



CLOSE to  
HOME

## WORDS FOR WORSHIP for Advent-Epiphany | Year C

Written by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

---

You are welcome to use or adapt these prayers for worship, with credit. When using these prayers for worship, please use the following credit line: “Prayer by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org).” If you adapt the prayers, please include the following credit line: “Adapted from a prayer by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org).” Refer to our licensing guidelines for more information: [sanctifiedart.org/licensing-terms](http://sanctifiedart.org/licensing-terms).

---

### ABOUT THIS LITURGY OUTLINE

- *Italicized lines are notes for worship leaders.*
- Unbolded lines are to be spoken by worship leaders and, when appropriate, printed in bulletins or projected on screens.
- **Bolded lines are to be spoken by the congregation and printed in bulletins or projected on screens.**

### A BENEDICTION FOR THE SERIES

As you leave *this* service, *your* service begins:

Comfort the homesick.

Open your doors to others.

Seek sanctuary.

Be brave enough to go home by another way.

And remember that here in God’s house, all are welcomed—so come back soon.

In the name of our Foundation—God, Spirit, and Son—

go in peace.

## The First Sunday of Advent

# HOMESICK (HOPE)

### Call to Worship

Can one be homesick for something you've never known?

**We are homesick for a just world,  
for peace like rivers,  
for the end of suffering.**

Yes, we are homesick—

**for joy that is contagious,  
for nations that feel like neighbors,  
and for hospitals that run empty.**

We are homesick for the world God promises.

**We are homesick, but we are on our way.**

God is here. God is still creating.

**Let us worship Holy God.**

### Candle Lighting Liturgy

*This litany is designed for two voices, but it could be adapted for three or four. The simple language and repetition was written with children in mind. We hope you will include them in this sacred ritual.*

A: We hope for a world where all are fed.

B: We hope for a world with more bridges than walls.

A: We hope for a world with wide open doors.

B: We hope for a world with contagious laughter.

A: We hope for a world where trees grow tall and creeks run clean.

B: We hope for a world where all people feel at home—in their bodies, in the church, in their physical homes.

A: We hope for that world.

B: We long for that world.

A: We are homesick for that world.

B: So today we light the candle of hope, because hope keeps our hearts alive as we wait.

A: May this light be a reminder that the wait is always worth it.

B: We are close to home. May we carry hope with us. Amen.

### Call to Confession

When you're a kid and you get homesick at a sleepover or a summer camp, you call home and your parents come and get you. Sometimes, that's what love looks like. Love bails us out.

In the same way, when we call upon God to confess that we've messed up, or forgotten something, or overlooked the truth, God answers with grace. God answers with love. So let us confess today, knowing that nothing could keep God from loving us.

## The First Sunday of Advent

# Homesick (HOPE) *cont.*

### Prayer of Confession

Gracious God,

We find ourselves with two options every day—  
to stay homesick for the world you had in mind, or to allow cynicism to win.

Do we hope against hope, or do we throw in the towel?

Do we insist on a better world, or do we assume it's impossible?

Forgive us for the days when cynicism wins.

Forgive us for numbing our homesick hurt instead of using it to fuel a better world.

Kindle in us a hope that won't let go.

Gratefully we pray, amen.

### Words of Forgiveness

Family of faith, even when we throw in the towel, even when we give up on hope, God does not give up on us. We are loved. We are claimed. We are invited closer to God's home. So hear and trust this good news:

**There is room for us in God's house, and nothing can separate us from that love. We are claimed. We are forgiven. We are welcomed home. Thanks be to God! Amen.**

### Prayer for Illumination

God of the stars and God of our hearts—  
our days will pass  
but your words will last.

The earth might fade  
but your words will last.

Our memories might blur  
but your words will last.

The grass will wither  
but your words will last.

The sky could go dark  
and your words would last.

So as we listen today,  
help us to hold onto  
what will last.

Help us hold onto you.

Gratefully we pray,  
amen.

## The First Sunday of Advent

# Homesick (HOPE) *cont.*

### Call to Offering

Family of faith, it does not take long to see that we are not home yet. There are people who are hungry, oceans that are polluted, churches that are fading, walls that are growing. We are clearly not home yet.

So until we reach that promised day, until we make it home, giving what we can to make a better world matters. When we give our tithes and our offerings we help build God's home here. So with hopeful hearts, let us give.

### Prayer of Dedication

Holy God,

We are homesick.

We long for the day that you spoke of when swords will be beaten into plowshares, the lion will lie down with the lamb, and justice will roll like waters. Until that holy day comes, take these gifts and use them to build that world here. We are hopeful. Amen.

### Prayer of the People

God of the weary and waiting,

Scripture tells us that where two or more are gathered, you are there.

So we trust that you are here—listening to these words, drawing us close, stirring hope awake in us. And for that we are grateful. We are so grateful.

Today, Holy God, we feel close to home, close to you when . . .

*Insert reminders of hope and gratitude here. For example:*

the choir sings,

when the candles are lit,

when we enter this space and someone knows our name.

We feel close to home when our children are curious,

when we find moments of true connection,

when we are brave enough to be who you call us to be.

However, God, even with gratitude for our close-to-home moments, we also recognize that buried deep within us we have homesick hearts.

The First Sunday of Advent  
Homesick (HOPE) *cont.*

Prayer of the People *cont.*

Holy God, we are homesick for...

*Insert examples of the ways you are homesick. For example:*

We are homesick for a world we have not seen.

We are homesick for a world where oceans are clean, trees are green,  
and animals are not endangered.

We are homesick for a life where days feel expansive and Sabbath feels possible.

We are homesick for days where mental health is not stigmatized,  
time is not a commodity, and self-worth is not a scarcity.

God who never leaves us alone, we are carrying both hope and homesickness all at the same time. Hold these two sides of the same coin tenderly, and fan the flame of both. For we realize, hope is a gift and homesickness is a reminder. For each conviction, we give you thanks.

Now with the confidence of children, we pray together, saying...

**Our Father...**

*Continue with the Lord's Prayer in the language and wording most familiar to you.*