

Few of us have ever seen a shepherd. Yet this pastoral imagery lives on, conveying to our minds our Creator's concern for the each of us: for our welfare, our development, our guidance, our discipline, and our lot in life. God still provides the green grass and the calm waters; God still calls us to come to him for renewal. Isaiah added this to the picture of the shepherd: "He will feed his flock like a shepherds, he will gather the lambs in his arms, he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young" (Isaiah 40:11). And in John's Gospel, Jesus calls himself the God Shepherd. (John 10:11-16).

Which metaphors of Jesus are most meaningful to you?  
Why is the term "pastor" used for clergymen?

**Prayer**

Savior, like a shepherd lead us,  
Much we need your tender care;  
In your pleasant pastures feed us,  
For our use your fold prepare.

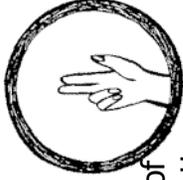
Dorothy Ann Thrupp

### **Prayer**

We thank you, Lord, for people like Moses who are able to break through barriers of injustice and lead people into a better society.

### **Second Wednesday of Advent Benediction – the Blessing of Aaron**

Read Numbers 6:22-27



Aaron, brother of Moses, was high priest of Israel. He was responsible for developing new patterns of religious practices among the people. His purpose was to unify, stimulate morale, improve morals and inspire cooperation to make concerted, sustained action possible. It took Aaron forty years of desert-dwelling and numerous mistakes (such as the golden calf episode of Exodus 32) to develop a religion and a people capable of entering and settling the land of Canaan. His significance is not so much in the particular form of worship he developed but in the noble and lofty conception of one God expressed in his familiar benediction.

What is the chief purpose of the church?  
What is the value of religion in today's society?  
Why did Aaron permit the golden calf?

### **Prayer**

Almighty God, the source and the goal of all life, care for us the same as you did for ancient Israel.

### **Second Thursday of Advent The Lamp – Samuel's Call**

Read 1 Samuel 3:1-21

Samuel is considered Israel's first prophet. He began a new form of ministry. The older form, the priesthood, emphasized worship through offering sacrifices, which were often expressions of repentance. Prophecy emphasized the "word of the Lord," that creative, redemptive voice of God which speaks in specific occasions. It may come as judgment. It

may inspire change. It may breathe faith and hope. In various ways it relates religion to daily life.

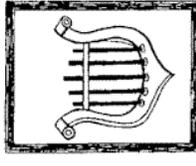
These two functions – the sacrificial and the prophetic – are still characteristic of religion.

### **Prayer**

Help us to keep our religion relevant to the needs of the world, O God, by attuning our ears to hear your Word.

### **Second Friday of Advent Harp – Saul and David**

Read 1 Samuel 16:14-23

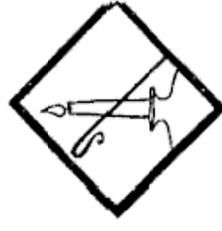


Of all David's remarkable achievements the poetry ascribed to him is the most enduring. From the depths of his soul he was able to give artistic expression to the faith that sustained him. The strength and courage he has imparted to countless millions over a period of three thousand years is perhaps unequalled in history. Is there any poem to compare with "The Lord is my shepherd" (Psalm 23)? Or Psalm 8: "What are we that you are mindful of us?" Or the 51<sup>st</sup>: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me?" Or "God is our refuge and strength" (Psalm 46)? To be sure, there is more excitement in the Goliath story (1 Samuel 17), but not as much healing.

What is your favorite psalm? hymn? poem?

### **Prayer**

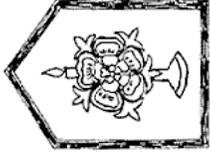
O sing unto the Lord a new song" for he has done marvelous things. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.



### **Second Saturday of Advent Shepherd's Staff – The Lord is my Shepherd**

Read Psalm 23

## **Week Two of Advent** **Jesse Tree Scripture & Reflections**



### **Second Sunday of Advent** **Advent Rose – Symbol of Prophecy**

Read Isaiah 9:2-7

Long before Jesus was born, Isaiah the prophet declared or prophesied that God would send a Savior to the world. We believe that Jesus fulfills this prophecy.

Many names have been given to Jesus, and many symbols are used to convey what he means to us. In the Bible, light symbolizes the intervention of God in the world. We use candles on our altars to remind us that Jesus himself is the light of the world. When we know him as our Light we honor that God is with us and for us.

The symbol of the rose reminds us of Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 35:1) that the desert shall blossom as the rose at the coming of the Lord.

How many names for Jesus can you recall?

What does each name tell us about him?

What light does Christ give for dealing with other people?

#### **Prayer**

Wonderful counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace: we praise and bless your holy name. Son of David, Branch of Jesse, Immanuel, good Shepherd, Light of the world: guide us and help us, we pray.

### **Second Monday of Advent** **Joseph's Coat**

Read Genesis 37:1-36

The coat that Jacob made for Joseph was a princely symbol. It showed the sheik's choice of a successor. That was bad enough for his eleven brothers, but when the young lad lorded it over them with his dreams it was more than they could take. The second dream was even more offensive because it meant that the sheik himself would bow down before

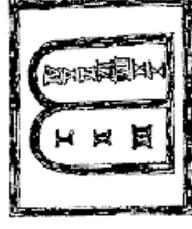
Joseph. Did this imply that Joseph would rebel against his father? No wonder the others were suspicious and wanted to get rid of him. Later the dreams came true. In Egypt he rose from being a slave to the highest position next to the pharaoh, and when his kin came to Egypt for food they had to obtain it from this brother they once despised.

What are some causes for family feuds?

What comes from boasting?

#### **Prayer**

Help us to learn to live together in peace. O Lord, and keep us from provoking others to jealousy.



### **Second Tuesday of Advent** **Ten Commandments – Moses and the Law**

Read Exodus 20:1-17

People have tried, at one time or another, every conceivable way to live. Some groups have lived as pirates, some as cannibals, some as slaves, some by enslaving, some in castes, some in communes instead of families. In other words, we live in the kind of society we build. The lasting greatness of Moses is NOT his emancipation of slaves; rather, it is the basis he provided for a society in which we acknowledge our responsibility for our neighbor as a commission from God. We can break the moral laws, but when we do, certain consequences are bound to follow. As St. Paul and others have put it: "As you sow, so also shall you reap." If we want others to respect us, we must also respect them and their property.



Which commandment do you count most essential? Why?

Why do we "reap what we sow"?

To what extent does God forgive?