

# Be AMAZED



**Mennonite  
Education  
Agency**

Advent 2025 to Epiphany 2026  
At Home Worship Guide



Advent to Epiphany At Home 2025  
November 30, 2025, through January 4, 2026

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# Introduction to Advent at Home

## BE **AMAZED!**

It's hard to have hope in today's world. Daily, we hear new stories of injustice, the breakdown of systems we have trusted and abuses of power. What are we to think, feel and do in the face of all this mess?

This Advent, we follow the Narrative Lectionary through stories that remind us that God gets right in there with us and our hope is firmly rooted in God. In the heat of the fire, in the dryness of death, in the loneliness of exile and in the despair of empire, God is present. In a world of hopelessness and violence, God gave the gift of love incarnate through an infant born to travelers. That story of creative, visceral salvation is the story we move toward in Advent and celebrate at Christmas.

In the “now-not-yet” reality of Advent, we position ourselves as resurrection people who tell the stories we live in from a vantage point of knowing the Good News. God’s “new world [is] coming—and it’s already here.”<sup>1</sup> And God will amaze us, defying our human hopelessness and acting in ways we can’t even imagine.

## What is Advent

- Advent is a season of waiting and preparation, in which we recreate the longing people felt before the birth of Jesus. Christians prepare for the celebration of Jesus’ birth by remembering Israel’s longing for the Messiah.
- The word *advent* comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means “coming” or “visit.” During the Advent season, we keep in mind both “advents” of Christ: the first one in Bethlehem and the second one yet to come.

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<sup>1</sup>Bryan Moyer Suderman. *New World Coming*, SmallTall Ministries, 2011. This phrase comes from the song by the same name.

- During Advent, we move from darkness to light, right at the time of the year when the days are reaching their shortest, and when the world is going from light to darkness leading to the winter solstice. We don't do this to equate light with goodness and darkness with evil. Rather, light is a symbol of illumination, helping us to see more clearly.

## Why celebrate Advent

- The four weeks of Advent help us ensure that we are making Christmas about Jesus and more than a present-opening party.
- Living in the Advent season slows us down and helps us remember that December is not just about frantic preparations for Christmas.
- Advent is the beginning of the Christian calendar, and walking through Advent gives shape to our entire year.
- Rituals are important! They form us and bring us home to God. Advent is a great entry point for forming household rituals.

## How to use this worship guide

- This resource accompanies the Be Amazed! worship planning materials in the Fall 2025 issue of *Leader* magazine. The themes and Scriptures are the same, which will connect your worship at home to worship at church. If your congregation is not following the *Leader* resource, that's not a problem; this worship guide will still make sense to you.
- Rather than the typical Revised Common Lectionary scriptures, this year's scripture passages are taken from the Narrative Lectionary. While some of them will still be familiar stories, they're not the scriptures most of us are used to hearing during Advent.
- This guide refers to the *Shine On* and *Peace Table* story Bibles from MennoMedia. If you have this resource, you can find correlating stories in it. If you don't have it, no problem. Reading straight from the Bible or from another story Bible is also great!

- This guide can be used weekly, daily, or a combination of both.
- Choose the rituals and ideas that are helpful for your household and skip the ones that aren't. To remind you that you can choose what works for your household, there are empty checkboxes next to each option.
- No need to be perfect; aim for persistence. If "daily" means "every few days," that's fine!
- Fit these materials into your household life. If the only thing your household can manage is a daily lighting of candles and singing a song or saying a quick prayer, that is enough!

## The Advent Wreath

Create your own version of an Advent wreath that looks similar to this:



- The wreath is circular like God's eternal love. It has no beginning and no end.
- Wreaths are traditionally dressed with evergreens, symbolizing endless life and rebirth. Since actual evergreens are highly flammable, consider using some artificial greenery, or decorate your wreath in a different way.
- The purple candles represent both repentance and royalty, and the pink candle, used the third week, is the "joy" candle.

- We often use a word for each week of Advent as we light each candle. Week 1 is hope, week 2 is peace, week 3 is joy, and week 4 is love.
- The white candle in the center is the “Christ candle.”
- Many stories recount the history and symbolism of the Advent wreath and even multiple colors that are used. If you’re intrigued, look them up!

## Morning scripture

Begin your day with Habakkuk 1:5, one of this Advent’s scripture texts. Print or write it and hang it in a place where you start your day: on the bathroom mirror, at your breakfast table, or by your entry door. Read it each day as your daily reminder and challenge to notice what God is doing in the world around you.

Look at the nations and see!

Be astonished! Be astounded!

For work is being done in your days  
that you would not believe if you were told.

—Habakkuk 1:5 NRSVue

## Fire and star chat

Enjoy this slightly different take on the common “rose and thorn” or “highs and lows” reflection prompt. Each day (at a meal together, bedtime or as part of your Advent time), share your “fire and star” reflections from the day. “Fire” refers to the story of the fiery furnace used to describe a moment when you felt anxious, afraid or alone. “Star” refers to the star that appeared in the sky as a sign of hope being birthed into the world, and describes a moment when you noticed hope, when you were amazed, or when God showed up.

If you live alone, consider doing this as a journal prompt. Or exchange daily texts or phone calls with a friend.

## DIY light bright

This hands-on project is for the craftier among us! Its inspiration is drawn from the popular late-20th-century toy. Make a DIY light bright, either as a one-time project or as a project that you make more elaborate each week. (see "Homemade Lite-Brite," [ToddlerApproved.com/homemade-lite-brite/](http://ToddlerApproved.com/homemade-lite-brite/))

### Supplies

- cardboard box (any size; this will be your light box)
- black or navy spray paint
- pencil
- pen (for punching holes in the cardboard)
- Christmas lights

### Method

1. Spray paint on the outside of your box and let it dry.
2. On the inside of your box, use your pencil to mark the holes for the picture you want to create. You could simply do a star or create elements of the manger scene, adding a new one each week.
3. Punch out the holes with your pen.
4. Poke your Christmas lights through the holes you've created.
5. Plug in the lights and be amazed!

