



ADVENT PRAYER CALENDAR
2011



ASCENSION
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Compiled by Brian Friesen.

Advent is traditionally a season of preparation and anticipation. The word “advent” (from the Latin, *adventus*) means “coming.” The season signifies the coming of our Lord, Savior, and friend, Jesus Christ. The coming of life abundant. The coming of the Way, the Truth, the Life. The coming of the Greatest Surprise in the humblest of packages. The God of surprises had it planned out all along.

Each day of this Advent season you are invited to read—by yourself, or with your family—from the short meditations, passages of scripture, poems, or prayer suggestions in this booklet. They are only suggestions. Following all the suggestions in this booklet will not make you a better person. It may bring you a headache, in fact. But also know that it will bring you together in spirit before the throne of grace with other brothers and sisters at Ascension Presbyterian who are praying alongside you with these suggested prayers.

Rather than just another thing to fit into a busy season, think of the daily habit of prayer as a way to breathe deeply at the beginning or the end of the day. A way to bring deeper meaning to the other stuff in your schedule. A way to draw near to God, to invite Him to fill your thoughts and actions with His peace, and to do so in unity with other families at Ascension who are probably going through some of the same joys and struggles you are.

Pray alone. Pray at the dinner table. Pray on the phone with each other. Confess to one another. Bear with one another. Offer grace to one another. Follow the way of love this Advent season as we prepare for the coming of the Christ child, the coming of the Greatest Surprise in history: Immanuel, God with us.

November 27 - Sunday
First Sunday of Advent

Romans 8:18-25

Advent is a season of abundance. This is the season where enough is not good enough. And everything must serve to further dazzle us. It only makes sense to border our homes with charged cords and bright bursts of color. We make lists. Our lives stick a little closer to the calendar. In the rush, we forget things, or feel the urgency not to.

We feel the pull toward familiar things. Or familiar things done in fresh, new ways. The best moments are often surprises. We make room for them. We dance in and out of spotlights with friends and family. Our generous gestures are sometimes robbed by obligation. Other times, they hit the mark, and are received as the genuine expressions of love and longing that they are.

Even in the presence of such abundance, we can't seem to satisfy our deeper longings. Maybe because we anticipate the fullness of this season, we feel especially empty, lonely, and disconnected when our inner lives do not meet up with the outward flourishes all around us. Or even if there is a congruence between what we are doing and what we are feeling, we may find ourselves exhausted rather than refreshed and renewed.

Somehow, perhaps we mistake hope for having. Or we expect hope to exist only as a guarantee of things to come. It is possible, after all to misplace our hope in tangible things, to desire the building-up of our own kingdoms, weak as they are, rather than to hope in the Kingdom of God—the kingdom that is within you—the Kingdom that is both now, and later.

There is much talk about hope around Advent. We must clarify what we actually hope for. This week, spend a little time with the prayers and passages from the Old Testament to help build a clearer picture of who it is that we are putting our hope in.

November 28 - Monday

Take some time in prayer today to dwell on the names attributed to Jesus in the Old and New Testaments. Read them out loud and confess how Jesus is (or is not) these things to you:

Wonderful Counselor
Prince of Peace
Ruler
Redeemer
Mighty God
Fountain
True Vine
Morning Star
Lord
King of the Jews
Servant
Shepherd
Messiah
Adonai
King of Kings
Lord of Lords
Son of Man
Son of God
Alpha and Omega
Lamb of God
Cornerstone and Stumbling Block
Stone the Builders Rejected
Great High Priest in the Order of Melchizedek
Teacher
Love
The Word
The Way, the Truth, and the Life
Immanuel - God with us
Jesus

November 29 - Tuesday

Proverbs 30:4

Take time to observe the elements around you and their limitations. Wind, water, the walls of your home, the landscape around you, roads, the sun, your own skin. Does God truly fill everything in every way? Praise God for the evidence of his power and grace and restraint that you see in the world around you.

November 30 - Wednesday

Isaiah 11:1-5; 61:1

How does the counsel and power and good news of the Son affect you today as you go about your business? Pray for the counsel and power and freedom that Isaiah speaks of for yourself and those around you.

December 1 - Thursday

Isaiah 9:5-7

Pray for peace in your family, your friends, your city and your nation. Pray that the Lord will open your eyes to His peace that fills and governs the lives of those who are called according to His purposes.

