Advent is celebrated in many Christian churches around the world. The season begins four Sundays before Christmas Day (25 December). This year, 2017, Advent begins on December 3. These four weeks are designated as a holy time, filled with expectation in preparation of the coming of Christ in the manger and in our lives. Some use this time for special focused prayer; a number of people choose to fast during Advent while others choose to reflect more deeply upon the gift of Jesus Christ. Many will use a special devotional just for Advent. A number of churches will light candles each week representing hope, peace, joy and love; or prophets, angels, shepherds and magi; or any number of themes they might like to reflect upon during the season.

Human Rights Day, December 10, is always during Advent. The Baptist World Alliance chooses to acknowledge this day as a time of reflection and consideration of the needs of our world and how we, as Baptists, are called to do justice, love kindness and to walk humbly with God as we prepare the way for the coming of Christ. This year, Human Rights Day is the second Sunday of Advent. We encourage your church to use these resources as you see fit in your worship experience. We would love to hear how your congregation celebrates Human Rights Day and Advent. Would you please email the Division on Mission, Evangelism and Justice and let us know? mej@bwanet.org

He [God] has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8, NRSV

“He [God] has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8, NRSV

“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world.” Eleanor Roosevelt, Driving force behind the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
A Prayer for Human Rights Day

Holy and loving God,

We know it to be true that you value the lives, rights, and the existence of all people. We come to you on Human Rights Day looking toward the eschatological vision of a day in which all people will be viewed as equal in the eyes of our Creator, and in the eyes of creation. As it is our calling to care for those who bear your image, help us to learn what it looks like to prepare the eschatological way of the Lord. As we go about our lives, be that which guides us through the wilderness as we continue to pave a consecrated highway that not only leads to you, but also points to you. And in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we ask that you allow us not forget the value of life that each person bears as a unique creation made in your image.

Amen.

Minister Robert “Bobby” V. Martinez
Master of Divinity candidate, George W. Truett Theological Seminary
Call to Worship:

Leader: Let us prepare the way of the Lord.
People: Let us make a smooth highway for our God.

Leader: Let us prepare the way of the Lord.
People: Let the glory of the Lord be revealed for all to see.

Leader: Let us prepare the way of the Lord.
People: Let the valleys in life be lifted up and the struggles in life be made low.

Leader: Let us prepare the way of the Lord.
People: Let the people be comforted for all time.

Prayer of Confession (Unison):

God of love, we come before you in the songs and celebrations of the season of Advent. Yet all too often, we forget why you came and entered our world.
We forget those who are the poor, the needy and the oppressed; especially when our actions and lifestyles contribute to their impoverishment.
We forget those who are in prison; especially those who suffer unjustly.
We forget those who are homeless; especially refugees, immigrants, and those in human trafficking.
We forget those who are the orphaned children; especially those orphaned as a result of war, terror, and famine.
All too often Lord, we forget those in need the world over. And in turn O Lord, we forget You.
May the voice of the one calling out in the wilderness stir our hearts and minds to action this day. Forgive our forgetfulness, have mercy on our apathy, and bathe us in Your grace, spirit, and power to go forth proclaiming and working for the coming of the Lord, this day and always. Amen.

Dr. Danny L. Franke
Professor of Philosophy and Religion
Alderson Broaddus University, USA
Litany for Human Rights Sunday
Based on Isaiah 40:1-11
(Or it may be adapted into a pastoral prayer)

Comfort, O Comfort your people, O God. Speak tenderly to the abused;

To the neglected;

To the orphan, the widow, the lonely;

To the refugee, the imprisoned, the trafficked.

You, who promises to lift every valley and lower every mountain, make us your
instruments to level the uneven ground.

In the rush of this Holy Season, give us your tenderness in gathering the bruised and broken lambs in our arms;

The homeless lambs;

The sexually exploited lambs;

The racially profiled lambs;

The nursing-home-forgotten lambs.

And as we stand, arm in arm on the level ground at the foot of the Cross, we will
shout together:

(All:) Here is your God!

Rev. Dr. Doyle Sager, Senior Pastor
First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Missouri, USA
Assurance

My Dearest Children,

I watched you as you slept last night. Though your heart may have been heavy, I reminded you as you slept, that your burdens were light. For I, the Lover of your soul, have exchanged burdens with you.

