

Highland Presbyterian Church

'SHARING HOPE FROM THE HEART OF THE HIGHLANDS'

DECEMBER 1, 2017



Do you ever find yourself on Christmas Eve wondering where the season of Advent has gone? By the time you receive this newsletter, it will be less than a month until Christmas. Already, the calendar may feel full of events and deadlines. Have you ever said to yourself, "This year, I'm going to slow down and savor the days and reflect on the deeper meaning of Christmas!" And then, the days fly by, and you've missed it once again.

One way to slow down the season of Advent is to take time each day – ten or fifteen minutes, even – to pause and reflect. One way to do that is with a book that provides daily readings, which allows you a moment to pause and reflect and to come away nourished. Westminster John Knox Press (the publishing company for our denomination) has produced a handful of rich and rewarding resources for the season of Advent. Here are a few of them.

Advent in Narnia by Heidi Haverkamp is a set of daily readings based on C. S. Lewis' classic *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Heidi's reflections are interwoven with quotes from Lewis and passages of scripture, drawing on Advent themes such as grace, love and sacrifice.

Every Valley: Advent with the Scriptures of Handel's Messiah is a series of forty reflections (taking you from Advent through Epiphany) on each of the scripture passages in *Messiah*. While Handel was using the King James translation, these reflections include the NRSV and often expand the passage so as to show the context for the verses quoted.

Rise Up Shepherd! Advent Reflections on the Spirituals by Luke A. Powery (dean of the Chapel at Duke University) presents a brief reflection on each of 28 spirituals. These songs, born in the struggle and faith of enslaved African people, "reveal the possibility of hope in hellish circumstances ... and love in the face of hate."

Advent for Everyone: A Journey with the Apostles by N. T. Wright (British New Testament scholar and accessible author) explores passages from the epistles around the themes: "A Time for Thanksgiving; A Time for Patience; A Time for Humility; A Time for Joy."

Celebrating Abundance: Devotions for Advent by Walter Brueggemann (retired professor of Old Testament and prolific author) begins the first Sunday of Advent and continues to Epiphany. Brueggemann's reflections invite us to re-envision God's abundant grace that comes to life among us. "Advent is not the kind of 'preparation' that involves shopping and parties and cards," Brueggemann writes. "Advent is preparation for the demands of newness that will break the tired patterns of fear in our lives."