

## December 2020 Prayer and Praise

The season of Advent is here! And like many of you, I need this time of reflection. I need to give myself permission to pause. My spirit is dry. To say that this has been a difficult year falls so short of capturing the emotions that has been a part of 2020 for each one of us. Nurses around the world have uniquely felt the weight of this year. It's been a time of grief and letting go. Our own strength has faltered. Yet...God is still God. Out of the pain and difficulty we've experienced, God is at work. He has not changed!



Each week of Advent focuses on four important themes that are a part of our own faith journeys:

- Hope
- Peace
- Love
- Joy

*Hope* – We all need hope. Too often I find myself “hoping” in my circumstances. I “hope” for a certain outcome. I “hope” in what I can accomplish through my own strength, grit, and determination. Sound familiar? I’m sure we’ve all experienced times when our misplaced hope has led to disappointment. If 2020 has taught us anything, it’s that our belief that we can control the outcome of a situation is false. So, what can we hope in? Psalm 119:114 (NKJV) reminds us of a source of hope that does not fade:

*You are my hiding place and my shield;  
I hope in Your word.*

*Peace* – Is peace something you are seeking? My soul aches for peace. Peace to fill the spaces where grief now resides following the death of my father. Peace for nurses around the world who are caring for family members, patients, students, and their community as a result of this pandemic. Peace for the political divides that surround us. Peace that makes right the injustice which is a part of our culture.

We find in John 14:27 (NKJV) a promise of peace. It’s a promise we can hold onto:

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you;

not as the world gives do I give to you.  
Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

*Love* – What does it mean to love? We use the word easily enough. We love coffee; we love a day off from work; we love good grades; or we love chocolate (Ghirardelli dark chocolate sea salt caramel for me). Romans 5:8 (NKJV) gives us a different view of love:

But God demonstrates His own love toward us,  
in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The most dangerous prayer you can pray is to ask God to help you love unconditionally – to love as he loves. I prayed this prayer years ago. God and I are still talking through how this takes shape in my life and with others. It's made me aware of how easy it is for me to love conditionally. It's also opened my eyes to the depth of God's love for me. It's a journey I am just beginning.

*Joy* – Joy is an emotion that unlike happiness is not dependent on our circumstances. Joy can be present in our pain. It comes from knowing our worth and value in the eyes of God. It's also trusting in the nature and character of God.

Habakkuk 3:17-19 (NIV) reflects real joy. It doesn't deny our circumstances, but it reflects deeper truth. The truth of joy follows words like "but" or "yet." Joy gives us something "more" to hold onto in the dark times we face.

Though the fig-tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines,  
though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food,  
though there are no sheep in the sheepfold and no cattle in the stalls,  
Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.  
The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,  
he enables me to tread on the heights.

If you'd like to explore and dig deeper into the meaning behind each of the weeks of Advent, take a few minutes to listen to the videos that are a part of [The Advent Series](#) created by the Bible Project. It will help focus your reflections back to the Word of God.

Blessings to each of you this December!

*Christy Secor RN, DNP, CDWF, NCF Professional Ministries Director*

## December Prayer Calendar

- December 1 – In this first week of Advent, may we be reminded that we are not alone in the challenges and loss we face. Our hope is in more than our circumstances. May we each experience a renewing of our faith and the hope we have in Christ.
- December 2 - We are grateful for your prayers for the first virtual Global Missions Health Conference (GMHC) and NCF's participation in this conference. We received great support after some initial technical challenges and made connections with nurses across the United States in our Zoom and chat rooms. Being able to pray for these individuals and to have them pray for us was a special blessing. May God continue to lead participants in his plan and purpose for their lives.
- December 3 – Jen Wojtysiak, NCF's Student Ministries Director, and Katharine Provost, NCF's Campus Staff Minister, are doing incredible work reaching out to NCF alumni. Pray that God would continue to bless these connections. Pray also for wisdom and leading as Jen and Christy Secor, NCF's Professional Ministries Director, meet to discuss other ways NCF could minister to our alumni.
- December 4 – Thank you for your prayers for NCF's leadership team as we look at selecting a new membership software system. Pray for leading as our team meets today to discuss the final candidates.
- December 5 - Pray for nurses and other members of the healthcare team as they care for individuals, family members, and others in the community who have COVID. Pray for needed resources and support among team members and organizations. Strengthen the mental health of our healthcare teams as they care for patients and experience moral distress. Pray for courage and the ability to be open about their own personal needs as they work long hours and are often the only one with their patients as they die.
- December 6 – We praise God for the work he is doing in and through our Sunday evening times of prayer. Pray these times of prayer continue to connect us to each other and deepen our relationship with God as we lift up the needs of students, faculty, and nurses across the country. We thank God for a deepening commitment to prayer within NCF.
- December 7 – As we reflect on the second week of Advent, we pray for peace – the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7a NJKV). We ask God to quiet our hearts. May we allow ourselves space to pause and to breathe in his peace.
- December 8 - Pray for students and faculty as they finish out this crazy semester. Both feel overwhelmed with all the changes that are taking place. They are worn. Pray for peace and hope as they head into the Christmas season.
- December 9 - The *Journal of Christian Nursing* editors thank God for increased feedback from readers about articles in *JCN*, as well as input from subject matter experts who

help maintain scholarly integrity in all that we publish. God has developed a skilled leadership team for *JCN*, for which we praise him.