## Candlelit evenings

When all is bright, it's hard to notice the light source. This weekly ritual invites us to be deliberate with light sources, to embrace the rhythm of darkness that God's created world provides and to rest.

1. Choose a day of the week that works well for your household.
2. Gather light sources such as kerosene lanterns, candles, and battery-operated candles.
3. At sundown, turn off all the lights in your home and use your deliberate light sources instead. Notice what happens within you throughout the evening.
  - Do you feel disoriented? Cozy? Tired? Invigorated?
  - What might God be inviting you to?



# Journey to the Manger

People of all ages have found this simple daily or weekly ritual meaningful. It's a visual way to anticipate the birth of Christ!

1. Set up a very simple, unadorned crèche. Maybe you have a nativity structure you want to use, but this could also be something you create. "Simple and unadorned" is enough! But if you want an extra challenge, you could decorate the crèche a little more each week to prepare it for Jesus.
2. Place Mary and Joseph somewhere in your home to the north of the manger and place the Magi somewhere to the east. Hide Jesus for now.
3. Each day of Advent, move Mary and Joseph a little closer to the manger, letting them land there on December 24.
4. You may want to also place your shepherds nearby instead of at the manger so that you can move them in to worship Jesus on Christmas Day.
5. Add Jesus to the crèche on Christmas Day.
6. After Christmas, begin moving the Magi closer each day, letting them arrive to worship Jesus on January 6, Epiphany.

Note: If you don't have a Nativity set, make a simple one! You can paint rocks for different characters or create them out of sticks, clothespins and fabric scraps. Find a free downloadable Nativity set to print on paper and cut out, as well as other child-friendly Nativity set options at [www.MennoniteUSA.org/adventathome](http://www.MennoniteUSA.org/adventathome).

## Weekly worship ritual

Multiple scripture passages are listed for each week. We encourage you to read all of them. The weekly worship ritual focuses on one Scripture passage each week.

- Connect to the Big Story: We begin by remembering that the Bible tells one big story that leads to Jesus. By reading this section each week, we learn where this week's Scripture belongs in the big story.
- Tell the story. Read the Scripture passage from your Bible and/or a corresponding version in a story Bible.
- Talk about it: Choose a few "talk about it" prompts to explore.
- If you're doing the candlelit evening or a Light Bright that grows each week, you may want to have it be part of this weekly ritual. Another option is to do the light activity at a different time during the week.
- If you want to end your time more reflectively, listen to or sing music together. Each week's ritual has suggestions for music to get you started.

## Daily Worship Ritual

- Light the candle(s) of the Advent wreath, saying that candle's Advent word.
- Optional: Read one (or part of one) of the week's Scripture passages or read the story of Jesus' birth from Luke 2:1-20.
- Optional: "Journey to the Manger" ritual.
- Optional: "Fire and Star Chat" ritual.
- Optional: Sing one of the suggested songs of the week. Or invite someone in the household to choose a song they would like to sing.
- Pray the simple suggested weekly prayer or another prayer of your choosing.
- Sing a song. "He Came Down" (*Voices Together* 239) is a simple song that can be altered for each week by using that week's Advent word in the lyrics. For example, the first week's verse would be "He came down that we may have hope."
- Blow out the candles.

Be  
**AMAZED**



# BE AMAZED!

## Hope in the Furnace

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Advent Week 1, Beginning November 30

**Advent Word of the Week:** Hope

**Focus Scripture:** Daniel 3:1, 8–30

**Additional Lectionary Scriptures:** Habakkuk 1:1–5; 3:17–19;  
Psalm 26:1–7

### WEEKLY WORSHIP RITUAL

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☐ **Connect to the “big story”:**

God created a good world. We were created to live peacefully, but we often miss the mark. When that happens, we must deal with the consequences, but God sticks with us. Our whole story is a story of God sticking with us. In the Bible, God called Abraham and Sarah’s family to be a blessing to the earth. Even when they missed the mark, God stuck with them. When the people were in slavery and cried out to God, God stuck with them by sending Moses to lead them. When the people of God had a hard time understanding how to live God’s law of love in community, God sent leaders like Joshua, judges like Deborah and prophets like Samuel to bring the people back to God.

The people wanted to be ruled by kings. Things didn’t always go well under kings, and the kingdom divided in two. Both kingdoms were eventually invaded by other nations. Some of the people were taken away into exile, and some were left in the ruins of the land. God continued to stick with the people, often through calling prophets and other leaders to point the people back to God and to a community of shalom.

☐ **Tell the story:** Daniel 3:1, 8–30.

Use the *Shine On: A Story Bible*, page 148 or *The Peace Table: A Storybook Bible*, pages 123–125.

- ☐ **Talk about it:** Choose a few of these prompts to explore:
- ☐ **Active Prompt:** Retell the story, with yourselves as actors or using other manipulatives (stuffed animals, blocks, playdough, mini figures, etc.) to act it out.
  - What do you notice?
  - Which parts of the story did you find yourselves leaving out or adding to it?

- ☐ **Active Prompt:** Read the story aloud as a campfire-style story. Maybe you can do a literal bonfire, or maybe you'll gather around a fireplace or another light source with regular lights turned off. Make it cozy and intimate, then read it with all the drama of a good late-night campfire story. Let it be amazing!

- Learn a little about the book of Daniel. It is thought to be the last book written in what we know as the Old Testament. We often categorize it as a prophetic book, but in the Hebrew Bible, it is put with miscellaneous writings. However you look at it, Daniel is different from any other scripture in form and style.

