



# ADVENT IN THE VALLEY

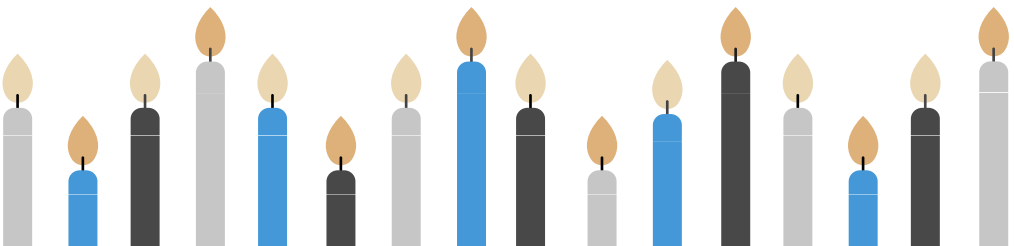
## WEEK 1: HOPE

As we begin, we light the first Advent candle and say,  
**Jesus Christ is the light of the world.  
A light no darkness can extinguish.**

Today we light the first candle, the candle for Hope. It reminds us that Jesus brings hope into the world, even when it seems scary or when the problems of our world seem too big for us to handle on our own, and Jesus asks us to share that hope with others.

Let us pray

Christ our Hope,  
Shine in our lives with hope and promise.  
Give us eyes to see so that we remain attentive in this holy season.  
Remind us to look for you in small acts of kindness and love.  
We await your coming with wonder.  
Amen.



*For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away ... Keep awake, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming ... you must also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.*

### Week One Reflections from Bishop Michael Bird

Commenting on this passage, the Rev. Dr. Herbert O'Driscoll, the great Canadian preacher and author, wrote something that has always resonated with me: "It is not that these activities [eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage] are anything other than normal, indeed essential, to our humanity. Yet such ordinary human activities and plans and hopes and responsibilities have a tendency to totally capture our minds and our loyalties. All which might be beyond and above and hidden in human experience is forgotten; even the reality of other levels of being is denied. Yet that is exactly what a secularize society seeks to do, to make the temporal eternal!"

One of the greatest gifts Susan and I have been given in our move to the Ottawa Valley is the opportunity to live in a place that will not allow us to ignore the fact that life and human experience happens on many different levels around us. Just looking out my window over these last few months has reminded me that there is so much happening in the forests and the fields, even if I can't always see or be aware of exactly what is taking place: growth, renewal, bounty, hibernation, constant change, and the promise of new life.

Everything that we read as we study the scriptures, everything that has been passed down to us through the words of the prophets, the deeds of the saints, and the richness of centuries of Christian tradition offer us the foundation of a faith that speaks to us of how God has been, and continues to be, at work remaking the world in love. If we are attentive, if we are watchful and ready to embrace the coming of Christ in our own lives and in our own human experience, then the signs of that coming cannot be ignored.

In the birth of the Christ-child in Bethlehem long ago, God turned the secularized tendencies of this world upside-down! Instead of a world where the temporal is eternal, now **the common becomes Holy!** The miracle of Christ's coming is proclaimed in the words of the ancient prophets, in lives of unlikely characters like John the Baptist and a group of lowly shepherds, in the signs of the natural world provided by the light of a star, and above all else, in the gift of a human family and the bond of human relationship.

"Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming..." The signs of this same loving, healing, transforming God are all around us as we begin this Advent season. May this time of watching and waiting for the miracle of Christ's coming be a blessing in your life and on our common life together in the Parish of the Valley.

### Questions for Further Reflection

1. What one thing will you do in this Advent season to be more attentive to the coming of Christ in your life?
2. What are the temporal or earthly concerns in your life that serve to divide your loyalties away from a deeper encounter with the presence of God?