

First Presbyterian Church, Cottonwood Falls, KS
Family Traditions: The First Sunday in Advent
Rev. Pat Ireland, Pastor
Dec 2, 2007

***INTROIT**

*Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.
Wait for the Lord, keep watch, take heart.*

Taize'

*The banners are hung and the
advent wreath is brought forward and set up*

***CANDLE LITURGY**

Today is the first Sunday in the season of Advent. Advent means coming. This is a time to prepare once again for the coming of Jesus.

The wreath is round, reminding us that God is eternal, no beginning nor ending. The candles remind us that Christ is the light coming into a dark world.

Children: *Today we light the candle of HOPE.*

With Christians around the world, we use this light to remind us that Jesus brings light into the dark places of the world and help us prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of God's Son.

Today, the prophet Isaiah describes a future shaped by peace for all nations as they walk in the light of the Lord. We wait in hope for this prophecy to be fulfilled.

Please join me in the prayer.

***MORNING PRAYER:** *Lord as we look to the birth of Jesus, grant that the light of your love for us will help us to become lights in the lives of those around us. Prepare our hearts for the joy and gladness of your coming, for Jesus is our hope. Amen.*

***RESPONSE** Chorus:

*Are you ready? Gotta get ready. Are you ready? Gotta get ready.
Are you ready? Gonna get ready for the lord. Alleluia! (Repeat)*

Verse 1 *He'll bring hope to the desperate. He'll bring hope to the desperate
So let's bring hope to the desperate, oh my lord. Alleluia (Repeat)*

Repeat Chorus.

This is piece composed by Kevin Ireland in '06.

LISTENING FOR THE WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION God of all nations - you spoke to Isaiah and you empowered him to speak welcome words of peace and hope to the people of his time. We need to hear your word anew to us today as the darkness of despair is still experienced wherever peace and hope is absent. Strengthen us with the power of the Holy Spirit so that we may be your prophets in our own time and place - teaching your ways and lifting people's darkness through words and work of love and peace and justice. In then name of Jesus, the Living Word we pray. Amen

FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 4:2-7b

Pew Bibles P 593

- 2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness-- on them light has shined.
- 3 You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.
- 4 For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.
- 5 For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood

shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

6 For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.

The Word of the Lord *Thanks be to God.*

CHOIR ANTHEM Let all Mortal Flesh: O Come Emmanuel

TIME WITH CHILDREN Family Traditions

Paraments: Notice and talk about the blue. (They were white last week)

Each season of the church has a specific color. The color for Advent is blue. That is new for us. We made the shift 5 or 6 years ago. We used to use purple, but it is the same color we use for Lent, and the purple paraments are faded because they are almost as old as your daddy! (*Have old one there*). As the color of the night sky, Blue symbolizes Christ who in one ancient Advent song is called the "Dayspring" or source of day. As the color associated with Mary, Blue also reminds us that during Advent the church waits with Mary for the birth of Jesus. (*Do they know who Mary was?*)

The candles on our Advent Wreath are still purple. The Pink one is for Joy Sunday the last Sunday before Christmas. On Christmas Eve we'll add a white candle and birthday cake for Jesus. I couldn't find out how long we've had that wonderful wreath [Does anyone know?]- is must be older than Karsen! When Sue was on Worship committee she got oil candles for it so the wax wouldn't get on the wreath. Oil candles don't burn down like wax ones, but they are much easier on the wreath and safer too! Sue added those pretty gold bows to the wreath also.

Banners – When Cole was younger we had some First Sunday Workshops. At the Advent workshop each person made an ornament for the Jesse tree. Each week somebody told the story the ornament represents and then hung it on the tree. How many of you remember making an ornament? The Jesse Tree tells us the stories about God that Jesus learned as a child. Debbie put them on a banner for us a couple years ago. We can take them off and put them on the tree again next year if we want.

This year (2007) is just the 2nd year for our new wreath banner. The hands are those of all the folks in worship. The smallest ones are Tucker's, and the little ones are Rowan's. There are lots of different adult hands. Debbie has a list of the people represented here and we'll put them on the back of the banner before we put it away. Who remembers adding a hand to the banner? I'm sure Elaine did.

The big wreath is out if not already hung.

