

## LITURGY FOR ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING by Rev. Rebecca Chancellor, 2015

*All scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible.*

### FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Advent means coming. We remember Jesus coming to earth in the form of a tiny baby, as we also wait for Jesus to come again.

**Advent is a time of expectation. We expect God to fulfill the promise Jeremiah proclaimed: "I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety." (Jeremiah 33:15b-16a)**

We watch and wait for justice and righteousness, knowing that God will come to be with us and all people, in all the corners of the world.

**We light the first candle with expectation that the Messiah is coming.**

*One candle is lit.*

Let us pray.

God of power and glory, you came to be with us as a helpless, fragile Middle Eastern baby. You came to live among us and to experience human life as one of us. You entered our world and experienced poverty, exile, loneliness, and pain. We give you thanks for your presence in our world today, especially among the people who are displaced, distressed, broken-hearted and lonely. Guide us to bring justice and righteousness to those who need it most, in our local community and around the earth. May we dare to expect you are present with us now and you are coming to restore all people to safety and righteousness. Amen.

## SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Advent means coming. We remember Jesus coming into our world to be one of us, as we also live in the mystery that Jesus will come again.

**Advent is a time for preparation. We prepare for Jesus to enter our lives and our hearts, remembering the Word of the Lord Malachi proclaimed to Israel: “See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight — indeed, he is coming.” (Malachi 3:1)**

We remember, too, John the Son of Zechariah who cried out in the wilderness, “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” (Luke 3:4b-6)

**We prepare to follow Jesus to all places: to be among the poor, the lonely, the sick, the afraid, the dying, and the oppressed.**

We light the first candle again with expectation that the Messiah is coming.

**We light the second candle in preparation for the Messiah to come lead us.**

*Two candles are lit.*

Let us pray.

Almighty God, you are the God of all people in all times and all places. You dwell in the valleys and on the mountains. There is no place on earth you will not go. Help us to prepare to follow Jesus wherever he may lead us. Help us to get ready to receive your light—the light that shines in the darkness and cannot be overcome. As we prepare for your advent once again, lead us to those who need deliverance from violence, hate, division, and brokenness. Even in these days of preparation, may we be agents of your peace, love, hope and grace. Guide us, O God. Amen.

### THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Advent means coming. We remember Jesus coming into our world as the Messiah, the anointed one, the one to save us. We recognize our need for Jesus to come and save us again.

**Advent is a time for repentance. As we watch, wait, and prepare, we remember John the Baptist calling the people to a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins and proclaiming: "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." (Luke 3:16)**

We remember, too, the promises of God proclaimed by Zephaniah as the people waited for God's deliverance, "The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival." (Zephaniah 3:17-18a)

**We repent before God and one another that we have been afraid to follow Jesus to the margins and hesitant to share our resources of food, clothes, money, and time.**

We light the first and second candles again with expectation that the Messiah is coming and in preparation for the Messiah to come lead us.

**We light the third candle with an offering of repentance and a renewed commitment to turn toward the Messiah, the one who saves us.**

*Three candles are lit.*

Let us pray.

God of love and mercy, you came to be with us and to show us how to love and serve you and our neighbors. You came to show us the way to abundant life and to save us from ourselves. You remind us that all God's children are invited to the table, all are deserving of love and respect, and all people bring gifts to the community. Forgive us, O God. Help us to recognize our own sin and brokenness—our own poverty—that we might be positioned to be renewed by your love. May our hearts and minds be open to repentance that we might seek right relationship with you and all people. Push us to go beyond ourselves to humbly serve those in need of the gifts and resources we have to share. Amen.

#### FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Advent means coming. We remember Jesus coming into our world and changing it forever. We long for Jesus to come again that we might be transformed.

**Advent is a time to rejoice. We remember with joy that God shows up in surprising ways and in unexpected places. We recall the words of the prophet Micah, “But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days... and he shall be the one of peace.” (Micah 5:2,5a)**

We remember, too, the song of Mary, as she rejoiced with Elizabeth over the child who leapt in her womb, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.” (Luke 1:46b-49)

**We rejoice with Bethlehem and Mary as we wait for Jesus to come and lift up the lowly. We rejoice in God’s power to use us to care for refugees, immigrants, widows, and orphans.**

We light three candles again with expectation that the Messiah is coming, in preparation for the Messiah to lead us, and with repentant hearts turned toward the one who saves us.

**Today, we light the fourth candle as we rejoice in God’s decision to be with us in the Messiah, the baby Jesus of Nazareth born in Bethlehem.**

*Four candles are lit.*

Let us pray.

God of transformation, you often surprise us and rattle our ways of thinking and being. You, Holy God, the one with the power to save, came to earth and entered our world as a tiny baby, born to an unwed mother, in a small town stable in the countryside. You did not come seeking glory and honor, but came to bring peace and justice. May we rejoice with you and with all our sisters and brothers around the world as you shatter our expectations by lifting up the lowly, blessing the poor and the weak, honoring those who thirst for justice, and claiming as your own those who make peace. Help us to magnify you with our hearts, our souls, and our minds. By your mercy, use us to do great things in our local community and around the world to bring joy and fulfillment, life and peace to all. Amen.

## CHRISTMAS EVE

*The four Advent candles are lit.*

Advent means coming. Throughout this season, we have watched and waited with expectation, prepared for this day by repenting and turning toward God, and rejoicing in God's surprising ways. Today, we remember and celebrate Jesus coming into our world, a great light shining on the people living in a land of deep darkness.

**On this Christmas Eve, we proclaim the birth of Jesus, the Messiah. We remember Isaiah's proclamation: "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." (Isaiah 9:6)**

We remember, too, the proclamation of the angel to the shepherds in the fields, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of 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." (Luke 2:10-12)

**With the heavenly host, we praise God, saying: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" We dare to proclaim God's favor for all the people: insiders and outsiders, rich and poor, proud and lowly, us and them. In Jesus, we are made one and God has come to save us all. (Luke 2:14)**

We light the Christ candle as a sign of Christ's constant presence with us, a proclamation that the Prince of Peace has come.

*The white candle in the center is lit.*

Let us pray.

Emmanuel, God-with-us, because you have come, our hope is renewed and peace reigns in our hearts. We are filled with joy as we remember you have come to save us and all people. We are drawn into your great love for us. And yet we do not forget that you have not come to make us comfortable; you have come to change us and transform us because your peaceable kingdom is not yet complete. You have come, asking us to follow you to the margins to love and serve others. We open ourselves to you, O God. May we receive the gifts you offer us and be transformed by your presence with us. Even when there is darkness around us, may we walk in the light of Christ. Amen.