



Tennessee
DISCIPLES *of* CHRIST

**Christian Church in Tennessee
Regional Advent Devotional 2025**

Rev. Kevin L. McNeil

Letter from the Regional Minister and President

Dear Disciples of Christ family,

Grace and peace to you in this holy season of Advent.

As we gather around the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, I am reminded of how the light of Christ continues to shine brightly across the Tennessee Region. In every congregation — from our newest church starts to our oldest sanctuaries — God is doing a new thing. Through your prayers, generosity, and faithfulness, the covenant of love that binds us to Christ and to one another remains strong.

This Advent devotional invites us to pause together each week, to listen for God's voice, and to recognize the ways Christ is being born anew in our midst. Whether you are worshiping in a bustling city or a quiet rural community, may these reflections draw you closer to the heart of God and to one another.

Let us enter this season with open hearts, ready to receive the One who still comes to bring light into our darkness, peace into our conflicts, joy into our weariness, and love into every corner of our world.

May the light of Christ shine through you and through the ministry we share as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Tennessee.

With gratitude and hope,

Rev. Kevin L. McNeil
Regional Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Tennessee

Week 1 – Hope: Walking in the Light of the Lord

First Sunday of Advent – November 30, 2025

Lectionary Readings:

- Isaiah 2:1-5
 - Psalm 122
 - Romans 13:11-14
 - Matthew 24:36-44
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Reflection:

As Advent begins, Isaiah’s words echo with a promise: “Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.” In a world that often feels overshadowed by uncertainty and division, this call invites us to live as people of hope. Hope is not wishful thinking; it is confidence in God’s unfolding future.

For congregations across the Tennessee Region—whether in the mountains of the east, the cities of the mid-state, or the river towns of the west—this season reminds us that we are united by a light that no darkness can overcome. We see glimpses of that light when a new congregation is born, when disciples gather around campfires at Bethany Hills, and when churches support neighbors through ministries of compassion.

Paul reminds us that “salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.” Advent hope means living as though Christ’s light has already dawned. Even when the nights feel long, God’s promise of renewal is certain.

Prayer:

God of light and promise, awaken us to your coming. Shine upon our congregations and communities, that we may reflect your love in every act of service. As we wait for Christ, help us walk in the light together—bound in your covenant of love.

Amen.

Regional Challenge:

- Light a candle in your home or sanctuary each evening and pray for one Tennessee congregation—old or new—that God’s light will guide their ministry.
 - Reach out to someone in your community who feels forgotten and offer a simple act of kindness: a call, a card, or a meal.
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Quote for the Week:

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” — Isaiah 9:2

Week 2 – Peace: Preparing the Way of the Lord

Second Sunday of Advent – December 7, 2025

Lectionary Readings:

- Isaiah 11:1-10
 - Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
 - Romans 15:4-13
 - Matthew 3:1-12
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Reflection:

A shoot shall come forth from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow from its roots. Isaiah paints a picture of life rising from what appears lifeless—a vision of peace that transcends conflict and fear. John the Baptist’s voice cries out in the wilderness: “*Prepare the way of the Lord.*”

For the Tennessee Region, this Advent call speaks directly to our mission. God is doing a new thing in our midst: four new congregations have been planted, others are beginning transformation, and ministries like Bethany Hills are finding renewed life. These are “branches” of God’s peace springing up from roots of faith.

Preparing the way of the Lord often begins in our own hearts. It means clearing the clutter of resentment, fear, or fatigue so that peace may take root. As communities and churches, we are called not only to proclaim peace but to practice it—through reconciliation, generosity, and hospitality.

Prayer:

God of peace, prepare our hearts and our congregations for your coming. Remove what divides us and plant in us the Spirit of reconciliation. May our ministries bear fruit that reveals your peace in every part of Tennessee. Amen.

Regional Challenge:

- Reach out to another Disciples congregation in the region—perhaps one you haven't connected with recently—and pray together for God's peace to flourish in both communities.
 - Participate in a regional or local outreach effort that brings peace and dignity to others: feeding the hungry, supporting families in need, or caring for creation.
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Quote for the Week:

“They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” — Isaiah 11:9

Week 3 – Joy: The Desert Shall Rejoice and Blossom

Third Sunday of Advent – December 14, 2025

Lectionary Readings:

- Isaiah 35:1-10
 - Psalm 146:5-10 (or Luke 1:46-55)
 - James 5:7-10
 - Matthew 11:2-11
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Reflection:

Isaiah envisions a world bursting into bloom: *“The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom.”* In Tennessee, we understand the beauty of creation—the rolling hills, the quiet rivers, and the renewal that comes after a long dry spell. Advent joy is not shallow cheerfulness; it is the deep gladness that grows when God’s promises begin to take shape.

When John the Baptist questioned whether Jesus was truly the Messiah, Jesus replied, “Go and tell what you hear and see.” The blind receive sight, the lame walk, the poor have good news brought to them. Joy is found in the evidence of God at work. We see that same evidence in the Tennessee Region as congregations nurture new leaders, restore ministries, and celebrate the lives being changed through Christ’s love.

Even when joy feels distant, God is faithful. The dry places of our souls will bloom again.

Prayer:

God of joy, open our eyes to the wonders of your work among us. Turn our weariness into singing, our doubt into trust, and our waiting into joyful witness. Let the Tennessee Region be a place where the desert blooms with hope.

Amen.

Regional Challenge:

- Spend a few minutes each day this week naming the signs of God's joy you see—in your church, your neighborhood, your family.
 - Share a word of encouragement with a pastor, elder, or ministry leader. Joy multiplies when it's spoken aloud.
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Quote for the Week:

“Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.” — James 5:7-8

Week 4 – Love: God With Us

Fourth Sunday of Advent – December 21, 2025

Lectionary Readings:

- Isaiah 7:10-16
 - Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
 - Romans 1:1-7
 - Matthew 1:18-25
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Reflection:

In this final week of Advent, we hear again the promise: “*The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means ‘God with us.’*” This is the heart of our faith and the center of our covenant—God is not distant but dwelling among us.

For congregations across the Tennessee Region, “God with us” is a truth we experience in community: in worship, at the communion table, in mission, and in mutual care. We have seen God with us in the laughter of campers at Bethany Hills, in the courage of new church planters, and in the resilience of congregations walking through transformation.

As we draw near to Christmas, we are reminded that love is not just a feeling—it’s God’s presence embodied in us and through us. The world still longs for the good news of Emmanuel. We are called to bear that love wherever we go.

Prayer:

God of steadfast love, thank you for coming to dwell with us. Let your Spirit fill our churches and communities with grace, compassion, and courage. As we celebrate Christ’s birth, may your love shine through us to bring healing and hope to Tennessee and beyond.

Amen.

Regional Challenge:

- Share the gift of presence this week. Visit or call someone who may be lonely or grieving this season. Let them know that “God with us” includes them, too.
 - Pray for all Tennessee congregations as they prepare for Christmas worship—that each sanctuary would be filled with the warmth of Christ’s love.
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Quote for the Week:

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory.” — John 1:14

Closing Blessing

May the light of Christ guide you,
the peace of Christ surround you,
the joy of Christ strengthen you,
and the love of Christ fill you—
now and always,
as we walk together in the covenant of love that binds us to Christ and to one another.