

## ***Guidelines for Writing Advent Devotions for 2024***

Advent Devotions will be sent via email to members and will be downloadable from the website. We will also have copies available in print for those who request them.

Please contact Rev. Dr. Damion Quaye at [dquaye@soapstoneumc.org](mailto:dquaye@soapstoneumc.org) or 301-661-5258 if you have any questions about writing the devotion. Note that devotions must be received by Friday, November 8, 2024. Thank you and may the writing of this devotion be a blessing to you!

### **TIPS FOR WRITING DEVOTIONS**

Here are a few tips on how you might prepare yourself to write the devotion.

1. Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
2. Read the scripture. Look at the scripture that precedes and follows it to get an idea of the context.
3. Read the scripture again and ponder it. How does God seem to be speaking to you through the scripture? What words or phrases seem to call your attention?
4. Over the next few days think about the scripture some more.
5. Pray and think about it more. Set aside some quiet time to write. You may want to light a candle to remind you of the light of Christ as you write.
6. Let the devotional "sit" for a day and then read it again. Edit as you feel led.
- 7. If you wish, add an interesting photo or other visual or perhaps a link to a related website.**
8. Email or send in your devotion by November 8, 2024

Praise God for the inspiration you were given as you wrote it!

### **DEVOTION GUIDELINES**

The format of the devotion should follow the following blueprint:

**3 Parts – Principle/theme, Illustration, takeaway**

- **The Theme:** The main principle is derived from a short passage from the Bible. It forms the basis for the devotional.
- **The Illustration:** The body of the devotional should present an authentic life situation that connects to the principle.
- **The Takeaway:** A good devotional strives to inspire. This element gives the reader something to think about, pray about, or do in order to apply the main principle to their lives.

### STEPS:

1. **Begin with a Title** — Describe the main idea with something catchy or memorable.
2. **Introduction** — Write an introduction that will help take readers center on the devotion and listen to what God is saying. This introduction will help readers focus on the main message in the scripture.
3. **Foundation** — The foundation of your devotion is the scripture and the main theme. Be specific about what the scripture means and the principle you hope reader's focus on. Your scripture will be included in this section. Please use the New Revised Standard Version to write your devotion (you can access it online if you do not have a copy). The scripture will be provided.
4. **Inspiration/Illustration/Reflection** — Think about the scripture. What does it mean to you? What is the "take home" message? Do you have a story from your experience that relates? Can you think of a good example? How does it relate to the theme for the week? Remember, there's no right or wrong reflection here! Just listen to how God speaks to you. Be as creative as the Holy Spirit inspires you to be!

*[By the way, the "sample devotion" below uses a lot of questions. You do not necessarily need to do this. You may choose to use a story from personal experience or some other insight.]*

5. **Prayer** -- Let your reflection about the scripture lead you into a prayer.
6. **Final Thoughts** - This is a kind of "blessing" to the reader, a benediction to go with God the rest of their day. You may choose to use scripture, or something you write yourself. Either way, try to relate the blessing to the message.
7. **Signature** - Add your name at the end.

NOTE: We'd love to have a digital photo of you to include, so if you would be so kind as to attach one or import the photo into the document, that would be great! (Though it is not required)

## SAMPLE DEVOTION

### TITLE: Ready or Not?

**Introduction:** *(Remember... this is an introduction)*

“Ready or not, here I come!” Those are words children use when they set off for a game of “Hide and Seek.” As I begin this journey to the cross, I ask myself, “Am I ready... or not?” Jesus was ready.

**FOUNDATION:** *Luke 9:51-62 (Remember to use the NRSV.)*

*A Samaritan Village Refuses to Receive Jesus*

<sup>51</sup> When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. <sup>52</sup> And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; <sup>53</sup> but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. <sup>54</sup> When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”<sup>k</sup> <sup>55</sup> But he turned and rebuked them. <sup>56</sup> Then<sup>l</sup> they went on to another village.

*Would-Be Followers of Jesus*

*(Mt 8:18–22)*

<sup>57</sup> As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” <sup>58</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” <sup>59</sup> To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” <sup>60</sup> But Jesus<sup>m</sup> said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” <sup>61</sup> Another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” <sup>62</sup> Jesus said to him, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

## INSPIRATION/ILLUSTRATION/REFLECTION

Jesus had made up his mind to go to Jerusalem. There he would face betrayal, humiliation, suffering, and death on a cross. Of course, we know that’s not the end of the story. But why did he do it? Why did he even begin the journey? He did it because of his great love for you and for me, as undeserving as we are.

There were those who said they were ready to follow, but Jesus knew they weren’t really ready...at least not yet. How am I like the one who asks first to attend to the business of burying the dead? How am I like the one who wants to go back first?

We all have our excuses. What “busyness” do I need to turn away from so that I can focus on Jesus? What do I need to do to begin the journey to the cross?

**Prayer:** *(Remember... this is a prayer.)*

*God of new beginnings, show me what I need to do to begin the journey to the cross of your son, Jesus. Amen.*

**Final Thoughts:** *(Remember... this is a blessing.)*

Those who put their strength in you are truly happy; pilgrimage is in their hearts. As they pass through the Baca Valley, they make it a spring of water. Yes, the early rain covers it with blessings.

They go from strength to strength, until they see the supreme God in Zion. *Psalm 84: 5-7(CEB)*

**SIGNATURE:** *Your Name Goes Here!*