



United
Lutheran
Seminary

2023
Advent Star
Devotional

Season of Advent 2023



Creator of the stars of night, your people's everlasting light,
O Christ, redeemer of us all, we pray you hear us when we call.

-9th Century Plainsong

Greetings from United Lutheran Seminary,

We are introducing our newly designed Advent Star Devotional that contains a page for each day of this year's season of Advent. Each devotion continues to contain a scripture reading and prayer shared by our wide-ranging ULS community. We invite you to use this as a liturgy at home.

While the Advent Star comes to you free of charge, please consider making a gift to the seminary to help us continue to provide high exemplary theological education. This gift may provide you with an opportunity to honor or memorialize a loved one. If you would like to make a gift, you can do so using the enclosed gift card or contribute at uls.edu/give. May God bless and keep you during this holy season.

In Advent Hope and Gratitude,

The Rev. Dr. R. Guy Erwin

ULS President, Ministerium of Pennsylvania Chair and
Professor of Reformation Studies

Sunday

DECEMBER 3 (ADVENT I)

ISAIAH 64:1-9

Heavenly Creator, Divine Parent to us all, you delight in your creation. No ear has heard, and no eye has seen any splendor but that which is you. But your children respond with sinful arrogance towards you and towards one another. You grow angry and mountains quake and nations tremble, and you warn us: “Don’t make me come down there!” but you do and meet us with grace, forgiving our iniquity. Thank you, Holy God, for your steadfast love. Amen.

Monday

DECEMBER 4

MICAH 4:1-5

May the mountain of the Lord's temple be established as the highest of the mountains, exalted above the hills, and peoples stream to it. Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. "Teach us in your ways, so that we may walk in on your paths. Allow us to walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever." We pray for peace. Allow disputes to be settled for nations far and wide, so they beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. We pray for a time when nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Amen.

★ The Rev. David C. Shank, CFRE, ELCA Foundation, Alum ('07G)

2023 **Advent Star** Devotional

Tuesday

DECEMBER 5

PSALM 79

O Lord our God, when we look around the nations of our world, we see devastation, destruction, and despair that are the everyday reality of people who dwell there; Even as we are baffled and forlorn, wringing our hands in anguish asking, “How long, O Lord, how long?”

Ignite in us the desire to bring about change – change in small yet telling ways in the places where we live, study, work, and worship. Help us to testify to your mercy and compassion, that brings about healing, reconciliation, and human flourishing. Help us to understand and participate in your calling to be mediators of peace. Amen.

★ **The Rev. Dr. J. Jayakiran Sebastian, the H. George Anderson Chair and Professor of Mission and Cultures, Dean of the Seminary, and Vice President of Student Services**

2023 **Advent Star** Devotional

Wednesday

DECEMBER 6

LUKE 21:34-38

You, O God, promise to return to take us to yourself. As we watch and wait for that day, our hearts are weighed down by many things. Keep us turned toward you alone. Make us eager to listen to your teachings every morning and to rest in your care every evening. Until that great day comes, we trust in your love and hope in your promise. Amen.

★ Bishop Tracie L. Bartholomew, New Jersey Synod, ELCA

2023 **Advent Star** Devotional

Thursday

DECEMBER 7

HOSEA 6:1-6

God of healing and hope, Thank you for coming after us when we try to go it alone. Too many things lure us away from your love. Help us to know you and your amazing grace. Use us to share your love in simple and surprising ways. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

★ The Rev. Deborah K. Scheffey, Alum ('86P)

2023 **Advent Star** Devotional

Friday

DECEMBER 8

JEREMIAH 1:4-10

Gracious Creator, as You knew Jeremiah before his conception, we pray for Your divine purpose to be unveiled in our lives. Just as You appointed him a prophet, guide us to recognize and fulfill our unique calling. Strengthen us against fear, for You are with us. Touch our lips with Your words, that we may speak truth boldly. Mold us like the almond branch, awake to Your signs. Let Your promises be our armor, shielding us from doubt. May we not turn away from Your path, but walk with unwavering faith. Empower us to uproot, build, and plant as You direct. In Jesus' name, Amen.

