

# WEsources:

## A Resource FOR ALL OF US

WRITTEN BY THE Discipleship Ministry Team OF THE Cumberland Presbyterian Church



### Personal Devotion

### THE SEASON OF Advent

#### THE PROPHETS' CANDLE: HOPE

Advent Lesson 1

#### RESOURCES

- Device to show videos links (computer, tablet, projector)
- Bible Journal or writing pad Pen
- (Optional) Advent Wreath

#### GATHERING

Before you start this WEsources on Advent it might be good to have an advent wreath for your room. Keep it there all Advent and light the candles each week.

Advent is a Middle English term from a Latin term that means to "arrive." Most notably it is used to describe the waiting period of the Church for the arrival of Christ that we celebrate every Christmas.

Here is a video from *The Bible Project* that further studies what hope is in relation to the Bible and the theme for this first week of Advent.

If this is a digital file, copy/paste the link into your browser of choice.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WYNBjJSyVE>

If this is a printed file go to youtube.com and search for the video titled - "Word Study: Yakhel - "Hope".

This Advent we are going to reflect on the themes that shape Advent: **Hope**, Faith, Joy & Peace.

These are the words that help shape our idea of the Advent season and the anticipation of Christmas.

The first candle of Advent is called the candle of Hope or the Prophets' Candle. Today's scripture comes from Luke chapter 1 verses 26-38 and is the story of Jesus' birth being foretold by an angel messenger— thus the Prophets' Candle.

#### SCRIPTURE

Read Luke 1:26-38

You may want to have your journal handy so you can write down words or phrases that capture your attention or cause you to have questions. If it helps to delve deeper into the scripture, read it a few more times. Or you may want to roughly outline the actions of the scripture such as:

"Gabriel was sent to Mary who was engaged to Joseph. She was living in Nazareth...."

## QUESTIONS

- What are the different feelings that Mary experiences as she listens and processes what Gabriel is saying?
- Where do you see hope in the story?
- What is the significance of the fact that Gabriel foretells Mary's pregnancy but also Elizabeth's?
- How do you think Mary's hope would be different from Elizabeth's?

## SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

The video says: "*Hope is something you choose.*" Mary did not wish this situation into being. She does, however, choose to be the servant of the Lord.

We do not wish the world in which we live with its poverty, hatred and hurt. In the midst of this mess, there is a movement with yard signs everywhere calling us to "Just be kind." We have the chance to choose hope every day, and not only choose it for ourselves, but for others.

Brian Wren wrote a prayer in his book entitled *Advent, Christmas and Epiphany*. The prayer "Giver of Hope" asks God to hear our prayer "for all who wait in hope for a smile, a handshake, and a welcome..." and then he prays this: "Resurrect

the hopes of people bruised and beaten. Fan into the flame the spark of hope in caregivers racked with tiredness, prisoners locked in isolation, and people held captive by illness and addiction." These are the ones for whom we need to ask God to help us choose hope. (*Advent, Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 26)

Our task for this week, as we remember the lighting of the candle of Hope, the Prophets' Candle, is to reflect on those around us and ask "What do they need in order to choose hope? How can I choose hope and work to give them what they need?"

Before closing this time in prayer, make a list of those who need our help to make them hopeful this week. Beside their name, jot down any actions that you will try to give them hope. And if needed, who and what you will need to do so.

**Giver of Hope, you alone know we get tired or apathetic or busy and don't choose hope in our daily lives. Instead we choose the things that don't give us life. Give us strength and courage to just be kind to people and in doing so give them hope for themselves and in turn hope for the world. Be with us on this journey to the birth of your son Jesus Christ.**

**Amen.**

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### Personal Devotion

### THE SEASON OF Advent

an overview of the birth of Jesus (what we are waiting for) and gives us a foundation for our faith. This is the theme for this second week of Advent.

If this is a digital file, copy/paste the link into your browser of choice.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_OLezoUvOEQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OLezoUvOEQ)

If this is a printed file go to youtube.com and search for the video titled - "The Birth of Jesus - Gospel of Luke Ch. 1-2".

