**Advent Devotional: Week One**

“Chrismons” are Christmas decorations with Christian symbols on them to remind us about the meaning of the season.

Can you find this week’s Chrismons on the tree in the entryway?

**December 1 Alpha and Omega**

 As the first and last letters of the Greek Alphabet, the Alpha and Omega represent God’s sovereignty over all things, from the first to the last. In Revelation 1:8, God declares: “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

This symbol invites us to remember God as the origin of all things and as the one who holds our future. While we look forward to Christmas and celebrating Jesus’ birth, the season of Advent invites us to anticipate the promise of Jesus to return, and to live in light of this hope.

**Scripture Reading**: Revelation 1:4-8

**Question of the Day**: If you knew that the time of Jesus’ return was near, how would that affect your perspective on life?

**December 2 Dove with Olive Branch**

 In Genesis 8:11, we read: “the dove came back to him [Noah] in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth.” The dove, bearing evidence of green vegetation and dry land, indicates that the storm truly is over and that there is hope of a new beginning. It is a reminder that, even as God opposes and punishes sin; God’s ultimate purpose is to bring life that is truly life. As Joel 2:13 reads: “Rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.

**Scripture Reading**: Psalm 103

**Question of the Day**: Sometimes it is harder to accept forgiveness than to extend it. Where may God be inviting you to accept the peace and forgiveness God is extending to you?

**December 3 Celtic Cross**

 This cross was developed by Celtic Christians around the 7th century. The distinctive feature of this cross is the circle linking each arm of the cross. The origin of the circle is debated, but one likely explanation is that early Christian missionaries adapted pagan imagery of the sun to illustrate a deeper truth fulfilled in Jesus who said in John 8:12, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”

For Christians, the circle has come to represent eternal love and salvation through Jesus’ crucifixion for the sake of the world.

**Scripture Reading**: Acts 17:22-31

**Question of the Day**: What symbols of Christmas have their origins in other cultures and beliefs? How have they taken on new meaning in light of Jesus?

**December 4 Angel with Trumpet**

 The word Angel means ‘messenger’, and we read of angels serving this way throughout the Bible, bringing messages and heralding momentous events.

In the season of Advent, angels serve as heralds in two key scriptures: Luke 2:13-14, announcing the birth of Jesus, and in 1 Thessalonians 4:6, where the call of the archangel and the trumpet of God announce the return of Jesus, as the king returning to set things right. In both settings, the announcement of God’s action in Jesus invites us to consider what God is doing in the world and how we will respond.

**Scripture Reading**: 1 Corinthians 15:50-52

**Question of the Day**: What part of God’s message gives you the greatest hope?

**December 5 Crown**

 A crown is the visible symbol of a ruler’s power and authority. Throughout scripture, we find images that reminds us that God’s authority is above every other power and ruler in earth and heaven. In the vivid imagery of the vision in Revelation, we see Jesus depicted as one wearing “many crowns” (Revelation 19:12) and who bears the title “King of Kings and Lord of Lords”

In Colossians 1:15-16, we find Jesus described as “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him.

**Scripture Reading**: 1 Timothy 6:13-16

**Question of the Day**: What is something in the world that we look forward to being different when Jesus truly is acknowledged as Lord? What is something that will be different in us?

**December 6 Hand of God**

‘Manus Dei’ or Hand of God was a visual symbol used in Jewish and Christian art to represent the action and presence of God while seeking to avoid any hint of idolatry.

The hand emerging from the clouds is a visual reminder that in the midst of our searching and seeking for meaning, it is God who reaches out to us, so that we can come to know God and experience God’s salvation. The Christian faith is not about being smart enough, or good enough that God will accept us and love us, but that God knows our need and comes to meet us where we are.

**Scripture Reading**: John 1:10-18

**Question of the Day**: Can you think of a time when you experienced the presence of God to encourage or comfort you?

**December 7 Iota Chi**

In Greek, “Jesus Christ” is written Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ From the earliest Christian era, the first letters of each word were combined to form a symbol of our faith that Jesus is also the one anointed by God to be the Messiah; the one who will bring salvation and restoration to Israel (and to the world!).

In Matthew 16:13, Jesus asks the disciples who the crowds believe him to be. They give various answers, until Jesus asks *them*: “who do you say that I am?” Peter’s response: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.” ‘Christ’ then, is not a last name, but a title, a description of Jesus’ identity and mission.

**Scripture Reading**: 1 John 3:18-24

**Question of the Day**: How might we show love to one another today?