



Advent 2022: Hope and Longing

A Guide to Lighting the Advent Wreath at Home



Dear Forest Lake family,

Kenneth Haugk writes the following in his book, *Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart*: "As Christians, when we meet Jesus, we meet God in the flesh. Jesus did not merely act as if he were like us. He suffered like us and for us. He even experienced the sense of being godforsaken that we may feel when we suffer. We are never alone in suffering because God suffers with us. The idea of a suffering God is distinctively Christian."

This Advent season, we invite you to meet Jesus - the Jesus who provides hope to those in despair, comfort to those living their darkest hours, and pushes his followers to break down barriers. This Jesus was not born in a comfortable bed and certainly not in a land of affluence. Rather, this Jesus grew up and lived his life in a climate of tension, uneasiness, arrogance, and division.

Sound familiar?

There's good news for his followers, though. Now that the messiah has been born and taught us how to love one another, we are free to follow his lead and be bold in this hurt, broken world. And little by little, we can make a difference, but it begins by taking the time to meet him.

He's waiting...for you.

Work Cited: Haugk, Kenneth. *Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart: How to Relate to those who are Suffering*. (St. Louis: Stephen Ministry, 2004), 28.



First Sunday of Advent

The Grief and Comfort Candle

Say Because we have lost so much, we are grieving. We have lost loved ones. We have lost trust. We have lost confidence and control. Because we know grief, we light a candle for comfort. O God of comfort, come into our hearts and heal our grief. Come, Lord Jesus, come!

We light this candle of comfort. *Light one purple candle*

Read Isaiah 9:1-7

Ideas

- Name what/who you have lost in the last three years to God in prayer and ask God for help with your sadness and grief.
- Pray for people you know who are grieving. Talk with someone about how to let those people know that you love them and are praying for them.
- At each meal this week, light the Advent wreath and pray for people who are grieving (or for your own grief).
- Send a card/text/email this week to someone who needs comfort.

Prayer: Ever-present God, let me feel your presence this Advent. Amen.



Second Sunday of Advent

The Despair and Hope Candle

Say Because there is so much that we cannot control, we are worried about the future. We feel hopeless when we hear of so much suffering and conflict. When we are tired, frustrated, and cannot see a way to help, we despair. Because we know despair, we light a candle for hope.

O God of hope, sweep away our despair and fill us with your Spirit. Come, Lord Jesus, come!

We light this candle of comfort. *Light one purple candle*

We light this candle for hope. *Light the second purple candle.*

Read Psalm 42

Discuss or reflect

- Is it easy or hard for you to feel hopeful right now?
- Describe a person that you feel is full of hope. What makes you think they are hopeful?
- Have you ever felt sad or depressed? Can you imagine how hoping in God might help? Could giving God thanks help you have hope? Why or why not?

Finish the sentence: "I feel hopeful when..."

If you want more, memorize Romans 15:13: May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in faith so that you overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: God of hope, let me feel your presence and fill me with hope in you this Advent.



Third Sunday of Advent

The Division and Community Candle

Say Because we are divided, we are lonely and separated. There is division in our families, in our communities, and in our country! Because we know division, we light a candle for community.

O Source of life, love, and community, unite and reconcile us. Come, Lord Jesus, come!

We light this candle of comfort. *Light the first purple candle.*

We light this candle of hope *Light the second purple candle.*

We light this candle for community. *Light the third purple candle.*

Read 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 2:8-22

Discuss or reflect

- What spiritual gifts do you admire in members of your family? Your friends? Your coworkers?
- What spiritual gifts do you believe you have been given?
- How can you use your spiritual gifts to support one another?
- What does the Body of Christ mean to you?
- Where do you see division?
- Have you ever felt lonely or separated? What did you do about that feeling?
- Are there things that we can do to build community and to make connections?
- How do you think Jesus wants us to treat those with whom we disagree or with whom we are angry?
- Each time you light the Advent candles this week, name where you have seen division that day, then pray for reconciliation and community.
- Practice being patient this week. Report back to the people in your family/friends about how you did (or didn't) live patiently with others.

Prayer: Faithful God, thank you for giving each one of us spiritual gifts that we can use to worship you and love one another. Empower each of us to keep using our gifts this Advent season and beyond. Amen.



