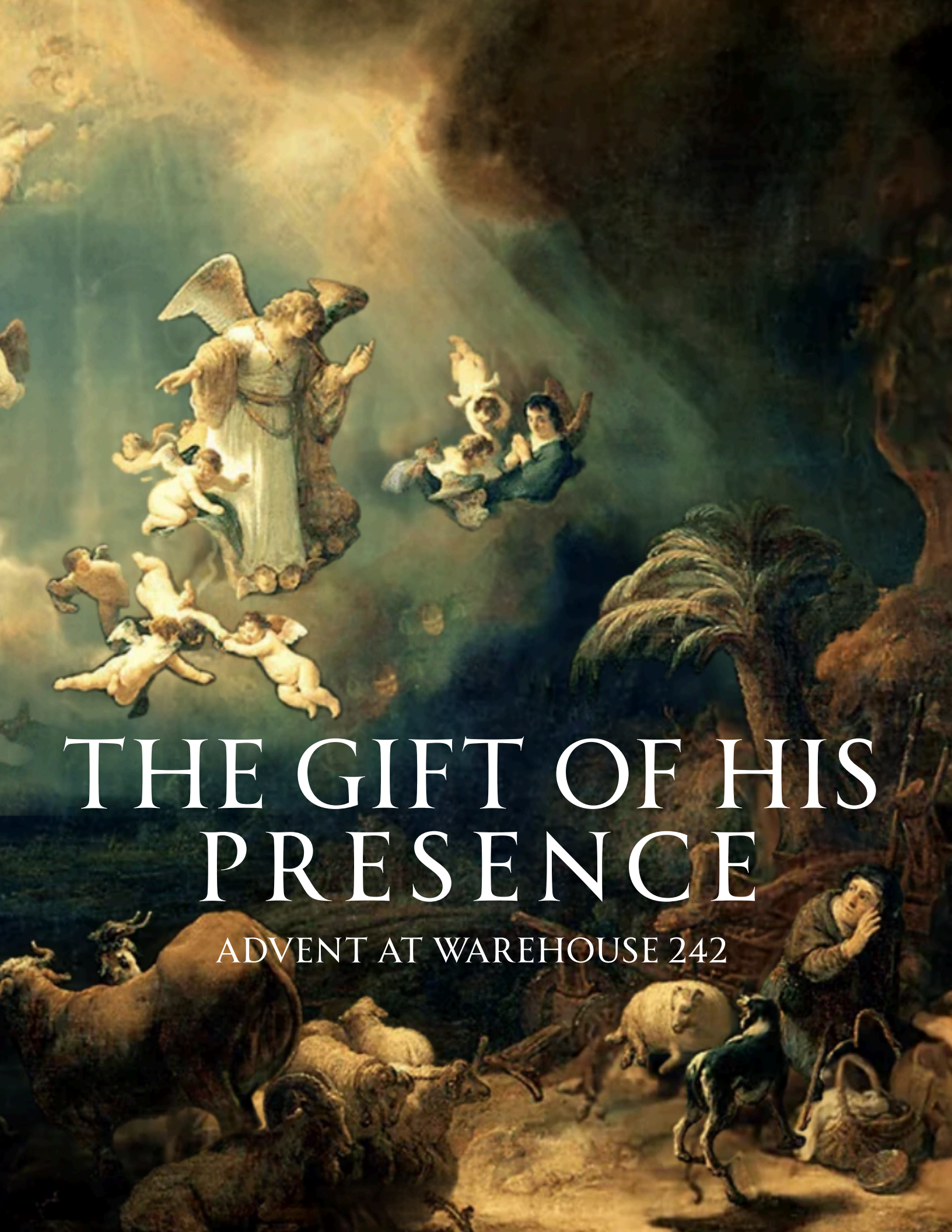

THE GIFT OF HIS PRESENCE

ADVENT AT WAREHOUSE 242

THE GIFT OF HIS PRESENCE

Join us in a five-week invitation of preparing our hearts for Christmas.

Advent is the celebration of the God who comes to us and the anticipation of the God who will come again.

It is a season of waiting and watching, of remembering God's promises and making room for their fulfillment. For generations, God's people longed for a light to lead them out of darkness, bread to sustain them, a shepherd to gather them, and water to renew them. Through the prophets, God promised that He would come to rescue, provide, restore, and redeem.

And then Jesus came.

Not simply to bring these gifts, but to reveal Himself as their fulfillment. He is the Light of the World, the Bread of Life, the Good Shepherd, and the Living Water. In Jesus, we encounter the God who comes near—not just for a moment in history, but to dwell with His people.

