

# THE WORK OF THE PEOPLE

The word "advent" comes from the Latin word, meaning "arrival." This season attempts to turn our hearts back in order to look at the arrival of the Christ child and to turn our hearts forward in order to anticipate the arrival of the Christ King. Whenever we are expecting a visitor, there is always a sense of waiting, anticipation, and hope. However, there are also the feelings of anxiety, dread, and fear. What if things don't turn out as planned? For some, the wait can be long and difficult.

## Using the liturgy

These liturgical pieces are to help tune the heart to the pitch of proper waiting. They are to provide the right tension between anticipation and expectation. They do not seek to fill the gap and longing, but to help us to know God's presence in these times.

In the context of a church, these prayers and responsive readings can be used to set the tone to each week of Advent. The videos can be used in conjunction with a reading of the prayers or they could stand by themselves.

## Invocations

These prayers are often used at the beginning of Church services to invite the presence of the Holy Spirit. This is a way to prepare our hearts of the presence of God during our time of worship.

## Confessions

At times we need to confront our failings toward God and others. These confessions acknowledge our waywardness and help us realign our souls to the one who is forgiving and merciful.

## Benedictions

The questions that accompany the benedictions can be used in small group bible studies. For individual use, play these videos during the appropriate weeks in Advent, as your own prayers and mediation. The curriculum for the benedictions can also be used to give guidance to the benedictions.

We hope that you and your community are blessed and enriched by these resources.

# ADVENT A, WEEK ONE

## INVOCATION, Phuc Luu

Glory of God,  
Make your way through our hearts.  
Where there are high and lofty places,  
bring them down low.

Where there are valleys,  
elevate them to a right place,  
set our feet straight  
and guide us by the light of your love.

Spirit of God,  
fix the path so that we may follow  
and in that following return  
to your law and your love  
to your place and your peace  
to where we have been searching  
and hoping to find—  
to the place that we might call "home".

Amen.

## CONFESSION, Kelly Hall

God, the wait.  
The wait is long and numbing,  
its nothing like the beginning.  
Like the natural and easy exchange between You and Adam.  
We have to work at it, at least on our end,  
making it easy to forget the connection exists because You made it so.  
We confess this disability, O God,  
how we too easily accept the disconnect  
and busy ourselves to earn what is always there.  
God, we absolutely need You.

Forgive us for too often needing reminders,  
too often needing You to bring us back to a new beginning,  
but, God bless the mother of our rebirth!  
She carries the wisdom of who we truly are.  
Even centuries down the line we sense the pains of her onset labor  
each tension drawing us closer to what could be.

Anoint our wait for more of You, God.  
Bless our tension, bless our release.

## I AM PRESENT VISUAL BENEDICTION QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

In "I AM Present" poet K. Hall invites us to reflect on the past and to know the reality of God's intimate presence. "In the womb of Eden where I fed you and warmed you," recalls a place where both our most basic needs and our highest needs are fulfilled.

What are important moments in your life that you can recall both your physical and spiritual needs were met, and that you knew that this was from God? How can the past memory of God's presence help us to know of the reality of God being with us?

When we wait, we are often anticipating the arrival of something or someone. However, the wait can be scary, lonely, and/or full of anxiety. K. Hall reminds us that God's "presence remains." How is God's presence revealed in our waiting?

How can waiting be a way that we can know God's presence, even before the great arrival?

K. Hall uses the image of "seers" who "lead the blind" and those who "take up hands with the paralyzed." This speaks of aiding others in their time of waiting. How does ministering to others during their waiting help us to anticipate the coming of God?

## ADVENT A, WEEK TWO

### INVOCATION, Phuc Luu

Spirit of the living God,  
Descend upon our restless hearts  
to provide the peace of still water,  
to move us to hold our differences together,  
to lay aside our weapons of war,  
vengeance, hate, greed, envy,  
destructive speech and unrighteous anger

And to open ourselves  
to the creative and life giving way of peace:  
swords into plowshares  
artillery into artistry,  
for your kingdom come  
and your kingdom here.

Amen.

## CONFESSION, Kelly Hall

God, life is tiring.

It's enough to try to be a good human most days  
With the ups and downs and twists and turns that stir within,  
That constant chatter of the mind that makes it ever more difficult  
To realize our impact on the world.

How do we keep walking on the crooked path?  
How do we find the straight way?  
Some days we just want to deactivate ourselves,  
Rest, and lie down in our addictions  
Even when we know it's a death bed.

From the depths of our soul we confess that we need You,  
And more and more of You in every sense  
In blood and bone and thought and flesh and sweat and tears  
We need You.

You lead us to the path by surrender,  
Lord let us give way.  
You take our heaviness by giving Your Light,  
Lord, enliven our step,  
You invite us into Your delight!

Bless our feet, our walk, our stumbles and our sprints,  
Grace our effort to move closer to You  
See us to the good, good end.

## I AM THE PATH VISUAL BENEDICTION QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

K. Hall describes a journey that is made through the terrain of our souls. These journeys leave "imprints" that remain with us "across mountainsides or laying low in the valley." Whether we know it or not, God's presence is with us in our triumphs and even our defeats. How has God blessed us in every step of our journey?

How do our lives "affect" God, in that God is "moved" to encourage our steps? In other words, our lives are a blessing to God. If this was true, then what blessing can we receive in knowing this?

