

How to Use This Book and eCourse

First and foremost, Pam designed *Prepare the Way* for use as a personal Advent resource. A reader may or may not choose to participate in a small-group reflection. If you are not in a group, it will be best to begin your reading on the Monday before the first Sunday of Advent and follow each day's reading guide so that you will complete Day Seven of each week on a Sunday in Advent. This will help you prepare for the upcoming weekly worship experience. But do not worry if you must read on a different weekly schedule because you may use the daily readings and reflections in whatever pattern suits your schedule.

Weekly Material to Be Read and Prepared

Daily material does not require extensive preparation time, varying from ten to fifteen minutes to no more than thirty minutes. The eCourse format includes audio and video to enhance your reading experience. Allow approximately one hour for the completion of a whole week's readings and reflections in one sitting.

Each week follows the same pattern and begins with a single word inspired by lectionary readings for the week from the prophet Isaiah and the Gospel reading from Matthew.

Based on the week's theme word, each week's daily readings and exercises include the following:

- **Beginning the Week with Pam** (video)
- **Reflection** on the week's word (video)
- **Day One:** an Advent Invocation (audio); and reflection through a sentence completion exercise.
- **Day Two:** A reading of an Advent article followed by reflection questions.

- **Day Three:** An Advent Prayer of Intercession (audio) followed by an invitation to remain in intercessory prayer through a bidding prayer exercise.
- **Day Four:** A selection from the prophet Isaiah (audio), followed by a set of reflection questions connecting the reading to the week's theme word.
- **Day Five:** A selection from the Gospel of Matthew (audio), followed by a set of reflection questions connecting the reading to the week's theme word.
- **Day Six:** A guide to the spiritual practice of lectio divina, sacred reading, using verses from one of the week's two scripture passages (audio).
- **Day Seven:** A reflection exercise prompting personal responses to questions about how the theme word influences faithful living in the world, closing with an Advent Benediction (audio).
- **Wrapping Up the Week with Pam** (video) and space for group comments.

Resources and Materials Needed

All you need for our eCourse is included in our online classroom—with the exception of a journal or notebook in which to write prayers and responses (if desired). *Prepare the Way* includes scripture texts. But if participants prefer a translation other than the New Revised Standard Version, they will want to use their own Bible. You should be able to access this content on any tablet, laptop or mobile device. Chrome is the preferable browser.

Small-Group Participants and Leaders

For persons who wish to use *Prepare the Way* as a group that uses the online course for remote interaction and meets in person for a weekly gathering, a Leader's Guide is available in the "resources" section of our

course for use during the weekly group sessions. The leader will determine and communicate the weekly reading schedule to group participants so that all read in the same rhythm. Again, if possible, it will be best if small groups plan to begin reading and meeting for Week One during the week before the first Sunday of Advent.

Before You Begin

Each time you sit down to begin reading this material, take time to get comfortable and to breathe deeply. The weeks leading up to Christmas are typically overfilled with busyness and holiday commitments that are stacked upon our too-full lives. Remember that simply by committing to this study, reading, and prayer, you have already made room for the coming of Christ, and in doing so, you have begun to cultivate a new and refreshed heart for God. Remember that you are a beloved child of God, and set your expectation that God has a word for you through the readings and prayers of this study. Just as God met me through the writing process of this book, I trust that God waits for you in the reading of it. So breathe, prepare your heart, watch for God's word for you, and begin.