***AT HOME EDITION***

**A Sacred Meal for a Dispersed Community available to the**

 **Church of New Hampshire**

**Epiphany 2021**

*Acknowledging that our church communities are not gathered in the same physical space in the same way that Jesus gathered in the Upper Room with his disciples on the night before he suffered, we can still worship at home, with our households or on our own, and join spiritually with those who also celebrate this agape meal. We do so out of the yearning for closeness expressed by our Savior who said, “I have eagerly desired to share this Passover with you before I suffer.” (Luke 22:15)*

*Participants are invited to have a candle and ceremonial food prepared and laid out on a table. Bread could be flatbread, crackers or challah; drink could be wine, grape juice, cider, water.*

**Opening Sentences[[1]](#footnote-1)** *(Participants are invited to light a candle here if they choose)*

Leader: The Lord has shown forth his glory;

People: Come let us adore him.

**Sunday’s collect** *(can be found here:* [*https://lectionarypage.net*](https://lectionarypage.net) *)*

**Hymn or Song of Praise:**

*Taize music and songs about light might be particularly appropriate. Worship music created by music directors from NH churches can be found by going to* [*https://www.nhepiscopal.org/worship-liturgy*](https://www.nhepiscopal.org/worship-liturgy) *or NH Episcopal YouTube Channel* [*https://www.youtube.com/c/NHEpiscopal*](https://www.youtube.com/c/NHEpiscopal)*, check back often as content is updated frequently.*

**The Word of the Lord**

(*from the lectionary for the day)*

**Scripture Readings** *(can be found here:* *https://prayer.forwardmovement.org/daily\_readings\_anytime.php)*

**Reflection:** *In the last week, what has been difficult and what are you called to mourn? What gift or grace have you known or received?*

**Apostles Creed**

I believe in God, the Father almighty,

creator of heaven and earth;

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit

and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven,

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic Church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins

the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting. AMEN.

**Prayers:**

Leader: We gather today, with a desire to know your Presence among us.

*People: Send out your light and your truth, that they may lead us.*

Leader: Surrounded by illness, we mourn our dead;

*People: Send out your light and your truth, that they may lead us.*

Leader: We know loneliness and discomfort;

*People: Send out your light and your truth, that they may lead us.*

Leader: We cannot see the way that lies ahead;

*People: Send out your light and your truth, that they may lead us.*

Leader: Yet, we know you make a way in the Wilderness;

*People: Send out your light and your truth, that they may lead us.*

Leader: Assure us that you are doing a new thing among us.

*People: Send out your light and your truth, that they may lead us.*

*(Perhaps the leader will offer a concluding prayer, including the opportunity to pray*

*for particular people and offer gratitude for blessings)*

**Agape Meal**

**Reading: Luke 22:14-20**
When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.” After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

*The Leader now offers the following prayers.*

**Prayer for Bread:**

Leader: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Creator of the universe. You bring forth bread from the earth; you have fed us with the bread of life in the Body of your Son. Feed us now with your presence among us and your presence in your Word. As grain scattered upon the earth is gathered into one loaf, so gather your Church in every place into the kingdom of your Son. To you be glory and power for ever and ever. **AMEN**.

**Prayer for Drink:**

Leader: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Creator of the universe. You create the fruit of the vine; and you refresh us with the cup of salvation in the Blood of Jesus Christ, crucified yet risen. May the time come quickly when we can share that cup again, even as you are with us now in our very thirst for you. Glory to you for ever and ever. **AMEN**.

*If you are having a full meal following this service, you may bless the food with this prayer:*

**Prayer for other Foods:**

Leader: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Creator of the universe. You have blessed the earth to bring forth food to satisfy our hunger. Let this food strengthen us in the fast that is before us, that following our Savior in the way of the cross, we may come to the joy of his resurrection. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, now and for ever. **AMEN.**

**Leader:** Jesus said, “When two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them.

**People:** *Thanks be to God.*

*(Participants now eat their bread and drink their drink)*

**Hymn or Song of Praise:**

*Taize music and songs about light might be particularly appropriate. Worship music created by music directors from NH churches can be found by going to* [*https://www.nhepiscopal.org/worship-liturgy*](https://www.nhepiscopal.org/worship-liturgy) *or NH Episcopal YouTube Channel* [*https://www.youtube.com/c/NHEpiscopal*](https://www.youtube.com/c/NHEpiscopal)*, check back often as content is updated frequently.*

**Closing Prayer :**

Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one

accord to make our common supplication to you; and you

have promised through your well-beloved Son that when two

or three are gathered together in his Name you will be in the

midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions

as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of

your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting. Amen.

**Blessing** *(all say together to bless each other)*

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countence upon you and give you peace.

