

## **Getting Started:**

### **The Advent Wreath**

The traditional Advent wreath is a collection of five total candles. Four candles representing the weekly Advent themes of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love surround a fifth candle, traditionally lit on Christmas Eve, representing Christ.

Many Advent wreaths use colored candles to further distinguish each week's theme. Purple candles represent Hope, Peace, and Love. A pink candle represents Joy. A white candle represents Christ.

Advent wreaths may be as simple or as creative as you would like. Your wreath might simply be five candles sitting on a plate or tray. Or you may want to turn your at-home Advent observation into a family project and create a more substantial wreath to be used throughout the years. Many craft stores now sell wreath forms that include candle holders for the advent candles. These can be decorated with garland, ribbon, flowers, or greenery as your family sees fit.

Please keep safety in mind when lighting an advent wreath at home. You may want to consider battery operated candles for your wreath. If using traditional candles, don't leave your wreath unattended once the candles have been lit, and fully extinguish all candles once your Advent observation is over.

### **Observing Advent**

This guide includes a collection of items that may be helpful for observing Advent at home. Included for each week of Advent is the traditional litany we recite during worship each Advent Sunday; a copy of the Gospel reading for each Advent Sunday; a suggested hymn for each Advent Sunday; and a prayer for each Advent Sunday.

## **HOPE: The first Sunday of Advent – November 29, 2020**

*Light one purple candle today*

### **ADVENT LITANY**

*Leader: Why light a candle that will burn out?*

**People: The message of this candle cannot be quenched. It speaks of hope:  
hope greater than fear; hope larger than despair; hope stronger than death.**

*Leader: We await the prophesied hope of the world, wrapped in swaddling clothes,  
lying in a manger.*

**People: We light this candle in faith.**

### **LIGHTING OF THE CANDLE OF HOPE**

**All: Prepare the way of the Lord, the Giver of Hope.**

**Suggested Hymn:** Lo, He Comes With Clouds Descending (#6 in The Presbyterian Hymnal)

**The Gospel reading for November 29, 2020:**

#### **Mark 13:24-37**

13:24 "But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, 25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. 26 Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. 27 Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. 28 "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 30 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. 32 "But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. 34 It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. 35 Therefore, keep awake--for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, 36 or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. 37 And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

#### **Prayer for the First Sunday in Advent:**

The "day that shall come to pass" is *now*. The "house of the God of Jacob and Rachel" is *here*. O God, be with us in these moments in this place, that in days to come we may remain with you as we walk in the world. Amen.

## **PEACE: The second Sunday of Advent – December 6, 2020**

*Light two purple candles today*

### **ADVENT LITANY**

*Leader: Why light a candle that will burn out?*

**People: The message of this candle cannot be quenched. It speaks of peace: peace no war can halt; peace no heartache can sever; peace no suffering can erase.**

*Leader: It represents the advent peace of the promised Messiah, who brings to our hearts so that goodness and mercy may abound.*

**People: We light this candle in faith.**

### **LIGHTING THE CANDLE OF PEACE**

**All: Prepare the way of the Lord, the Giver of Peace.**

**Suggested Hymn:** On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry (#10 in The Presbyterian Hymnal)

**The Gospel reading for December 6, 2020:**

#### **Mark 1:1-8**

1:1 The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; 3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" 4 John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. 8 I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

#### **Prayer for the Second Sunday in Advent:**

O God, in Jesus you revealed to us your spirit. Now send your spirit upon us. Too long we have judged by the sight of our eyes and decided by the hearing of our ears. Too long we shunned wisdom and understanding. Now we pray for the descent of your spirit, that we might see with our eyes, hear with our ears, and understand with our hearts. Then we shall turn from ourselves to you and our neighbors. Amen.

