Sacred Space: A Resource
For Small-group Ministry

Year A

Focus: Second Week of Advent

Scripture: Isaiah 11:1–10 NRSV

Gathering
Welcome

(For the Advent season it is traditional to have Advent candles (four white candles, one for each week of Advent) or an Advent wreath (an evergreen ring, with four candles and one white candle in the center). One candle is lit each week with the center candle lit on Christmas Day. The lighting of the Advent candle takes place at the beginning of the spiritual practice.)

Advent is a season of waiting in expectation for the coming of light into a darkened world in the form of the infant Jesus. Advent is spent anticipating and spiritually preparing for the arrival of the Christ-child. Scriptures, symbols, and hymns help make Advent a time of expectation for Christ’s birth, rather than a frenzy of holiday tasks.

The Advent season begins four Sundays before Christmas and is observed each Sunday until Christmas. An Advent wreath with four candles and one Christ candle in the center often is used to observe the weeks of Advent. One candle is lit each week until all are burning brightly on Christmas.

Prayer for Peace

Ring a bell or chime three times slowly.
Light the peace candle.

They call you the Prince of Peace.

We read those words in wonderment because we live in chaos and shattered dreams. But when we read those words, The Prince of Peace, in our hearts, we want to follow. Long have we known the commandment: “Follow after the things that make for peace.”

O Holy One, Teach us to love each other. Clear our minds of evil thoughts that keep us from following you. Teach us to love each other. Clear our hearts of evil intent that keeps us from following you. Teach us to love each other.

We want to venture forth to meet this need to love, but we are afraid of the consequences. So we find many reasons not to follow you.
There seem to be many ways to follow, but only one way to not follow. Grant us the
desire and courage to follow you in the path of peace.

Teach us, O holy One, to follow you in the path of peace. So be it. Amen.

—Charles Kornman

**Spiritual Practice**

**Take Five**

Light the second candle of Advent and say:

Today we light the second candle of Advent. This candle symbolizes Christ bringing peace to the world. May we seek peace and patience in our lives.

Read the following:

The Christmas season that mirrors the Advent season can be full of rushing and to-do lists. This is true for us in our spiritual lives as well. We hope that all our spiritual to-do lists will bring us comfort, spiritual guidance, and answers. Advent is a time of waiting and anticipating, but the light isn’t birthed right away. All the to-do lists can’t bring the birth of the Son of God sooner. We learn to settle into the waiting time. To Take Five at this time of year reminds us to go inward and be patient with waiting on God.

Read the following:

Today we are going to do five minutes of contemplative prayer. Contemplative prayer helps us empty our mind and listen to God. We will breathe in and out to help open our minds to God’s whispers. Breathe in for eight seconds, breathe out for eight seconds. We will repeat for five minutes.

Set the timer for five minutes. At the end of five minutes say “Amen.” Invite group members to share how this practice helped them feel peace during this season.

**Sharing Around the Table**

**Isaiah 11:1–10 NRSV**

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder’s den.

They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

On this second Sunday of Advent, Isaiah presents us with two pictures. In the first picture Isaiah describes a righteous leader who will emerge from the descendants of King David. Every generation could benefit from a righteous leader endowed with a “spirit of wisdom and understanding…counsel and might…knowledge and the fear of the Lord.” One could argue that a leader who looks upon the poor with righteousness and decides with equity for the meek, and lays low the wicked, is a leader after God’s own heart.

In the second picture Isaiah reminds us that in the kingdom of God, life itself is different. Wolves will be living with lambs, leopards with baby goats, calves with lions, cows and bears grazing together, all the while led by a child. These images remind us that conventional wisdom and conventional ways of relating one to another will not hold.

For the reign of God to be ushered in, we must see differently. We must approach our relationships with God, each other, and the whole of creation differently. Isaiah gives us a goal. Though we may not attain it in our lifetime, we have a responsibility to try. As we wait for the coming of Jesus this Advent season we endeavor to change our own lives to prepare for the reign of God to come near.

Questions

1. From your perspective, what are the benefits of being led by someone endowed with the leadership characteristics mentioned in the text?
2. How might you incorporate those characteristics into your own leadership opportunities?
3. How might you approach your relationships with God, others, and creation differently to move closer to the goal outlined by Isaiah?

Sending

Generosity Statement

“Faithful disciples respond to an increasing awareness of the abundant generosity of God by sharing according to the desires of their hearts; not by commandment or constraint” (Doctrine
and Covenants 163:9). The offering basket is available if you would like to support ongoing small-group ministries as part of your generous response.

The offering prayer for Advent is adapted from A Disciple’s Generous Response:

God who is faithful, Be present with us as we plan our spending. May we use our resources to build healthy, happy relationships with you, with others, and with the Earth. May we remember the teachings of Jesus that challenge us to make lifestyle choices that are counter to our culture of accumulation and excess. Amen.

Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn

CCS 396, “Blessed Be the God of Israel”

Closing Prayer

Optional Additions Depending on Group

- Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper
- Thoughts for Children
Prayer for Peace

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Communion Statement

We come together in this time of waiting to share in the Lord’s Supper “as a visible witness of loving Christian fellowship and shared remembrance of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection” (Doctrine and Covenants 164:4a).

All committed followers of Christ are invited to partake, but no one should feel pressured to receive the emblems.

This Advent season, our experience of being together as we share in Communion is an expression of blessing, healing, peace, and community.

In preparation let’s sing from Community of Christ Sings 519, “In the Singing.”
Thoughts for Children
Wait in Peace


Explain: In very old times, the mark of a good leader was his or her willingness to protect the poor and other marginalized people. As a good leader, Jesus did these things. He brought peace by serving the poor and other overlooked people in society. As we wait for Jesus this Advent season, we can bring peace by doing what he did.

Lead children in an animal role-play:
1. Have one child pretend to be a lamb and another pretend to be a wolf. Ask them to act out what probably would happen in nature if a lamb and wolf came across each other.
2. Repeat with a calf and lion.
3. Explain that Jesus brings peace in all situations.
4. Have the children act out each role-play again, but this time invite them to incorporate actions of peace, kindness, and friendship.
5. Explain that this is what Christ can help us do. Through us, Jesus can bring peace, kindness, and friendship to any situation.

Ask: How can you follow the example of Jesus and bring more peace into your own life, family, and community?

Hand out Peace Seal pages for children to color, and invite them to return to their seats.