



PREPARING TO BECOME THE
**BELOVED
COMMUNITY**

ADVENT-YEAR C

Preparing to Become the Beloved Community

Year C

Advent 2021, 2024, 2027

Session One: Advent 1 - Telling the Truth about Our Churches and Race

Session Two: Advent 2 - Repairing the Breach in Institutions and Society

Session Three: Advent 3 - Practicing the Way of Love in the Pattern of Jesus

Session Four: Advent 4 - Proclaiming the Dream of Beloved Community

Session Five: Christmas Eve or Christmas Day – Lighting the Candle

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Learn more about Becoming the Beloved Community and The Episcopal Church at
www.episcopalchurch.org/reconciliation.

Share reflections and queries by writing to reconciliation@episcopalchurch.org or
on social media using [#belovedcommunity](https://twitter.com/belovedcommunity).

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ABOUT THE ADVENT WREATH LITURGY

The Advent wreath is believed to have originated with a Lutheran pastor working among the poor in Germany in the late 1800s. Tradition states that the children would ask every day if Christmas had arrived, so he arranged candles (four large candles for the weeks and then smaller ones for the days) to help the children mark time and journey with Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem without leaving Germany. The wreath came to appear as it does today through the adoption of the practice by German Catholics, who decreased the wreath to just the candles we use today. Different traditions attribute different meanings to the candles, and even use different colors, but the purpose remains the same: to provide Christians with a way of marking time through the season of anticipation until we reach the birth of Jesus. For some, the wreath is a visual pilgrimage through Advent, similar to the idea behind the recreation of the creche in churches and homes started by St. Francis of Assisi as a way of helping the poor experience holy sites from home. For many, this Advent will be spent at home and lighting the Advent wreath will serve as a method for journeying with Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. Our liturgy comes from a place of social justice and Becoming Beloved Community. It is our hope that the prayers throughout this document will help you journey through this time of waiting and anticipation for when Christ is born again in our hearts and in our world. This liturgy is written for a literacy level of 5th grade and up. For smaller children, you can adapt the liturgy by saying the “Reader 1” section and lighting the candles.

WELCOME

*In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God...
Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together. - Isaiah 40:3, 5*

Advent is a season of preparation: shopping for gifts, decorating our homes and sanctuaries. Advent is also a time to prepare our hearts and communities for the coming of Christ, the Almighty God who came among us poor and homeless, a stranger and a child. There may be no better time to reflect on how we as the Episcopal Church embrace the Holy One who continues to draw near in the neighbor, the stranger, the refugee, or the one who seems most “other” to you. It is the ideal season to commit to becoming Beloved Community and growing loving, liberating, life-giving relationships across the human family of God.

We make the journey not only as individual Christians and congregations, but as a whole church. This spring, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and President of the House of Deputies Gay Clark Jennings and their supporting officers shared “Becoming Beloved Community,” a new vision document that lays out the Episcopal Church’s long-term commitment to racial healing, reconciliation, and justice. A second resource — “Becoming Beloved Community Where You Are” — details many ways for individuals and congregations to take concrete steps toward change and healing. Both are available at www.episcopalchurch.org/beloved-community, along with a host of resources for faithful reflection and action.

The journey is framed around the labyrinth. Why? In the ministry of racial healing and justice, none of us walks a straight line. We enter the labyrinth wherever God has provided an opening – telling the truth about our church’s story around race; discerning and proclaiming God’s dream of Beloved Community where we are; learning and practicing Jesus’ way of healing and love; and bravely working to transform systemic racial injustice. We keep moving from one quadrant to another and back. No one is ever really finished. That is the way of ongoing spiritual formation.

As you “walk” sections of this labyrinth, gather a group, and together engage the scriptures, reflections, and activities. Designate a facilitator who will carefully preview the session. Set aside at least 45 minutes for each session, and consider these **Conversation Tips**:

Speak from your own experience. Be genuinely curious about what others share. Imagine you can disagree without someone being wrong. Avoid debate and stay with the story. Seek Christ in others and seek to embody his loving, liberating, life-giving way.

You will find printer-friendly online resources and alternative activities for a variety of contexts – at www.episcopalchurch.org/beloved-community. Feel free to also explore daily offerings and ongoing conversation about Becoming Beloved Community on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry regularly welcomes us to live not just as the church but as the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement: the ongoing community that follows Jesus into loving, liberating, life-giving relationship with God, each other, and creation. May God bless and grow us into vibrant embodiments of the Christ we welcome and follow, this Advent and always.

