

SEEDS  HOPE  
OF  
*in a time of waiting*

An Advent liturgy for church and home  
by Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball,  
West Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church

*Includes weekly encouragements for personal or small group engagement*





dimmed days of Advent, we are called to remember, we are called to prepare, we are called to make way. Our hope awaits Jesus. It is out of the darkness that light appears as light. It is out of our hope and through our preparation; it is out of our faith in Christ and actions taken out of that faith that light is born. We hope for the Advent of Christ, and as we wait we prepare by bringing forth Christ's light.

***The First Purple Candle of the Advent Wreath is lit.***

**One Voice:** We light this candle recognizing that Jesus is the light of the world and our hope. Purple is the color of royalty and the color of preparation. Sometimes it is hard to wait in hope. There were probably times when the Jews thought the Messiah would never come. But their candle of hope never went out. "Those who lived in a land of darkness – on them light has shined."

**Voices Together:** I want to walk as a child of the light. Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

**Prayer:**

Dear God, our world seems to be in darkness at times. We need Your Light of hope and love. You gave us that light through your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Please help us in this time of waiting to prepare our hearts and our homes to receive the One who said, "I am the light of the world." We pray this in the name of the Son you sent so that we might have hope and life. *Amen.*

**Sing or read verse 1: #196 The United Methodist Hymnal**

*Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free; from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee. Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art; dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.*

***A seed for reflection: How are you preparing to receive Christ once again into your heart and way of living?***



**Opportunities for individual, family, or congregational action and engagement  
from Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball**

**Christmas Eve or Christmas Day (and beyond) – The Adoration  
*The season of Christmas: Dec. 26-Jan. 6 (The day of Epiphany)***

**H**ow are you sharing Christ's Good News and bringing God's light and love to the world?

1. Surprise someone with a gift of appreciation and love.
2. Visit someone who needs to know that they are valuable and loved.
3. Share your witness for what Christ means to you and what Christ has done for you with someone who needs hope.
4. Take time to contemplate where you can plant additional seeds of hope. Share your ideas with another and ask them to join you in prayer, action, and engagement.

***Light the four Advent candles and the White Christ Candle***

**THE CAROL: "SILENT NIGHT"**

*Silent night, holy night!  
All is calm, all is bright,  
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child!  
Holy infant, so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heavenly peace,  
Sleep in heavenly peace.*

**One Voice:** Jesus was sent into the world by God to be our light, the light of life. Today, we thank God once again for Jesus, God's gift of love and God's gift of life. So what shall we give in return for this gift? God sent God's Love and Light into the world through his Son. Jesus has now shared that love and light with us and Jesus commissioned us to go and to do the things that he did. So what gift can we bring on this birthday celebration? We can bring ourselves – we can spread kindness, give hope, share love, forgive others, be joy filled, and bring peace.

**Prayer:** Dear Jesus, your birthday celebration is a day of joy. We thank you for giving yourself to us. Now we give ourselves to you. Please help us to walk in your love and to be your light. Guide us that we may express our gratitude by the action of sharing the "good news" of Your love and Your Word to everyone, in your Holy name we pray. Amen.

***A seed for reflection: How are you sharing Christ's Good News and bringing God's light and love to the world?***



**Opportunities for individual, family, or congregational action and engagement  
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**Sunday, Dec. 2 – The Promise**

**I**n these dimmed days of Advent, we are called to remember, we are called to prepare, we are called to make way. Our hope awaits Jesus. It is out of the darkness that light appears as light. It is out of our hope and through our preparation; it is out of our faith in Christ and actions taken out of that faith that light is born. We hope for the Advent of Christ, and as we wait we prepare by bringing forth Christ's light.

Opportunities for action and engagement:

1. Take your mission passport (if you don't have one yet, ask your pastor or call your district office) and visit one of our Conference mission sites to learn more about how you can shine Christ's light of hope in the midst of the challenges of life.
2. Be intentional about smiling more.
3. Visit a nursing home and sit with someone who needs to know that someone somewhere cares about them.
4. Take time to contemplate where you can plant additional seeds of hope. Share your ideas with another and ask them to join you in prayer, action, and engagement.