This Advent we are reflecting on the themes that shape Advent: Hope, **Faith**, Joy & Peace.

These are the words that help shape our idea of the Advent season and the anticipation of Christmas.

The second candle of Advent is called the candle of Faith or the Bethlehem Candle. Today's scripture comes from Luke chapter 2 verses 1-7 and is the story of Jesus' parents traveling to Bethlehem for a census and the birth of Jesus—thus the Bethlehem Candle.

#### SCRIPTURE

Read Luke 2:1-7.

You may want to have your journal handy so you can write down words or phrases that capture

## THE BETHLEHEM CANDLE: FAITH

*Advent Lesson 2*

### RESOURCES

- Device to show videos links (computer, tablet, projector)
- Bible Journal or writing pad Pen
- (Optional) Advent Wreath

### GATHERING

Before you start this WEsources on Advent it might be good to have an advent wreath for your room. Keep it there all Advent and light the candles each week.

Last week, we learned Advent is a Middle English term from a Latin term meaning to "arrive." Most notably it is used to describe the waiting period of the Church for the arrival of Christ that we celebrate every Christmas.

Since we are moving to the second week of Advent and with it the celebration of the Bethlehem Candle symbolizing faith, watch this video from The Bible Project that gives us

your attention or cause you to have questions. If it helps to delve deeper into the scripture, read it a few more times. Or you may want to roughly outline the actions of the scripture such as: "Augustus said he wanted everyone to be counted. Joseph and Mary went from Nazareth to Bethlehem...."

## QUESTIONS

- What reason do you think Augustus had for ordering a census?
- Where do you see faith in the story?
- What is the significance of the fact that God's son was laid in a cattle trough?
- What do you think Mary and Joseph were thinking about God's plan given their spontaneous travel and lodging circumstances?

## SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

The video says that God is going to bring salvation by turning the world order upside down. And it does seem like things are upside down—a virgin has a son, a non-descript teenager becomes the mother of our savior, the holy family and the world's little king stays in a dirty cattle stall, and the first visitors of this little king are poor, dirty shepherds. It takes great faith for them to believe God given this situation. And it also takes great faith for us to believe this event will lead to our salvation and the salvation of the world.

Brian Wren's prayer "Who Cares, God?" raises up the petty things we often argue about—What calendar was Luke using? Did Jesus' birth really take place in October, March or June? Is everything in the Bible that was written down and brought forth to us today accurate in every

detail? And then he prays: "All we need to know is that around that time and about that place, a voice cried out in the desert, and we must decide whether to listen and what to do." (*Advent, Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 77)

We have a choice this week again. We can choose to have faith even when many people and things are telling us that we are foolish. We all must decide for ourselves. There is no having faith on behalf of someone else. It's not possible.

Our task for this week, as we remember the lighting of the candle of Faith, the Bethlehem Candle, is to reflect on what we believe, think through and pray about our doubts since they are the way our faith grows and how we will share—live out—our faith so that others might see and believe. We are an example to a world that has more and more decided that they are a "none" (they have no faith in anything).

Before closing this time in prayer, make a list of those people in your life who need your example of faith and your witness through your words and deeds. Beside their name, jot down any places that your paths will cross and what you might say and do.

**Giver of Faith, you know our faith sometimes wavers and we are silent when we should use our voice. We know the blessings we receive daily because of our faith and yet are scared to share with others. We are afraid they will turn from us or embarrass us. Give us strength and courage to genuinely share with others how our faith has filled our lives with joy and peace. Continue to be with us on this journey to the birth of your son Jesus Christ.**

**Amen.**

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### Personal Devotion

### THE SEASON OF Advent

#### THE SHEPHERDS' CANDLE: JOY

Advent Lesson 3

#### RESOURCES

- Device to show videos links (computer, tablet, projector)
- Bible Journal or writing pad Pen
- (Optional) Advent Wreath

#### GATHERING

Before you start this WEsources on Advent it might be good to have an advent wreath for your room. Keep it there all Advent and light the candles each week.