Prayerfully offered,

The Episcopal Church’s Racial Reconciliation Team
www.episcopalchurch.org/reconciliation - reconciliation@episcopalchurch.org

ADVENT I

Telling the Truth about Our Churches and Race

Pray the Collect for This Sunday

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Read the Scripture Together: Psalm 25:1-9

- 25** ¹ To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul;
my God, I put my trust in you; *
let me not be humiliated,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.
- ² Let none who look to you be put to shame; *
let the treacherous be disappointed in their schemes.
- ³ Show me your ways, O LORD, *
and teach me your paths.
- ⁴ Lead me in your truth and teach me, *
for you are the God of my salvation;
in you have I trusted all the day long.
- ⁵ Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love, *
for they are from everlasting.
- ⁶ Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions; *
remember me according to your love
and for the sake of your goodness, O LORD.
- ⁷ Gracious and upright is the LORD; *
therefore he teaches sinners in his way.
- ⁸ He guides the humble in doing right *
and teaches his way to the lowly.
- ⁹ All the paths of the LORD are love and faithfulness *
to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

Reflection: Telling the Truth

Listen with me. Can you hear the plaintive cry of the psalmist with me? Can you hear the pain, fear, and desperation as they pray to the faithful God who is their only hope? Can you imagine their deep desire for truth as a way of life not only for themselves, but for all of society? And hearing it in the psalm, can we together tune our hearts to hear it in all of God's beloved who still long for peace, safety, and dignity?

In a time when facts from experts are discounted for the opinions of influencers, and when the lies that have been perpetuated of who we are and have been as a nation are debated, the need to be led into ways of truth and compassion has become an ethical and spiritual imperative. Guided by God's gracious nature, we can listen with humility to the stories that need to be told. We can see and tell the truth that is all around us, if we are willing. And then, we can receive the grace to do something about it.

— Mother Andrea Arsene

In the Labyrinth: Telling the Truth about Our Churches and Race

We cannot become what God created us to be unless we also examine who we have been and who we are today. Who are you, as a church community? What groups are included and excluded? What things have you, as a church, done and left undone? What are the prophetic voices among you saying?

Make It Real: Inside/Outside Exercise

Gather in groups, ideally of no more than eight people. Share the **Conversation Tips**:

Speak from your own experience. Be genuinely curious about what others share. Imagine you can disagree without someone being wrong. Avoid debate and stay with the story. Seek Christ in others and seek to embody his loving, liberating, life-giving way.

Now invite people to pause and recall a particular time and place when you spoke a difficult truth to another person or group. If you have never done that, tell your partner about a time you heard a difficult truth. Pair off and tell the story to a neighbor, for about two minutes each.

Next, recall a particular time and place when you felt your voice was silenced, misinterpreted, or not heard. Share with the same neighbor. Then reflect in the small group. What did it feel like before and after speaking your truth? What did it feel like when you were unheard, silenced, or misinterpreted? What did it feel like to hear your neighbor's story? What did you learn?

Now as a whole group, take a large sheet of paper and draw a circle within a circle.

- What racial, cultural, and ethnic groups experience their voices, stories, and ideas as valued and “truth” in your congregation today? Which groups have shaped your church’s story since its founding? Write those groups in the inner circle.
- What racial, cultural, and ethnic groups voices, stories, and ideas are absent, silenced, or misinterpreted from your congregation or community? Write those groups in the wider circle.
- How do you feel as you recall and share these realities? What difficult truths might need to be spoken? Where do you see possibilities for growing into Beloved Community? Name them together and list them on a separate sheet.

Lighting the Candle

Readings can be said by one or two different people depending on the needs of your family or congregation.

*All: Light of the world, in grace and beauty,
mirror of God’s eternal face,
transparent flame of love’s free duty,
You bring salvation to our human race.¹*

Reader 1: Sacred Mystery, we light the first candle of Advent for hope and truth.

The first candle is lit.

¹ Throughout the liturgy, the prayer said at the beginning is slightly adapted from the Phos Hilaron on page 23 of *Enriching Our Worship 1*, the word “human” was added before “race”.

Reader 2: We kindle it with hope. We long for you to come to our world, to break through and reign with compassion, justice, and peace.

