

The First Congregational Church of Shelburne United Church of Christ



Advent Wreath 2020



The origins of the use of an Advent Wreath in the home and in the church are lost in the ocean of church history. It is thought that the Advent Wreath might have started in Germany, perhaps France, within the Lutheran tradition. This would place the origin of the Advent Wreath sometime between the late 1500's and the early 1600's. Other commentaries put the origin much earlier. The wreath started out as a circle of wire adorned with evergreens that had four candles set in it. In its simplest form, these candles marked each of the four weeks of the Advent season. The colors of these candles have changed over time. Originally white, they eventually became purple and then blue. Most Christian traditions that use colors to denote the seasons of the church year now use blue, the color for Mary, the mother of Jesus, as a reminder that Advent is a time of waiting for the birth of Jesus. There is no one tradition concerning the names of the candles. At one time, the first two candles lit were for the coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ, while the third candle was for John the Baptist and the fourth candle for Mary. Often the four carry the names, Peace, Hope, Love and Joy, all words that describe the coming of Christ. What is important is that the Advent Wreath marks the season of Advent, reminds us that we are waiting for the coming of Christ, and separates this season from the season of Christmas.

This year we are unable to offer Advent Sunday services and Christmas Eve service in the church sanctuary. We understand how difficult and unfortunate this is. These services have always been a wonderful and joyous opportunity to be together and celebrate this season. There will be videos for all the Advent services and one for Christmas Eve.

The Deacons have offered Advent Wreaths with a four-candle set for those in the congregation who do not already have one. These have been given in the hopes that church families may use them as the Advent Wreath was originally intended, in the home to mark each Advent Sunday. If you have one of these, or your own, the following resource gives a reading and a prayer for each Sunday of Advent and one for Christmas Eve. Each Sunday can be read by two family members. If you wish to have one person do the reading and prayer, simply use the first reader sheet, and read the entire page.

The candles that the Deacons provided are a set of three purple and one pink. Please note that for Christmas Eve, you will need to provide your own white Christ candle.

We hope that this resource brightens your Advent and helps to bring the light of Christ into your family.

Faithfully Yours,
The Deacons and the Pastor

Advent Wreath 2020

The Candle of Peace

First Sunday in Advent
November 29, 2020

Reader 1: **Bold Print**
Reader 2: Normal Print

Reader 1 Long ago, God spoke to the people of Israel through the prophet Malachi. Malachi told them to prepare for God to come and transform everything.

Reader 2 When the time came for the Messiah to be born, God sent an angel to Zechariah. The angel told Zechariah that his wife, Elizabeth, would bear a son, and his name would be John. John would prepare the way for the coming of the Lord's Christ who would bring peace to the nations.

Reader 1 We too long for peace.

Reader 2 Today, on the First Sunday in Advent, we light this candle of peace, waiting for the Prince of Peace to be born among us.

Light one of the purple, or blue candles.

Reader 1 Let us pray:
O, God of peace, teach us your way of peace, so that wars may cease, and that hatred and fear may give way to compassion and hope. Help us to prepare the way, as we wait for the coming of the Prince of Peace. Amen.



Advent Wreath 2020
The Candle of Hope

Second Sunday in Advent
December 6, 2020

Reader 1: **Bold Print**
Reader 2: Normal Print

Light the candle from last Sunday, the candle of Peace.

Reader 1 Long ago, God spoke to the people of Israel through the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah spoke about the coming of the Messiah.

Reader 2 When the time came for the Messiah to be born, God sent the angel Gabriel to a young woman named Mary. Gabriel told Mary that she would bear a son named Jesus and that he would be great and called the son of the Most High.

Reader 1 Today, on the Second Sunday in Advent we light this candle of hope, rejoicing with Mary, the mother of Jesus, the Lord's Messiah.

Light the second purple, or blue, candle.

Reader 2 Let us pray:
O, God of hope, help us to delight in your vision for the world. Help us to have the courage of faith as Mary did as she learned that she had been chosen to bear Jesus, Immanuel, God With Us. Amen.



Advent Wreath 2020
The Candle of Joy

Third Sunday in Advent
December 13, 2020

Reader 1: **Bold Print**
Reader 2: Normal Print

*Light the candles from the previous Sundays:
The candle of Peace and the candle of Hope*

Reader 1 Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Elizabeth, wife of Zechariah and the mother of John the Baptist, waited for their sons to be born.

Reader 2 Scripture records that they visited each other and spent time with each other as they awaited the birth of their children.

Reader 1 It was Mary who sang, in great joy, concerning God's plan in the birth of John and then Jesus. Today, on the Third Sunday of Advent, we light our candle of joy.

Light the third purple, blue, or pink candle.

Reader 2 Let us pray:
O God of joy, even in times of trial and challenge, help us to see you in our lives and help us to see your call to us as your disciples, even as Mary and Elizabeth saw their calling and their place in your design. Amen.



Advent Wreath 2020
The Candle of Love

Fourth Sunday in Advent
December 20, 2020

Reader 1: **Bold Print**
Reader 2: Normal Print

*Light the candles from the previous Sundays:
The candle of Peace, the candle of Hope and the candle of Joy.*

Reader 1 Long ago, God spoke to the people of Israel through the prophet Micah.

Reader 2 Micah promised them a ruler from the tiny town of Bethlehem to love the people the way a shepherd loves the sheep.

Reader 1 Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, surrounded by Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and God's love.

Reader 2 God's love for us still comes to us through the gift of Jesus.

Reader 1 Today, on the Fourth Sunday in Advent, we light this candle of love, celebrating the love that came out of Bethlehem, the love that changes everything.

Light the fourth purple, or blue candle.

Reader 2 Let us pray:
O God of love, from a stable in a tiny town you taught us the meaning of love. Help us to rejoice with Mary and Joseph in your love that changes everything. Amen.



Advent Wreath 2020
The Christ Candle

Christmas Eve
December 24, 2020

Reader 1: **Bold Print**
Reader 2: Normal Print

*Light all four Advent candles:
The candles of Peace, Hope, Joy and Love.*

Reader 1 We have waited for the peace of Christ,
so that God's design might be seen.

Reader 2 We have waited in hope for God to come among us.

Reader 1 We have waited with joy,
celebrating the things God has already done.

Reader 2 We have waited with love,
awed by how God has shown love for us.

Reader 1 Tonight, on Christmas Eve, we light the Christ candle to
celebrate the light that God has sent into the world in the
birth of Jesus.

Light the Christ Candle

Reader 2 Let us pray:
O God of peace, hope, joy, and love, from that stable so long ago your light shines out into every corner of the world. Help us to sing with the angels of the joy of your coming. Help us to live by your light throughout the whole year so that tidings of peace will be brought to all. Amen.