December 2 - Friday

Isaiah 53

Read the entire 53rd chapter of Isaiah. Consider the ways that your feet have wandered or been led astray this week (v.6). For which of your actions and attitudes has Jesus interceded to God the Father on your behalf (v. 19)? Confess your heart to God and thank him for His forgiveness.

December 3 - Saturday

Isaiah 11:1-5

This striking figure spoken of in the Old Testament by poets and prophets is mysterious enough that, rather than waiting or continuing to serve the Lord in faith, it was easy for the Jewish people to project upon Him whatever they felt they were lacking.

And it is the same for us today. We have some of the words that Jesus spoke, and many descriptions from witnesses and friends of Jesus. And yet, Jesus has become many figures for many people.

And what about you? What assumptions do you have about this Jesus that you are preparing yourself to meet this Advent season? If we received only strict disapproval from our parents, we may see in Jesus a loving, accepting friend who approves of anything we do or feel or say. If we feel we were raised in a sheltered environment, smothered with loving care and fawned over, perhaps Jesus might appear to offer tough love and discipline, requiring action and many seasons of fruitfulness for his kingdom.

As you discover your own assumptions about Jesus this Advent season, read through Psalm 103 to test those assumptions against what the Psalmist says about God's motivations and intentions.

December 4 - Sunday
Second Sunday of Advent

“Prayer is a path where there is none.”

— Noah benShea

This week, pay attention to the kinds of situations where you become stuck:

- Conversations with non-Christians where you can't think of anything helpful to offer.
- When you reach a bitter, familiar impasse with your spouse.
- Someone you love is in danger and you want to reach out to them, help them, DO something for them.
- Habits in your daily life that you would like to change, but haven't been able to.

It is amazing how often we can catch ourselves having not prayed for some of the most important, difficult struggles we are facing. When you get stuck this week, or settle for merely pushing through something that you feel is destined to fail, pray.

Prayer is a path where there is none.

December 5 - Monday

Emily Dickinson
Poem #377¹

At least - to pray - is left - is left
Oh Jesus - in the Air -
I know not which thy chamber is -
I'm knocking - everywhere -

Thou settest Earthquake in the South -
And Maelstrom, in the Sea -
Say, Jesus Christ of Nazareth -
Hast thou no arm for Me?

In this poem by Emily Dickinson, the first line is halting, and weary. The speaker calls out to Jesus by name, twice. And in the last few lines, you can't help but hear the allusion to the apostle Peter, crying out as he sinks into the stormy sea. The poem ends before satisfaction is given, but the poem is not without comfort and faith. Read the poem several times as a prayer, out loud if possible. What kind of path forward does this prayer create for you today?

December 6 - Tuesday

Isaiah 65:24

Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.

Not only is God with you on your path today, he has gone ahead of you. He is at work in the larger landscape, but he also listens while you are speaking. Hold these promises in your mind today as you bring your thoughts and praises and requests to him.

¹ This poem, and some thoughts on it, from Susan VanZanten's, "How to Read a Poem," in Seattle Pacific's *Response Magazine*, online at <http://www.spu.edu/depts/uc/response/new/2011-autumn/features/reading-poems.asp>, ©2011.

December 7 - Wednesday

Read the following prayer from *The Valley of the Vision* once in the morning and once in the evening.

Desires

O Thou that hearest prayer,
Teach me to pray.
I confess that in religious exercises
the language of my lips and the feelings
of my heart have not always agreed,
that I have frequently taken carelessly upon
my tongue a name never pronounced above
without reverence and humility,
that I have often desired things which would
have injured me,
that I have depreciated some of my chief mercies,
that I have erred both on the side of my hopes
and also of my fears,
that I am unfit to choose for myself,
for it is not in me to direct my steps.
Let thy Spirit help my infirmities,
for I know not what to pray for as I ought.
Let him produce in me wise desires by which
I may ask right things,
then I shall know thou hearest me.
May I never be importunate for temporal blessings,
but always refer them to thy fatherly goodness,
for thou knowest what I need before I ask;
May I never think I prosper unless my soul prospers,
or that I am rich unless rich toward thee,
or that I am wise unless wise unto salvation.
May I seek first thy kingdom and its righteousness.
May I value things in relation to eternity,
May my spiritual welfare be my chief solicitude.
May I be poor, afflicted, despised and have thy blessing,
rather than be successful in enterprise,
or have more than my heart can wish,
or be admired by my fellow-men,
if thereby these things make me forget thee.
May I regard the world as dreams, lies, vanities, vexation of spirit,
and desire to depart from it.
And may I seek my happiness in thy favour, image, presence, service.

