

The background of the entire page is a light gray. Radiating from the center are numerous dark red lines of varying lengths and angles. Small white diamonds are placed at intervals along these lines, creating a starburst or sunburst effect. The text 'GOD US' is prominently displayed in the center, rendered in a bold, red, blocky font with a white outline. The word 'with' is written in a smaller, black, cursive script font, positioned between 'GOD' and 'US'.

GOD US

with

advent 2020

Dear Cherry Hills,

It's Christmas season! Can you believe we made it? These last 8 months have been unprecedented. And each one of us is carrying a weight we were not meant to carry alone. Doing life together in this season is more important than ever and we believe Advent is one way we can practice this, whether in person or remote. Advent, if you are unfamiliar, is traditionally celebrated on the four Sundays before Christmas Day. The very first Advent ever celebrated took place in the 4th or 5th century. We stand on the shoulders of many who have come before us in participating in this season. The word Advent simply means "arrival" or "coming" in Latin and it ushers in a 4-week period of waiting for the Church worldwide. "But we've been waiting for 8 months," you might say, "why practice waiting more!?" We definitely resonate with this question. However, we believe all of life is wrapped up in waiting. To be human is to long for the goodness of the original creation. And if we're honest, we need constant reminders of how to wait well. And so, the season of Advent is there for us, every December, to help us relearn how to wait. This year, we welcome it with open arms.

Each Sunday morning as we gather, we will light a candle. Fire is present throughout the story of Scripture as a reminder that God indeed is with us. This Advent season we are taking four weeks to remember the hope, love, joy, and peace that Jesus Christ brought into the world when He put flesh on and came to live among us. In fact, "God with us" means we can have hope, love, joy and peace as we wait.

We've created this devotion so that you and your family can journey along with us in our Sunday morning Advent series, reflecting on Scripture and stepping into some activities to share the hope of Christmas with our neighbors.

We love you Cherry Hills family, and we hope this simple book will help you and your family encounter and experience the presence of God this Christmas season.

week one

HOPE



Hope.

The very word itself when spoken aloud brings with it feelings of possibility and life and yet we've all felt hopeless at times. As human beings, we often treat hope as a feeling, sensing it most when circumstances go our way and trying desperately to conjure it up when we face difficulty. But what if hope is not a feeling? What if hope is a reality? What if it does not change based on the highs and lows of our lives but is rather a promise delivered to all the ages, past and present, and available to us now through a different way of seeing the world? This is what the birth of Jesus proclaims. Hope. That the Kingdom of God is in fact near. Hope that the rightful King will return. Hope that all wrongs will be made right. Hope that grief and death will not have the final word. "For a shoot will come from the stump of Jesse, from His roots a branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him... and righteousness will be His belt and faithfulness the sash around His waist..." (Isaiah 11:1-2, 5).

What area or circumstance of your life does the Spirit of God want to breathe hope into? How might you allow this to happen?

Father God, we confess any hopelessness we feel. Thank You that we can come before You honest, raw and real. Because of what You have done in and through Jesus Christ we are never without hope. Holy Spirit, guide us today to bring hope into a world that so desperately needs it.

week one

scripture

monday:

Isaiah 11:1-9, Jeremiah 33:14-16, Psalm 119:81-88

tuesday:

Matthew 1:1-25, Psalm 39:7

wednesday:

John 11:28-44, Psalm 146:1-10

thursday:

Romans 15:1-13, Psalm 43:5

friday:

Ephesians 1:15-23, Psalm 71:1-6

saturday:

Hebrews 10:19-25, Psalm 130:7-8

week one

activity to spread

HOPE

This week as we think about hope, create a card to write down the name of someone who needs the hope of Jesus this Christmas.

Place the card somewhere you can see it everyday (on your bathroom mirror, on your coffee maker, etc.) and pray for that person during this Advent season.

week one

reflections

reflections

week one

week one

week Two

LOVE



Love.

There are some words that have lost their meaning. Years of cliché use and frivolous mention dull the impact they bring like the unsharpened blade of an axe. And yet, a single picture can bring back that meaning in an instant. The Old Testament begins to paint this picture when it mentions a coming Messiah who will be oppressed and afflicted, and yet open not His mouth. By judgement He will be taken away and pierced for our transgressions though He did nothing wrong (Isaiah 53). In the New Testament this picture of the cross comes fully into focus and stands at the end of Jesus' 33 years of ministry. It points like a sign post back to His life of sacrificial love. Example after example of the true meaning of this word are present from His birth to His final breath. He healed the ear of His enemy, He washed the feet of His disciples, He invited the tax collector to His table. He walked among the sick and the outcast, He included and blessed the outsider, He bound up the broken hearted. He knew love, He lived love, in fact, love was at the very center of His every task. This is love; not that we loved God but that He loved us and gave Himself for us (1 John 4:10). He asks us to go and do likewise.

