



## First 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 begin to celebrate the season of Advent by lighting the first 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, in a sense, a countdown of anticipation of celebrating Christ’s birth; and this Sunday, we study passages to give us HOPE, preparing us for the Messiah’s next return.

The wreath and its candles are a visual focus and symbol of Advent, originating with German Lutherans in the 16<sup>th</sup> 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 selected have meaning as well: laurel signifies victory over persecution and suffering; pine, holly, and yew, immortality; and cedar, strength and healing. Pinecones are sometimes included to symbolize life and resurrection.



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The four outer candles represent the gifts of His spirit in us which are: Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. Three of the outer candles are Purple, the color of repentance and royalty. A fourth outer candle is rose, which reminds us of love: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16 KJV).” 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!



## Hope

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

As we light the first Advent Candle of the season, I am grateful to God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and this church for a year of personal support. Living in our world today, we all need the HOPE of Christ! This verse speaks to me:

<sup>3</sup> Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:1-5).

After pandemic, even now as 2022 as it comes to an end, it felt like coming home as we gathered each Sunday for Worship and reflection. Although we are small, the house of the Lord still provided less isolation and more fellowship opportunities, even if we did slow down some large group activities. “Listening for the Work” allowed us to hear God calling us, pruning us, and loving us one and all. I hope you shared your gratitude for people past and present this past Thanksgiving.

As we prepare to welcome the Christ child, we need God’s abiding Hope. We need it still for 2023! And to receive it, we must empty ourselves of division, criticism, judgment, and distractions. Only then can we truly receive Christ as an infant, and Christ as he returns, whenever that occurs! Let us be ready for both as we rejoice in the hope of his salvation!

~ Rev. Pam Moyer

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