

December 2015

My dear friends,

During the season of Advent we light our advent wreath at the beginning of each service. There are four candles—often called the candles of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

Hope, peace, joy and love. This is what Jesus lived to bring us. We live in a real world, and we might feel despair, strife, sorrow and fear. Advent is not a time to pretend that these realities don't live in our world; that they aren't present in our lives. Advent is a time to live the reality of what God has given to us, and what we can give to others.

**Hope** is future oriented. It looks ahead to a life that is meaningful, and filled with love, justice and mercy.

**Peace** is a way of living, right now. It is a state of mind and a reality of our goal in living this life.

**Joy** is an attitude. Not an emotion that is a result of any particular circumstance, but an understanding and a realization of the spirit of God moving within us. Joy is not a result of happiness—it springs from our creation, our reality as beloved children of God.

**Love** is the source of it all. Love comes from God, is God and infuses us. It is love that gives us hope, peace and joy.



The candle of hope we light in this hour  
Proclaims that the Lord is coming in power.

We wait for a future, now hidden from view,  
When Christ in his glory will make all things new.

The candle of peace shines bright with God's plan;  
The wolf will lie down and dwell with the lamb.  
Our guns and our weapons, our hatred and war,  
Will give way to gardens that heal and restore.

The candle of joy reminds us to sing,  
For God is at work to do a new thing.  
The proud will be humbled; the lowly will rise.  
God's kingdom is one of delight and surprise.

The candle of love tells what we are worth:  
God loves us so much, God came to the earth!  
An angel brought news of a child who would be  
The one who would save us and set us all free.