December 8 - Thursday

Read or sing the hymn below as a prayer to Jesus:

Fairest Lord Jesus

Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of all nature,
O Thou of God and man the Son,
Thee will I cherish, Thee will I honor,
Thou, my soul's glory, joy and crown.

Fair are the meadows, fairer still the woodlands,
Robed in the blooming garb of spring;
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer,
Who makes the woeful heart to sing.

Fair is the sunshine, fairer still the moonlight,
And all the twinkling starry host;
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer
Than all the angels heaven can boast.

All fairest beauty, heavenly and earthly,
Wondrously, Jesus, is found in Thee;
None can be nearer, fairer or dearer,
Than Thou, my Savior, art to me.

Beautiful Savior! Lord of all the nations!
Son of God and Son of Man!
Glory and honor, praise, adoration,
Now and forever more be Thine.

December 9 - Friday

In a spirit of gratitude, read the following poem by William Stafford and return to that final question of the poem throughout the day.

You Reading This, Be Ready

— William Stafford

Starting here, what do you want to remember?
How sunlight creeps along a shining floor?
What scent of old wood hovers, what softened
sound from outside fills the air?

Will you ever bring a better gift for the world
than the breathing respect that you carry
wherever you go right now? Are you waiting
for time to show you some better thoughts?

When you turn around, starting here, lift this
new glimpse that you found; carry into evening
all that you want from this day. This interval you spent
reading or hearing this, keep it for life -

What can anyone give you greater than now,
starting here, right in this room, when you turn around?

December 10 - Saturday

In preparation for Sunday worship, go through the Ascension phone directory and pray for everyone by name. If you are compelled to pray in more detail for someone, go for it, but try to pray short prayers for every member and anyone new to Ascension that comes to mind.

December 11 - Sunday
Third Sunday of Advent

Sometimes with prayer, as with many things, less is more. Our congregation may not habitually work itself up to loud, passionate, emotional prayers, but we do esteem our God greatly, and our language tends to rise to a level of discourse that approaches a recipient much loftier than ourselves. It is a worthy habit, forming our thought-prayers by composing, organizing, and articulating thoughts and confessions, but perhaps not at all times or always in the same way.

Again: sometimes less is more.

This week, make an effort to present your prayers before the throne of God as if they are unwrapped parcels. Spend less effort constructing your requests and praises, complete with underlining reasoning and supporting scripture passages, as if to inform God, or remind Him, or impress Him. Limit yourself to one or two words. Before the throne of God, list the names of the people on your heart and mind.

“Lord, Eric... Jerilee... Ransom... Justus... Evangeline, Lord... Please, Lord: my parents...”

Your Heavenly Father knows what Eric needs, and Jerilee, and their kids, and your parents. If prayer has become a burden to you, perhaps you have needlessly burdened yourself with a level of clarity or articulation or wisdom that the Lord has not required of you. Ask the Lord for help, and take some time this week to rest in prayer. Rest in his presence. You have gained access into this grace in which you now stand. Let prayer be more about His gracious presence and less about the things you say or how you say them.

December 12 - Monday

1 Timothy 2:1

Today, try praying for the people in your life that you haven't seen or thought of in a while. Perhaps you are the only one likely to speak to God on their behalf:

- High School friends (middle school, grade school friends?)
- Family members you are not speaking to
- Broken relationships (ex-friends, romantic involvements, ex-spouses)
- Former co-workers
- Former bosses
- College friends and contacts
- Colleagues
- Former pastors
- Christian friends struggling with faith
- People you are still unable to forgive

December 13 - Tuesday

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Write down a list of the things that occupy your mind on a regular basis. Not the things that you feel *should* occupy your mind, but the things that *do*. The half-thoughts, worries, longings, things half done, things not started, bad habits, online games, Facebook, sins, lottery numbers, nervous ticks. Pray through the list, thanking God for something related to those items.

Wait... thank God for *sins*? Thank Him for how He has used your worst efforts to draw you to Himself. Getting answers or feeling peace about every little thing in your life isn't the point. Spending time in His presence where *He* can cultivate a grateful heart *is*.

