

Worship Service
First Sunday of Advent: HOPE

Helpful Elements:

Christmas hymnal
Advent stand and electric candles
Advent banner
Nativity scene (separate table)

Welcome: Welcome! My name is ____ and I'll be leading our worship time today. Today is the first Sunday of Advent. The word "advent" comes from the Latin term "adventus" which means "arrival" or "coming," and it's the season when the church remembers and celebrates the coming of Christ to earth, as well as anticipating his return.

The **PURPLE** candle we light today represents **hope**. Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening prayer: God of hope, who brought love into this world,
be the love that dwells between us.
God of hope, who brought peace into this world,
be the peace that dwells between us.
God of hope, who brought joy into this world,
be the joy that dwells between us.
God of hope, the rock we stand upon,
be the center, the focus of our lives
always, and particularly this Advent time.
Amen.¹

Hymn: Joy to the World

(Turn on the candle of Hope – or have someone in the front row "light" it.)
Today we light the candle of hope, remembering how the birth of Jesus brought hope into the world.

Hymns:

¹ http://faithandworship.com/prayers_Advent.htm

**O Come O Come Emmanuel
God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen
Angels from the Realms of Glory**

First reading: Isaiah 11: 1-6

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

²And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

³And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,

⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked.

⁵Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

⁶The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

**It Came Upon a Midnight Clear
The First Noel**

Second reading: Mark 13: 32-36: Jesus talking about when he comes again:

³²“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he

leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. ³⁵ Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— ³⁶ lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Angels We Have Heard on High

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

Interactive Homily:

- What sorts of things do you wait for?
 - birthdays; holidays; Christmas morning; a visit; a new job; a baby
- How does waiting feel?
 - Can be difficult! Slow; agonizing; distracting
- What makes waiting harder than usual?
 - When something is a long way off; when you're in pain; when you're alone; when you're worried; even when you're exceptionally excited
- What makes waiting easier?
 - Waiting with someone else or others; knowing that it *will* come; praying for patience; talking about it with others for reassurance
- The Isaiah passage predicts a time when “the wolf will dwell with the lamb.” What would that look like to you? What would be different than how it is today?
- How can we help bring this “kingdom vision” to where we live, here and now? What kinds of “seeds” can we plant?
 - Prayer: For what and for whom can we pray?
 - Learn: listen to wise words and teachings; act on them!
 - Stay awake, be watchful: What do you think that means?
 - Be with others to work and wait together, to bring peace and justice
- Advent is all about waiting for an arrival: The Christ Child on Christmas morning, and the Lord coming again to establish his kingdom of rightness and equity. It's a time of looking back and looking forward, both in an

attitude of waiting in HOPE. Let's pray to God for the ability to endure waiting with joy and hope.

... Let's take a moment to silently pray and reflect on the waiting of Advent.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, in your love and mercy, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord's prayer together:

Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Hymn: Go Tell it on the Mountain

Third Reading: A Season of Hope, by Raymond A. Foss

We are waiting, expectantly
for the coming of the angels,
His parents,
the shepherds, the animals,
the Star, the Babe,
and the wise men, the coming
of the Christmas miracle,
the telling of the same story,
never old in the remembering
of the moment when Mary gave birth
to the one who was to come
to save His people, the one God
the only begotten son
to rescue us all from our sin,
from the divide we created
between us and God, the father, the mother
the holy mediator, arbitrator,
sacrificial lamb of God
Waiting as they did, even in the retelling
because it is a timeless story

of infinity love and good
that we need to hear,
until we all get the message
and believe

Hymns:

Silent Night

O Holy Night

Fourth Reading: Whom Do We Await?²

Whom do we await this Advent? What special things come at this time of year? Holly, ivy, Christmas trees, parties, candy, food, crafts—all these things are special. But *who* is coming? A baby was promised and was delivered many years later. He, Jesus, the Messiah, centered his ministry in Galilee of the Gentiles. This land had just been overrun by the Assyrians who took captive the northern kingdom. It is to this very land that the Light would dawn. Those living the land of the shadow of death would see a great light.

Imagine what they had seen, what they had gone through, yet God had not forgotten them. Their land would be restored and repopulated, and the Messiah would come and walk on that currently desolate ground someday.

But that is also the problem for them and for us. *Someday* is a long time away. They stood between the desolation and the promised Light much as we stand between the first coming of the Messiah and His promised return. Some days all we can see is the desolation, and some days we get so caught up in the cleanup that we forget the promise.

So, for whom do we wait? We are waiting for the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace, the Wonderful Counselor, the victor over every battle inside us and outside us. This is one who came and who is coming again, the one who died for us, the one who is alive and dwells in our hearts. It is by Immanuel—God with us—that we are sustained, who holds us and on whom we wait and hold tight. “And a little child will lead them.”

Hymn:

Hark the Herald Angels Sing

² Adapted from 1994 LaVerne Heights Advent Devotions essay by Sue Nordine

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. Amen.

Closing Hymns:

O Come All Ye Faithful

(optional) Doxology