Does the life of Jesus bring meaning back to the word love for you? In what way is the Holy Spirit leading you to love like He loved? Can you name a specific example?

Father God, thank You for loving us. For coming to live among us. We pray that You would be near to us, and continue to teach us how to love our families, neighbors, friends, and enemies well in a time of separation and loneliness.

week Two

scripture

monday:

Isaiah 40:3-5, Isaiah 53:1-9, Deuteronomy 7:9

tuesday:

John 1:1-18, Psalm 118:1-29

wednesday:

Luke 19:1-10, Psalm 86:15, 103:8

thursday:

John 13:1-17, Lamentations 3:22-23

friday:

Ephesians 2:4-10, Psalm 51:1-19

saturday:

1 Peter 4:8-11, Psalm 136:26

week two

activity to spread

LOVE

Show love through an act of service that fulfills a need for someone. We want your act of service to go beyond a random act of kindness for a stranger. The goal is to invest time to deepen a relationship or take a first step investing in a new relationship.

Check out our idea list to jump start your imagination:

- ◆ Shovel snow for a neighbor or friend.
- ◆ Take groceries to a family who is struggling financially.
- ◆ Bake a Christmas goody and drop it off at a friends house.
- ◆ Visit virtually with someone who needs connection.
- ◆ Send a hand written note to a parent who needs a little encouragement.
- ◆ Drop off a meal to someone who is sick or quarantined.

week two

reflections

reflections

week two

week two

week three

JOY



Joy.

Shortly before the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus prays a prayer for every person that would follow Him (John 17). The prayer is beautiful and within it, He expresses His desire that His disciples would be filled to the full with joy. And yet, Jesus is on His way to the cross. Furthermore, His followers are called to pick up their crosses daily in His name. Now this naturally raises a question: Is it possible that fullness of joy can coexist with daily cross carrying? Is fullness of joy to be found in the midst of a sin-soaked and suffering world? The reading of the gospels is the invitation to answer this question with an overwhelming “yes!” Joy is to be found in Jesus. His birth announcement declared tidings of comfort and joy! His ministry included the multiplying of fish and bread and the transformation of water into wine. He gave food to the hungry and complete healing to the physically sick. His life was a testament to the fact that one can live full of joy while at the same time fully identifying with every broken human encountered. Perhaps this was because He learned to look through the brokenness to the reality of redemption. He saw each person as they would one day fully be. May we also see each person and each moment as it would look fully redeemed.

When was the last time you brought true joy into another’s life? In what way might the Spirit be leading you to not only be filled with joy but also to bring joy to another? Be specific.

Father God, we confess that we trade fullness of joy for fleeting happiness. We don’t know how to hold joy and brokenness in tension. Come awaken us to the truth that joy is the natural response to new life and let it overflow in every area of our lives.

week three

scripture

monday:

Numbers 24:17, Jeremiah 23:5-6

tuesday:

Luke 1:26-56, Psalm 16:5-11

wednesday:

Matthew 14:13-21, Psalm 4:6-7

thursday:

John 2:1-11, Psalm 4:6-7

friday:

2 Corinthians 6:1-10, 1 Peter 1:8-9, Psalm 126:5-6

saturday:

1 John 1:4, 1 Thessalonians 1:4-8, Psalm 70:4

week three

activity to spread

JOY

Nothing brings instant joy like a fun surprise!

Let's spread a little JOY through a simple act of kindness this week.

- ◆ Leave someone a generous tip.
- ◆ Drop off a basket of goodies to your hairstylist, grocery store clerk, dentist or local librarian.
- ◆ Give a \$5-10 gift card to a teacher, your postal worker, waste/recycle provider.
- ◆ Put out a basket of individually wrapped snacks for the UPS/FedEx delivery people.
- ◆ Leave a surprise on your co-workers desk.
- ◆ Buy your office or school receptionist a cup of coffee.

week three

reflections

reflections

week three

week three

week four

PEACE



Peace.

There is a longing deep within every human heart. You can almost feel it in all of creation, a groaning for all things to be made new and right. This yearning is universal and in the Hebrew Scriptures the redemption the world longs for is called, “shalom”. Listen to these Scripture verses with this Hebrew word shalom inserted for the English word peace as is done in “The Complete Jewish Bible”.