December 14 - Wednesday

1 Peter 4:7

Try this:

Set a timer in the morning or in the evening for 10 or 20 minutes in order to focus and pray through a list of family and friends. Keep a tally of how many times you are distracted. Thank the Lord for helping you to focus each time you catch yourself getting distracted.

Even if you are distracted every few seconds, make a mark on a piece of paper and thank the Lord for getting your attention and then *keep going* with your list. Pray for help if the task is overwhelmingly discouraging, and then *keep going* again, trusting that the Lord is helping you.

When the set amount of time has passed, count the number of "victories" you have tallied. Thank the Lord for His help bringing your focus back to Him and for cultivating His perseverance and resilience in you.

December 15 - Thursday

1 Peter 3:12

*For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous
and his ears are attentive to their prayer.*

Have there been times in your life when prayer seemed to fail to give you what you felt you desperately needed? Times where the work of prayer seemed only to weigh you down? Maybe you cannot see or hear evidence that the Lord is with you, but you can know, in faith, that the Lord's eyes are upon you and that His ears are attentive to you. Perhaps the Lord is calling you to speak further to Him, to go deeper, to confess more, to discover more about how you relate to Him and to others. Ask Him to shine His light into your heart—into dark corners of it that are a mystery even to you...

Consider speaking to your pastor, an older friend, or someone you trust about this.

December 16 - Friday

Colossians 3:15-17

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

How many times were we admonished in that passage in Colossians to *give thanks*? Sounds like maybe that would be a good idea. And it bears repeating. Give thanks. Don't worry about feeling thankful. Do it because you are admonished to in the word of God. Leave the business of having a thankful heart to the one who can cultivate it.

Make a list today of the things you've never thought of being thankful for: struggles, annoying people, things you use so often, that you don't even think about them any more. Offer up thanks to God, to other people, for each of the things on your list.

Read about an easily overlooked woman in Luke that seemed to have much thankfulness overflowing in her heart to God (Luke 2:36-38).

December 17 - Saturday

Romans 7:21-25

When I want to do good, evil is right there with me...

What evil or sin distracts you from the good you want to do? Are there fears, lusts, cravings that steal the energy that would have otherwise been spent doing good?

Read all of Romans 8.

There is much comfort and victory for us in this great 8th chapter of Romans, but make a plan to speak to someone you know and trust (maybe someone you haven't spoken to in a long time) about the sin that so easily entangles you. Confess, not just to God, but to one of your brothers and sisters. There is no fear in love, perfect love casts out all fear. Bear one another's burdens and in doing so you will fulfill the law of God.

December 18 - Sunday
Fourth Sunday of Advent

Today, find a place where you can be alone for a time with no distractions and rest in the presence of God. Bring a bible, or a notebook for making any lists that come to mind. If there is anything keeping you from resting in God's presence, list it. But try to quiet your mind.

Planning for more than a few minutes of prayer can be a daunting task. We can aim for anything and usually miss by a long shot and feel we have failed. To pray is to engage in relationship, and relationships do not usually blossom when we treat them as a series of transactions where we assert our rights to this or that result when we give this or that effort. Perhaps you've tried many approaches in the past and ended up with the same disappointing experiences. Perhaps you've given up, or changed your philosophy of prayer (or your expectations about your own *abilities* in prayer) to ease the tension you feel between what you ought to accomplish and what you are likely to accomplish.

In addition to performance anxiety with regard to prayer, we are also engaging in a relationship in which it is difficult to hide. We would like to believe that we are rich in our understanding of God and how he relates to us. We would like to believe that we are rich in spirit and know what to pray and when and how. After all, we've been praying for how many years now? And we hope to appear to one another as knowledgeable, rich, and blessed. Maybe we even settle for the appearance of love, humility, and thoughtfulness in our lives rather than admitting to our weakness, rather than granting the Lord enough access to nurture in us a loving, humble heart, or a thoughtful mind.

In long stretches of prayer, by ourselves, we can only deceive ourselves for so long. Most of us are not rich in spirit. We are the poor in spirit. Which is good, because blessed are the poor in spirit.

The poor in spirit may not have a whole lot to say in prayer, and they may pause a lot, and rethink things as they go. So don't try to be heroic. You don't need to slay all the dragons in the entire history of your life. It may be best to have no agenda at all, but to be still, and quiet. As Dallas Willard has said about the spiritual disciplines of Solitude and Silence: you are not trying to get God to do something. It may be important to do nothing, especially if you live under the banner of busy-ness with the underlying assumption that "if I am busy, then I am important."

