

Advent Devotional - Day 01

2025

December 1st

Scripture: Isaiah 7:14 (NIV) - Verse: *"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."*



Reflection:

The Christmas story starts with a quiet, surprising announcement: God isn't arriving in splendor but as a child—Emmanuel, God with us. That flips our expectations. Instead of trumpets and spectacle, God comes in vulnerability—through hard work, a long journey, and a manger's humility. The shock in the Christmas story is that all-powerful love chooses closeness.

That changes where we look for God. His presence isn't only in fancy church buildings, polished sermons, or the high points of our life. You'll find God at the worn kitchen table where hard talks happen, at the hospital bedside holding a hand, or on a dim porch during a long night. God shows up in the messy, everyday places where life really happens.

For Mt. Hope and Penn Hills, ministry should fit the neighborhood. Worship and candles matter, but so do practical compassion and steady presence. Being a church that believes God is with us looks like volunteers bringing meals, people sitting with those who are lonely, teachers staying an extra hour, and neighbors shoveling a walkway without being asked. Those everyday acts are where God tends to show up.

This changes how we measure success. If God delights in the overlooked, our focus should too. Success isn't just big attendance or polished programs but whether folks on our block feel seen, warmed, and supported. Small, regular acts of mercy—more than seasonal gestures—carry God's presence in a community over time.

Finally, let this truth shape our Advent eyes and hands. Look for God in everyday places: listen to stories while you wait in line, notice the people working late, and clear time for a neighbor who needs company. The season is richest when we live with the conviction that God is already here and join Him in the simple, humble work of loving the people around us.

Prayer:

Immanuel, draw near to our streets and homes; open our eyes to see Your presence in the ordinary, steady our hearts to welcome You in the small moments, and give us the courage to serve our neighbors as if we were serving You. Amen.

Today's Mt Hope Mindful Response Challenge:

Invite someone who may be alone to share a simple meal with you this week or give them a call, bringing warmth, conversation, community and a listening ear.



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