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### Sunday, Dec. 9 – The Message

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**All:** Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

**Sing or read verse 1: #206 The United Methodist Hymnal**

*I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to follow Jesus. God set the stars to give light to the world. The star of my life is Jesus. In him there is no darkness at all. The night and the day are both alike. The lamb is the light of the city of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.*

**One Voice:** Last week we lit the first purple candle looking forward to rehearsing the story of Christ’s first coming and expecting Christ’s coming again. Each of the candles on the wreath represent Jesus, the light of Life. The first candle stands for the promise of God, Jesus Christ, who brings us hope. ***Light the first purple Advent Candle.***

**A Reading: Luke 1: 26 – 33 – The Message**

“In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.

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### Christmas Eve or Christmas Day – The Adoration

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All: Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

**Sing or read verse 1 : #206 The United Methodist Hymnal**

*I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to follow Jesus. God set the stars to give light to the world. The star of my life is Jesus. In him there is no darkness at all. The night and the day are both alike. The lamb is the light of the city of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.*

**One Voice:** As the shepherds came to the manger, they were thankful to be the first persons to actually see the fulfillment of the age-old prophecy. They expressed their gratitude by going and telling everyone they met the “good news” of the birth of Jesus. May we not be content to only worship God for God’s great gift on this special day, but may we also tell others about Christ and God’s love and may we shine light on where God and Christ are active in our world today.

**A Reading: Luke 2: 15 - 18 – The Adoration**

“When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.” (NRSV)



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### Sunday, Dec. 23 – The Announcement

Can you turn aside from your busyness to experience the presence of the One who brings life? What are you doing to develop a heart of peace so that you might face the challenges of the world with the heart of Christ? In the midst of challenges, how will you help things go well instead of having to be right?

1. Take time to stop during the day and engage with those you normally pass by.
2. Pray the Prayer of St. Francis (<https://bit.ly/2worlli>, UMH 481) at the beginning, middle, and end of your day.
3. What do you need to learn about those you work with at your job, in the church, or in your family that will help knit you together in ways that help your projects and challenges go well? Be intentional about helping things to go well instead of going after things in ways that you have to be right.
4. Take time to contemplate where you can plant additional seeds of hope. Share your ideas with another and ask them to join you in prayer, action, and engagement.

He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” (NRSV)

**One Voice:** What amazement: to have an angel visit! What amazement: Mary listened! How many of us hear the angel’s voice or even are aware of the angels among us? Mary heard and Mary replied, for angels are messengers of God who bring messages, and revelation calls for a response. When the angel announced that she would give birth to the Son of the Most High, Mary answered, “I am the Lord’s servant.” To be fully alive is to be obedient to the work to which God calls us. To follow our calling is to be formed by, to embrace the vision of God’s calling. The dancer, dances. The teacher, teaches. To follow our calling is to say yes to the miracle of life for when we follow our calling, opportunities appear, doors open that we did not know were there.

***The Second Purple Candle of the Advent Wreath is lit.***

**One Voice:** We light this candle recognizing the amazing gift of faith and love. What amazement: Mary listened! God spoke and Mary listened. In faith we can discover that God still speaks and does many great and wonderful things in our world today! God’s messengers are among us. The second candle reminds us to look at this world through the eyes of faith so that we might receive, hear, respond to, and be formed by the messages of God.

**Prayer:** Dear God, help us in this time of waiting and preparation to deepen our love and faith in you and in your Son our Savior. Help us to Listen for your voice and for your call and give us the courage and strength to respond. Amen.

**Sing or read verse 1: #196 The United Methodist Hymnal**

*Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free; from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee. Israel’s strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art; dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.*

***A seed for reflection: Are your spiritual ears and eyes open to hear and see the things God is up to?***



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### Sunday, Dec. 9 – The Message

**A**re your spiritual ears and eyes open to hear and see the things  
God is up to?

1. Do a prayer walk around the community in which you live or around your church home. Pray for your neighbors and pray for God to reveal how you might be a better neighbor.
2. Spend intentional time listening to those with whom you work or spend time with to discover how God is speaking.
3. Slow down and ask Christ to reveal his presence to you in the ordinary things and actions of your day.
4. Take time to contemplate where you can plant additional seeds of hope. Share your ideas with another and ask them to join you in prayer, action, and engagement.

“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors.” (NRSV)

**One Voice:** The shepherds were frightened when the sky was suddenly flooded with a brilliant light. Not only did the message of the angels calm their fears, but this announcement meant that the long-awaited prophecy had been fulfilled. As we follow Jesus today, we know that the Spirit of God is always with us. God still speaks! God makes announcements today that bring life, hope, love, joy, and peace to the world. Help us to turn aside from our busyness to experience the presence of the One who brings life abundant!

