



2017 Devotional



First
LUTHERAN
Church



Week 1 (December 3 – 9)

God, come and forgive. (Isa 64:1-9)

We have all become unclean, our righteousness nothing more than a dirty cloth. That's pretty dirty. Thank God our relationship with Jesus cleans us and moves us forward to forgive others.

Sunday

Oh Lord, I have failed so often at being the person You intended. I have rejected Your spiritual gifts and talents, which you so lovingly bestowed on me. Instead, I wished to be someone else. I considered Your gifts a burden instead of a blessing. I clung to relationships that did not nurture my true self. I did not love or honor myself. I did not believe I was lovable. But You have helped me through. You have forgiven me, time and again, and given me the opportunity to start over and do better. Your unfailing love and hope in me allows me to love myself, and Your gifts and try again. Amen.

Monday

Come to me, Lord Jesus. There are so many times I need your forgiveness. Despite trying my best to do your will, my sins are as numerous as stars in the sky and I can never break free. I always fall short.

Lord, you have gently led me to realize all I have needed is your abiding love and grace. I know there are times that I have been so concerned with the letter of the law there was no room in my heart for the spirit. There are times I can barely believe you would forgive me. But your mercy has forgiven me. This I know. I feel your love urging me to keep going - to keep trying.

Come Lord Jesus. Come Emmanuel. Make known your presence in my heart. With your help, I am here to serve you in this world. Amen.

Tuesday

In this time of darkness before the light...

Where are you?

Where are the signs of your love and grace?

Is this your righteous anger towards an unfaithful people?

9 million yearly die from hunger.

Global warming is destroying our weather, plants and animals.

20,000 people are homeless in the state of Nebraska.

Children were killed during worship.

Our sin has broken our spirit and your creation.

My own indignation has closed my eyes, my ears and my voice.

Loving father, I beseech you,

Let me feel your grace and peace.

Open my heart and light my way with your love.

Heal me. Help me to grow so I hear the cries of those in need, see you in all that surrounds me and use my voice to fight injustice and strive for peace.

In this time of darkness before the light, use my hands to reach out.

Wednesday

Forgiving God, we know pride may get in our way of honestly examining how we have intentionally or unintentionally sinned against you and our neighbor. Move our hearts and minds so we recognize our sins as individuals and as a community and honestly confess, repent and receive Your mercy and Your gift of forgiveness. Then, we will be set free to faithfully share this forgiveness and grace with our family, friends and neighbors. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Thursday

Just as a small child sins, disappoints or even angers their earthly father, so we, your creation, also sin, disappoint, and at times, anger you. We humbly ask your forgiveness, O Lord, for all our sins, known and unknown, and implore you not to turn away from us. It is when we sin we feel far from you and know in our soul that repentance and forgiveness is what we desperately need. Therefore, we call on you, O God, with contrite hearts, and ask that you forget the sins of your children and remember them no more. We are, each and every one of us, the work of your awesome hands and long to follow your way. Come, Lord, make yourself visible to us, Amen.

Friday

What does it mean to be clay? What does it mean to have you, O Holy God, as the potter? My mind is drawn to the potter who cannot get the clay to conform and the pot is not coming. The potter does not give up. The potter continues working with the clay. That may mean smashing the pot and starting over, adding water to moisten the clay, pounding it to work air bubbles out or cleaning the dried clay off the tools. O Lord, I am comforted by the fact you are the potter. You will not give up on me. When I ignore your Word, want revenge or turn away from the work you set before me, you continue to work with me. You see my potential, understand my fears, hold me tight and comfort me with your never-ending love. Thank you. Amen.

Saturday

Write your own prayer here:



Week 2 (December 10 – 16)

God, come and comfort. (Isa 40:1-11)

There is a great deal in our world that stresses us, Lord. Help us to pause in this season. Comfort our stresses. Help us seek your presence as our present.

