

***Solitude and Solace***

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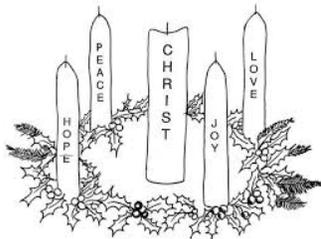
**Department of Christian Education Ministries**

**BIG BETHEL AMEC ATLANTA, GA**

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**404 827-9709 WWW.BIGBETHELAME.ORG**

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**Contributors**

The Reverend John Foster, PhD, Senior Pastor

The Reverend Monica C. Jones, PhD, Editor

Sis. Mylinda Fisher

Bro. Everett Jolly



Sis. Cheryl Taylor  
Asst. Editor

Rosa M. Baxter, Ph.D.  
Editing Staff

**Advent 2020**

**SOLITUDE AND  
SOLACE**

*A Devotional for a Time Such as This*



**BIG BETHEL**

**African Methodist Episcopal Church**

**220 Auburn AV Atlanta, GA 30303**

**The Reverend John Foster, PhD**

**Senior Pastor**



Dear Bethel AME Church Family:

*Hark the Herald Angels Sing...*

Let us enter this season of Advent with a spirit of expectation. The early church was filled with the hope of Jesus' return. Their songs, prayers and even sermons all pointed to the day that Christ will come again. Two thousand years later, let us lift our voices as we proclaim that "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

So let us use this season to pause and refocus. We can use this season to remind ourselves of the reason for the season. We must stay alert and ready for Jesus' presence in our lives. Jesus not only came into this world but also is returning as King of Kings and Lord of Lords!!!

Let us receive the Christ child during this advent season.

*Glory to the Newborn King...*

Sincerely,

Rev. John Foster, Ph.D.  
Senior Pastor

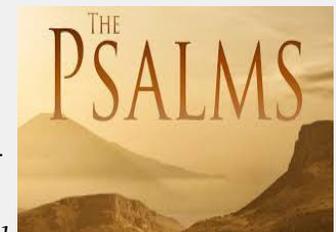
## SOLACE—PEACE IS OURS

Monday: *O God, do not keep silence; do not hold your peace or be still, O God!* 83:1

Tuesday: *Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.* 119:165

Wednesday: *Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers."* 122:7

**Christmas Eve:** *Peace be upon Israel! The Lord is king! Let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!* 128:6b and 97:1



## Christmas Day

Whenever I am lonely and lost in deep despair,  
I bundle all my troubles up and go to God in prayer.  
I tell him I am heartsick and lost and lonely too,  
that my mind is deeply burdened,  
and I don't know what to do.  
But I know He stilled the tempest  
and calmed the angry sea,  
So I humbly ask if in His love, He'll do the same for me.  
And then I just keep quiet,  
and think only thoughts of peace;  
and if I abide in stillness,  
my restless murmurings cease.

*E' Yho!# aI' VofE!kik\$*

**FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT**  
**Solace through Peace**  
**Sunday, December 20th**

**The Reverend John Foster, PhD**  
**A Testimonial**

Many times in my life, God has taken me through seasons of loneliness or solitude where it looked as if I was all by myself. One such time was going through medical treatment while living in Texas. It was the first time in my life that I faced a medical situation that needed hospital admission and stay. I found myself not talking about the situation to anyone – including Sis. Mary Ann – nothing concerning my fears and anxiety of the upcoming procedure. I prayed continually to God. Eventually, I found strength to open up to Sis. Mary Ann and we prayed continually to God.

As the date of surgery came closer, God blessed us with peace towards the procedure. Although it was still growing near, we felt God’s presence and grace in providing just what we needed. God took us through our trials. But more importantly it gave us the understanding that God is with us in our darkest situations.

*Psalm 23:4 “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me.”*



**From Your Editor**

Beloved Big Bethel Family,

In last year’s devotional, we began with these words...

*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.*

The words are still appropriate one year later, with the addition that also, we are combating a horrific health crisis that has left too many in economic strife and in a constant, perhaps, unfamiliar state of loneliness. *Solitude and Solace* is brought to the reader for the divine and distinct purpose of offering inspiration, hope and comfort for those preparing for a Christmastide that promises emotional and spiritual challenge.

**Using the Devotional Guide**

Each week features testimonials, sacred poetry, and biblical inspiration from the Psalms that reflect on hope, peace, joy and love (though not in that order); some will feature faith. Rather than submit to solitude in sadness, we encourage you to embrace it, using this devotional as a companion, and consider the solace that comes through the love of Jesus the Christ. *Blessed Advent and Merry Christmas. Dr. Monica*

**The Meaning of Advent**

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. We usually begin the Season on the 1st Sunday of December culminating on Christmas Day. This year, it begins on November 29.

**Candle lighting at Big 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.



*All biblical text — NRSV, unless otherwise noted*

## FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

Solace through Hope

Sunday, November 29th

### The Reverend Monica C. Jones, PhD A Testimonial

As a single person, and the last remaining member of my immediate family, I have often wondered what would happen to me if I suddenly became ill, had an accident or just needed help while in my apartment. The older I become, the more this is a concern.

This kind of concern can easily materialize into fear, especially in times like these, but I have learned to not concentrate on the “what ifs” that arise. Instead, I focus on the “what I know.”

I know that the Lord hears me (Psalm 116:1).