## **JOY: The third Sunday of Advent – December 13, 2020**

*Light two purple candles and one pink candle today*

### **ADVENT LITANY**

*Leader: Why light a candle that will burn out?*

**People: The message of this candle cannot be quenched. It speaks of joy: joy deep as the human soul; joy profound as the truth of salvation; joy rich as the promises of God.**

*Leader: It represents the advent joy of the heavenly host, heralding the newborn King, the Messiah.*

**People: We light this candle in faith.**

### **LIGHTING THE CANDLE OF JOY**

**All: Prepare the way of the Lord, the Light of the World.**

**Suggested Hymn:** Of the Father's Love Begotten (#309 in The Presbyterian Hymnal)

**The Gospel reading for December 13, 2020:**

#### **John 1:6-8, 19-28**

1:6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 19 This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." 21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." 22 Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. 24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. 25 They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" 26 John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, 27 the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." 28 This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

#### **Prayer for the Third Sunday in Advent:**

Eternal God, before whose power we bow in awe, we thank you for the majesty and grandeur of your creation. But even more, and above all, we thank you for the revelation of your glory and grace in Jesus Christ. In him you kindled the hope for a new life in a new world. Let that hope be reborn in us today. Amen.

## **LOVE: The fourth Sunday of Advent – December 20, 2020**

*Light three purple candles and one pink candle today*

### **ADVENT LITANY**

*Leader: Why light a candle that will burn out?*

**People: The message of this candle cannot be quenched. It speaks of love: love we do not deserve; love we can never confine; love we can never escape.**

*Leader: It represents the steadfast love of God, seen in the birth of the Christ Child*

**People: We light this candle in faith.**

### **LIGHTING THE CANDLE OF LOVE**

**All: Prepare the way of the Lord of Love, Jesus.**

**Suggested Hymn:** Savior of the Nations, Come (#14 in The Presbyterian Hymnal)

**The Gospel reading for December 20, 2020:**

#### **Luke 1:26-38**

1:26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 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. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. 36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

#### **Prayer for the Fourth Sunday in Advent:**

Gracious Creator, you bring the world forth from your womb. Make your presence known to us, your children, that we may drink deeply from the abundance of your glory. May we be newly born; may we grow to give light to those who dwell in darkest of nights and who sit in the valley of the shadow of death. Amen.

## **CHRISTMAS EVE – December 24, 2020**

*Light all candles today*

### **†LITANY OF THE CHRIST CANDLE**

*Leader: Why light a candle that will burn out?*

**People: The message of this candle cannot be quenched.**

*Leader: It speaks of hope:*

**People: Good news of great joy shall come to all people.**

*Leader: It speaks of peace:*

**People: To us is born a Savior, Christ the Lord.**

*Leader: It speaks of joy:*

**People: Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth.**

*Leader: It speaks of love:*

**People: A child has been born for us, a Son given to us. In Him is Life, and the life is the light of the world.**

*Leader: And to all who receive Him, who believes in His name, He gives the power to become children of God.*

**People: We light this candle in faith.**

### **Suggested Hymns:**

Hope: O Come, O Come Emmanuel (#9 in The Presbyterian Hymnal)

Peace: Angels We Have Heard on High (#23 in The Presbyterian Hymnal)

Joy: Joy to the World (#40 in The Presbyterian Hymnal)

Love: Good Christian Friends, Rejoice (#28 in The Presbyterian Hymnal)

Christ: The First Nowell (#56 in The Presbyterian Hymnal)

### **The Gospel reading for December 24, 2020:**

#### **Luke 2:1-20**

2:1 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4 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. 5 He

went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 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. 8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see--I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" 15 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." 16 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. 17 When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

**Prayer for Christmas Eve:**

O Jesus, light of the world, in you God broke the hold of darkness on the world of Caesar. We pray that today, as in those days, you will illumine us with the vision of a new world--a world in which hate yields to love, weapons are turned into tools, and enemies become allies. Give us the grace not only to see that vision, but to put flesh on it as did Jesus in Nazareth of Galilee. Amen