Another odd thing about the book is that it begins and ends in Hebrew, but the rest of the book is written in Aramaic. Because the Hebrew is awkward and not fluent, scholars think the writer(s) was probably not a native Hebrew speaker. The book of Revelation is drawn from the book of Daniel. Daniel has been decoded, interpreted, and wrestled with by Christians and Jews alike throughout the ages — sometimes in ways that are helpful, and sometimes in ways that are hurtful. It's a complex book!

- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were given a chance to save their necks. All they had to do was serve the statue Nebuchadnezzar set up. They refused, even though they knew their refusal would lead to a fiery furnace.

Tell a story of a time that you decided to do what you believed was right, even knowing the potential consequences.

- What were the outcomes?
- Would you make the same decision again?

- Notice how many times the phrase “set up” appears in the story (read vv. 2–7 if you want to see it even more times!).
  - Who is doing the “setting up” of the statue?
- Tell stories of times you are tempted to be the one setting up objects of worship, or times that you’re tempted to place your worship and trust in things set up by humans instead of God.
- Read verses 17–18. The three men didn’t know God would save their lives. This isn’t a story of “if you trust God, God will come to the rescue!” This is a story of knowing that obedience and loyalty to God are more important than life itself — that even in death, God is with us, and we belong to God.
  - How does that match or clash with other things you have been taught about God or about this story?
- Read verse 25. Common interpretation is that the fourth being in the fire was God. God didn’t pull them out of the fire; God jumped in the fire with them.
  - When have you been in something like a “fire”? How did God show up?
- In this 500th year of Anabaptism, we are even more aware than usual of the early Anabaptists who were killed because of their expression of faith, some of whom were burned at the stake.
  - How might this story have sounded to early Anabaptists?
- Look around at the “fires” in our world today — whether those fires are near or distant to you. Imagine God amid the fire.
  - What might God be doing or saying?
  - What does God’s presence feel like there?
  - Where is God bringing hope?
- Imagine Jesus knowing this story, as a child and as an adult.
  - What questions do you think Jesus would have asked of the text?
  - How might it have inspired him?
  - What amazes you about this story?

- Where is the hope in this passage?

- ☐ **Candlelight Evening or DIY Light Bright.** If you're doing this weekly ritual, you might want to make it part of this time.
- ☐ **Journey to the Manger:** If you're moving Mary and Joseph weekly, do that now.
- ☐ **Reflective Listening Ideas: (available on YouTube)**
  - [How Firm a Foundation](#)
  - [O Come, O Come, Emmanuel](#) | Cinematic Christmas Cover – The Piano Guys
  - [God of the Poor \(Beauty for Brokenness\)](#) – Graham Kendrick

## DAILY WORSHIP RITUAL ---

The optional rituals are described in the Introduction, page 7.

- ☐ Light one purple candle and say, "Jesus brings hope" and/or "We are amazed by hope."
- ☐ Optional: Read one (or part of one) of the week's Scripture passages or read the story of Jesus' birth in Luke 2:1-20.
- ☐ Optional: "Journey to the Manger" ritual.
- ☐ Optional: "Fire and Star Chat" ritual.
- ☐ Optional: "Morning Scripture" ritual.
- ☐ Optional: Sing one of the suggested songs for the week. Or invite someone in the household to choose a song they would like to sing.
- ☐ Prayer: Jesus, source of hope, open our hearts to be amazed.
- ☐ Optional: Sing a song of hope.
- ☐ Blow out the candles.

# BE AMAZED!

## Peace in the Valley of Bones

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Advent Week 2, Beginning December 7

**Advent Word of the Week:** Peace

**Focus Scripture:** Ezekiel 37:1–14

**Additional Lectionary Scriptures:** John 11:25–26

### WEEKLY WORSHIP RITUAL

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☐ **Connect to the “big story”:**

God created a good world. We were created to live peacefully, but we often miss the mark. When that happens, we must deal with the consequences, but God sticks with us. Our whole story is a story of God sticking with us.

In the Bible, God called Abraham and Sarah’s family to be a blessing to the earth, and even when they missed the mark, God stuck with them. When the Israelites were in slavery and cried out to God, God stuck with them by sending Moses to lead them. When the people of God had a hard time understanding how to live God’s law of love in community, God sent leaders like Joshua, judges like Deborah and prophets like Samuel to bring the people back to God.

The people wanted to be ruled by kings. Things didn’t always go well under kings, and the kingdom divided in two. Both kingdoms were eventually invaded by other nations. Some of the people were taken away into exile, and some were left in the ruins of the land. God continued to stick with the people, often through calling prophets like Ezekiel and other leaders to point the people back to God and to a community of shalom.

☐ **Tell the story:** Ezekiel 37:1–14

Use the *Shine On: A Story Bible*, page 146 or *The Peace Table: A Storybook Bible*, pages 120–121.

☐ **Talk about it:** Choose a few of these prompts to explore:



☐ **Active Prompt:** This story is weird! Do some imaginative exploration.

- Draw a comic strip of the story.
- Bring the story to life! Have everyone lay on the ground, then start breathing together. Turn on “[Drum Trip](#)” by [Rusted Root](#) (available on YouTube) and let everyone start coming to life, eventually becoming a dance party.
- Create a being of some kind using everyday objects and things you find in your recycling bin.

☐ **Active Prompt:** Think of something in your orbit that needs new life breathed into it. Maybe there’s a relationship that needs tending, a plant that needs some TLC or a daily ritual that feels a little dry. How might the Spirit be filling it with new breath? Join what God is doing. These bones aren’t just dry, they’re very dry! They’re not just kind of dead, they are full-on, completely dead! So who in their right mind would prophesy to something that so obviously can’t hear? And yet, the Spirit tells Ezekiel to do just that.

