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen*

- 1. What are the obstacles in your life that might prevent you from welcoming God's arrival in the birth of the Messiah?
- 2. How may God help you work to remove those obstacles in the days ahead?



As Isaiah prepares the people for the coming of the Lord, he attempts to teach them that solutions from within the human realm will not satisfy and will not meet the needs they are facing. And so he must face them squarely with the inadequacy of human solutions, thereby teaching them to look to God and his Word only. We look away from ourselves to find our hope only in the abiding Word of God. In our worship, prayer, and song we confess our helplessness apart from God's action.

ISAIAH 40:6-8

A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

COLLECT FOR ADVENT 3

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. *Amen*

- 1. Can you identify times over the past few months when your solutions to the challenges you faced felt inadequate or lacking?
- 2. How might a focus on God's presence in those moments have lightened your burden?



The message of Isaiah is becoming more and more complete. The oppressed and forsaken Hebrews have heard the proclamation that comfort will be coming to them. They have been instructed in the preparations they must make. The good news now comes, "Here is your God!" It is always a good time to celebrate such good news from God. In word, song, prayer, and sacrament the joy of knowing that God is among us is expressed and professed to one another.

ISAIAH 40:9

Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"

COLLECT FOR ADVENT 4

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen*

- 1. During this time of difficult and unusual challenges, what does the coming of God's good news into your life mean?
- 2. In what ways will your celebration be different this year?

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For information on Advent and Christmas: CATHEDRAL.ORG/CHRISTMAS

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