All: Sacred Mystery, break through all that keeps us from you. Help us to see the truth about oppression, as we prepare to become the beloved community. We ask for your mercy and to see your image in one another. This Advent, visit us with your justice, love, and peace. Amen.²

² Throughout the liturgy the prayers said by Reader 2 and at the end have been adapted from the Liturgy for Lighting Advent Candles from the United Church of Christ: https://www.ucc.org/worship_worship-ways_year-a_ace_advent-liturgy-for

ADVENT II

Repairing the Breach in Institutions and Society

Pray the Collect for this Sunday

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Read the Scripture Together: Cantic 16, The Song of Zechariah; Luke 1:68-79

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; *
 he has come to his people and set them free.
He has raised up for us a mighty savior, *
 born of the house of his servant David.
Through his holy prophets he promised of old,
that he would save us from our enemies, *
 from the hands of all who hate us.
He promised to show mercy to our fathers *
 and to remember his holy covenant.
This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham, *
 to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
Free to worship him without fear, *
 holy and righteous in his sight
 all the days of our life.
You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, *
 for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
To give his people knowledge of salvation *
 by the forgiveness of their sins.
In the tender compassion of our God *
 the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, *
 and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Reflection: Repairing the Breach

Are we able to see ourselves in every part of this cantic? It is natural to imagine our own community of faith, or ourselves, as the ones whom God needs to keep safe from the hands of the enemy. And yes, we all are in need of God's saving hand, yet many of us hearing these reflections during Advent may also be the descendants of those who created the systems that have intentionally prevented our siblings, sisters, and brothers from having the same freedom "to worship God without fear." Can we individually, and corporately, take a deep breath and plunge into our own history to see our whole selves? Can we both honor and celebrate the good our ancestors did while working to undo the great harm they also did in their zealotry or in ignorance? Can we then bring this self-examination forward, recognizing that in our own lives we may be in need of God's saving *grace* precisely because we have taken no personal action toward real change in our Church or wider communities? A breach cannot be repaired if we cannot admit to ourselves that it exists.

Looking back over Episcopal News Service reports since the 2006 General Convention commitment to address racism, further promises were made by acclamation in 2009, 2012, 2015, and 2018 as attendees discussed and lamented how little progress we have made. Even in the light of the last two years, as the

general public began to awaken to the devastating modern legacies of racism, the number of Episcopalians making commitments to participate in the work of personal and spiritual growth in this area is admittedly small. Have you heard the clarion call to follow Christ's way of love for all people but seem to never find the time? Find it now. Are you willing to *turn, pray, love, and learn* so that you can see the *blessing* in your own life as it is in relation to all? Make a beginning today. Commit today. Start by participating in a Beloved Community class, or join in the heart-opening work of a Sacred Ground course; perhaps you may want to start or continue by attending the virtual or in-person sessions hosted by the Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing. Begin...then continue. It takes more than one encounter with the *sacred* to refine a soul.

— the Rev. Erin Kirby

In the Labyrinth: Repairing the Breach in Institutions and Society

God came among us in Jesus because of the deep, divine longing to love and repair this world. What social institutions and systems are broken around you? Where do you notice systems and structures that reflect racial injustice? How could we together participate in the repair, restoration, and healing of institutions and systems?

Make It Real: In Solidarity Exercise

The coming of Christ is so close we can sense him. Dwell for a moment with your own longing for Jesus' coming. After some silence, as a whole group, sing or speak this hymn:

O Come, O Come Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lowly exile here, until the son of God appear
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel

Invite people to pause and silently imagine communities near and far who wait for ransom and relief: refugees, immigrants with or without documentation, prisoners and detainees in the criminal justice system, victims of human trafficking, and many others. What unjust systems and institutions in our society disproportionately target people of color? In a posture of deep prayer, name these systems aloud. Name and capture them.

Once again review the **Conversation Tips**:

Speak from your own experience. Be genuinely curious about what others share. Imagine you can disagree without someone being wrong. Avoid debate and stay with the story. Seek Christ in others and seek to embody his loving, liberating, life-giving way.

Now reflect as a group:

- Which of these systems and institutions most intersects with the life of your church or community? Agree on no more than two.
- What efforts can you identify, as a group that contribute to healing and transforming the systems you have named? Research options on the web in real time.
- How could your church actively participate in repairing one of the systems the group identified? Together, set one concrete, achievable goal for engagement in the year ahead.

Lighting the Candle

Readings can be said by one or two different people depending on the needs of your family or congregation.