I know that He sees me (Genesis 16:13); and

I know that, most of all, God loves me (John 3:16).

I firmly believe that when life threatens you with sadness, loneliness or fear, the first thing to do is to focus on the Word that encourages us all, and let it remain in your heart. Let it strengthen your hope; let it uplift your spirit; let it bring you solace. And so it is.

*“Because the Lord is my Shepherd, I have everything I need....That’s why I’m safe....that’s why I’m safe in His arms!”*

*(Milton Brunson)*

## SOLACE—JOY IS OURS

Monday: *But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy. 5:11a*

Tuesday: *May we shout for joy over your victory, and in the name of our God set up our banners. May the Lord fulfill all your petitions. 20:5*

Wednesday: *For you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy! 63:7*

Thursday: *When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul 94:19*

Friday: *Let your priests be clothed with righteousness, and let your faithful shout for joy. 132:9*

Saturday:

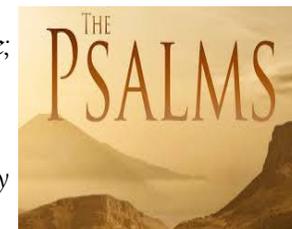
*A joyful heart knows,  
all about God’s goodness  
it knows His presence  
in all of its fullness.*

*It knows it’s not alone,  
in this thing called life  
it knows He’ll deliver it  
from it’s earthly strife.*

*A joyful heart knows,  
God has for it a plan  
it knows the power  
of His righteous hand.*



Deborah Ann Belka



THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

Solace through Joy

Sunday, December 13th

**Bro. Everett Jolly**

A Testimonial

One of the most difficult times for most people is when they lose a love one. That has been my experience. Even though you have other close family members to lean on and share your emotions during this most trying of times, sometimes finding out how much you are loved and appreciated by others helps soothe the hurt of losing a love one. *Reach Out and Touch.*

Of course, I reached out to our Pastor at the time and he came to my side quickly and compassionately. I remember him sitting humbly in the pulpit during the funeral and sharing comforting scripture. However, the most impactful gesture was made by two elders of the church who drove to Macon from Atlanta just to see about me. These men stood in silence as if they were there to offer whatever strength that was needed at the moment, a strength that words could not provide. I had never visited their home... they had never visited mine. But they thought of me as their child of God.

Two men... one mission... to *Reach Out and Touch.* So, while it may not be possible to connect to everyone, we can connect to someone: *Reach Out and Touch.*

**SOLACE—HOPE IS OURS**

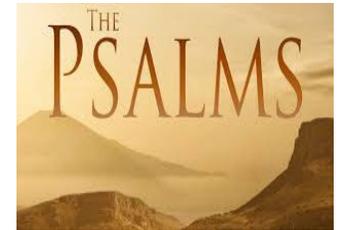
Monday: *For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.* 62:5

Tuesday: *For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth.* 71:5

Wednesday: *I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I have set my heart on your laws.* . 119:30

Thursday: *And now, O Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in you..* 39:7

Friday: *Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope.* 19:116



Saturday:

**My Hope**

Lord, my hope is in you, for you have been all that I need!  
Even in the loneliest hour, your blessed  
presence comforts me.

Now, as I witness another Season of thanksgiving and  
praise, even if I must do so alone.

I pray that my focus will stay not on what I do not have,  
but on how your grace through pain has shone.

Thank you, Lord, for coming into my world;  
thank you, Lord, for bringing me through.

I praise you, Lord, this very day — my  
hope is ever in you!

Unknown



## SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

Solace through Love  
Sunday, December 6th

**Sis. Mylinda Fisher**  
(Big Bethel Village Chapel)

### A Testimonial

A decision to move out of state and away from family, job, home, friends, church and community, in the final scheme of things, can bring about loneliness and solitude. It can be compounded and made more difficult when children are involved, uprooting them from school and friends. It takes courage, extended family and fortitude to follow through and stay on task.

Sixteen years after moving to another state, I was left alone in a big city all by myself. Those who had made the journey with me were no longer there. My circumstances had changed. I was divorced; my children had grown up and left home. Getting used to being alone was daunting at first. So, how did I transition through such a disparaging and lonely time? It was by the grace of God! I learned to stay busy, faithfully attending church, staying connected to friends and interacting with my neighbors. Most importantly, I did all of this with faith and favor. I did it with inspiration from God! We serve a good God who is ever mindful of us. As the Lord said in Matthew 26:

*“I will never leave you... I will never forsake you. Lo, I am with you always.”*

## SOLACE—LOVE IS OURS

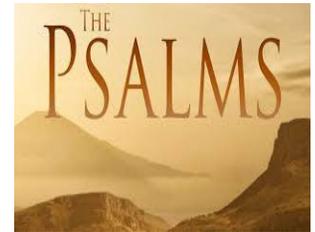
Monday: *For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.* 100:5

Tuesday: *Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me.* 66:20

Wednesday: *I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my supplications.* 116:1

Thursday: *My God in his steadfast love will meet me...* 59:10a

Friday: *The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.* 34:18



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Saturday:

**Our Savior and our Lord  
A love that reveals eternity  
With abundance of mercy and grace**

**Search my whole heart  
I'll continue seeking your face**

**I run upon your mountain  
Where you always set me free  
Your words laid upon my heart  
A revealing love you have shown me!**

Brittani

Source: <https://www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/revealing-love>