***The fourth Candle of the Advent Wreath is lit. (Purple)***

**One Voice:** This week, we light the fourth Advent Candle announcing peace. Peace – the promise included a Prince of Peace. The angels said to the Shepherds, “Peace, do not be afraid.” Jesus, the light of the world would later say, “Peace I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, do not let them be afraid.”

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you are the Prince of Peace, and our world and our church so needs the peace and love you offer. Help us to feel peace in our hearts, to accept and respect others, and to spread peace and love in our community and world by getting along with each other. Amen.

**Sing or read verse 1: #196 The United Methodist Hymnal**

*Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free; from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee. Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art; dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.*

***A seed for reflection: Can you turn aside from your busyness to experience the presence of the One who brings life? What are you doing to develop a heart of peace so that you might face the challenges of the world with the heart of Christ? In the midst of challenges, how will you help things go well instead of having to be right?***

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**Sunday, Dec. 23 – The Announcement**

All: Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

**Sing or read verse 1 : #206 The United Methodist Hymnal**

*I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to follow Jesus. God set the stars to give light to the world. The star of my life is Jesus. In him there is no darkness at all. The night and the day are both alike. The lamb is the light of the city of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.*

**One Voice:** Today is the Fourth Sunday of Advent. The Light of Christ continues to shine forth in our lives as we light the three previous candles remembering that Christ brings us hope, faith, and joy in times of waiting and preparation, as well as, in the midst of chaos, the unknown, and challenge. ***Light the first three Advent candles***

**A Reading: Luke 2: 8 – 12 – The Announcement**

“In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of a great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

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**Sunday, Dec. 16 – The Arrival**

All: Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

**Sing or read verse 1 : #206 The United Methodist Hymnal**

*I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to follow Jesus. God set the stars to give light to the world. The star of my life is Jesus. In him there is no darkness at all. The night and the day are both alike. The lamb is the light of the city of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.*

**One Voice:** Today is the third Sunday of Advent. The Light of Christ continues to shine forth in our lives as we relight the first two Advent candles remembering that Christ brings us both hope and faith in times of waiting and preparation. ***Light the first two Advent candles***

**A Reading: Luke 2:3-7 – The Arrival**

“All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.” (NRSV)

**One Voice:** Talk about faith in God ... The trip to Bethlehem must have been trying. But, then again, trusting in God's promise against all odds is the very essence of faith. Trusting, waiting, and watching is what helps us to live in the light of Christ and to live a life that matures into a renewal of life. Renewal of life, that is what Mary and Joseph found as they laid their first born in a manger. At the birth of Jesus, their disappointment in travel and lodging was quickly turned to joy. As we place our trust in God, we too will find that God has the power to turn times of chaos, disappointment, and challenge into joy and the gift of life.

***The third Candle of the Advent Wreath is lit. (Pink)***

**One Voice:** This week, we light the third Advent Candle of joy. Pink or Rose is the color of Joy. Can you imagine the joy Mary and Joseph felt with the birth of Jesus? It wasn't an easy journey - the trip or the birth. But, new life came to them – both in the time and waiting and in the arrival. They were transformed by both. Indeed, we are filled with joy when we realize that God's divine power does transform disappointment, challenge, and chaos into new life, hope, and opportunity.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Parent, as You gave great joy to Mary and Joseph after a long and difficult journey, may you also bless us when everything seems to have turned against us. Help us to seek your voice in the midst of challenges and to be alert for your presence. Grant us new hope for a better future for ourselves and our families; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Sing or read verse 1: #196 The United Methodist Hymnal**

*Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free; from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee. Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art; dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.*

***A seed for reflection: Are you open to receiving God's gift of transformation in your life? What in your life needs God's transforming power?***



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### **Sunday, Dec. 16 – The Arrival**

**A**re you open to receiving God's gift of transformation in your life? What in your life needs God's transforming power?

1. Try a new way of praying or being present with God this week.
2. Volunteer some time with a child or children's ministry or outreach this week. The presence of children often reveals to us where our lives need to be transformed.
3. Pray intentionally for those whom you believe to be your enemies or for those whom you believe do not like you. This kind of prayer often transforms how we approach these relationships and thus transforms these relationships themselves.
4. Take time to contemplate where you can plant additional seeds of hope. Share your ideas with another and ask them to join you in prayer, action, and engagement.