I hugged you as you awakened. As my arms wrapped around you, I enveloped you with my Love and Peace.

I kissed you as you went forth into the day. A day which I have made just for you to rejoice in. And with my kiss came all the Grace, Wisdom, Mercy and Strength that you would need to make it through this day.

I watched as you walked into this day. And I smiled when you hesitated, called out My name and invited me to go with you.

And so, here I am, with you today.....
as I always was.....
and always will be.

My dear children, go in God’s peace!

Minister Joann (Jodi) Newton
Palmer Theological Seminary student, USA
Prayer

Blessed God of all comfort, we humbly bow before you in this moment of prayer. We thank you for your great love for us and at the same time we affirm together our common humanity, people made in your glorious image. Even as we prepare to celebrate your Son’s coming into this fallen world, we turn our hearts inward to see ourselves just as you see us, people in constant need of your amazing grace, people who earnestly desire to allow the light of your Christ to be seen more clearly in us in all our actions, and people who strive to love others as we love ourselves.

We also turn our hearts outward, Merciful God, and we earnestly pray for the pain of so many millions of people all over our world whose voices have been silenced by unjust systems, whose daily life is painfully punctuated by senseless violence and abuse as adults and and children, whose cry for justice too long denied seem to fall on deaf ears, whose anguish for the basic necessities of life become an occasion for the rich and powerful to render them invisible by inhumane policies, and whose humanity seem to be reduced to mere numbers.

So, Dear God, baptize us again afresh today. We stand not only in need of your forgiveness and your salvation, but we also need to be unburdened from our own private fears. We need to be loosened from our helplessness and doubt. We need to be emboldened to take our stand firmly on the side of peace, mercy, justice, compassion, hope and nonviolence. Give us the courage to risk our safety for the sake of all persons who suffer the diminishing of their humanity. You love us all. We are all created equal in your sight.

Remind us, holy God, as we also keep our hearts looking upward, that the Good News has be entrusted to us; we are people of good tidings. We are certain of your coming again and again to empower us by your Holy Spirit to finish your work. May the sacrifice of your beloved Son continue to inspire us to serve others, to be faithful to our God-given call, to be indeed the keepers of our sisters and brothers, and to not grow weary in well doing. We make this prayer in the strong name of Jesus Your Christ. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Leo S. Thorne
Associate General Secretary (Retired)
American Baptist Churches USA
The prayer of service our neighbor
(Luke 10:30-37, Micah 6:8, Isaiah 58:12)

Oh Lord, allow us to remember those whose rights are jeopardized daily, allow us not to be silent to the heinous realities of injustice, prejudice, and oppression facing our sisters and brothers in our local communities, towns and those around the world. Allow our prayers and words to be met with Godly action that minister to our neighbors’ personal and spiritual needs. Holy Spirit, remind us to examine our hearts and motives, and why we are called to be the voice for the voiceless and advocate for those cannot for themselves. Before difficulties arise in our service to others let us center Christ in all we do. Our local communities, towns, countries are crying out for help and we have been called to answer. As we prepare to answer the call, God fill our hearts with compassion, love, mercy, and grace, that was shown to us by Jesus Christ; so we can be catalysts for change not for our own praise and self-aggrandizement but so Jesus Christ will be exalted through the breaking our wickedness. Lord, we pray these things in Jesus name, Amen.

Minister Terrance J. Young
Palmer Theological Seminary, USA
Advent Carol
Tune: Personent Hodie

God of light
Shine the way
For the child
To be born
Hopeful hearts
Long for _____ (hope, peace, joy, love)
Unto us our Savior
Born for all the nations

Refrain:
Pre--pare the way,
Ma--ke straight the path.
Pre--pare, the-- way,
Ma--ke straight the pathway.

Rev. Dr. Trisha Miller Manarin
Baptist World Alliance
Mid-Atlantic Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, USA
Covenant

Return to us once again...
Reclaiming God, with your own outstretched arm you led your once-enslaved people through the mighty Red Sea, and named them as your very own.

In acts of miraculous generosity, you fed them with fresh bread from heaven, and they were sustained; by looking only to you.

At your word, both the strong and the weak were equally renewed and refreshed, though they did not know nor understood how.

Reclaiming Father, return to us once again.

To Renew and Refresh us!

