

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 4 – 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,

“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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