Remember, Advent is a Middle English term from a Latin term that means to "arrive." It is the four weeks before Christmas and is a time for the Church to wait with anticipation for the arrival of Christ Child.

Here is a video from The Bible Project that further studies what joy is in relation to the Bible and the theme for this third week of Advent.

If this is a digital file, copy/paste the link into your browser of choice.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvOhQTuD2e0>

If this is a printed file go to youtube.com and search for the video titled - "Word Study: Chara - "Joy".

This Advent we are reflecting on these themes that shape Advent: Hope, Faith, **Joy** & Peace.

These are the words that help shape our idea of the Advent season and the anticipation of Christmas.

The third candle of Advent is called the candle of Joy or the Shepherds' Candle. Today's scripture comes from Luke chapter 2 verses 15-20 and is the story of the shepherds, upon hearing the good news of Jesus' birth, becoming the first earthly messengers of that good news—thus the Shepherds' Candle.

#### SCRIPTURE

Read Luke 2:15-20

You may want to have your journal handy so you can write down words or phrases that capture your attention or cause you to have questions. If it helps to delve deeper into the scripture, read it a few more times. Or you may want to roughly

outline the actions of the scripture such as: "The angels left the shepherds in the fields. The shepherds decide to go Bethlehem...."

## QUESTIONS

- What do you think was the driving force causing the shepherds to head to Bethlehem—the magnitude of being visited by angels or the content of what they said? Or both?
- Verse 18 says: "...and all who heard it were amazed..." Who do you think was there to hear their good news?
- What do you think Mary and Joseph's responses were to the shepherds? Do you think they shared their stories too? What does it mean that Mary "treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart"?
- What do you think the shepherds' return trip looked like with them "glorifying and praising God for all they have heard and seen, as it had been told them"?

## SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

The video says that joy is "an attitude God's people adopt not because of happy circumstances but because of their hope in God's love and promise." The shepherds could have remained in the fear they first experienced when their angel messenger first appeared. But they didn't. They adopted joy because the hope in this message of a savior and messiah fulfilled a promise that God made over and over with the ancestors of the Hebrew people.

The truly amazing thing is that the shepherds were chosen to be the first earthly messengers of the good news. Brian Wren wrote that the shepherds were seen as inferior to others, that

because they worked funny hours, they couldn't go to the synagogue often, and they often had a "fragrant" odor about them because of their work. And yet, he asks "What does it mean that Jesus was recognized, honored, and adored not by the Town Council and the Chamber of Commerce, but by people called unclean?" Maybe because they were not held in such esteem, they experienced the joy of the news even more than others might have. (*Advent, Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 93)

Our task for this week, as we remember the lighting of the candle of Joy, the Shepherds' Candle, is to bring joy at this time to those who may not feel joy—those who have lost a loved one in the last year, those who are by themselves even though they crave companionship, or those who are experiencing hurt, either physically or emotionally and are having a hard time feeling joy.

Before closing this time in prayer, make a point of looking for those who need to feel the joy that God's love and promise hold. Jot down any ideas that you have for sharing joy in a tangible way.

**Giver of Joy, it is sometimes hard to feel joy when all we see is violence, greed, murder, and abuse in the news every day. Remind us to be the bearers of good news to your world. Because of your son Jesus Christ, we know and feel that joy that cannot be snuffed out. Help us to look for and share your joy with those who are suffering. Give us the words and actions to convey your message to them so they might also experience your joy. Be with us on this journey to the birth of your son Jesus Christ. Amen.**

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THE SEASON OF  
Advent

## THE ANGELS' CANDLE: PEACE

Advent Lesson 4

### RESOURCES

- Device to show videos links (computer, tablet, projector)
- Bible Journal or writing pad Pen
- (Optional) Advent Wreath

Gathering Before you start this WEsources on Advent it might be good to have an advent wreath for your room. Keep it there all Advent and light the candles each week.

Advent means to "arrive" in Middle English from the original Latin. It is used to describe the waiting period of the Church for the arrival of the Christ Child.

This lesson's video from The Bible Project that further studies what peace is in relation to the Bible and the theme for this fourth week of Advent.