★ **The Rev. Dr. Martin Otto-Zimmann, ULS Senior Director of Kindling Faith, Alum ('98G)**

2023 **Advent Star** Devotional

Saturday

DECEMBER 9

PSALM 85:1-2, 8-13

God of all, even in moments of anger and loneliness, we are reminded of your promises and presence with us. We will listen for you, even in times of trial. We know that you, O Lord, provide what is good and your love and favor is shown to us through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. May the glory of God dwell among us in this season of advent and beyond. Amen.

★ Sarah Parson, ULS Student Council Philadelphia Campus Chair, MA '24

2023 **Advent Star** Devotional

Sunday

DECEMBER 10 (ADVENT II)

ISAIAH 40:1-11

Gracious and Loving God, comfort us.

Comfort us in times of this season's stresses and worries.

Gather us in Your arms and carry us to Your heart.

Clear the path before us as we seek to grow and follow you more closely.

Make the rough places smooth.

Let us and all the world see Your glory.

Lift up our voices to declare Your praises.

Alleluia; Amen.

★ **The Rev. Kimberly J. Stowell, Alum ('86P)**

Monday

DECEMBER 11

ACTS 2:37-42

God of love I get so distracted by the trappings of daily life that I forget to turn to you. I ask for forgiveness in my failing to listen to you, to follow your ways, to live as Jesus taught us. Help me to devote myself to sharing your love through Jesus with all those I meet, inviting instead of dividing, breaking bread together instead of caring just about my needs, serving others so we can all live in a world where each of us is seen just as you see us – as your beloved children. Open my mind to hear your will and live your love daily. Amen.

★ Deacon Chelle Huth, ULS Director of Field Formation, Certificate Studies and Adjunct Faculty in Christian Education, Alum ('04G)

2023 **Advent Star** Devotional

Tuesday

DECEMBER 12

PSALM 27

Gracious God, you are our ever-present source of strength, courage, and protection. When we are weighed down by the trouble and chaos that surround us, lift us up and show us your face. Shelter us from the storms of this life. Use this Advent season to remind us that you cast out fear and darkness. Give us trust and confidence to proclaim your light and salvation. Amen.

★ **Ron Fairchild, ULS Board of Trustees**

2023 **Advent Star** Devotional

Wednesday

DECEMBER 13

LUKE 1:5-17

God who dispels our fear, thank you for marvelously working through Zechariah and Elizabeth. You gave them a son John, the forerunner of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet your joyous announcement of their coming child, proclaimed by the angel, brought terror to Zechariah. Later, Mary also responded in fear to the angel's news of her conceiving the Savior of the world. Again and again you have needed to tell your people, "Do not be afraid." Forgive us when we respond in fear to your working in us. Replace this fear with the joy and gladness you alone bring. Amen.

★ The Rev. Laura Csellak, Alum ('86P)

