

Celebrating the Season of Advent-2006

Starting with the first Sunday in December and ending with the Sunday after Christmas, we celebrate the season of Advent. The word advent means “a coming or an arrival.” Thus, this is a month long celebration remembering the *coming* to earth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Each Sunday during this season, we will explore a theme in our worship as it relates to Christ’s *advent*. The themes trace a path through history from the first days of creation to the end of time, to which we look forward in anticipation of the return to earth of Jesus and the coming, advent, of His kingdom in its fullness. This path follows God’s plan to redeem a people for Himself as it has unfolded in Scripture.

First Sunday of Advent: (Dec. 3) – Communion Sunday – Sermon text: Isaiah 7

Call to Worship: Psalm 8

We begin with **creation** and reflect on how God designed and ordered the universe and placed a man and a woman in His garden to rule over everything He created, and it was very good. Unfortunately, this perfect union between God and his creation did not last long, for mankind quickly fell into disobedience and brought ruin and devastation to God’s wonderful design. But God did not leave the man and woman simply to die in the misery of their sin. Instead, even as He pronounced curses upon them for their failure, He promised victory over the serpent and over the forces of evil. It would come at a terrible cost.

Today we light a candle to remember the **Creation**. We remember that God designed and ordered this universe for our good and His glory, and we have hope that one day God will again restore all things. By lighting this candle we begin a season celebrating the coming of the second Adam, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Second Sunday of Advent (Dec. 10) – Sermon text: Isaiah 9

Call to Worship: Genesis 22: 9-14

Assurance of Pardon: Genesis 22: 15-18

Everything we hope for depends upon God’s promise. On this second Sunday of Advent we remember the **promise** made to Abraham. Though 100 years old and his wife, Sarah, 90 years old, God gave Abraham a son and heir and led him into a land that his descendants were destined to inherit. Even as God tested Abraham by asking him to take his son Isaac and to offer him as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah, Abraham believed God’s promise to be true, and he knew that God would provide an acceptable sacrifice. And so, God provided a ram as a substitute for Isaac and blessed Abraham for his faith, promising to bless his descendants and to give them the land. He also declared that all nations on earth will be blessed through his offspring. This is the hope to which we cling.

Today we light a candle to remember the **Promise**. We believe that the ram God provided points us to Christ, the true heir and better sacrifice, once for all. By faith in Christ, we enjoy the blessing promised to Abraham, and we hope, work and pray for His grace to be poured out on all the nations.

Third Sunday of Advent (Dec. 17) – Sermon text: Isaiah 11

Call to Worship: Deuteronomy 6: 4-7

Assurance of Pardon: Exodus 34: 4-7

On this third Sunday of Advent we remember the **law** given to Moses. Only days after the people of Israel, the descendants of Abraham, were freed from their bondage in Egypt, the Lord led them to Mt. Sinai and gave them what was necessary to live well and prosper in the land to which He was taking them. He gave them His law, His word, His instruction, His heart. The law served to show them how to love God and their neighbor, but it also served to show them their continual need for repentance and faith. It pointed to something greater, something higher, something far better than they could imagine. It spoke of the reality within the human heart, our condition as a result of the fall, and it pointed to the need for an atoning sacrifice.

Today we light a candle to remember the **Law** of God. With the Psalmist we declare that “Your word is a lamp to [our] feet and a light for [our] path.” And we rejoice that God’s word became flesh and made his dwelling with us in Jesus Christ, our Savior. He came not to “abolish” the law, but to “fulfill” it. By lighting this candle, we acknowledge that it is only by trusting Jesus we are no longer counted as law-breakers in the Father’s sight, and, filled with His spirit, we are empowered to joyfully obey His commands.

Fourth Sunday of Advent (Dec. 24) – Sermon text: Isaiah 40

Call to Worship: Psalm 89: 1-5

Assurance of Pardon: Psalm 89: 30-37

In the days after Israel had settled in the Promised Land, looking at the horror and wreckage of people’s lives, the writer of the book of Judges declared, “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.” Despite the blessing of the law, the people of God came under its curse by their disobedience. Nevertheless, God showed them His mercy and continued to build His **kingdom** through them. Choosing a forgotten shepherd boy named David as His king, God established a dynasty. On this fourth Sunday of Advent we remember this **kingdom** which still stands. God promised to establish David’s line forever and fulfilled that promise unexpectedly. As a baby born in a stable in Bethlehem, God came to earth in Christ, the Humble King.

Today we light a candle to remember the unshakeable **Kingdom** of God. In the lighting of this candle we long for the words of Isaiah the prophet to be fully realized: “Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for ever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.” (Is. 9:7)

Trinity Presbyterian Church, Arts and Worship Ministry

Fifth Sunday of Advent (Dec. 31) – Sermon text: Isaiah 65

Call to Worship: Revelation 19: 4-9

Assurance of Pardon: Revelation 21: 1-6

The writer of the book of Hebrews declares, “in these last days [God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.” In the midst of the creation and the fall, He was there; in the promises to Abraham, he was there; in the Law of Moses, He is there. He is the promised heir of David and rules at the right hand of the Father. In the form of a little baby, he came to earth, put on our flesh, perfectly honored the Father, and became our atoning sacrifice. And now, we wait with hope for his return, the second *advent*, for he who began this good work will bring it to completion.

Today, the center candle, the Christ candle, is lit. It symbolizes the abiding presence of His Spirit here with us and burns as a light of hope in a world of darkness. As we reflect upon the Advent of our Savior, we long to see Him return. Only then will we know in full the blessings of the original design, perfect fellowship with the God of Heaven.