If this is a digital file, copy/paste the link into your browser of choice.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLYORLZOaZE>

If this is a printed file go to youtube.com and search for the video titled - "Word Study: Shalom - "Peace".

This Advent we are reflecting on these themes that shape Advent: Hope, Faith, Joy & **Peace**.

These are the words that help shape our idea of the Advent season and the anticipation of Christmas.

The fourth candle of Advent is called the candle of Peace or the Angels' Candle. Today's scripture comes from Luke chapter 2 verses 8-14 and is the story of the angels coming to the shepherds in the fields and ending their message with "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"—thus the Angels' Candle.

### SCRIPTURE

Read Luke 2:8-14

You may want to have your journal handy so you can write down words or phrases that capture your attention or cause you to have questions. If it helps to delve deeper into the scripture, read it a few more times. Or you may want to roughly

outline the actions of the scripture such as: "The shepherds were in the fields watching their flock of sheep. The angels descend from heaven and light up the sky...."

## QUESTIONS

- What do you think is the reason for one angel coming first to the shepherds? Does this relieve any of their fears?
- Do you think the description of Jesus—messiah and savior—"wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger" surprised the shepherds? Do you think it made it easier or harder to accept the angel's message?
- What do you think the scene looked like once the "multitude of the heavenly host" appeared and started speaking? What would your feelings be if you were the shepherds?
- In the New Revised Standard Version, verse 14 says "peace among those whom he favors!" There is a note on that verse that translates it "peace, good will among people." What do you think is the difference in these translations and how does that change the meaning of the message? Or does it?

Seeking Understanding The video says that "Life is complex, full of moving parts and relationships and situations. And when any of these is out of alignment or missing, your shalom [peace] breaks down. Life is no longer whole. It needs to be restored." The angels are bringing a message of peace—that Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection are restoring wholeness to our lives, our world, and our relationships. This is not only good news it is great news. And this is especially significant because he is restoring our—humanity's—relationship with our creator—God.

In the prayer "Recognizing Angels," Brian Wren confesses that it would be great to be able to see and hear an angel, but we don't expect God to come to us "with shining wings, in a flash of light...." Because of that, he asks God to "give us your watchful Spirit that we may resolve our perplexity, detect your presence, and answer your call." The shepherds have the benefit(?) of seeing and hearing all the "bells and whistles" and were clear on what they must do. To be restored to wholeness, we must feel the nudge of the Holy Spirit in order to know how to do God's will. (Advent, Christmas and Epiphany, p. 66)

Our task for this week, as we remember the lighting of the candle of Peace, the Angels' Candle, is to find ways to bring about peace or shalom within our communities. The video says that shalom is not only the absence of fighting, it is created when we begin working together. Perhaps that is why we see so many wars break out in the same areas of the world. Look around you and find where there is no wholeness or completeness. Reflect on what is needed to bring about peace.

Before closing this time in prayer, spend time reflecting on the brokenness in the communities in which you live and work. Make notes in your journal where these are and who might be willing and able to help you in your bringing about peace. Pray together for God to be in your midst.

**Giver of Peace, brokenness is all around us. There are so many people who are trying to sow hatred in our world and we know that it is not your will. Help us to have the courage to reach out to others to bring about shalom in our relationships. In doing this, may it set an example for others to stand up and do something in your name. May we use the voices and resources that you have blessed us with to bring about a peace that truly passes all understanding. Be with us on this journey to the birth of your son Jesus Christ.**

**Amen.**



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*Personal Devotion*

THE SEASON OF  
*Advent*

## FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS: THE CHRIST CANDLE

*Advent Lesson 5*

### RESOURCES

- Device to show videos links (computer, tablet, projector)
- Bible Journal or writing pad Pen
- (Optional) Advent Wreath

### GATHERING

Before you start this WEsources on Advent it might be good to have an advent wreath for your room. Keep it there all Advent and light the candles each week. Also light the Christ candle this week.