This Advent, we are exploring these promises through the words of the prophets and the declarations of Jesus. As we do, we'll also hear stories from some of our ministry partners and local ministry friends, offering glimpses of the ways God is at work in communities near and far.

These stories remind us that God's presence is not confined to our walls or our familiar places. We are invited to notice, to listen, to pray, and to participate in the work of God's kingdom wherever we find ourselves.

The practices and reflections in this devotional are not another list of things to accomplish during an already full season. They are invitations to slow down, pay attention, and make room for God. The God who has come, who is with us, and who will come again.

May we receive the gift of His presence, and may our lives become a reflection of His love in the world.

EXPECTANTLY WAITING

Priming our Hearts | November 22 | Psalm 5

"Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly." — Psalm 5:3

READ

Psalm 5:1–3, 7–8, 11–12 NLT

REFLECT

What are you waiting for? Perhaps it's something you can name easily: an answer, a decision, a change in circumstances, a relationship restored. Or perhaps it's a longing you haven't quite found words for. We all know something of waiting—the uncertainty of what lies ahead, the ache of what is not yet, the hope that things might be different.

In Psalm 5, David brings his whole self before God. He comes with groaning and cries for help. He asks for direction and protection. He doesn't hide his uncertainty or pretend that the road ahead is clear. Instead, he brings his requests to God and waits expectantly.

PRACTICE | A Morning Prayer of Waiting

For a few mornings this week, before reaching for your phone or moving into the demands of the day, take a few moments to be still before God.

You might begin with the words of Psalm 5:

"Listen to my voice in the morning, Lord. Each morning I bring my requests to You and wait expectantly."

Bring whatever is on your heart. Name your hopes, your worries, and the things you cannot control. Then allow a little space for silence. You don't need to solve anything or come away with an answer. Simply practice placing your life in the care of the One who hears you.

story | HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

As we enter this season of waiting, we are honored to share more about Ravens Uganda, the ministry of our friends Abel and Mildred Muwanguzi. Ravens Uganda helps hope take root by providing access to higher education and holistic care for the next generation in Uganda.

engage | Ravens uganda

Join us for "Lunch + Livestream" on December 6 to hear more from Abel and Mildred, a Ravens graduate, and some current youth in the program. You can also purchase Rod Wimer's art in the Warehouse gallery to support Ravens Uganda.

a prayer for the week

God of unfailing love,
Meet me in this season of waiting.
I offer You my hopes and my groaning,
my questions and my prayers.
Make Your way plain for me to follow.
Teach me to wait with open hands and an expectant heart, trusting that You are near.
Amen.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

WEEK 1 | November 29

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light."
— Isaiah 9:2

READ

Isaiah 9:2–7
John 8:12

REFLECT

There are seasons when the darkness sits heavier than the light. We see it in the brokenness of our world, in the suffering of our neighbors, and in the places of uncertainty and longing within our own lives. The hope of Advent begins here—not with an expectation that we will somehow find our way out of the darkness, but with the promise that God comes to meet us in it.

CONSIDER

Where are you most aware of darkness or uncertainty in your life or in the world right now? What might it mean for you to follow Jesus, the Light of the World, in that place?

PRACTICE | LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Using whatever you have available—watercolors, colored pencils, photography, collage, or even words on a page—create something that reflects the movement from darkness into light.

There is no right way to do this, and it doesn't need to be something you would show anyone else. When you finish, sit with what you've created. Offer it to God as a prayer, asking Jesus to continue shining His light in you and through you.

STORY | BRINGING LIGHT

Sometimes the light of Christ shines most clearly through the simple act of showing up. Young Life, Urban Young Life, and Young Lives are ministries committed to entering the world of young people, building meaningful relationships, and creating spaces where they can experience belonging and discover the love of Jesus. **Young Lives** specifically comes alongside adolescent parents, offering friendship, encouragement, practical support, and opportunities to grow in faith as they navigate the challenges of parenting and young adulthood.

Engage | Young life

We are honored to host a Young Lives group at Warehouse 242. You can support the work of making room for young parents to be known, supported, and encouraged by signing up to provide a meal or childcare through the "Learn More About Ways to Engage" QR code on the back of this booklet.

A prayer for the week

God of Light, You meet us in the darkness
and promise that the darkness will not overcome Your light.
Open our eyes to the places where You are already at work.
Give us courage to draw near to those who need care.
Give us compassion to walk alongside those who are weary.
Give us generous hearts that reflect Your love.
May we receive the gift of Your presence and become people who carry Your light into the world.
Amen.

