



Fourth 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 **last purple** 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 God’s **LOVE** 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!



LOVE

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

As we light the fourth Advent Candle of the season, we yearn to be a people who demonstrate love in all we do, yet that kind of agapé love is not always easy! In our world of self-interest, it takes an intentional motive and action to demonstrate love to others, especially when we don't feel like it. God's voice this season reminds me to look for LOVE in the everyday ordinary tasks of life, and **HE** will supply extraordinary love through prayer, meditation, relationships, friends, healing, charity, abundance, the Scriptures, art, grandeur, generosity, and forgiveness.

We cannot appropriately welcome the Christ child without emptying our hearts and minds of distractions, anger, cynicism, fear, or whatever is keeping us from love, both receiving and giving it. I encourage you to empty yourself in order to be filled! God's grace and mercy define love.

We cannot experience Christmas without acknowledging Christ's sacrifice on the cross for our sin. Birth, death, and resurrection were God's gifts to humankind, his creation. So, as we meet Jesus again in the manger, let us thank God for Christ's incarnation and sacrificial love. Let us also thank God for loving us so much that he sent his only son.

Charles Wesley, the hymnwriter, in 1747, penned these words:

¹ Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heav'n, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.

Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art.
Visit us with thy salvation;
enter ev'ry trembling heart.

Are we empty in a good way, humble, and ready for this extraordinary visit?
~ *Rev. Pamela Moyer*

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