Wreaths are very important in this season because they remind us that, like a circle, God never ends. That is what eternal means – never ends or dies. So God is with us in all times. We have a *huge* wreath that goes around our beautiful window. The window has an open Bible in it. The wreath and the Bible remind God's Word is for all times. The wheat and the grapes in the window remind us that Jesus is the Living Word, that we share today in communion.

Now back to the wreath: It was made by a man named Park Mauderly. Park also made the cross that is below the window and some other things around the church. Elder Tom told me that Park was a very *handy fellow*! That wreath is SO big it takes 2 ladders and 2 people to hang it. It is a big job and sometimes we get so busy we don't even get it hung. We are so glad to have this year!

We also like Greens & Bows in our sanctuary because it makes it look very festive.

We can put them up after church or during the final hymn.

The two trees are up and bare.

During Advent we have *TWO TREES* in our sanctuary. That big tree is back is called a Chrismon Tree. The PW group purchased the supplies and Vickie & Mary Beth made the ornaments. That was more than 10 years ago because they have been used as long as I have been here. Each ornament is a symbol for Jesus, so it is a Jesus tree! Some of the ornaments are fragile so the grownups decorate that tree. The importance of that tree, of course is it where we gather our gifts for the Adopt a Child program. Sharing with children is a very important family tradition for our church!

If you'd like to purchase one or more gifts this year, there is a list in the back of the sanctuary.

The Small Tree in front is the children's tree and has been used different ways. It was our Jesse tree for a couple years. This year it is our prayer tree, our longing tree. I have special ornaments for it. Each one says "Come Lord Jesus". People can write their prayer on the ornament and we will hang it on the tree. Here are the prayers we lifted up at the first of the service. Can you hang them on the tree? One for Ruby, and Elmore, for Violet and Ruthanne. Here is one for the Mattis. We pray they will know God's presence close to them during Advent. This is a pray for peace in the Holy Land.

I'll bet there are lots of other prayers in people's hearts. I hope you all will use ornament to write your Advent prayers and hang them on the tree.

Have ornaments in a basket to pass... Can return in the offering

Christmas is the birthday of Jesus and as we wait for Christmas we pray for Jesus to come into our hearts. We have several Nativity Sets to remind us how a special baby was a gift from God.

Our biggest nativity is the Silhouette One that is outside. It was made and given to the church by Judge Towle. He was sheriff for lots of years and before he became a judge. He wasn't a member of the church, but he loved and respected this congregation and made this as a gift for us. We'll put it outside after worship.

Our fanciest Holy Family was a gift from the family of Kathryn Bell Murdock. Kathryn was baptized by this congregation in 1915 in the old wooden church. The Window by the organ was given in memory of her parents John and Mate Bell. Katryn died before I came (1995), but there are those who remember her beautiful singing voice and sense of humor. Her daughters sent the "holy family" statues about 6 years ago and they have enriched our season ever since.

Flight to Egypt: was awarded to the congregation for having the most supporters of the Senior Center on church day for three years in a row. Ray has been our 'encourager' in that endeavor as we are intentionally supported this important community resource. *(It goes out in the narthex on the table)*

Small Holy Family – goes under the small front tree. Don't know its history.

New on this year for your youngest kids: This soft set in a carrying case. It can go under the tree or down to Sunday School or wherever – because it can't be broken. It for playing the story of Jesus birth.

Last week Myrna asked me if we could sing a "real" Christmas carol each week. So, let's sing "The First Nowell" as we put some of these traditions right where they belong.

*Kids can go to pew with clip board and activity sheets
While I talk a little with the adults.
Pew Bibles P 867*

SECOND LESSON

Mark 1: 1-8

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.”

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

MEDITATION

John the Baptist, as a predecessor to Jesus, called people to repent: literally, to turn around. In this season of long lists and rushing forward it is especially important to stop and turn around.

Turn around to notice the world around rich with symbolism and meaning if only we can take time to notice; notice the decorations, and especially notice the people, the beautiful ones and the ones at the edges, for that is where Jesus is likely to be.

To repent is to turn a round and to stop and breathe. Breathe deeply for Mary heavy with child. Breathe deeply for Joseph who bucked both law and social convention to stand by Mary in her disgrace. Breathe deeply for the child as he fills his lungs for the first time.