Sunday

“O Comforter of priceless worth. Send peace and unity on earth.” Martin Luther wrote these words in the hymn, *Lord Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word*. God, your comfort is needed throughout the world. It feels as though everything is spinning out of control. To list what is broken in this world would take a lifetime! But, here is Advent season! A season to remind us that You have come to us as a human being to experience this world first hand. Remind us that Jesus was sent to us not only to experience our pain, but also to heal – to heal our brokenness, to bear our sorrow, to comfort us in our bleakest moments. Continue, we pray, to bring comfort to those in need, to bring peace to troubled souls and to bring unity to this world full of conflict. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.

Monday

Dear Lord, How can Christmas be only a few weeks away? Where did this year go? Suddenly, I am making “to do” lists that ensnare me in feelings of anxiety and panic. Lord, free me from my long list of decorating, shopping and wrapping. Help me replace it with a must-do list of prayer, worship and charity towards others. Turn my anxiety into anticipation, my panic into peace and my stress into the joy of your birth. In Jesus name, Amen.

Tuesday

O Holy One, I beg of you... Come!

Come... Don't leave me alone. I long to sit with you and sense your presence. I need your comfort. I long to claim the title of, “Follower,” and be an element of change. Help me understand. Help me see with new eyes. Help me be brave. Help me know what it means to be a new creation. Come!

Lord... Holy One, you are the Lord of Lords. We need a king with the power to exercise with absolute dominion and one that rules with love. You are it. You are the Lord of all!

Jesus... They were waiting. You came with power and might, but not like they expected. You came as a babe born in a manger with a welcoming committee of stinky shepherds. Your guiding principles grounded in love - human yet divine. You are Jesus, the Christ, the Emmanuel!

Wednesday

Comfort us, Lord. Draw us into your arms and hold us close to your chest. We hunger for you, Good Shepherd. Amen.

Thursday

Most merciful God, how deep Your love is. Despite of our self-centered way of living, you continue to comfort us and guide us. Deliver us from chaotic lives. We are so easily buried under physical and mental burdens. Help us to seek You when we feel contented with your abundant blessings. Thank you for Isaiah's words of encouragement. Help us respond to Your call with action and prayers. Please be in our head and in our heart to ponder on the coming of Your amazing gift, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Friday

Comfort us in our busyness, Lord. Be near and grant us your peace. We are in a season of waiting in hushed anticipation and yet everything around us is a clanging gong, pestering us for attention. Slow us down to hear your coming and by that slowing, may we find refuge in you. We ask in the name of Jesus, the one who is and was and is to come. Amen.

Saturday

Write your own prayer here:



Week 3 (December 17 – 23)

God, come and free. (Isa 61:1-4, 8-11)

Many in this world are not free. Slavery (human trafficking) is alive and well. Many are imprisoned in body, mind and soul. Come and free us, your people.

Sunday

Arise, your light has come! The Spirit's call obey,
Show forth the glory of your God which shines on you today.
Arise, your light has come! Fling wide the prison door,
Proclaim the captive's liberty, good tidings to the poor.
Arise, your light has come! All you in sorrow born,
Bind up the broken-hearted ones and comfort those who mourn.
Arise, your light has come! The mountains burst in song!
Rise up like eagles on the wing, God's pow'r will make us strong.

O God, help us to hear your testimony and to believe. Remind us to keep our eyes fixed on you and not on earthly things. Remind us whose we are. Give us all good things without measure.

Monday

I thank Thee, Lord, as a volunteer for the chance to serve another year.
And to give of myself in some small way, to those not blessed as I each day.
My thanks for health and mind and soul, to aid me ever toward my goal.
For eyes to see the good in all, a hand to extend before a fall.
For legs to go where the need is great, learning to love – forgetting to hate.
For ears to hear and heart to care, when someone's cross is hard to bear.
A smile to show my affection true, with energy aplenty – the task to do.
And all I ask, dear Lord, if I may, is to serve you better day by day.

Tuesday

We wait. We await you, oh, Lord, in this season of Advent, with its short days of light and long nights of darkness. We await your coming, the promise of a Savior fulfilled, a Redeemer. The piercing light of hope. The lightness and joy that brings us hope in our darkness. You have delivered us, your people, molded by you, the potter, guided by you, the light giver, and nudged by you, the loving parent. Help us remember the freedom, joy and lightness of your saving grace. For this, we revel in the wait.

