



Third Sunday of Advent

Thank you for a strong year of “Listening for the Work” as we prayed together using new

tools, read the parables of Jesus and observed the extraordinary among the ordinariness of life here at The United Baptist Church! This morning we celebrate the season of Advent by lighting the pink/rose candle in our fresh Advent wreath. In Western Christianity from the year 480, early believers fasted and prepared for Christmas for four weeks prior to the birth of the Christ child, Jesus. This period became the beginning of the liturgical year. The word Advent, from the Latin *adventus*, is a translation of the Greek *parousia*, meaning “second coming” or “arrival.” It is a time of waiting in anticipation of celebrating Christ’s birth; and this Sunday, we empty ourselves of distractions to receive **JOY** to prepare us for the Messiah’s arrival.

The wreath and its candles are a visual focus and symbol of Advent, originating with German Lutherans in the 16th Century. One of the candles is lit each week as Christmas approaches. The circle of the Advent wreath, having no beginning and no end, portrays for us God’s timelessness, his everlasting love, and the fellowship of believers around the world. The evergreens have meaning as well: laurel (if used) signifies victory over persecution and suffering; spruce, weeping cypress, and yew symbolize immortality; and the prominent boxwood symbolizes eternal life, nature’s abundance, healing, and grounded-ness. Pinecones are sometimes included to symbolize life and resurrection.

The four outer candles represent the gifts of his spirit in us which are: **Hope, Peace, Joy and Love**. Three of the candles are Purple, the color of repentance and royalty. A fourth candle is rose, which symbolizes **joy**: “⁴⁶ And Mary said: ‘My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior . . . (Luke 1:46-47 ^{NIV}.”



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The center white candle is called the Christ Candle and is lit on Christmas Eve as we wait and acknowledge Christ the Savior, “the light of the world,” is born. We then share our light on Christmas Eve to share this “Good News” with others, safely!



JOY

Please save this insert to use as a devotional reading this week.

As we light the third Advent Candle of the season, we definitely are a people in need of joy! Last year’s writing by Melissa, Jeff, & Lucy Snavelly gave us a lot of joy with a picture of their new puppy! This year, ask Melissa to show you the photos of herself and Lucy in matching sweaters!

In the midst of evil violence and heartbreak, the message I’m hearing the Holy Spirit say is “Look for the joy in the everyday ordinary matters of life, and I will supply the extraordinary joy in your laughter, healing, comfort, rest, work, Scriptures, friends, and expressions of beauty, awe, and wonder.” But we must still ask for joy:

²⁴ Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full (John 16:24).

Are we actively seeking Joy? Or are we more comfortable complaining about life, death, inflation, taxes, politics, violence, etc.? Remember that we can have joy even in the midst of trials:

² My brothers and sisters, whenever you face various trials, consider it all joy, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

Anxiety or health concerns can steal our joy if we lose sight of Jesus’ saving grace and mercy. In this week’s lesson, Mary is in an awkward situation – pregnant out of wedlock. We hear her surrender to God’s will. It is spoken by Mary while she visits her cousin Elizabeth. After Mary greets Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist, he moves within Elizabeth’s womb. Elizabeth praises Mary for her faith and Mary responds with what is now known as the *Magnificat*. It was an ordinary visit, yet God anointed them both in an extraordinary way that would change lives for generations to come. Her trials were about to unfold, yet she found extraordinary joy in the ordinary visit. Can we seek joy in new ways?
~ Rev. Pamela Moyer

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