- Have you ever felt the Spirit nudging you to do something utterly ridiculous? Did you do it? What happened?

One of the fun things in this passage is all the word play with the Hebrew word *ruah*, which can be translated as “spirit,” “wind” and “breath.” Read the passage and highlight all the *ruah* words (if there are children, have them count them). In this story, Spirit breathes life, hope and peace into a hopeless situation.

Ezekiel is, in the words of one scholar, “surely the strangest of all the prophets.”<sup>2</sup> His actions and visions are often graphic and bizarre. Recent scholars have begun to be more aware of the trauma that is evident in these writings. When read through this lens, we can begin to understand the deep places of pain and trauma that come through in the text. Read this scripture again, now aware of the trauma of forced migration, the

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible, Volume 3: The Writings* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2019), 1049.

violence of war and other traumas we may not be able to imagine.

- How does this lens help you hear the story differently?

The nation of Israel had been defeated in multiple wars, the people had been prisoners of war multiple times, families had been torn apart. As a community put it in the *Anabaptist Community Bible* margin notes, "This is a vision of the resurrection of a community. A people who were dead—a people who had lost their faith and their identity—will be brought back to life again."<sup>3</sup> Look around you, at your immediate community and at communities around the world.

- Where are the dry bones?
- What does it mean for God's breath of peace to be active here and now?

Imagine Jesus, who would one day die and live again, reading this story.

- What might he hear in it, and how might he interpret it if he was talking with you?
- What amazes you about this story?
- Where is the peace in this passage?

☐ **Candlelight Evening or DIY Light Bright.** If you're doing this weekly ritual, you might want to make it part of this time.

☐ **Journey to the Manger**

If you're moving Mary and Joseph weekly, do that now.

☐ **Reflective Listening Ideas** (available on YouTube)

- [Taizé "Veni Sancte" Spiritus](#)
- ["Rain Down"](#) by Jaime Cortez
- ["Breathe on Me, Breath of God"](#) by Northern Baptist Association

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<sup>3</sup>*Anabaptist Community Bible* (MennoMedia, 2025), 1036.

## DAILY WORSHIP RITUAL ---

The optional rituals are described in the Introduction, page 7.

- ☐ Light one purple candle and say, "Jesus brings hope" and/or "We are amazed by hope." Light a second and say, "Jesus brings peace" and/or "We are amazed by peace."
- ☐ Optional: Read one (or part of one) of the week's Scripture passages or read the story of Jesus' birth from Luke 2:1–20.
- ☐ Optional: "Journey to the Manger" ritual.
- ☐ Optional: "Fire and Star Chat" ritual.
- ☐ Optional: "Morning Scripture" ritual.
- ☐ Optional: Sing one of the suggested songs for the week. Or invite someone in the household to choose a song they would like to sing.
- ☐ Prayer: Jesus, source of hope and peace, open our hearts to be amazed.
- ☐ Optional: Sing a song of peace.
- ☐ Blow out the candles.

# BE AMAZED!

## Joy in the Desert

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Advent Week 3, beginning December 17

**Advent Word of the Week:** Joy

**Focus Scripture:** Isaiah 55:1–13

**Additional Lectionary Scriptures:** Psalm 42; Isaiah 40:1–5;  
John 4:13–14

### WEEKLY WORSHIP RITUAL

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☐ **Connect to the “big story”:**

God created a good world. We were created to live peacefully, but we often miss the mark. When that happens, we must deal with the consequences, but God sticks with us. Our whole story is a story of God sticking with us.

In the Bible, God called Abraham and Sarah's family to be a blessing to the earth, and even when they missed the mark, God stuck with them. When the people were in slavery and cried out to God, God stuck with them by sending Moses to lead them. When the people of God had a hard time understanding how to live God's law of love in community, God sent leaders like Joshua, judges like Deborah and prophets like Samuel to bring the people back to God.

The people wanted to be ruled by kings. Things didn't always go well under kings, and the kingdom divided in two. During this time of civil war and unrest, prophets like Isaiah tried to point the people to God's way. Both kingdoms were eventually invaded by other nations. Some of the people were taken away into exile, and some were left in the ruins of the land. God continued to stick with the people, often through calling prophets and other leaders to point the people back to God and to a community of shalom.

☐ **Tell the story:** Isaiah 55:1–13

This passage is not in *The Peace Table* or *Shine On*.

- ☐ **Talk about it:** Choose a few of these **Active Prompts** to explore:
- This passage has extravagance! Prepare a feast together, just for your household or invite friends to enjoy it with you. Prepare it from a place of abundance. If you're doing this with children, it might mean preparing their favorite meal or snacks. Perhaps they can decorate in a way that feels inviting and extravagant to them. Read Isaiah 55:1–3, then enjoy your feast.
  - Read Isaiah 55:8–11.
    - When have you learned (perhaps the hard way!) that God's plans are not the same as our plans?
  - Isaiah 55 is the final chapter in what scholars call Second Isaiah. In this part of the story, the people are in exile in Babylon, grieving and traumatized. In Isaiah 56, the story shifts to the people who have returned from exile.
    - When you read this as the final song before the shift to a return from exile, what stands out to you?
    - How do you think this might have been heard, sung, or experienced?
  - The story behind this passage includes shifts in geography, and a major theme in Isaiah is that God is not tied to a particular geography or political structures. God is not a nation. As nations and kingdoms come and go, God is still God, and God is worthy of our trust.
    - What does this stir up in you?
  - Restoration is a major theme in the book of Isaiah. Look at the world—your immediate world and the global community.
    - Where is restoration needed?
    - Where do you see God already at work in bringing about restoration?
  - Imagine Jesus reading these words. Read it out loud as you think he might read it to you.
    - What amazes you in this story?
    - Where is the joy in this passage?

