

**EXPECTING LIFE: ISAIAH 40**  
**LEADER INSTRUCTION SHEET**  
5-MINUTE ADVENT EVENING CANDLE SERVICE  
EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH + 7:00 PM

Thank you for serving as a 5-Minute Advent service leader for the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh!

*The Advent season prepares us to welcome Jesus into the world at Christmas. Sometimes Advent is called the Little Lent, with about a month to get ready for the arrival of the Christ child. This year the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh will observe Advent together, turning our eyes toward new life that comes at Christmas. Together we'll share 5 minutes in the evening, turning our hearts toward the hope we receive in the story and promises of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Our 5 Minute Advent series will follow Isaiah 40 verse by verse, which prophesies the coming joy of God in the world, with ample comfort, straight paths, and eternal hope. Together we'll prepare for the new life God brings in and among us.*

**Instructions to prepare for the evening(s) you lead**

You will receive a copy of the working bulletin for the day by email. You will lead all parts of the service except for the hymn. Participant responses are in bold.

**Please prepare a prayer and email to Canon Hall ([nhall@episcopalpgh.org](mailto:nhall@episcopalpgh.org)) to print at least 24 hours in advance.** The prayer should relate to the reading and your reflection and be no more than 3 sentences long.

*Here are examples:*

- God of our homing, you went to Lazarus' home, whom you raised from the dead. Come to our own lives and homes, too. Give us new life and celebrate your lifegiving work among us. **Amen.**
- Holy God, we're told to stay home now. Before the pandemic that was sometimes our hope: to stay home and rest. But now, give our hearts and minds other places to go by hope in you, through your promises out ahead of us. **Amen.**
- God of life, we enter the world in various ways, yet we all need the same things: food, clothing, home, and family. Thank you for parents who find every way possible to give children what they need. Give us eyes to see where we can help. **Amen.**

**Please prepare a brief reflection on the verse(s).** The reflection is a short paragraph that speaks to the context and meaning of the verse(s) on what it is to expect life coming to us at Jesus' birth (remember, 5 minutes total!).

*Sample verse and reflection:*

*Monday, November 29*

Isaiah 40:1 Comfort, o comfort my people, says your God.

When I was expecting, people gave gifts for the new baby. Most everything was soft, fuzzy, and warm. Blankets, sleep-sacks, onesies, sheets, and loveys – all of it was designed to communicate *comfort*. Babies are new to the world and comfort is what they seek: a full belly, soft clothes, and warm arms to hold them.

This upcoming Christmas, I don't have anything soft or fuzzy on my list. Instead, I'm hoping to replace a few kitchen pans. But the truth is that even as an adult, I still vie for that which is soft, gentle, and snuggly. Years after the time I was a baby, I still seek comfort. Which is why these first words out of Isaiah's pen are so inviting. *Comfort... comfort... Yes. Comfort is what I need. Isaiah tells us comfort belongs to God; comfort is God's will and purpose for you, for me, and for all people. Comfort is not just for babies, new to the world; comfort is for you, too. God sees that you need comfort, and God promises to bring comfort to you, and for you. Amen.*

**Instructions for the evening(s) you lead**

- Canon Hall will start the Zoom link at 6:55 PM. Please also join a few minutes before the 7:00 PM start.
- Hall will introduce you by name and parish, then screenshare our evening bulletin.
- Please begin the brief evening service at 7:00 PM. Gathered participants respond with the bold text.
- Hall will advise participants to mute during the hymn.
- Conclude by blessing those gathered with one of the blessing options.
- At 7:05 PM, at the conclusion of the service, thank everyone, say that you look forward to seeing them tomorrow evening, and Hall will end the Zoom meeting.

Thank you for your faithful leadership and helping us gather around Jesus together during this Advent season!

In Christ,  
Natalie+