2023 **Advent Star** Devotional

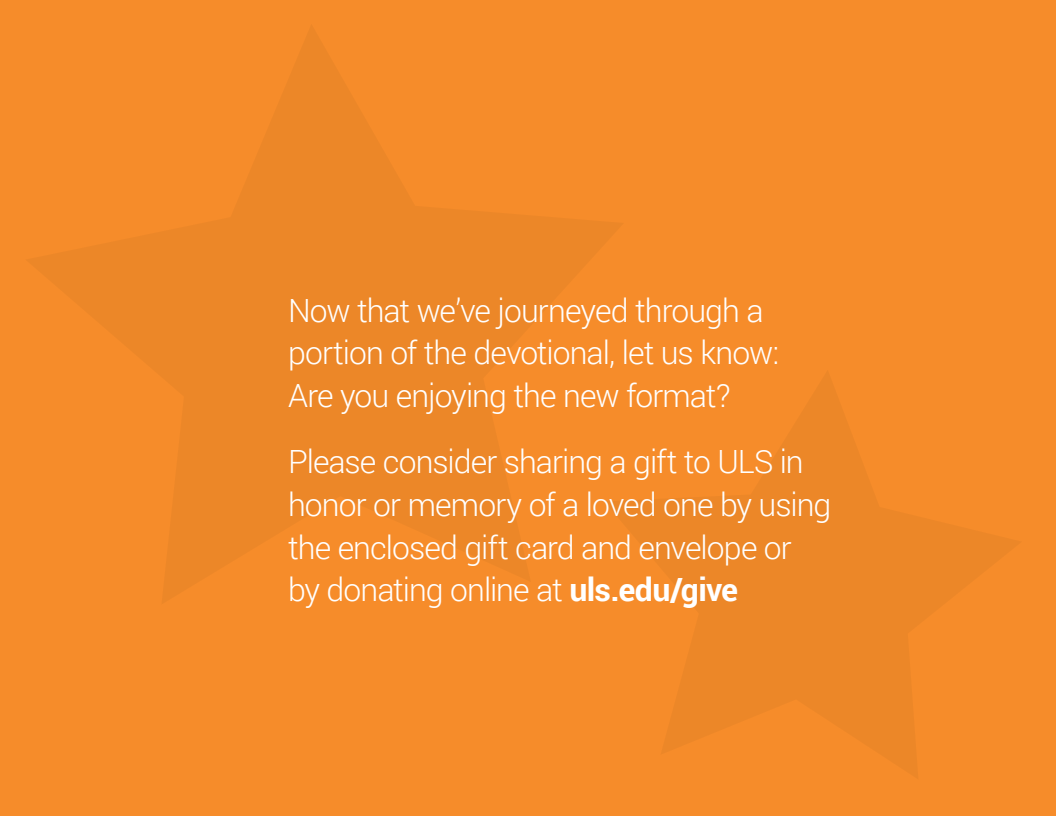
Thursday

DECEMBER 14

PSALM 126

Merciful God, as the Children of Israel cried out to you in their distress, we cry to you for the many in our communities who struggle to meet the demands of daily life. We dream of the day when their weeping turns to shouts of joy. Use our hands and feet to provide necessary assistance to those in need and serve the course of justice. In your name we pray, Amen.

★ Deacon Susan L. Gerrard, TULSAA Board, Alum ('01G)



Now that we've journeyed through a portion of the devotional, let us know: Are you enjoying the new format?

Please consider sharing a gift to ULS in honor or memory of a loved one by using the enclosed gift card and envelope or by donating online at **uls.edu/give**

Friday

DECEMBER 15

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-16

Gracious God, So many things vie for our attention as we strive for success and perfection in this life. Oft times we forget the real reason for the season, Jesus Christ, the babe who lived to give his very life for us. Remind us that we will always be a work in progress and that you, our Creator, desire our very best and yet, we will never be all that we can be during our earthly walk. Remind us that the ultimate prize is eternal life in Christ. Help me to be all that Christ Jesus saved me for and wants me to be. Amen.

★ The Rev. Peg Marose, Alum ('21ULS)

Saturday

DECEMBER 16

HABAKKUK 3:13-19

O God, so much of the time we can only see our world filled with turmoil. Our waking hours are spent in fear, doubt, and anxiety. We hear and read of violence, racial turmoil, hatred, and wars. We realize that the gap between rich and poor continues to widen. We acknowledge that the hungry and the homeless continue to be on our streets. Amid all these issues and concerns, let us remember during this season, your son Jesus. He came to help us live in hope and confidence that you continue to be with us. Amen.

★ The Rev. Dr. Nelson T. Strobert, Emeriti Faculty, Alum ('73G)

2023 **Advent Star** Devotional

Sunday

DECEMBER 17 (ADVENT III)

JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

Holy One who is among us – As John was sent to testify to Your way, teach us in humility to be a reflection of You in the many spaces and places in which we find ourselves in Your world. Grant us the courage to bear witness to Your redemption and liberation this day and all of our days to come. May we also be attentive to Your Spirit in our encounters with others as we strive to continually point to You. In your Holy Name we pray. Amen.