- December 10 – We thank God for supporters who have continued to give during the pandemic. Please pray for new donors or increases to make up for gifts that have been lost.
- December 11 – We ask for wisdom and discernment as our nation's leaders make decisions about the release of vaccines to address COVID. May our leaders address the needs of the most vulnerable keeping the principles of justice and equity in mind.
- December 12 – Pray for clear communication and good discussion as Christy Secor and Mary Thompson, NCF's former Director, share tonight about mentoring with the Sacramento NCF group. Pray for wisdom and direction as this group explores mentoring with nursing students/new graduates and for NCF as we look at expanding mentoring initiatives in other areas as well.
- December 13 - Pray for a successful response to NCF's end of the year giving letter. Pray also for success with our December membership drive for new and renewing members. These initiatives provide needed financial support for the ministry and work of NCF.
- December 14 – As we pause and reflect on the power of love for the third week of Advent may we as God's people be willing to pray the dangerous prayers. May we be willing to love as God has loved us and to encourage each other as we grow.
- December 15 - Pray for our NCF student groups as they continue to navigate online ministry and battle the very real "zoom fatigue." Pray for groups to stay active through the pandemic.
- December 16 – We remember our faith community nurses who have been providing support, insight, and resources to their communities of faith. Pray for protection of their health and give them insight as they communicate with members who may be struggling with guidelines that have been set to help protect and slow the spread of the virus.
- December 17 – Pray for our more than 100 professional nurse group leaders who are a part of more than 40 professional nurse groups. We ask God to give them encouragement and to provide wisdom and insight as they lead their groups. Some are seeing growth in their groups. Others are struggling to stay connected. Pray for wisdom for Christy Secor as she supports these groups. Pray also for God to work in the hearts of other nurses to establish new groups in the coming year.
- December 18 – We lift up Kathy Schoonover-Shoffner, the Director of NCF and the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Christian Nursing*, and her husband, Richard. We ask God to support and encourage them both. We are grateful for Kathy's leadership and her dependence on the Lord. May God bless Kathy and give her wisdom, discernment, and insight as she leads NCF and the *JCN*.

- December 19 – Pray for Jessica Harper and Leanne Snively who are behind the creative marketing of NCF’s communication pieces. We ask God to bless them and to continue to provide marketing tools that communicate the mission of NCF – to establish and advance in nursing witnessing communities of nursing students and nurses who follow Jesus as Savior and Lord as they grow in love for God, God's Word, God's people of every ethnicity and culture, and God's purposes in the world.
- December 20 – We praise God for the fruits of ministry that we are seeing during these uncertain times: our Sunday evening prayer times, weekly prayer times for faculty, student groups that are inviting their peers to NCF meetings, a renewed interest in mentoring, growing attendance in our virtual professional nurse groups, and student groups that are implementing spiritual care proxies. God is at work!
- December 21 – We enter this final week of Advent remembering and reflecting on the gift of joy. May this joy be seen in our lives even in the difficult circumstances we face. May this joy also draw others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.
- December 22 – We ask God to lead *JCN* authors and editors in preparing meaningful and practical spiritual content in each article and column. We want to develop and refine the journal’s aim to help students, nurses, and educators integrate their faith with their practice.
- December 23 – We remember the more than 900 healthcare workers who have died as a result of caring for others with COVID. We lift up their families, friends, and colleagues who grieve their loss.
- December 24 – We pause to reflect on the obedience of a young woman who was willing to say, “I am willing to be used of the Lord. Let it happen to me as you have said” (Luke 1: 38a, NLV). May we walk in that same obedience.
- December 25 – We celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior and the upside-down way he entered this world...born in a stable, placed in a manger, announced by angels, and visited by shepherds. He was born a king and crucified as a criminal. His sacrifice bought our freedom. We are forever grateful.
- December 26 - Pray for NCF’s student ministries fundraising efforts that will be used to help ensure thriving groups for years to come.
- December 27 – Thank you for the prayers for Christy Secor following the death of her Daddy in August as well as her move to another state and then diagnosis of COVID. The staff and members of NCF have provided tremendous prayer support, presence, understanding, and encouragement during these difficult months. Pray for Christy as she seeks God’s leading and wisdom. Pray for creativity and management of her time. Pray also for continued healing from the grief that can weigh her down.

- December 28 – Pray for the health and well-being of NCF’s staff and their families during the pandemic. Some are also balancing the challenges of school needs of their children. Pray for times to be in the Word where they can be renewed and refreshed.
- December 29 – We ask for your prayers for the NCF International World Congress that will be held virtually in July 2021. This event is being hosted by Colorado Christian University. Pray for wisdom and God’s leading as details come together.
- December 30 – We ask for continued sensitivity to the Holy Spirit and his wisdom for each member of NCF’s staff as we work with students and nurses across the United States. Nurses Christian Fellowship has and will always be his ministry. We lean on him for direction.
- December 31 – Today we close out 2020. It has been a year of letting go, new priorities, sheltering in place, but also seeing God open new possibilities for ministry. God is still at work. We acknowledge the loss and pain of this year while also recognizing the hope we have in Jesus Christ. We lean into his love as we continue to learn to trust him in all things.