- ☐ **Candlelight Evening or DIY Light Bright.** If you're doing this weekly ritual, you might want to make it part of this time.
- ☐ **Journey to the Manger**  
If you're moving Mary and Joseph weekly, do that now.
- ☐ **Reflective Listening Ideas** (available on YouTube)
  - "[Come to the Water](#)" | Beautiful Choral Arrangement | John Foley
  - "[Comfort, Comfort O My People](#)"
  - "[You Shall Go Out With Joy](#)" by Stuart Dauermann, TTM English

## DAILY WORSHIP RITUAL

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The optional rituals are described in the Introduction, page 7.

- ☐ Light one purple candle and say, "Jesus brings hope" and/or "We are amazed by hope."
- ☐ Light a second and say, "Jesus brings peace" and/or "We are amazed by peace."
- ☐ Light the pink candle and say, "Jesus brings joy" and/or "We are amazed by joy."
- ☐ Optional: Read one (or part of one) of the week's Scripture passages or read the story of Jesus' birth from Luke 2:1–20.
- ☐ Optional: "Journey to the Manger" ritual.
- ☐ Optional: "Fire and Star Chat" ritual.
- ☐ Optional: "Morning Scripture" ritual.
- ☐ Optional: Sing one of the suggested songs of the week. Or invite someone in the household to choose a song they would like to sing.
- ☐ Prayer: Jesus, source of hope, peace and joy, open our hearts to be amazed.
- ☐ Optional: Sing a song of joy.
- ☐ Blow out the candles.

# BE AMAZED!

## Love Comes Down

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Advent Week 4, beginning December 21

**Advent Word of the Week:** Love

**Focus Scripture:** John 1:1–18

**Additional Lectionary Scriptures:** Psalm 130:5–8; Isaiah 9:2, 6

## WEEKLY WORSHIP RITUAL

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### ☐ Connect to the “big story”:

God created a good world. We were created to live peacefully, but we often miss the mark. When that happens, we must deal with the consequences, but God sticks with us. Our whole story is a story of God sticking with us.

In the Bible, God called Abraham and Sarah’s family to be a blessing to the earth, and even when they missed the mark, God stuck with them. When the people were in slavery and cried out to God, God stuck with them by sending Moses to lead them. When the people of God had a hard time understanding how to live God’s law of love in community, God sent leaders like Joshua, judges like Deborah and prophets like Samuel to bring the people back to God.

The people wanted to be ruled by kings. Things didn’t always go well under kings, and the kingdom divided in two. During this time of civil war and unrest, prophets like Isaiah tried to point the people to God’s way. Both kingdoms were eventually invaded by other nations. Some of the people were taken away into exile, and some were left in the ruins of the land. God continued to stick with the people, often through calling prophets and other leaders to point the people back to God and to a community of shalom.

Eventually, the exiled people were allowed to return home. They rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem, so we call this the Second Temple period. They began to hope for the Messiah. And that Messiah, as we



now know, came in the form of a tiny baby, born to a woman named Mary.

☐ **Tell the story:** John 1:1–18. Use *The Peace Table*, pages 160–61.

☐ **Talk about it:** Explore a few of these **Active Prompts**.

- This passage talks about Jesus as the Light. Unlike any light we can create (flashlights, candles, light bulbs), Jesus is a light that can never burn out or be blown out. Play with light, using some of these ideas:
- When it's dark outside, turn off all the lights in the house. As your eyes adjust, notice the lights that remain and discover their sources. You might find starlight or other outside lights coming through your windows. Maybe someone is wearing a watch that shines a little light, or a phone is giving off some light. Maybe it's a light on another electronic device.

John 1:10 talks about not recognizing the light. Sometimes we're so caught up in all the bright things in the world around us that we don't even notice Jesus, the true light, who is always there.

- If you haven't done the DIY Light Bright yet, this is a great time to do it!
- Take a night hike, using a flashlight to find your way.
- Make luminaries and put them outside your house or apartment to invite your neighbors to welcome the Light of the World.
- Grab some glow sticks, turn off the lights, and turn on some music, such as:
  - The Georgia Mass Choir, "[Walk in the Light](#)"
  - VOICES, "[Waiting for the Light to Shine](#)"

☐ **Active Prompts:** This is a poetic account of Jesus' origins. Write a poem about Jesus' birth.

- This is John's account of the Creation. Read John 1:1–5, then Genesis 1:1–5.
  - What do you notice?
- The writer of John calls Jesus the Word. We often call the Bible the Word of God, but the Bible never actually calls itself that. Sit with that a little.
  - What, if anything, does that shift for you?
- Read Psalm 119:105.
  - Given what John 1 describes, how do you hear this familiar passage?
- Read John 1:11. Tell a story of a time that you didn't welcome Jesus or maybe struggled to welcome Jesus.
- Read John 1:14. This is pretty humbling, that the Word made his home among us.
  - How might your household and your community be a place for Jesus to be at home?
  - What amazes you in this poem?
  - Where is love in this passage?

☐ **Candlelight Evening or DIY Light Bright.** If you're doing this weekly ritual, you might want to make it part of this time.

☐ **Journey to the Manger**

If you're moving Mary and Joseph weekly, do that now.

☐ **Reflective Listening Ideas** (available on YouTube)

- The Georgia Mass Choir, "[Walk in the Light](#)"
- John 1 – IBC Live 2025 "[In the Beginning](#)"
- "[Lead Kindly Light](#)" by Audrey Assad
- Pentatonix "[O Come, All Ye Faithful](#)"

## DAILY WORSHIP RITUAL

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The optional rituals are described in the Introduction, page 7.

