

## **SAN RAMON VALLEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH WIDE ADVENT STUDY 2024**

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Small Group Discussion Guide for the "INCARNATION" Sermon Series based on Adam Hamilton's, INCARNATION: Rediscovering the Significance of Christmas

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### **Week 1: "A King Like None Other"**

**Scripture:** Isaiah 9:6-7, Matthew 2:1-12

**Chapter Summary:** Jesus as "King of Kings" challenges conventional notions of power. Hamilton reflects on how Christ's kingship is defined not by dominance but by humility, service, and love. He invites us to imagine a world shaped by Jesus' values of justice and peace.

**Quote:** "Christ's kingship is not about lording over others but about reigning in hearts that are committed to justice, mercy, and peace." (*Incarnation*, Chapter 1)

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How does Christ's kingship differ from earthly rulers?
2. What areas of your life need to come under Christ's reign?
3. How can the Church embody kingdom values in the community?

**Action Step:** Commit to an act of justice or service that reflects Christ's kingdom values this week.

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### **Week 2: "A Savior of the Oppressed"**

**Scripture:** Exodus 3:7-11, Luke 2:8-15

**Chapter Summary:** In exploring Jesus as "Savior," Hamilton focuses on His role in rescuing humanity from sin and brokenness. This salvation extends beyond the individual, calling the Church to liberate and uplift the oppressed. Hamilton connects Jesus' mission with God's concern for justice, as shown in the Exodus story.

**Quote:** "Jesus is the Savior who comes not only to save us from our sins but to save the world from oppression and injustice." (*Incarnation*, Chapter 2)

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What does it mean for Jesus to be both personal Savior and Savior of the world?
2. How can the Church reflect Christ's liberating work in society today?
3. What parallels do you see between Moses' mission and Jesus' ministry?

**Action Step:** Partner with a local organization addressing injustice (e.g., homelessness or food insecurity).

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### **Week 3: "You Shall Call Him Emmanuel"**

**Scripture:** Matthew 1:18-24, Hebrews 1:1-3

**Chapter Summary:** "Emmanuel" reminds us that God is present in our struggles, joys, and pain. Hamilton emphasizes how the Incarnation reveals God's love and solidarity with humanity. Through Christ's presence, believers are called to embody God's care by standing with those in need.

**Quote:** "Emmanuel means God is with us, not as a distant observer but as one who shares in our suffering and joy." (*Incarnation*, Chapter 3)

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What does it mean for you personally that God is "with us"?
2. How has God's presence been evident in difficult times in your life?
3. How can we reflect God's nearness to others during Advent?

**Action Step:** Reach out to someone who feels isolated and offer them support or companionship.

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### **Week 4: "The Light That Leads Us"**

**Scripture:** Isaiah 60:1-5, John 1:1-14

**Chapter Summary:** Jesus as the "Light of the World" dispels darkness and brings hope. Hamilton examines how Christ illuminates our lives and calls us to reflect His light into a world filled with fear and despair. The Incarnation invites us to live as bearers of hope and healing.

**Quote:** "Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness, and His light calls us to reflect His love in a world longing for hope." (*Incarnation*, Chapter 4)

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What does it mean for Jesus to be the Light in your life?
2. How does the light of Christ inspire you to act in the face of darkness in the world?
3. In what ways can the Church be a beacon of hope in your community?

**Action Step:** Share an act of kindness or a gesture of love with someone in need.

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#### **Further Study Suggestions**

- **Supporting Scriptures:** Philippians 2:5-11, Psalm 72, Colossians 1:15-20
- Encourage participants to read a chapter of *Incarnation* each week, reflecting on the related sermon theme.
- Use the book's accompanying videos or Leader Guide to deepen discussions in your small group setting.

This structure ensures that each week builds anticipation for Christmas while encouraging tangible acts of faith and service, inspired by Hamilton's exploration of Christ's titles

## FULL SERMON SERIES SYNOPSIS:

### INCARNATION: Rediscovering the Christ of Christmas

**Series Synopsis:** Based on the book *Incarnation* by Adam Hamilton, this four-part series explores the meaning of Jesus' titles and their relevance for our lives today. Each sermon draws from the Advent narrative and invites practical actions to prepare our hearts for Christmas. This series not only prepares congregations for Christmas but also calls them to active participation in the transformative work of Christ. Each week builds anticipation and deepens faith in the incarnate God who came to dwell among us.

Sunday, December 1, 2024 (1<sup>st</sup> Week of Advent) | "A King Like None Other" based on Isaiah 9:6-7 and Matthew 2:1-12

Synopsis: Jesus is introduced as King, the one who reigns with justice and righteousness. As the promised King, He comes not to dominate but to bring healing to a broken world. While earthly rulers often fail, Christ's kingship offers hope, peace, and a model of leadership centered on service and humility. This week, we explore what it means to live under the reign of Christ and align our priorities with His kingdom. This message challenges the Church to reflect Christ's kingdom values by working toward peace and justice in our communities.

Sunday, December 8, 2024 (2<sup>nd</sup> Week of Advent) | "A Savior of the Oppressed" based on Exodus 3:7-11 and Luke 2:8-15

Synopsis: In His ministry, Jesus fulfills the role of Savior, bringing good news to the poor and liberation to the oppressed. The angel's proclamation of Jesus as Savior highlights humanity's need for rescue from sin and brokenness. Jesus offers not just personal salvation but also the hope of restoration for the world. This sermon examines how the Savior's work impacts our lives and communities. Drawing parallels between Moses' call and Jesus' mission, this sermon explores how the Church is called to continue this work. The Incarnation reminds us that salvation isn't just spiritual but encompasses the liberation of the whole person.

Sunday, December 15, 2024 (3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Advent) | "You Shall Call Him Emmanuel" based on Matthew 1:18-24 and Hebrews 1:1-3

Synopsis: Emmanuel, meaning "God with us," reveals the nearness of God in Christ. In Jesus, God made flesh steps into our world, dwells among us, sharing our joys and struggles and entering our pain and brokenness. This message encourages us to find comfort in God's presence and to embody that presence for others. His presence demonstrates God's nearness to those who suffer and calls the Church to do the same, equipping us to be present with those in need, embodying God's love in tangible ways.

Sunday, December 22, 2024 (4<sup>th</sup> Week of Advent) | "The Light That Leads Us" based on Isaiah 60:1-5 and John 1:1-14

Synopsis: Jesus as the Light of the World dispels darkness and illuminates the path of life. His coming into the world signifies hope and victory over fear, sin, and death. As followers of the Light, we are called to reflect His radiance in our actions and relationships, reflecting His glory through acts of compassion and

mercy. This final message urges us to embrace our identity as bearers of light, bringing hope and healing to the world.

Sunday, December 29, 2024 | “Epilogue: Revisiting the Visit of the Magi” based on Matthew 2:1-12 and Philippians 2:5-11

Synopsis: Christmas may now be past us, but hopefully the Christ of Christmas remains in our hearts. Having come to know Jesus deeper in the season of Advent, the hope is that we can be more intentional about worshipping Him. The Magi who came from the East had a singular purpose: to worship the Christ. The saying is true: “Wise men still seek Jesus.” In this epilogue message of the Incarnation series, we will consider how we can continue to worship and follow Jesus in the new year.

**\*Action:** Commit to regular practices of community worship on Sundays and daily devotions.