**Dismissal**

Leader: Go in peace, be the light of Christ

People: *Thanks be to God.*

**Appendix I - Advent Wreath Lighting Prayers Options:**

 **- Option 1[[2]](#footnote-2) -**

**Advent I (Hope):**

**Reader**: This first week of Advent we remember the gift of hope we have in Christ. The prophets of Israel all spoke of the coming of Christ, of how a savior would be born, a king in the line of David. They spoke of how he would rule the world wisely and bless all nations.

We light the candle of hope.

*(Light one purple candle on the Advent Wreath.)*

Let us pray - Loving God, we thank you for the hope you give us. Help us prepare our hearts for the Lord's coming by being open seeing to the light of Christ in others. We ask this in the name of the one born in Bethlehem, Jesus our Lord. **Amen**.

**Advent II (Peace):**

**Reader:** The second week of Advent we remember the gift of Peace we have in Christ. Peace is a gift that we must be prepared for and must work for. God gives us the gift of peace when we turn to him working together in faith.

We light the candle of peace.

*(Light the first two purple candles on the Advent Wreath.)*

Let us pray - Loving God, we thank you for the gift of peace you give us through Jesus. Help us prepare our hearts for the Lord’s coming by working for Christ’s peace to take root in our family. We ask this in the name of the one born in Bethlehem, Jesus our Lord. Amen.

**Advent III (Joy):**

**Reader:** The third week of Advent we remember the gift of Joy we have in Christ. We remember the joy that Mary felt when the angel Gabriel told her that a special child would be born to her - a child who would save and deliver all people. Joy is the gift we all receive from the unconditional love Christ has for us.

We light the candle of joy.

*(Light the first two purple and the pink candle on the Advent Wreath.)*

Let us pray - Loving God, we thank you for the joy you bring us. Help us prepare our hearts for the Lord’s coming by helping us see that Christ came for every person we meet wherever we go. We ask this in the name of the one born in Bethlehem, Jesus our Lord. **Amen**.

**Advent IV (Love):**

**Reader:** The fourth week of Advent we remember the gift of Love we have in Christ. The light of the candles is meant to remind us of the love that God has for us. Jesus shows us God's perfect love. He is God's love in human form. The Bible says that "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

We light the candle of love.

*(Light all the candles on the Advent Wreath except the white one.)*

Let us pray - Loving God, we thank you for your gift of love - shown to us perfectly in Jesus Christ our Lord. Help us prepare our hearts for the Lord’s coming by loving others as Christ loves us. We ask this in the name of the one born in Bethlehem, Jesus our Lord. **Amen**.

**Christmas**

**Reader:** Today we celebrate the gift of the Incarnation, Emmanuel, God with us. We celebrate the birth of Christ who is the Light of the World—a Light no darkness can extinguish. Christ’s Light can enter any darkness and as members of the Body of Christ, we live in the Light of Christ.

We light the Christ candle.

*(Light the candles on the Advent Wreath and the white candle in the center—the Christ candle.)*

Let us pray - Loving God, we thank you for your mystery of the Incarnation – Emmanuel, God with us. Help us receive the Light of Christ in our hearts and share it generously and joyfully in our families and communities. We ask this in the name of the one born in Bethlehem, Jesus our Lord. **Amen**.

 **- Option 2[[3]](#footnote-3)-**

**Advent I (Hope):**

**Reader One:** When I look around, I see shadows of hunger. So many people in this city and around the world will go to bed hungry tonight…

**Reader Two:** When I look around, I see shadows of injustice, the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer, everyone saying, "Buy, buy, buy!" - and someone somewhere will fall asleep under a bridge tonight…

**Reader One:**  In the face of hunger, we light a candle of hope…

**Reader Two:**  In the face of injustice, in the face of despair, we light a candle of hope…

*(Light the first candle in your Advent wreath.)*

**Reader One:**  Let the light from this candle say to all that God’s hope is coming on earth as it already is in heaven.

**Reader Two:** Friends, be not afraid, God’s hope is at hand!

**Advent II (Peace):**

**Reader One:**  Because of war, because of violence in our communities, because there is still so much unrest in Jerusalem, we light a candle of peace...

**Reader Two:** Because hatred is still so strong, because so many swords have not yet been beaten into ploughshares, we light a candle of peace…

*(Light the second candle in your Advent wreath.)*

**Reader One:** May the light from this candle overwhelm the world.

**Reader Two:** May the light from this candle say to all that God’s peace is coming on earth as it already is in heaven.

**Reader One:**  Friends, be not afraid, God’s peace is at hand!

**Advent III (Joy):**

**Reader One:** When I look around, I see shadows of sadness, families in homeless shelters, people in prison, people who have become invisible and forgotten...