Fourth Sunday of Advent

The Anger and Peace Candle

Say Because the world is uncertain, broken, and unjust, and because life is full of pain, suffering, and loss, and because many are afraid, there is anger and cruelty all around us. We are quick to be angry when we are afraid.

Because we are this way, we light a candle for peace.

O Prince of Peace, be born in our hearts and lives so that we may become agents of your peace in an angry and fearful world. Come, Lord Jesus, come!

We light this candle of comfort. *Light the first purple candle.*

We light this candle of hope! *Light the second purple candle.*

We light this candle for community. *Light the third purple candle.*

We light this candle for peace. *Light the fourth purple candle.*

Read John 14:27, Ephesians 2:14-22, and Ephesians 4:26

Discuss or reflect

- Have you ever been afraid to be alone?
- When you feel afraid, what helps you feel peace?
- In your own words, tell God about a situation or event that causes you to feel afraid or worried, and ask God to give you peace. Then, see if you can wait in silence for a few minutes. As you sit, imagine putting your worry into God's hands.
- In your own words, tell God about a situation or event that causes you to get angry. Then read Matthew 18:15-22 and ask God to give you peace. Remember that it is OK to be angry, but remember to think about how Christians are supposed to act when angry.
- Are there things we should not do or say when we are angry?
- Pray for yourself and your family when you feel angry.

Finish this sentence: "I feel peaceful when..."

Prayer: Faithful God, you are at work to restore all of creation in its intended harmony. Give us your shalom that we may be reconciled to all enemies in the peace that passes all understanding through Christ Jesus our Lord. God of promise, God of hope, into our darkness come. Amen.



Christmas Eve

The Christ Candle

Say The world is full of grief, despair, division, anger, fear, and darkness. We feel small and weak. We cannot secure ourselves or save the world. Tonight, we light the candles for comfort, hope, community, and peace. We need a savior, and so we light the Christ candle.

Come, Lord Jesus, come!

We light this candle of comfort. *Light the first purple candle.*

We light this candle of hope! *Light the second purple candle.*

We light this candle for community. *Light the third purple candle.*

We light this candle for peace. *Light the fourth purple candle.*

Now our redemption draws near! *Light the Christ candle (the center white candle).*

Read John 1:1-5 and Colossians 1:15

Discuss or reflect

- Are you good at waiting? What helps you be patient when you must wait?
- What are you waiting for right now?
- Do you think God waits? What does God wait for?

If you can, after it is dark outside, turn off all the lights in your room and spend a couple of minutes just watching the flames of the candles in silence. How do you feel? If God were sitting with you, what would God say to you today?

If you want more, worship with us at FLPC. We have a family communion service at 5 PM and a candlelight communion service (no nursery) at 8 PM. The 8 PM service will be livestreamed.

Prayer: God of comfort, hope, community, and peace, help me to know you are present with me right now and to feel and to trust your love. Tonight, come and live in my heart, just like you came to live with Mary and Joseph so long ago! Amen.



Christmas Day

The Advent Wreath!!

Into a world that knows too much of grief, despair, division, anger, fear, and death, God has come to live and to love. We are not alone. We have not been abandoned. We need a savior. Come and hear our prayers. Because we know you and love you, we light candles of comfort, hope, community, and peace. O Jesus Christ, Savior of the world and Lord of our hearts, be born again in us today.

On this Christmas morning, be born in our hearts and lives anew. Come, Lord Jesus, come!

Light all the candles!

Read Luke 2:1-20 (If you have others with you, take turns reading. If you have preschool children, feel free to read this story out of a children's Bible.

Discuss or reflect

- How do you think Mary and Joseph felt on that first Christmas morning?
- How do you feel today?
- Name the people, things, or events for which you are most grateful today.
- Name the people, things, or events that you most need God to help with today.

If you want more, sing your favorite Christmas song (that talks about Jesus' birth - not Santa Claus). Or if you are not a singer, choose a song you like and search online so you can listen to it. Sit and pay attention to the words. What do you like about this song?

Prayer: Jesus, just like you were born in Bethlehem so long ago, I pray that you will come and live in my heart. Fill me with hope, peace, joy, and love. And help me to share those with everyone I meet today. Help me to share the present of your love with others.

I pray that you will help...

And I thank you for....

Amen.