- ☐ Light one purple candle and say, "Jesus brings hope" and/or "We are amazed by hope."
- ☐ Light a second and say, "Jesus brings peace" and/or "We are amazed by peace."
- ☐ Light the pink candle and say, "Jesus brings joy" and/or "We are amazed by joy."
- ☐ Light the final purple candle and say, "Jesus brings love" and/or "We are amazed by love."
- ☐ Optional: Read one (or part of one) of the week's Scripture passages or read the story of Jesus' birth from Luke 2:1–20.
- ☐ Optional: "Journey to the Manger" ritual.
- ☐ Optional: "Fire and Star Chat" ritual.
- ☐ Optional: "Morning Scripture" ritual.
- ☐ Optional: Sing one of the suggested songs of the week. Or invite someone in the household to choose a song they would like to sing.
- ☐ Prayer: Jesus, source of hope, peace, joy and love, open our hearts to be amazed.
- ☐ Optional: Sing a song of love.
- ☐ Blow out the candles.

# BE AMAZED!

## Christmas Ritual

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December 24–25

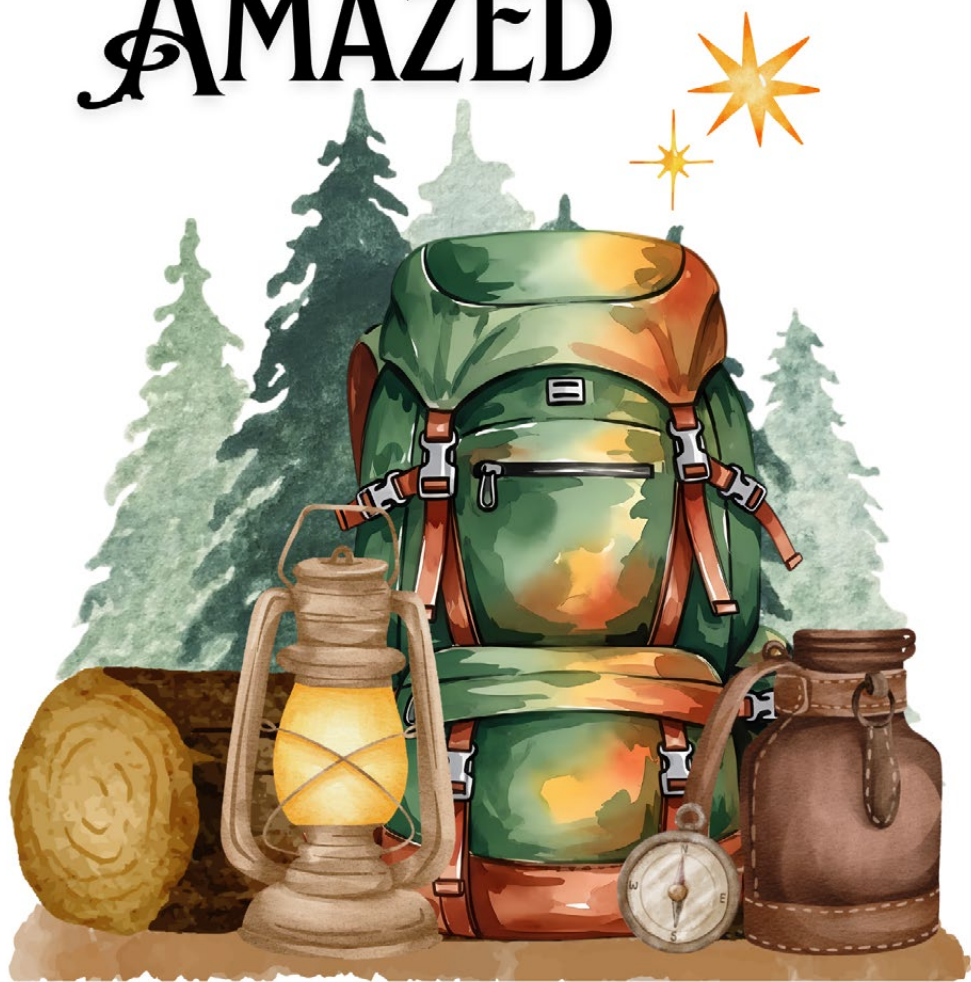
**Families have many traditions on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, and these are full days. This ritual is for marking this day as a holy day. It can be done before heading to bed on Christmas Eve or upon rising on Christmas Day.**

### Focus Scripture

Luke 2:1-20

- ☐ Light one purple candle and say, "Jesus brings hope" and/or "We are amazed by hope." Light a second and say, "Jesus brings peace" and/or "We are amazed by peace." Light the pink candle and say, "Jesus brings joy" and/or "We are amazed by joy." Light the final purple candle and say, "Jesus brings love" and/or "We are amazed by love."
- ☐ Light the center white candle! Finally! And say, "Jesus is born!"
- ☐ If you're doing the "Journey to the Manger" ritual, it's time to put Mary and Joseph by the manger and put Jesus in it. You can also gather all those shepherds and bring them to worship Jesus.
- ☐ Read the story of Jesus' birth from Luke 2:1–20. Add some creativity by using your nativity figures to act it out as you read it.
- ☐ Prayer: Jesus, source of hope, peace, joy and love, open our hearts to be amazed at your birth.
- ☐ Optional: Sing "Silent Night" or "Away in a Manger."
- ☐ Blow out the candles.

# Be AMAZED



# BE AMAZED!

## God Among Us

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Christmas Week 1, beginning December 27

**Focus Scripture:** John 1:19–34

**Additional Lectionary Scriptures:** Psalm 32:1–2; Isaiah 40:3

### WEEKLY WORSHIP RITUAL

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#### ☐ **Connect to the “big story”:**

God created a good world. We were created to live peacefully, but we often miss the mark. When that happens, we must deal with the consequences, but God sticks with us. Our whole story is a story of God sticking with us.

