



SEEDS OF HOPE
in a time of waiting

*An Advent liturgy for church and home by Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball,
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Advent 1 – The Promise

Introductory words:

Today is the beginning of the season of Advent. Advent means arrival, coming, approach, rise, birth. The traditional readings for this time of year talk about Mary and Joseph coming to Bethlehem, the shepherds coming, the wise men coming, and finally the arrival of the child, Jesus. This season is all about the journey of discovering and re-discovering the light and hope of God's promise through Jesus Christ.

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.

A Reading: Isaiah 9: 2 and 6 – The Promise

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined.” “For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (NRSV)

One Voice: Autumn's bounty of color and harvest slips away as the colder temperatures of winter approach. The light and warmth of the sun are with us for a shorter time. Advent, a season of hope and promise, are born out of some of the coldest and darkest days of the year. In 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.

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?