K. Hall talks about the "restorative" path that we are on. How is the point of our journey one toward restoration and wholeness? How can we take steps toward this goal?

Even though we might not be able to see the path ahead of us, K. Hall encourages us that the "Way is well lit/ the Pathway, straightforward." If Christ is the "Way," then how is this a well-lit path? How can others help us to see Christ better or encourage our steps toward path we call, the Christ?

# ADVENT A, WEEK THREE

## INVOCATION, Phuc Luu

Spirit of the living God,  
We welcome you into this space.  
A space made full and cluttered  
With too many distractions and worry  
Too many unkept promises  
and things waiting to be done.

Come and hover over these dark waters  
Over the chaos and confusion  
Or the calm and silent  
To set a right rhythm  
Back to these lives  
Lives waiting for you  
Preparing for you,  
so you might not fill the space  
But make the space whole again,  
To make it wholly yours.  
Amen.

## CONFESSION, Kelly Hall

God, can You hear us?  
Do our voices reach You  
Calling, crying...throats parched.  
Our flame is but a flicker, about to be put out.

We confess our hope to live.  
To truly live and extend Your radiance throughout the earth,  
But our light, though profound, doesn't end the darkness  
(the dark that lingers in us and among us)  
Like Your light does.

There are days when the darkness wins  
Causing a great forgetting  
(or at least a great avoidance)  
Of You, of one another, of joy.  
It becomes a defeating solidarity  
(or at least an intense illusion of isolation).

Your overflowing life goes on and on.  
You birth and give and take on and receive us.

Give us Your Word, give us Jesus.  
Flood us with Your presence, let Your living water flow.

## REJOICE VISUAL BENEDICTION QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

God's voice is a torrent of life that seeks to flow into us. K. Hall's images are vivid and express the strength and awesomeness of God healing word. These words provide "freedom" and "liven the blood." They are all inspiring and all encompassing. How can God's word bring freedom and healing for our lives? Have you discovered ways of hearing God that nurture you and bring new life?

K. Hall describes the light as both "brilliant" and "glorious" but at the same time "unexpected." This conjures up the image of Paul's Damascus Road experience. (Acts 9: 1–17) How can the light that we need come in ways we least expect? What are ways in which God has worked in your life that was unplanned or in no way fit into your preconceived ideas about how God would work?

The response to God's light is to rejoice in song. What are ways in which we can celebrate our freedom and healing with others?

K. Hall's poem ends with the promise of completion and the anticipation of song. This is the image of our lives as "written" and "composed" but yet the choir is ready to sing. There is a sense of both finality and beginning, which brings excitement and anticipation. What are ways in which we can celebrate the work that God has done in our lives and the work that God will begin? How can we take steps toward this new beginning?

## ADVENT A, WEEK FOUR

### INVOCATION, Phuc Luu

Spirit of God, we call you from the quiet—  
From places without voice,  
Places where we are too tired to even cry  
From the longing of our souls  
Within the deep and empty  
To wait for you  
In this time of turning and turmoil  
Time of unrest  
To have God with us,  
    God near us,  
    to sit with us in this place

Come, be with us, breath of life  
We wait for you  
For the sound of your voice  
To emerge from the silence  
To be heard as infant's cry  
    to be near us  
    and with us  
    even in this place.

Amen.

### CONFESSION, Kelly Hall

God, we need Your presence.  
We need Your help, Your hope, Your vision, Your desire.  
We confess that without it, we don't think about much of anything besides ourselves.  
It's hard to admit, but true.

We are so busy trying not to die  
We don't see life as the gift that it always is,  
We aren't able to make out the daily occurrence of signs and miracles  
We can't find blessing even though it is given in each and every moment,  
With every breath, every comfort, every warm smile.

Continue to bless us.  
In hard times, bring us breath.  
Hold up the world (even though we think we do),  
Bless our doubts and our certainties,  
Call us out of ourselves, teach us to die so we may live.

God, reassure us of the blessing of hard times,  
Of times when there is not enough,  
Of needing a friend  
And help us to share eternal resources:  
Love, time, healing space  
That we all will arrive for You,  
Just as You arrived for us.

### BIRTH GIVER VISUAL BENEDICTION QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

K. Hall begins with a blessing to those who are "visionaries" and who can keep company to the "yet to be." These are the prophetic voices who can look forward and imagine another reality. What would it be like to look forward to the world in the way that God looks forward, i.e. to the Kingdom come?

The second stanza speaks about Mary, the mother of Jesus, and how she is “the light bearer” who carries the light. Mary is described as being a co-laborer with God to bring this light in the world. How can we be like Mary in agreeing with the Spirit's work in our lives? How can we join with God's work, and not against it, so that life can be birthed?

K. Hall describes a life where we “serve with wisdom” and in this way are part of seeing the coming of God in this world. How does service reveal God's presence?

What are healthy ways to give that replenish our souls instead of depleting our souls?

K. Hall gives a list of blessings that are reminiscent to the Beatitudes that Jesus gives (Matt 5:1–12 and Luke 6:20–26). These blessings are ancient prayer forms that pre-date Jesus (ex. Psalm 1) and are used to show God's grace and love to those who walk in God's ways. How can we bless the people around us for their acts of obedience and service?

The ending stanza speaks of freedom and security that the light gives. Light is all encompassing and life giving; it seeks to fill us with its energy and radiance. What are ways in which we can “invite” the Light in our lives on a daily basis, even amidst the darkness?