The Lord bless you and keep you and make His face shine upon you...and give you “*shalom*” (Numbers 6:24-26).

Of the increase of His government and of *shalom* there will be no end... and He shall be called the prince of “*shalom*” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

“*Shalom*, I leave with you. My *shalom* I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled (John 14:27).

“Now may the Lord of *shalom* Himself give you *shalom* always and in every way” (2 Thess 3:16).

In Jewish communities, this ancient word is still used as a familiar farewell to this day when friends are parting company. And as they part they are saying over one another, “May you be full of well-being and filled with a complete and perfect peace. May health, prosperity and clarity of mind and spirit be upon you. And may you experience inner and outer contentment and fullness of life and joy.” This was the ultimate promise at the birth of Jesus. Glory to God in the highest and on earth, shalom (Luke 2:14).

What situations, circumstances or relationships are robbing you of peace? In what way is the Holy Spirit asking you to bear the image of Jesus by bringing peace to others this week?

Father God, we pause to confess any restlessness we feel. You have not created us to strive and to worry, but to reflect Your perfect peace. Let our lives bring a glimpse of shalom into the hearts and souls of those we encounter today that they might know You are redeeming everything.

week four

scripture

monday:

Isaiah 9:6-7, Micah 5:2-5

tuesday:

Luke 2:1-38, Numbers 6:22-27

wednesday:

Mark 4:35-41, Psalm 91:1-16

thursday:

Matthew 5:9, Psalm 133:1-3

friday:

Romans 12:14-21, Psalm 37:1-11

saturday:

Philippians 4:4-9, Psalm 29:11

week four

activity to spread

PEACE

This month, we've been praying for and connecting with the people in our lives.

This week spend time praying that God would show you one person that needs the PEACE that comes through a relationship with Jesus, and invite them to our Christmas Eve services.

Whether we gather in person or remotely this Christmas Eve, our hope is that everyone who joins together would know the amazing love of our God and how He longs to be WITH US.

How might you share this invitation with someone else?

week four

reflections

reflections

week four

week four

Join us for Christmas Eve
on Thursday, December 24th
as we celebrate “God With Us”.



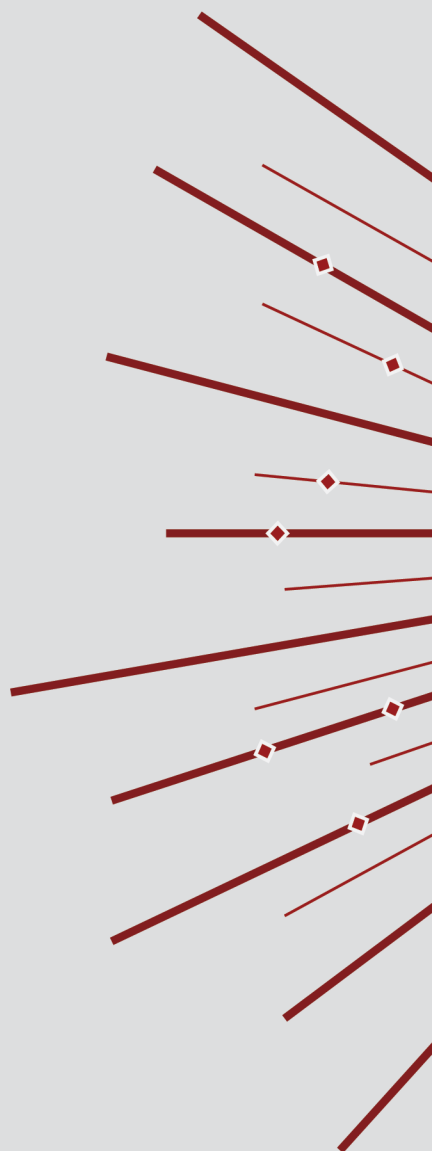
Merry Christmas to you Cherry Hills family!

As we look back on 2020 and all that's transpired, I'm so thankful we get to do life together! Life together with Jesus, one another and our community & world.

It's our prayer that these reminders of the hope, love, joy and peace that are found in knowing and trusting the LORD will be yours in abundance this season. How we need the LORD!

And as we step into 2021 together, let's keep giving ourselves fully to Jesus and His mission. We won't regret it in the long run—it will be worth it all when we see Jesus face-to-face.

With affection,
Pastor Jeff



ch *life together*