

Advent is the time of preparation for the light of Christ to shine into the lives of all people. It is a time of waiting. But that does not mean it is a time of standing still. We can never reach the peace of Christ that God brings into being without journeying along the pathway of peace that God puts before us.

As you journey along this Advent season, remember to stay on the pathway, the pathway of Christ's peace. You'll know it by its four cornerstones. It's the pathway where peace is what guides our way, where every step takes us closer to Christ; it's the pathway where all people are welcome, and where the outcome is governed not by us, but by God, under God's divine judgment and wisdom.

God's judgment is not dependent upon us, but rather upon God. It's a wisdom and a judgment that allows us to set down the weapons we use against each other, and pick up the tools we can use to help each other, and to help all people the world over, and especially the people closest to us. Peace on earth, and goodwill to all.

Pastoral prayer

God of glory, we eagerly await the coming of our Savior. It continues to amaze us that the birth of this baby would change the world.

Help us live as people of grace – people who are changed because we have encountered the living God.

In a time when the world wants to segregate and divide people by political party, gender, race or religion, help us see beyond those labels, to see all people as your children.

Help us find common ground where we are able, following Jesus' teaching and example. Let us realize our own ability to bring about change.

Our culture expects this to be a season of good cheer, but for some of us, the fears can be overwhelming.

We pray for those who are grieving this holiday season, or for whom there is an emptiness – in body, soul, or circumstance.

It is because of the One who was born in a lowly stable and who will come again in glory that we celebrate in our worship service today without concern for what may happen tomorrow. For here in worship is where we are most mindful that he is Emmanuel, God with us.

That is what gives us confidence to unburden all of our fears and concerns and lift up our joys before the One who created and sustains us. It is your presence, Lord that gives us the boldness to pray so confidently the prayer that you taught us, lifting our eyes to you and our voices together in song as we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.