★ Jessica Zurcher, ULS Student Distance Learning Council Chair, MDiv '25.

Monday

DECEMBER 18

EPHESIANS 6:10-17

Holy One, during this Advent Season remind us of the strength you provide us against any foe. Remind us of the mighty ways you provide armor for us. Remind us to dress with your grace and love. Remind us that your protection from those things that oppress us is solid and sure. Remind us that the armor you give us is not impenetrable, but in union with our siblings we can weather the storms of life with your grace and strength. Remind us to put on the shield and shoes that will enable us to proclaim the Gospel of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. Amen and Amen.

★ The Rev. Dr. Karyn Wiseman, ULS Stuempfle-Folkemer Professor of Homiletics

2023 **Advent Star** Devotional

Tuesday

DECEMBER 19

PSALM 125

Loving God, in this world of suffering and death we are tempted daily to turn aside and walk the crooked way. Guide us along your pathway of mercy and peace, led by Jesus, our Savior. May his scepter of truth and love go before us, leading us into the New Jerusalem where, at last, our Lord stands among us as the immovable mountain of righteousness, surrounding us with his redeeming grace, abiding with us, forevermore. Amen.

★ The Rev. Mark Swanson, Alum ('88P)

2023 **Advent Star** Devotional

Wednesday

DECEMBER 20

MARK 9:9-13

Holy One who draws near to your people, your Son did not flee from suffering, or even death, in order to give his life for humankind. Let us not become so fixated on seeking you in majestic and solitary places that we neglect to find you coming to our neighbors who are suffering and to us in time of greatest need. Come swiftly and unite us with you and with all our kindred in the human family, revealing your unfailing compassion and saving grace; through Christ our Savior. Amen.

★ **The Rev. Kevin Shock, DEM, Asst. to the Bishop, Allegheny Synod, ELCA, Alum ('06P)**

2023 **Advent Star** Devotional

Thursday

DECEMBER 21

PSALM 89:1-4, 19-26

Gracious God, Hear us as we sing out your praises of love and joy! Your mercy shines upon us through every person we meet. Grant us strength to face our obstacles. Teach us to love and care for the world around us. Help us find rest in your faithfulness and unwavering love. Your Kingdom come, your will be done. Amen.

★ **Hannah Tonn, ULS Student Body President, MA '24**

2023 **Advent Star** Devotional

Friday

DECEMBER 22

HEBREWS 1:5-14

Gracious and loving God, angels and archangels proclaim your glory through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Empower us to proclaim the good news of Christ's birth. Send us to serve, clothed in humility and righteousness. Anoint us with the oil of gladness in this season of light. In the name of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

★ The Rev. Dr. Constance L. Mentzer, ULS Board of Trustees

Saturday

DECEMBER 23

JOHN 7:40-52

O Lord God, we quibble and squabble about You. We tend to cherry-pick scripture, usually to bolster our own interpretation of what and how we think You are working in this world and in our own lives. Yet You continue to “draw straight with crooked lines,” using anything and everything and everyone to bring about opportunities of grace for all creation. Forgive our arrogance, merciful God. Grant us humility to discern Your hands at work, especially in the most unexpected of places. It could be Galilee, or even a stable in Bethlehem. Amen.

★ The Rev. Mary Ellen Larson, Alum ('86P)

Sunday

DECEMBER 24 (ADVENT IV)

LUKE 2:1-20

God of wonders, God of love—we thank you for the ways you have broken into the lives of your people and intervened in human history. You startled shepherds with unexpected news; you upended the life of a young woman with an angelic message and used her willingness to say yes to your Spirit. You interrupted the studies of wise scholars, who left their books and tools behind to seek the promised Child. And in that manger, wrapped in rags, you placed before the world its King, made flesh as a powerless infant, but born with the fullness of your majesty and glory. Venite adoremus. Amen.

