



## RECAPTURE the Wonder

Join us for Advent Sundays  
November 27 - December 18

### northchurch

Group Discussion Guide

#### Found in the Hope

Sunday, November 27, 2011

#### Read

Read aloud through the story found in Matthew 1:18-23. Go around the circle in the group with each person reading a verse until you're done.

#### Discuss

Do you remember the feeling of anticipation and wonder you had as a child before Christmas? Share with the group one aspect of Christmas you looked forward to the most when you were little.

That sense of wonder we had as children about Christmas gets eroded over time – shopping, busy schedule, expectations, family tensions, etc. all tend to leave “wonder” in the dust. And yet, Advent is about remembering the birth of Jesus, and anticipating his return! As we focus on this, we hope to recapture the wonder of what Christmas is really about.

Read Matthew 1:18-23 and imagine yourself in Joseph's shoes. What do you think you would have felt? What do you think was on Joseph's mind during the rest of Mary's pregnancy after the dream? What does it really mean that “God is with us”? What difference does it make to you personally?

Read 1 Peter 1:3-12. This text is written specifically to us who, unlike Peter, have never “seen” Jesus physically. He speaks of the hope we have for the future when Jesus returns on the “last day” – a day that the prophets of old spoke about and angels watch for. What is the “priceless inheritance” we have that Peter is referring to? In light of your current circumstances, what part of this inheritance do you anticipate the most?

The traditional Christmas carol *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* speaks of the brokenness of this life and longing for the life Jesus (Emmanuel) brings. Read through the words of this song (on page 2). Which word or phrase carries meaning for you? What is it about that word or phrase that creates hope or anticipation for you?

#### Pray

Reserve at least the last 15 minutes of group time to pray for the things that came up during your discussion and any other prayer needs.

**Here's some background information:**

**Matthew 1:18-23 New Living Translation (NLT)**

**18** This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. **19** Joseph, her fiancé, was a good man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

**20** As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. **21** And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

**22** All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet: **23** "Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'"

**1 Peter 1:3-12 New Living Translation (NLT)**

**3** All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, **4** and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. **5** And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.

**6** So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. **7** These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

**8** You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. **9** The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.

**10** This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about when they prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you. **11** They wondered what time or situation the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ's suffering and his great glory afterward.

**12** They were told that their messages were not for themselves, but for you. And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.

**Lyrics to "O come, O come, Emmanuel"**

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.

Refrain  
*Rejoice! Rejoice!*  
*Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,  
Who orderest all things mightily;  
To us the path of knowledge show,  
And teach us in her ways to go.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;  
From depths of hell Thy people save,  
And give them victory over the grave.

O come, Thou Day-spring, come and  
cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

O come, Thou Key of David, come,  
And open wide our heavenly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery.

O come, O come, great Lord of might,  
Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height  
In ancient times once gave the law  
In cloud and majesty and awe.

O come, Thou Root of Jesse's tree,  
An ensign of Thy people be;  
Before Thee rulers silent fall;  
All peoples on Thy mercy call.

O come, Desire of nations, bind  
In one the hearts of all mankind;  
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,  
And be Thyself our King of Peace.