THE BREAD OF LIFE
WEEK 2 | December 6

"Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'" — John 6:35

READ

Exodus 16:1–18

John 6:25–40

REFLECT

We know what it is to be hungry. Sometimes our hunger is physical, but often it reaches beyond what can be placed on a table. The invitation of Jesus is not to stop caring for our daily needs, but to discover the One who meets us in them. We are invited to come to Him, to receive rather than grasp, and to trust that His life is enough.

CONSIDER

What kinds of hunger are you carrying in this season?

PRACTICE | MAKE ROOM AT THE TABLE

Share a meal or a baked good with someone this week. It might be a friend, a neighbor, someone you don't know as well as you'd like, or someone who could use a little company.

As you gather, consider asking one another:

- Is there a place in your life where you are hungry for something more?

STORY | FROM EXCESS TO NOURISHMENT

In Charlotte, good food is often discarded while neighbors go without enough to eat. **Feeding Charlotte** works to bridge that gap by rescuing surplus food that would otherwise go to waste and making it available to nonprofit organizations serving people in need.

Among the volunteers who make this possible are our own Connie and Jeff Grubbs. They give their time to pick up and repackage rescued food so it can nourish neighbors in our community. Their service is a simple but meaningful expression of care: recognizing that what might otherwise be discarded can still meet a real need, and choosing to be part of making that possible.

engage | Feeding Charlotte

Where might God be inviting you to participate in His care for others? Perhaps it begins with noticing the needs around you, sharing a meal, giving generously, or offering your time. Consider learning more about **Feeding Charlotte** and the ways you can join their work.

a prayer for the week

Jesus, Bread of Life,

You know our hunger before we have words to name it. Forgive us for the ways we grasp for more when You invite us to trust Your care. Teach us to receive what You give, to recognize the abundance around us, and to share generously with others. May we find our life in You, and may our lives become a source of nourishment and care for our neighbors. Amen.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

WEEK 3 | December 13

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." —Jesus as recorded in John 10:11

READ

Ezekiel 34:11–16
John 10:1–18

REFLECT

In Ezekiel 34, God speaks to a people who have experienced the failure of their shepherds. Those entrusted with their care have looked after themselves rather than tending the flock. The vulnerable have been neglected, the injured have not been healed, and the scattered have not been gathered. God responds with a promise: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them.

Centuries later, Jesus takes up this image and declares, "I am the good shepherd." He is not a distant caretaker or an indifferent leader. He knows His sheep, calls them by name, seeks them when they wander, and lays down His life for them.

PRACTICE | WALK WITH THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Take a walk this week without headphones or a particular destination in mind. As you walk, pay attention to the people and places around you.

As you walk, pray:
Good Shepherd, help me see the people You see. Teach me to notice, to listen, and to offer care as You have cared for me.

STORY | COMING ALONGSIDE

This week's ministry spotlight is on Amy Golden with **Cornerstone International**. Amy is a long-time member of Warehouse 242 who has returned to South Africa after working for more than a decade as an Occupational Therapist in Charlotte. Amy's heart for shepherding and caring for others is evident in her work alongside local leaders, providing holistic care to women and children in transition. Amy is working to help women and children experience the love of Jesus, receive emotional healing, and become equipped for sustainable living.

engage | Amy golden

Bring the whole family for cookie decorating and snacks at our "Cookies with Amy" event following the service on December 13. You will have the chance to hear more from Amy and learn about her work in South Africa.

A prayer for the week

Good Shepherd,
I am often like the sheep who falls into the same trench again and again.
Lord, set me on the right path.
Thank you that I am seen, known, and cared for by You.
May I walk with You and be attentive to your voice.
Amen.

THE LIVING WATER

WEEK 4 | December 20

"Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." — Jesus as recorded in John 7:38

READ

Isaiah 35:1–10
John 7:37–39

REFLECT

In Isaiah 35, the prophet offers a picture of hope: the desert will rejoice, the wilderness will blossom, and streams of water will flow through dry places. God promises restoration where there has been barrenness, strength where there has been weakness, and a way home for those who have been scattered.

Centuries later, Jesus stands before a crowd during the Feast of Tabernacles and extends an invitation: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink." He speaks of living water—not simply water that satisfies a momentary thirst, but the life of God's Spirit, given freely to those who believe.

