



Pastor's Corner

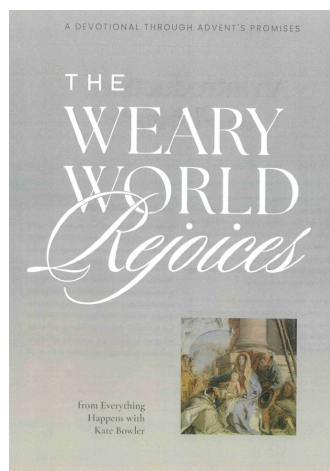
Dear friends,

This Sunday is the first day of Advent, a special season in the life of the church. Advent is a time of preparation for the celebration of the *past birth* of the Christ child, in addition to preparation for the *future second coming* of Jesus. It's a time of waiting for something greater than ourselves: the Savior of the world.

Maybe your family observes some Advent traditions. Lighting candles on the *Advent wreath* is one of the most popular traditions. The *Hanging of the Greens* is another one, in which a church is decorated for Christmas. *Advent calendars* are sometimes used to mark the days until Christmas. I remember growing up using these and each day I would open a window which concealed a piece of candy or chocolate. I wouldn't always be able to restrain myself to one piece per day, so some years the advent calendar didn't last anywhere near Christmas Day! Today, they have all sorts of Advent Calendars, containing different types of teas, wines, toys (some for our pets), and so on. Another tradition is the *Jesse Tree*. For information on this, click on <https://oftheearth.com/diy-jesse-tree-ornaments/>. Volunteering for a family/friends *service project* can be meaningful - maybe make it an annual tradition! Many organizations that meet the needs of those who go without are looking for volunteers. Listening to religious *Christmas music* provides a soothing and meaningful backdrop to our daily activities. Reading a daily *Advent devotional* for the month of December - the one we've selected for this year is Kate Bowler's "A *Weary World Rejoices*" (the link to this devotional is on this page - we can provide you with a hardcopy if you prefer) - can provide a little daily ritual of refocusing our hearts. And, of course, attending *worship services* helps keep us rooted in what really matters.

However you observe Advent, try not to get caught up in the frenzied craziness of the holidays and instead make this a time of *intentional preparation* for the glory and awe of Christmas day, because let's face it, if we aren't intentional about it, it will not happen. When we focus our hearts on the *real* reason for this season, God's great love for us, it will make it even more meaningful when, on Christmas day, we all find a gift in the manger with our name on it! May you have a blessed and meaningful Advent season. We'll see you at First!

Pastor Kara



https://katebowler.com/seasonal_devotional/the-weary-world-rejoices/#guides