



Advent Devotional 2019

The Best Arsenal of All:

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**BIG BETHEL African Methodist
Episcopal Church**

220 Auburn AV Atlanta, GA 30303

The Reverend John Foster, PhD
Senior Pastor



BIG BETHEL A.M.E. CHURCH

THE REVEREND JOHN FOSTER, PH.D. - SENIOR PASTOR

Advent 2019



Dear Bethel AME Church Family:

For the Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth...

Praise God for this season of Advent! Across all of Christendom God's creation is celebrating the greatest act of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love – God reached through time to give us Jesus the Christ. The world has never been the same!!!

We are excited about this year's theme on Love - Love through Witness, Love through Warmth, Love through Wisdom and Love through Worship. We receive a blessing through God offering Himself to us during this season.

Let us receive the Christ child during this advent season. Jesus is still King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And He shall reign forever...

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Foster".

Rev. John Foster, Ph.D.
Senior Pastor

From Your Editor

Beloved Bethel Family,



The world around us, especially the United States, is in political and social turmoil. We experience and are surrounded by hate every day and in every form. In our Advent guide for 2019, although the Season calls for four themes, our entire message will be on Love, with sub-themes. What can we do to combat the hate we see? We can offer love! We can offer love through witness, through warmth, through wisdom and through worship. Pray with me this Holy Season that the Almighty will equip us to combat hate with the best arsenal of all: Love.

Using the Devotional Guide

Each week will be dedicated to a sub-theme. The biblical narrative and meditation is featured on Sunday. Monday through Saturday will offer a sacred task to choose from that you will commit (prayerfully) to completing. Please take these commitments seriously; complete the ones you are led to do, and then record which one (My Commitment) and the outcome (My Testimony) in the provided space. This is an interactive experience in the Lord. May God bless your journey! Dr. Monica

Advent: What It Means

Advent is the Holy Season of celebrating The Christ's coming, and it should not be confused with Christmastide. It is from the Latin term, *Adventus Redemptoris*, referring to the arrival of the soon coming Messiah. In expectation, we usually begin the Season on the 1st Sunday of December culminating on Christmas Day. Candle lighting at Bethel is as follows:

1st Hope—Purple; 2nd Peace—Purple; 3rd Joy—Pink;
4th Love—Purple & Christmas (lit on Fourth Sunday or Christmas Eve/Christmas Day)—White



Scripture taken from the NRSV unless otherwise noted

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT—WITNESS

Sunday, December 1st

The Reverend Monica C. Jones, Ph.D.

Read: Acts 3:1-10 Peter & John and the Lame Man

Then Peter said, “Look at us!” (Acts 3:4b) *Look at us...when someone asks you to look at them, they are asking for your attention. In this popular healing narrative, the first thing that Peter does is ask for the lame man’s attention. He then witnessed to him about the healing power of Jesus.*

As we go through life, witnessing about Jesus and salvation can be a challenge. This is especially true in today’s culture where tolerance of Faith expressions has declined. Yet, we are called to let the world know that Jesus lives! We can do that by getting the attention of others through our words, our actions and our prayers. Speak love, give love and most of all pray for love that heals all wounds and breaks the bonds of hatred. Be a witness today; get the attention of the world through love.

Prayer: *Lord, help me to lift you high by the love I show towards others. Let me witness for you in the things I say and do. May I remember to pray not just for myself, but for others and, indeed, the world. Let me be a powerful witness for you! Bring the Church back to you, Dear Lord, and let our witness conquer hate wherever it rears its sinful head. Let us conquer it with love. And so it is!*

WITNESS

HOW WE WITNESS

December 2-7

May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad
and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples with
equity and guide the nations of the earth.

May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you!
Psalm 67:3-5 (NIV)

HOLY TASKS

Monday: Call a long, lost friend or old acquaintance

Tuesday: Visit with someone who is sick

Wednesday: Send a Christmas greeting to an estranged relative

Thursday: Pray with someone at work or at church

Friday: Tell a stranger about the Lord's goodness; give a
passerby a meditation booklet or this devotional

Saturday: Say, "Merry Christmas" when someone says, "happy
holidays"

My Commitment (what I will do):

I will witness through: _____

My Testimony (what happened):

SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT—WARMTH

Sunday, December 8th

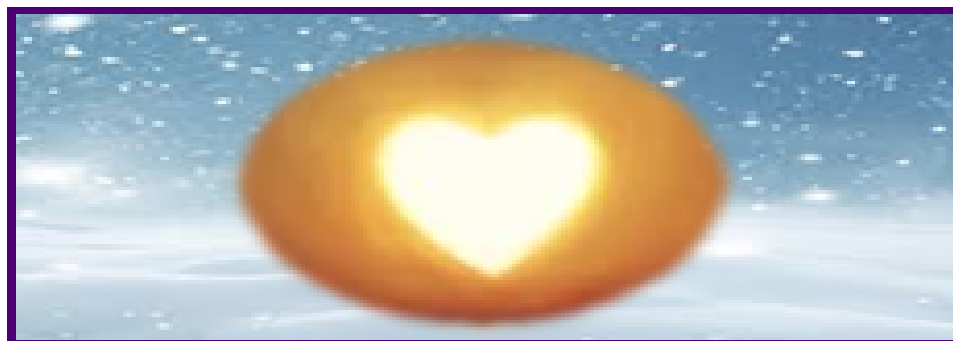
The Reverend Charmain Purvis

Woman at the Well – John 4:7-29

The perception of being hated; to be less than, unclean or marginalized can create feelings of low self-esteem, being invisible or unequal. The Woman at the Well lives the experience of the cold shoulder, the frigid stares and freezing loneliness of shame.

The encounter with Jesus' invitation to experience relationship through "living water" demonstrates the love of God is for everyone...even her. The woman's forecast of a wintry existence of life on the outside is changed in the warmth of acceptance. As a result, she is a living witness, and advocate to the welcoming love of God.

Prayer: *Lord, God, show us how to love, that those may feel the warmth of acceptance, through our interactions. Erase the spirit of hatred, displayed by discrimination, indifference and inequality in the Name of Jesus. Make us instruments of your compassionate love.*



HOW WE GIVE WARMTH

December 9-14

HOLY TASKS

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

My Commitment (what I will do):

I will witness through:

My Testimony (what happened):



THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT—WISDOM

Sunday, December 15

Sis. Deborah L. Stephens

Read: A father's instructions to his son-Proverbs 3, Key Verse- 3:5-6
Angels speak to Joseph and Mary-Matthew 1-18-25; Luke 1:26-38

The Advent season is when joy, sharing, and love are the highlights. But, the current times reveal the opposite. Why? Because divisiveness, cultural, gender, and racial biases are so prominent. Love and wisdom are the missing factors. In Proverbs, the father instructs his son with wise words. Trusting, leaning not, understanding, and acknowledging are the key actions that he always wants his son to remember and use, thus, showing love and teaching wisdom simultaneously. In the story of Joseph and Mary and their angel-encounters, we see how they endured similar social issues. Her pregnancy, being unmarried and his anxiousness in deciding whether to marry or divorce were issues that arose due to biases and religious rules at that time which could have divided them.

But, there was another purpose, and that's where wisdom comes into the picture. Their trust and faith in the message that God sent gave them absolute hope and love. It took wisdom for them to understand and go forth to fulfill their mission. And now, it is that absolute love and hope and trust and faith equaling wisdom that allows us to press on in discouraging times. Use discernment, trust in Him, not your thoughts or ways, and acknowledge Him, knowing that our God is always with us. Use your spiritual wisdom to show love.

Prayer: *Father God, it is in you that we live and breathe and have our being. Help us keep focused on trusting and acknowledging you in all that we do. Showing your love and using your wisdom, we press towards the high mark in Christ Jesus as we conquer this craziness in your precious name.*

Wisdom

HOW WE FIND AND SHARE WISDOM December 16-21

A scoffer who is rebuked will only hate you;
the wise, when rebuked, will love you.

HOLY TASKS

Monday: Read the Bible and study as much as you can on wisdom and godliness (record your passages).

Tuesday: Share a teaching moment with a child.

Wednesday: Listen to a parent, grandparent, or other elder in your life; seek their advice.

Thursday: Pray for God's guidance, and then follow through on the task God has given you to do.

Friday: Go to the Bible and blindly choose a verse; see where God leads you through a random selection!

Saturday: Share a Bible verse on wisdom or a related subject with a friend or classmate from Bible study.

My Commitment (what I will do):

I will witness through: _____

My Testimony (what happened):



FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT— HOW WE WORSHIP

Sunday, December 22

Words inspired by King David

Psalm 92

It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
² to declare your steadfast love in the morning,
and your faithfulness by night,
³ to the music of the lute and the harp,
to the melody of the lyre.
⁴ For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work;
at the works of your hands I sing for joy.
^{5a} How great are your works, O Lord!

Prayer: Lord, prepare me to be your sanctuary, your voice — your messenger through my worship. I will spread love each time I declare your goodness to others in prayer, spoken word, scripture and song. Grant me your power, Lord! This is my prayer, as I worship you, my King!



HOLY TASKS

Monday—Prepare a meal or share a meal with someone who is lonely; give a gift to someone who will not expect it.

Christmas Eve

Gather with family, friends or loved ones in prayer. Intentionally take time to pray as a unified group and lift the world in prayer.

My Commitment (what I will do):

I will witness through: _____

My Testimony (what happened):

On Christmas Day:



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All biblical text—NRSV, unless otherwise noted



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