To repent is to turn a round and be quiet and to listen. Listen for the pain of God who having entered mortal life must also die. Listen for the love in the voices and in the silence. Listen for the still small voice of God with us, the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

In this season, prepare the way for the Lord to enter into your heart. Ask Jesus to enter your life in a new and powerful way. Repent, turn off the TV and read. There are a variety of materials in the back. Start each day with pray and/or silence. Pause in the midst of the day to repent, turn around and again catch a glimpse of the coming one.

Finally, In this season especially, live in hope. Hope that God’s presence is with you and this community; that God’s will might be done on earth as in heaven; hope that one suicide bomber or terrorist will choose life, hope that one adolescent will turn from that stupid life changing decision; hope that a lonely person will be touched.

Turn around, repent, and recognize the one who is coming.

*Extra copies of Repent study in back of sanctuary
along with other assorted devotional material. Gift Yourself!
Prayer from Communion Table*

Let us join prayer. I will end each section with, O God, and you will respond: **Turn us around.**

The pardon response is printed in the bulletin.

CONFESSION

Living God, who was and is and is yet to come, we confess your being is hard to grasp for we are time-bound people. O God **Turn us around...** Turn us from rushing to waiting. Turn us from chatter to silence. Turn us from talking to listening. O God **Turn us around...** Turn us from spending to giving; from consuming to sharing; from wanting to emptying. O God **Turn us around...** Turn us again and

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again, as many times as sit takes until we might see you in our midst: in bread and cup, in people in need, in people who love and support us. O God *Turn us around...* (silence) Amen.

PARDON While we are yet sinners, Christ comes to us.

Believe the Good News: *In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.*

*HYMN

“Prepare the Way”

PH 13

OFFERTORY SENTENCE As the offering plates are passed, you’ll notice that there are Advent coins in them. As the plate is passed please accept a gift from God in the form of this Advent coin to remind you to turn from the craziness into the holiness of this season of hope.

You may, of course, also offer your thanksgiving and pledges to one whom we receive at Christmas.

*OFFERTORY PRAYER *Gracious and loving God, these gifts we offer are our response to the light which came into the world that first Christmas. Help us in this Advent season to allow that light to shine through us, so that the dark areas of people's lives life can be pierced by Christ's love. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen*

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you

Lift up your hearts

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

And also with you

We lift them to the Lord.

It is right to give our thanks and praise

We give thanks that at the dawn of history, you, O God, formed our forebears and breathed into them the breath of life. When they forgot about you and turned away, you did not turn away from them, your love remained constant. You delivered them from captivity and led them through the wilderness, providing food to eat and water to drink. Your Spirit came upon prophets and empowered them to speak your word of justice and righteousness. They pointed to the coming of one who would be a sign of your kingdom on earth. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of life and light, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the One for whom we wait, who bears the name Emmanuel.

Hosanna in the highest.

We thank you, Holy God that in the time of our dreams your care for us was sealed in the rainbowed promise of hope - of the sun, after storm; of life, after death, of yourself, revealed in human form - in Jesus Christ.

We wait for the promised One.

The One whom your Spirit anointed to proclaim justice to all peoples, good news to the poor, release for the captives, sight for the blind, liberty for the oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people.

We wait for the promised One.

In the name of the promised One, we take this bread and this cup and give you praise and thanksgiving. May your Spirit, O God, breathe upon these gifts of bread and wine that they may be for us the body and blood of Christ. His life in us. For this we give you thanks, in Jesus name. Amen.

Receiving the Gift of God

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We give thanks to you, O God, for renewing , refreshing and sustaining us in this meal by the presence of your love revealed so fully in Jesus Christ. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to be daily revelations of that love- in Jesus' name. As Jesus taught us, we are bold to say: Our Father who art in heaven... Amen

*HYMN

“God, We Await Your Advent Here”

Tune PH 357

*God, we await your advent here: When will these desert lands rejoice?
When will new blossoms bright appear And all earth praise you with one voice?*

*We live in deserts we have made; Gifts of your love we pass right by.
We seek possessions, more each day, And then in thirst for joy, we cry.*

*God, we prepare for Jesus' birth- Searching for gifts from store to store!
Yet when you sent your Christ to earth, You gave us joy worth so much more.*

*When in the love of Christ we grow, Streams in this desert shall abound.
Then by your Spirit we will know: True wealth in Jesus Christ is found.*

Text: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, © 1998

*CHARGE and BENEDECTION