Redeeming God, by your own stretched-out arms you are still calling nations once excluded from the covenant, to be joined together into one people through grace in the baptismal regeneration.

In an act of self-sacrifice you brought an end to our despair, and opened the door to jubilant celebration; as the hope-filled new creation, so that all who were once-enslaved to traditions of men, and, separated by sin might become one though we might not fully understand how.

Redeeming Saviour, return to us once again.

To Renew and Refresh us!

Renewing God, through the purity of your baptismal fire you still open the hearts of all who are lost in ignorance and oppression.

You have shown us incomparable favour, by turning our gaze from introspection to your profound majesty and beauty.

Having shone your light into the darkened corners of our hearts, you have revealed what is false.

And, turning over artificial forms of our preferred images, you have revealed our true selves in the mirror of the word of truth though we still do not understand how.

Renewing Spirit, return to us once again.

To Renew and Refresh us!

Righteous God, who still journeys on to create the one new people; for all the pain we have caused in the past, and experienced through willful neglect to do what we know and understand to be right - we repent, and plead for spiritual renewal with fresh showers of blessing.

We renew covenant with you and with our brothers and sisters, by affirming our call to do what is right.

Acknowledging the sins committed in our name in the past through failure, so that we may walk with one another in watchfulness and joyful celebration from our shared baptismal story.

Once again Lord, renew and refresh us your people, to live in the fullness of your glory.

Amen

Rev. Dr. George Ayoma, Minister of the Fleetwood Baptist Church in Lancashire, England
Tenth anniversary of Baptist Union of Great Britain Council
offering an Apology for Slavery. General Secretary Rev. Lynn Green
LESSON TITLE: "Open Your Mouth...Regarding GOD's Gifts and Graces!!!"

LESSON TEXT: Proverbs 31:1-9

The sayings of King Lemuel—an inspired utterance his mother taught him.

2 Listen, my son! Listen, son of my womb!
   Listen, my son, the answer to my prayers!
3 Do not spend your strength[a] on women,
   your vigor on those who ruin kings.
4 It is not for kings, Lemuel—
   it is not for kings to drink wine,
   not for rulers to crave beer,
5 lest they drink and forget what has been decreed,
   and deprive all the oppressed of their rights.
6 Let beer be for those who are perishing,
   wine for those who are in anguish!
7 Let them drink and forget their poverty
   and remember their misery no more.
8 Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
   for the rights of all who are destitute.
9 Speak up and judge fairly;
   defend the rights of the poor and needy.

King Lemuel's Mother ardently reminds her son that he is to use his privilege, position, and power to help the 'least-privileged, least-positioned, and least-powerful' among us!

she states in verses 8 and 9:
"Speak up (open your mouth) for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of ALL who are destitute."

Speak up (open your mouth) and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."

Twice in this periscope, King Lemuel's GODly Mother, admonishes and implores her son to consider the (human) "rights" of the 'poor,' 'needy' 'destitute' and for 'those who cannot defend themselves.'

This is at the heart of "Human Rights Day" as espoused by the United Nations AND by ALL GOD-fearing, spiritually-minded, and justice/mercy loving adherent to any faith.

I challenge ALL of GOD's people...OF ALL FAITHS...to heed the wisdom of this ancient Jewish Proverb...OPEN [Y]OUR MOUTHS and speak-up against injustice, indecency, and incessant abuse of masses of people for the benefit of a few people.

"ALMIGHTY GOD, I ask that you would do the following in and for your people:

• remind us that we ALL have been given gifts and graces in amounts that surpass at least one other person on this planet;
• remind us that the greatest gift is the gift of voice to speak-up against unrighteousness in any form and anywhere;
• and GOD if and when we forget about our gifts and graces, send a "Proverbial Woman," like King Lemuel's Mother to give us either a gentle or forceful reminder, that to whom MUCH is given, MUCH is expected!

IN THE NAME OF THE ONE I CALL "YESHUA MY MESSIAH,"...JESUS' GRACIOUS & POWERFUL NAME, AMEN...AMEN...AMEN!!!

Rev. Dr. Darrell L. Armstrong
Pastor - Shiloh Baptist Church, Trenton, NJ USA
General Secretary – General Baptist Convention of NJ, Inc.
Chief Administrative Officer to the U.N. – Baptist World Alliance