Those who are busy may be more prone to self-deception. It is easy to use busy-ness to mask our weakness. God knows our weakness, and he seems to delight when we accept our weakness with humility (Romans 8:26-27).

So hurry up and sit still and pray, using whole sentences if you must, because "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

December 19 - Monday

Luke Chapter 1

Zechariah questioned the angel that came to announce that Zechariah and his elderly wife would soon have a son (John the Baptist). The result of this doubt was that Zechariah would spend the entirety of his wife's pregnancy mute, unable to communicate with his voice.

I use the word "result" instead of "punishment," because I'm not convinced that nearly a year of silence was intended as God's wrathful reaction to one man's doubt. It could also have been a way of cleansing Zechariah's tongue, inducing a fast from speaking too hastily, a time of intensifying his sense of hearing, giving him ears to hear, tuning his heart and mind to hear with deeper faith.

Whatever God's intentions were for this time of silence, it is clear from Luke chapter 1 that much fruit was cultivated because of it. Fruit in Zechariah, in Elizabeth, and in the community around them (Luke 1:64-66).

Pay special attention today for some of your own personal doubts about the promises given you in the Word of God. In response, consider reading Zechariah's Song as a prayer to the Lord (Luke 1:67-79) asking Him to build on the faith that He has given to you.

December 20 - Tuesday

Luke 2:1-7

For Mary, the journey to Bethlehem must have been a time of intense vulnerability and discomfort, a time that would have stretched her faith. A pilgrimage during the final week of pregnancy would have surely sharpened she and Joseph's focus onto their immediate pragmatic concerns. A journey toward seething crowds, endless line-ups, and foul smells would have magnified Mary's physical discomfort and tested her patience and endurance. Joseph would have felt deeply his responsibility to secure any small comforts he could for his wife. And surely, his thwarted attempts would have weighed upon him as failures.

They may have felt abandoned by God, and forgotten. And yet, God was clearly with them: His will had already been composed, as a great symphony, before the foundation of the world. And *how* God's son entered the world was as essential a part of this grand symphony as the fact of His birth.

Perhaps Mary and Joseph had the opportunity to laugh at the absurdity of their situation. Likely, they prayed, and likely, they knew something of the Lord's peace.

Whether or not they did, God was with them. *Is it possible for you to know peace when you are in physical and emotional discomfort?* Not the peace and security offered by the systems of this world, but peace that God is with you, even when bodily pain and sickness, and frustrations, and bitter relationships—maybe even abusive relationships—seem to get worse and worse?

Is the Prince of Peace ruling all the corners of your heart and mind, or do the princes of fear, lust, rage, or depression still dominate in certain rooms within you?

Confess your desire for Jesus to shine His light in you and welcome His cleansing and grace. If you need help, reach out for it. Christianity is not just a you-and-God thing. Seek His peace wherever you can find it when you are in the midst of pain, discomfort, and frustration.

December 21 Wednesday

Luke 2:8-21

When God moves and works in His creation, He sometimes offers proof in the form of witnesses. God sends out His messengers who testify to the truth of what they have seen and heard, and what their hands have touched. We can't get far without faith, but God has also not left us without reasonable evidence in the words of His witnesses. Who will believe their message?

The witnesses to Christ's birth are purposefully and thoughtfully chosen. It was an earthy bunch of people that He chose to witness the birth of His Son and to get a glimpse of the ongoing cosmic celebration.

Read and sing the following carol knowing that you join in a heavenly celebration as well as an earthly one as you worship the Newborn King this season:

Angels from the Realms of Glory

Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story
Now proclaim Messiah's birth.

Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

Though an Infant now we view Him,
He shall fill His Father's throne,
Gather all the nations to Him;
Every knee shall then bow down:

All creation, join in praising
God, the Father, Spirit, Son,
Evermore your voices raising
To th'eternal Three in One.

Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

December 22 - Thursday

Today, recite or sing the carol below. We share with the prophets and the patriarchs a similar longing for the coming of the Messiah. Psalm 6:3-4: "My soul is in deep anguish. How long, LORD, how long? Turn, LORD, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love." For Christians, the coming of the Messiah is both a memory and a promise. Some day, He will return, and take us with Him to be where He is. We hold in our hearts this season, joy mixed with longing....

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.

O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight!

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.