As we come to the close of Advent, we are reminded that the God who came near in Jesus continues to bring life to dry places. We are invited to drink deeply, to be renewed, and to allow His love to flow through us.
Consider:

- Where in your life are you feeling spiritually thirsty or depleted?
- What are you turning to in an attempt to satisfy that thirst?
- Where might the life of Jesus be inviting you to bring encouragement, hope, or renewal to someone else?

PRACTICE | LET THE WORDS FLOW

Use the prompts below to write your own prayer or poem. Don't worry about making it beautiful or getting the words just right. Let it be an honest response to God.
Jesus, you invite me to come and drink.
Sometimes I feel....
Jesus, today I need you to...
Something I hope you will bring to life in me is…
I want your love to flow through me to…

STORY | A LIFE THAT FLOWS OUTWARD

This week, we get to hear from Aidyn Fischli. Aidyn grew up at Warehouse 242 and is now serving with **Christian Surfers** in the Southwest. Through relationships and a shared love of surfing, **Christian Surfers** creates opportunities to connect with local communities and share the hope of Jesus.
Her story offers a glimpse of how the life of Christ takes root in us and continues to reach beyond us, like living water moving outward—bringing hope, connection, and the love of Jesus into the places where we live, work, and serve.
engage | Christian Surfers International

Join us after the service on December 20 for a screening of the first episode of "To Love & Do Good", a three-part film series exploring the relationship between surfing, faith, and the importance of community in a surfer's life.

A PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Jesus, Living Water,
You meet us in our thirst and offer us the life that only You can give. Renew the dry places within us. Teach us to come to You again and again, trusting that Your Spirit is at work within us. Let the life we receive from you flow outward in love, generosity, and hope. Amen.

CHRISTMAS
THE GIFT OF HIS PRESENCE

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." — John 1:14

READ

Luke 2:1–20
John 1:1–14

REFLECT

After all the waiting, the promises, and the longing, the moment arrives. A child is born. An angel announces good news. Shepherds leave their fields and hurry to Bethlehem. And there, in an ordinary place, they encounter something extraordinary: God has come near.

The God who promised light for those walking in darkness, bread for the hungry, a shepherd for the scattered, and water for the thirsty has come among us—not as an idea or an abstraction, but as a person. Flesh and blood. A baby who needs to be held.

This is the wonder of Christmas. God does not wait for us to find our way to Him. He comes to us. He enters the vulnerability of our humanity and makes His home among us.

Throughout Advent, we have considered the ways Jesus reveals himself as our Light, our Bread, our Good Shepherd, and our Living Water. These are not simply gifts He offers from a distance. They are expressions of who He is. In Jesus, we encounter the very presence of God.

And perhaps that is enough for today. We don't have to accomplish anything, resolve every uncertainty, or manufacture a feeling of wonder. We are invited to receive the good news: God is with us. In the joy and the sorrow, in the fullness and the longing, in the ordinary and the unexpected, His presence is our gift.
The child in the manger is the beginning of a story that will change everything. And the promise of Christmas is that this God who came near has not stopped drawing near to us.

PRACTICE | MAKE ROOM TO RECEIVE

Find a quiet moment today. If you can, sit with the Christmas story in Luke 2. Read it slowly, imagining yourself among those gathered around the manger.
You don't need to find the perfect words or make a particular response. Simply sit with the wonder that God has come near.
When you are ready, pray:
God, thank You for coming to us. Help me receive the gift of Your presence—not only today, but in the ordinary moments of my life. Amen.

A Christmas Blessing
May you know the light of Christ in every darkness,
the nourishment of His presence in every hunger,
the tenderness of His care in every uncertainty,
and the renewal of His Spirit in every dry place.
May you receive the gift of His presence
and carry the love of Christ into the world.

THE STORY CONTINUES

Throughout this Advent season, we've shared glimpses of the ways God is at work through friends and ministry partners near and far. These are just a few of the people and organizations we are honored to walk alongside.

We invite you to learn more, pray for their work, and consider how you might participate through the links below.

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR PARTNERS HERE:

LEARN MORE ABOUT WAYS TO ENGAGE HERE:

We believe God's kingdom work isn't reserved just for missionaries or people in formal ministry. It happens wherever ordinary people make themselves available to God's extraordinary love—in their neighborhoods, workplaces, families, churches, and communities around the world. Each of us has a part to play. As we notice the needs around us and offer what we have, we become participants in the unfolding story of God's kingdom.

FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN.
AND HIS NAME IS IMMANUEL—GOD WITH US.


WAREHOUSE 242
ADVENT 2026