Wednesday

The prophet, Isaiah, empowered by God's spirit, tells the people of Israel they are free to bring good news and comfort to the oppressed, the broken hearted, the captive, the prisoners, those who mourn. That is quite a command – be a “comforter.” We are to be comforters. The dictionary says, “a comforter is a person or thing that comforts.” As a young child, my mother would put a comforter on my bed to keep me warm on cold, winter nights. Each day, our lives are filled with opportunities to be “comforters.” Comfort can be a smile, a held hand, a soft touch, a kind word, a listening ear, a quiet presence, a helpful action, a welcoming greeting, a respectful response or a shared prayer. Lord, open our hearts, eyes and ears each day to recognize and act as comforters to the people we meet – wherever we are, each day. Amen.

Thursday

LORD, bring us good news. Heal our broken hearts. Set us free from bad news and injured selves that we might be whole, love and serve and proclaim your excellent name. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Friday

Come, Lord Jesus, and set us free from our bondage to sin and death. Set us free from our desire for things which do not satisfy. Set us free from the grudges and memories which divide our families and sever relationships. Set us free from our prejudice of those who differ from us. Set us free to be your disciples, claimed and empowered by You. Set us free to love and care for all

your people and this precious earth. Set us free to celebrate the giftedness and grace of life. Set us free to live our lives fully in you. Amen.

Saturday

Write your own prayer here:



Week 4 (December 24 – 30)

Come, Lord Jesus.

Sunday - Christmas Eve

Come to us, Lord Jesus. Come to us this Christmas Eve. Come and fill us with awe at your holy birth. Come and penetrate our hearts with your love. Come and fill our homes with your abiding presence and peace. Come and fill us with courage and grace to live faithfully in this time and place. Come and make us to be your disciples in this needy world. Amen.

Monday – Christmas Day

God with us, you wrapped your beloved son in human likeness with tender power and vulnerability. Wrap us in your protective grace and in your warmth, hold us tight, kiss us with your eternal love.

God with us, you are born into our midst and are present - always have been, always will be, for that is your promise; that is who you are. As a helpless infant, rejected and excluded, you long for our hearts to be your managers, our mouths to be your trumpets and our hands to be your servants.

God with us, light us anew each day and keep calling us forward into your reign of love and freedom. Help us to shine your light to a world that so desperately longs to feel it. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Tuesday

Heavenly Father, Thank you for all the blessings in my life. When my soul is troubled, your presence calms me. When I anguish for loved ones, your promises sustain me. Your love pours through me whether I am full of joy or full of sorrow. Help me to help others find that peace. Amen.

Wednesday

Lord, the news is sometimes hard to hear. We cling to the light of your presence among us. Remind us that you are near. Amen.

Thursday

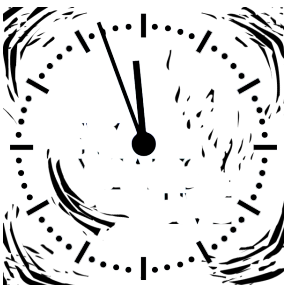
Jesus, thank you that you came to be with us. Thank you that you are with us always. Thank you that you are coming again. Amen.

Friday

Thank you, Great Giver, for gifts that could not be placed under a tree. Thank you for family, for food, for shelter, for worship. Thank you for our very lives. Amen.

Saturday

Write your own prayer here:



Sunday – New Year’s Eve

O Come, O Come Emmanuel is a favorite Advent hymn and *All Who Are Thirsty* is one of my favorite praise songs, pleading, “Come Lord Jesus, Come...”

As I sat in the sanctuary of St. Paul’s in Grand Island at the LYONS assembly on a Saturday evening, I felt the longing for Jesus to come. The participants moved through prayer stations in silence with soft music being sung in the background. When we were dismissed for the evening, the music

stopped, but no one moved. Through tears and sighs and stillness, it was obvious the Holy Spirit was present. My prayer is for those who still wait in stillness and silence for the Holy Spirit pleading, “Come Lord Jesus, Come.” May we all feel his presence and be his presence to others this season and always. Jesus, come. Amen.



Monday – New Year’s Day, 2018

Write your own prayer for 2018: