

SEEDS OF HOPE

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*

Advent 3 – 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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