O come, O come, Thou Lord of Might,
Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud, and majesty, and awe.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

December 23 - Friday

Today, take some time to pray for the children at Ascension. If you don't have all their names memorized yet, go through the Ascension phone directory and pray for them by name. Pray for patience and wisdom for their parents. Pray that the Lord would teach these children about Himself, that they would draw near to Him, and that any pain or hardship they face would strengthen them and lead them into the arms of the Savior.

Pray that the Lord would place his blessings in their hearts and memories this Christmas season. "Lord, give these children love and humility and resilience as they face the many joys and disappointments that come with holiday celebrations. Give discernment to everyone who speaks into the lives of these children, and help adults to have ears to listen to them."

December 24 - Saturday Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve can sometimes be even more full and rich than Christmas Day. In some ways this whole day, and especially the evening, is when we can be the most vulnerable to the music, and the lights, and the smells, and the tastes of the season.

The preparations for Christmas Day are almost at an end. Lots of hard work may still be ahead of us, but we might feel permission to take it easy even as we finish the efforts we intend for others. Take a few moments today to rest in the midst of everything else you are doing. Get away from the computer. Rest and enjoy the depth of peace in the quiet anticipation of the birth of our Lord Jesus.

Take a moment to read the lines below that are taken from various Christmas carols. May they rise from your heart and mind today as a prayer of praise, longing, and thanksgiving for all that the savior is for you and His people.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay
close by me forever, and love me, I pray.

This Child, now weak in infancy,
Our confidence and joy shall be,
The power of Satan breaking,
Our peace eternal making.

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail th'incarnate Deity

Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.

In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

Look now! for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing!

Through the way where hope is guiding,
Hark, what peaceful music rings;
Where the flock, in Thee confiding,
Drink of joy from deathless springs.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love

And, when earthly things are past,
Bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide,
Where no clouds Thy glory hide.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Lord Most High!

We to the Christ Child bring our hearts' oblations.
O come, let us adore Him

Oh, come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!

December 25 - Sunday
Christmas Day

Merry Christmas!

May Prince of Peace rule in your hearts today and every day!

The following prayer is taken from the 1906 Book of Common Worship, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. General Assembly; Van Dyke, Henry, 1852-1933:

Christmas Day:

Father in heaven, whose mercy we praise in the yearly remembrance of the birth of Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; Grant that as we welcome our Redeemer, His presence may shed abroad, in our hearts and in our homes, the light of heavenly peace and joy. Make known unto all men, by Thy Word and Spirit, the Gospel of His blessed incarnation, whereby Thou hast clearly revealed Thy love for the world. And help us so to celebrate this day, in humility and gratitude, in unselfish love and cheerful service, that our keeping of Christmas may be a blessing to our souls, a memorial of Christ, a benefit to our fellow men, and a thanksgiving unto Thee for Thine unspeakable gift of the Saviour. Amen.

Almighty God, who by the birth of Thy Holy One into the world didst give Thy true light to dawn upon our darkness; Grant that as Thou hast given us to believe in the mystery of His incarnation, and hast made us partakers of the divine nature, so in the world to come we may ever abide with Him, in the glory of His kingdom; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God, who hast given us Thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon Him, and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin; Grant that we, being regenerate, and made Thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by Thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Conclusion

In the days after the Christmas Holiday, exhaustion can manifest itself in lots of different ways in your level of patience, your capacity to take in new information and new requests, your grace (or lack thereof) with family, coworkers, children.

Make a plan to call a friend to touch base and pray together for one another. Confess to one another sins or folly, scorning any shame you may have.

The joy of the Lord is your strength. Be open to laughing at yourself, your clumsiness, your childlike responses and desires. Not with a mocking spirit. Feel God's smile over you and his gracious pleasure in you as you look all around for Him, longing to please Him, make faltering steps, and then call for Him again. Laugh with Him at the messes you tend to make, and praise Him for his gracious love.

May the God of all comfort carry you through the end of this season, and may no one be able to steal the Joy of the Lord that is your strength.

A Christmas Carol
by G. K. Chesterton

The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,
His hair was like a light.
(O weary, weary were the world,
But here is all aright.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast,
His hair was like a star.
(O stern and cunning are the kings,
But here the true hearts are.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,
His hair was like a fire.
(O weary, weary is the world,
But here the world's desire.)

The Christ-child stood on Mary's knee,
His hair was like a crown,
And all the flowers looked up at Him,
And all the stars looked down.