In the Bible, God called Abraham and Sarah’s family to be a blessing to the earth, and even when they missed the mark, God stuck with them. When the people were in slavery and cried out to God, God stuck with them by sending Moses to lead them. When the people of God had a hard time understanding how to live God’s law of love in community, God sent leaders like Joshua, judges like Deborah and prophets like Samuel to bring the people back to God.

The people wanted to be ruled by kings. Things didn’t always go well under kings, and the kingdom divided in two. During this time of civil war and unrest, prophets like Isaiah tried to point the people to God’s way. Both kingdoms were eventually invaded by other nations. Some of the people were taken away into exile, and some were left in the ruins of the land. God continued to stick with the people, often through calling prophets and other leaders to point the people back to God and to a community of shalom.

Eventually, the exiled people were allowed to return home. They rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem, so we call this the Second Temple period. They began to hope for the Messiah. And that Messiah, as we now know, came in the form of a tiny baby, born to a woman named Mary and welcomed by shepherds, angels, common people, and

elders. Before Jesus began his ministry, his cousin John prophesied to prepare the way for him.

□ **Tell the story:** John 1:19–34.

Use the *Shine On: A Story Bible*, pages 176–77 or *The Peace Table: A Storybook Bible*, pages 182–83. Note: This is a retelling of a similar story from other gospels.

□ **Talk about it:** Explore a few of these **Active Prompts**.

- John the Baptist seems to play a funny sort of game with the leaders who question him. They're almost trying to guess who he is, and he just keeps saying, "No, not quite." Play this guessing game in your household:
  - One person finds an object in the house and puts it into a box. For example, maybe they put a stapler in the box.
  - Other family members ask, "Are you" questions, such as: "Are you something we use for cooking?"
  - When they eventually guess what is in the box, the original person reveals it, and it's someone else's turn.
- John has an answer, eventually, for who he is. Come up with your own "I am" statement.
  - What kind of messenger are you for God?
- We tend to read conversations in the Gospels that involve combative Jewish leaders. But this one is more of a curious conversation. These Jewish leaders see that John is baptizing people, a messianic sign, and they're trying to figure out if he's the Messiah.
- Read John 1:29–34. Notice that this gospel account differs from the others in that other gospel accounts describe Jesus' baptism. This gospel account gives us John's testimony of what happened when he baptized Jesus. "I have seen and testified."
  - What story do you tell?
  - How have you seen and how can you testify to who Jesus is?
  - What amazes you in this story?

☐ **Candlelight Evening or DIY Light Bright.** If you're doing this weekly ritual, you might want to make it part of this time.

☐ **Journey to the Manger**

If you're moving Magi closer to the manger, do so now!

☐ **Reflective Listening Ideas** (available on YouTube)

- Godspell – ["Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord"](#)
- ["To Us a Child of Hope is Born"](#)
- ["Go Tell It on the Mountain"](#)



## DAILY WORSHIP RITUAL

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The optional rituals are described in the Introduction, page 7.

- ☐ Light one purple candle and say, "Jesus brings hope" and/or "We are amazed by hope."
- ☐ Light a second and say, "Jesus brings peace" and/or "We are amazed by peace."
- ☐ Light the pink candle and say, "Jesus brings joy" and/or "We are amazed by joy."
- ☐ Light the final purple candle and say, "Jesus brings love" and/or "We are amazed by love."
- ☐ Light the Christ candle and say, "Jesus is born!"
- ☐ Optional: Read one (or part of one) of the week's Scripture passages or read the story of Jesus' birth from Luke 2:1–20.
- ☐ Optional: "Fire and Star Chat" ritual.
- ☐ Optional: "Morning Scripture" ritual.
- ☐ Optional: Sing one of the suggested songs of the week. Or invite someone in the household to choose a song they would like to sing.
- ☐ Prayer: Jesus, source of hope, peace, joy and love, open our hearts to be amazed.
- ☐ Optional: Sing a Christmas song
- ☐ Blow out the candles.

# BE AMAZED!

## Come and See

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Epiphany Week, beginning January 4

**Focus Scripture:** John 1:35–51

**Additional Lectionary Scriptures:** Psalm 66:1–5; Matthew 2:1–12

### WEEKLY WORSHIP RITUAL

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#### ☐ **Connect to the “big story”:**

God created a good world. We were created to live peacefully, but we often miss the mark. When that happens, we must deal with the consequences, but God sticks with us. Our whole story is a story of God sticking with us.

In the Bible, God called Abraham and Sarah's family to be a blessing to the earth, and even when they missed the mark, God stuck with them. When the people were in slavery and cried out to God, God stuck with them by sending Moses to lead them. When the people of God had a hard time understanding how to live God's law of love in community, God sent leaders like Joshua, judges like Deborah and prophets like Samuel to bring the people back to God.

The people wanted to be ruled by kings. Things didn't always go well under kings, and the kingdom divided in two. During this time of civil war and unrest, prophets like Isaiah tried to point the people to God's way. Both kingdoms were eventually invaded by other nations. Some of the people were taken away into exile, and some were left in the ruins of the land. God continued to stick with the people, often through calling prophets and other leaders to point the people back to God and to a community of shalom.

Eventually, the exiled people were allowed to return home. They rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem, so we call this the Second Temple period. They began to hope for the Messiah. And that Messiah, as we now know, came in the form of a tiny baby, born to a woman named Mary and welcomed by shepherds, angels, common people, and

elders. When Jesus' life was in danger, his parents fled with him to Egypt, where they remained as refugees until it was safe for them to return and settle in Nazareth, where Jesus continued to grow up. When he was grown, Jesus began to call disciples to be with him in his ministry. When he was grown, Jesus began to call disciples to be with him in his ministry.

☐ **Tell the story:** John 1:35–51.

This story is not in *Shine On* or *The Peace Table*.