Advent is a Middle English term from a Latin term that means to "arrive." Most notably it is used to describe the waiting period of the Church for the arrival of Christ that we celebrate every Christmas.

This lesson's video retells the story of Anna and Simeon and the presentation of Jesus at the

temple. This story is a great way to celebrate the birth of Jesus just as these faithful two did.

If this is a digital file, copy/paste the link into your browser of choice.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leN-xNrjbo>

If this is a printed file go to youtube.com and search for the video titled - "God's Story: Anna and Simeon".

If you would like you can refer back to lesson 2's video to review what we have read so far about the birth of Jesus.

This Advent we have reflected on these Advent: **Hope, Faith, Joy & Peace.**

These are the words that have helped us prepare for the birth of Jesus Christ and now in the celebration of Christmas.

The fifth candle in the middle of our Advent wreath is called the Christ Candle. Today's scripture comes from Luke chapter 2 verses 22-38 and is the story of Mary and Joseph bringing Jesus to the temple to be presented and sacrifices offered in thanksgiving for this child. What Mary and Joseph probably did not expect were Simeon and Anna being at the temple and celebrating the birth of the messiah that they

and the Hebrew people were looking for—thus the Christ Candle.

## SCRIPTURE

Read Luke 2:22-38

You may want to have your journal handy so you can write down words or phrases that capture your attention or cause you to have questions. If it helps to delve deeper into the scripture, read it a few more times. You may want to watch the last part of the video again which gives a quick outline of the actions in this scripture.

## QUESTIONS

- What was it about Jesus that made Simeon recognize him as the Lord's messiah?
- After blessing the family, Simeon speaks to Mary in verse 34. What do you think he means by Jesus being "destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel"? How do you think Mary understood the part that specifically referred to a sword piercing her soul?
- Anna was obviously a prominent prophet because she is named, her father and tribe are named, the fact she was a widow after 7 years and never left the temple, only fasted and prayed. What do you think is the reason for Luke attaching so much detail to her description?
- What is so important about Simeon praising God and singing about Jesus and Anna praising God and preaching to all who would hear her? What feelings other than amazement do you think Mary and Joseph were having?

## SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

The story of Anna and Simeon as seen in the video envelops all the Advent themes: the hope of Simeon and Anna for the messiah to come, their faith in the Holy Spirit's promise that they would see the messiah, their joy in their praise to God for the messiah's arrival and the peace that they felt at having their lives become whole (v. 29 "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace...")

It is appropriate to look to Brian Wren even beyond Advent. His prayer "How Can a Baby Change the World?" assures us that the rich are still in power even when a baby is born, the poor are still poor and hungry, when a baby is born. And yet, the babe is changing our lives forever just as it did Mary throughout her life. He asks "Then how can a baby not change the world? Who knows what a child will become? For when new life surges it changes the shape of the shoreline so that even the castles of power are like sand." Our world has been rocked. The powerful in the world's eyes no longer hold the power. For sure our world has been changed by the birth of Christ. And we can further change the world for good by continuing to birth new ideas of hope and faith and joy and peace. (Advent, Christmas and Epiphany, p. 65)

Our task for the remainder of the Christmastide and beyond, as we remember the lighting of the Christ Candle, is to prophetically preach hope, share our faith from our little "Bethlehems" to the ends of the earth, be joy-filled in the company of the powerful and those without it, sow peace by finding the missing pieces and making our world complete, and recognize the messiah in our world and praise God and tell everyone we can the good news. Jesus Christ is born. Hallelujah!

Before closing this time in prayer, grab your journal and create something on the page. It can be through written words—a poem, a story, a prayer, a hymn—or something visual—a picture, symbols or even something purely abstract. Let it be a gift to God for the precious gift of Jesus Christ, our savior and messiah.

**Giver of Hope, Faith, Joy, Peace, and our Savior, we cannot stop singing your praises. You are God—the God of love and promise. The God bringing shalom to our brokenness world. As Jesus gave the disciples power to go out and do mighty acts, send us out to do the same. As a new year approaches, let us continue to sing about Christ "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." Jesus is born! Hallelujah!**

**Amen.**