**Reader Two:** When I look around, I see shadows of grief and loss, people dreading the holidays because they've lost a loved one, because they're recently divorced, because they don't want to spend another Christmas alone…

*(Light the second candle in your Advent wreath.)*

**Reader One:**  In the face of sadness, we light a candle of joy...

**Reader Two:** In the face of grief, in the face of loss, we light a candle of joy...

**Reader One:**  May the light from this candle overwhelm the world.

**Reader Two:** May the light from this candle say to all that God’s joy is coming on earth as it already is in heaven.

**Reader One:**  Friends in Christ, be not afraid, God’s joy is at hand!

**Advent IV (Love):**

**Reader One:** Because too many people are wandering in the wilderness, because too many people are sitting in the valley of the shadow of death, we light candles…

**Reader Two:**  Because people all over the world are suffering and we are too busy to notice, we light candles…

**Reader One:**  Today we stop everything and light these candles: one for hope, one for peace, one for joy, and one for love…

*(Light the fourth candle in your Advent wreath.)*

**Reader Two:**  May the light from these candles overwhelm the world.

**Reader One:**  May the light from these candles illuminate the valley of the shadow of death.

**Reader Two:**  May the light and the fire from these candles burn away everything that is preventing God’s love from being born among us.

**Reader One:**  Brother and sisters, be not afraid, even now - even now - God’s love is overwhelming the world!

**Christmas with Christ Candle or Paschal Candle:**

**Reader One:** Because injustice and despair threaten to overwhelm us, we pray for hope… *(Light the first candle in your Advent wreath.)*

**Reader Two:**  Because so many swords have not yet been beaten into ploughshares, we pray for peace…*(Light the second candle in your Advent wreath.)*

**Reader One:** Because grief and loss weigh so heavily, we pray for joy… *(Light the third candle in your Advent wreath.)*

**Reader Two:** Because hatred is still so strong, and because people all over the world are suffering, we pray for love. *(Light the fourth candle in your Advent wreath.)*

**Reader One:** God has come to us as a child. Christ is present in our world.

*(Light the Christ Candle in your Advent wreath or the Paschal Candle)*

**Reader Two:**  May the light and the fire from these candles burn away everything that is preventing the God of hope and peace and joy and love from being born among us…

**Reader One:** Friends, be not afraid, even now - even now – the light of Christ is overwhelming the world!

**Appendix II - Advent Prayers of the People:**

 **- Suggestion 1[[4]](#footnote-4) -**

**Advent Prayers of the People**

Leader: God of the watching, God of the waiting: Be present with us.

Leader: God of the watching, thank you for the symbol of the Advent wreath, whose circle reminds us that your mercy is endless, with no beginning or end. Help us to set our minds on things eternal.

*People: Hear our prayer.*

Leader: God of the waiting, we pray for all in authority. We look forward to the day when the nations of the world walk in the light and your peace is experienced by all.

*People Hear our prayer.*

Leader: God of the watching, we pray for this city that we may be a community of hope and light in this world.

*People: Hear our prayer.*

Leader: God of the waiting, we pray for all the people of your church that you may strengthen them for the ministry that you have set before them.

*People: Hear our prayer.*

Leader: God of the watching, we pray for the sick, the friendless, and the needy, that they may experience your healing presence.

 *(Please add your own prayers for those in need)*

 God of the watching, God of the waiting.

*People: Hear our prayer.*

Leader: God of the watching, we pray for all who have died, especially those we name before you now:

 *(Please add your own prayers for those who have died)*

 God of the watching, God of the waiting.

*People: Hear our prayer.*

Leader: God of the waiting, we are challenged in our worship to set our hearts and minds on the here and now, and to remember and be thankful for what matters.

  *(Please add your own prayers of thanksgiving)*

 God of the watching, God of the waiting,

*People: Hear our prayer.*

Leader: God of the waiting, we pray for all those who are watching and waiting for a dream to be born that you may give them patience of heart and mind and the wisdom to see your presence.

*People: Hear our prayer.*

Leader: Hasten, O God, the coming of your kingdom, and grant that we, who now live by faith, may with joy behold your Son at his advent in glorious majesty. **AMEN**.

 **- Suggestion 2 -**

**Litany**

Leader: We gather today, with a desire to know your Presence among us.

*People: We gather today in faith that God will hear our prayer.*

Leader: Surrounded by illness, we mourn our dead;

*People: O, Come, O Come Immanuel, God with us.*

Leader: We know loneliness and discomfort;

*People: O, Come, O Come Immanuel, God with us.*

Leader: We cannot see the way that lies ahead;

*People: O, Come, O Come Immanuel, God with us.*

Leader: Yet, we know you make a way in the Wilderness;

*People: O, Come, O Come Immanuel, God with us.*

Leader: Assure us that you are doing a new thing among us.

*People: O, Come, O Come Immanuel, God with us.*

1. BCP 81 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Prayers is adapted from the UCC:  <https://www.saintroberts.net/documents/Liturgy%20%26%20Prayer_advent%20prayer.pdf>  [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. "ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING LITANIES" from SALT:  <https://www.saltproject.org/progressive-christian-blog/advent-candle-lighting-litanies> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Written by Lynne Mallonee Schlimm [↑](#footnote-ref-4)