☐ **Talk about it:** Explore a few of these **Active Prompts**.

- Notice the repeated phrase in this story of invitation—"Come and see!" The answer to the question is an invitation to follow curiosity. Take some time to "come and see" together. You could go to a museum, a downtown area or a place with hiking trails. Once there, simply follow the curiosity of the people in your household. "What's down that trail?" Come and see! "I've never been in that store." Come and see! Let your curiosity take you to places you haven't been before and see what you discover. God can use our curiosity to give us into new understanding and deeper compassion, so take some time to exercise it!
- Notice that the first two disciples Jesus calls are already John's disciples. John doesn't seem to have a problem with his disciples leaving to follow Jesus. He de-centers himself and allows God's bigger picture to be at play.
  - When have you needed to set your ego aside and join the bigger story?
- Read John 1:43–46. Jesus calls Philip, and then Philip uses Jesus' words to call Nathanael! Nathanael's call was no less authentic coming from Philip than it would have been directly from Jesus. And that phrase, "Come and see," is a really low-pressure way to invite someone to follow Jesus.
  - Have you ever tried to invite someone into Jesus' story?
  - How did you do that?
- Read John 1:46. Whoa! Ouch. Nazareth was considered a sort of

backwater place, and Nathanael's condescending tone reflects that.

- When has God surprised you by defying your preconceived notions, stereotypes and prejudices?
- What amazes you in this story?

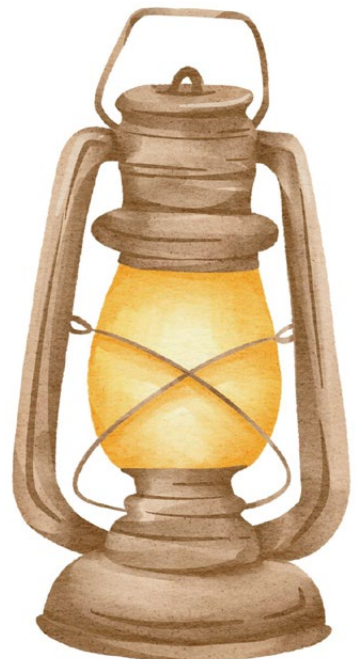
☐ **Candlelight Evening or DIY Light Bright.** If you're doing this weekly ritual, you might want to make it part of this time.

☐ **Journey to the Manger**

If you're doing this ritual, move the Magi closer to the manger.

☐ **Reflective Listening Ideas** (available on YouTube)

- "Come and See"
- "Pescador de hombres | Tú has venido a la orilla"  
(Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore)
- "Solemn Stillness, Weary Streets"



## DAILY WORSHIP RITUAL

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The optional rituals are described in the Introduction, page 7.

- ☐ Light one purple candle and say, "Jesus brings hope" and/or "We are amazed by hope."
- ☐ Light a second and say, "Jesus brings peace" and/or "We are amazed by peace."
- ☐ Light the pink candle and say, "Jesus brings joy" and/or "We are amazed by joy."
- ☐ Light the final purple candle and say, "Jesus brings love" and/or "We are amazed by love."
- ☐ Light the Christ candle and say, "Jesus is born!"
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- ☐ Optional: "Fire and Star Chat" ritual.
- ☐ Optional: "Morning Scripture" ritual.
- ☐ Optional: Sing one of the suggested songs of the week. Or invite someone in the household to choose a song they would like to sing.
- ☐ Prayer: Jesus, source of hope, peace, joy and love, open our hearts to be amazed.
- ☐ Optional: Sing "O Come, Let Us Adore Him."
- ☐ Blow out the candles.

# BE AMAZED!

## Epiphany Walk

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This Epiphany scripture does not correspond with the part of the story we celebrate at Epiphany. This ritual is related more closely to the traditional story of the magi worshiping Jesus. It is adapted from an event at College Mennonite Church in January 2021, led by Daniel Yoder and Talashia Keim Yoder.

### **Start:**

- One household member: put a star over a door of your house. If you have children, try to not let them see you do it!
- Gather the supplies: A “travel pack” with a thermos of hot drink and some cups, plus some dried fruit and nuts.
- Decide who will be the camel (who carries the pack). You can take turns with this job!
- Step outside to begin your journey.
- Journey Prompt: The magi were seekers of wisdom, and they saw something in nature – a star – that prompted their curiosity and led them to Jesus. What in creation makes you curious and leads you to Jesus? Spot something and “travel” to it.
- As you travel: Sing a traveling song together.
  - [Siyahumba](#) - PPC Virtual Choir
  - “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star”

### **Journey Stop 1:**

- Eat your snack.
- Read the story (Matthew 2:1-12) from your Bible or story Bible.
- Spot the next thing that makes you curious and “travel” to it.

- As you travel, talk about what your household's (or household of origin's) travel traditions are/were. Or share wacky travel stories.

## **Journey Stop 2:**

- Play Caravan Telephone. Stand in a line and see how a phrase changes when it's whispered to each person from the front of the caravan to the back. Maybe use a phrase that goes with the story, like "camel spit smells like frankincense."
- Spot the star over the door and travel to it.
- As you travel: Talk about the question:
  - Why do people caravan/travel/go on journeys in other Bible stories and in today's world?

## **Destination:**

- Go in the door and gather around a nativity set (or your household manger).
- Sing "Away in a Manger" or "Silent Night." This can be the end.
- If you want more wrap-up, consider these things:
  - How do you feel now at the end of our little journey? (hot/cold, tired, invigorated).
- Imagine how the magi journeyed for many, many days—maybe even a year. They weren't fleeing anything or getting money at the end. They came purely to worship Jesus. Jesus is so very, very special that these seekers-of-wisdom from a foreign land undertook a long and dangerous journey. They wanted to be part of this thing God was doing, part of the way God was changing the world.