★ The Rev. Dr. R. Guy Erwin, ULS President, Ministerium of Pennsylvania Chair and Professor of Reformation Studies

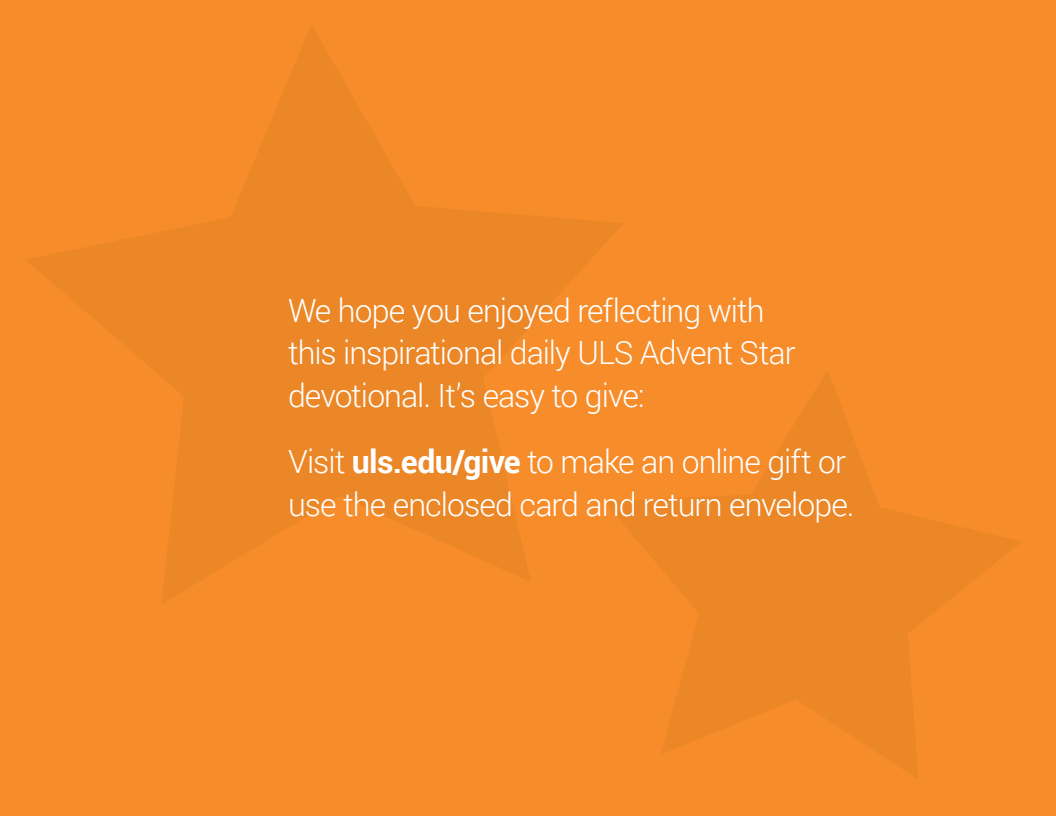
Monday

DECEMBER 25

JOHN 1:1-14

O Divine Creator, in holy darkness you call life into being and with a Word illumine the universe. Your Creative Sprit carved the cosmos with comets, constellations, nebulae and supernovas. At the right time you formed us in your own image of loving-kindness, and made us your children, inheritors of eternal life. We give you thanks for your gracious love given in Christ Jesus, who, though Divine, took on our flesh, and by his death and resurrection, reconciled us to yourself. We are witnesses to the power of love! Glory to you for the darkness and for the light. Glory to you, for the Word made flesh! Amen.

★ **Bishop Lee M. Miller II, Bishop of the Upstate New York Synod, ELCA, Alum ('98P)**



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this inspirational daily ULS Advent Star
devotional. It's easy to give:

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