The first candle is lit.

All: Light of the world, in grace and beauty,
mirror of God's eternal face,
transparent flame of love's free duty,
You bring salvation to our human race.³

Reader 1: Sacred Mystery, we light the second candle of Advent for faith and healing.

The second candle is lit.

Reader 2: We kindle it with faith. As mighty God and tender infant, you come. Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you.

All: Sacred Mystery, look upon your world. Give us faith and courage so we can repair the breach created through injustice and oppression. Help us to heal your land and your people. This Advent, teach us, like you, to be tender and just. Amen.⁴

³ Throughout the liturgy, the prayer said at the beginning is slightly adapted from the Phos Hilaron on page 23 of *Enriching Our Worship 1*, the word "human" was added before "race".

⁴ Throughout the liturgy the prayers said by Reader 2 and at the end have been adapted from the Liturgy for Lighting Advent Candles from the United Church of Christ: https://www.ucc.org/worship_worship-ways_year-a_ace_advent-liturgy-for

ADVENT III

Practicing the Way of Love in the Pattern of Jesus

Pray the Collect for This Sunday

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

Read the Scripture Together: Zephaniah 3:14-20

3 ¹⁴ Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!

¹⁵ The Lord has taken away the judgments against you,
he has turned away your enemies.
The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.

¹⁶ On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands grow weak.

¹⁷ The Lord, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing
¹⁸ as on a day of festival.
I will remove disaster from you,
so that you will not bear reproach for it.

¹⁹ I will deal with all your oppressors
at that time.
And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise
and renown in all the earth.

²⁰ At that time I will bring you home,
at the time when I gather you;
for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes, says the Lord.

Reflection: Practicing the Way of Love

Practicing the Way begins with *remembering*. Zephaniah makes two points to remember. First, remember all that God does to protect us from harm and oppressors. Second, remember the spiritual gift of joy—to “sing aloud” and “rejoice and exult.”

Note that Zephaniah used more than double the verses to recite God’s grace toward humanity than to tell us to be joyful. Was it because Zephaniah doubted that humans would *believe* in God’s grace if they didn’t have more words to commend God’s graciousness?

Practicing the Way and its attendant actions are about the *embodiment* of being followers of Jesus—of embodying the hope we find in Jesus Christ. We share the Good News of God in Christ *because* it is good news that is too life-saving to keep secret from our fellow humans. We Christians strive to be the carriers and advocates of the hope found in Christ because its all-loving, incarnational perspective aligns us with God’s command to love God and love our neighbors.

Zephaniah reminds us to *remember* to be joyful in our sharing the hope that Christ brings us. Zephaniah tells us to “sing aloud” and to rejoice and exult. Practicing the spiritual gift of embodying joy enhances our advocacy of hope in Christ.

Remember, says Zephaniah, to be joyful because of everything that God does for us.

— Lelanda Lee

In the Labyrinth: Practicing the Way of Love in the Pattern of Jesus

Loving our neighbor takes formation, practice, and commitment. How will each of us learn to be reconcilers, healers, and justice-bearers in Jesus’ name? How could we practice sharing stories, growing relationship across dividing walls, and seeking Christ in the “other”?

Make It Real: The Far by Faith Exercise

Gather in circles of no more than 15 people. Review the **Conversation Tips**:

Speak from your own experience. Be genuinely curious about what others share. Imagine you can disagree without someone being wrong. Avoid debate and stay with the story. Seek Christ in others and seek to embody his loving, liberating, life-giving way.

Now reflect on ways your congregation or ministry engages in loving your neighbors, within and outside the church. Make a list of the most significant ministries (no more than three). For each...

- Recall the story of how your church took up this ministry. Who had the idea? Why did others say “yes”?
- Describe the process of beginning the ministry. What was hard? What made it work?
- What (and who) did you not know at the beginning that you know now?
- How has God blessed you and your church through these ministries?

Now consider your conversations over the first two weeks. Think about people groups - racial, ethnic, and cultural, but also socioeconomic, ideological, and theological - with whom your church has experienced separation or even tension. With which of these do you wish your church would develop deeper relationship? Once the circle has decided, reflect together:

- How could the ministry experiences you described before help you to approach the challenge of forming these challenging new relationships? How are those experiences a gift you can offer?
- What new learning and practice would help you to prepare for relationship across difference and division? Book study? Dismantling racism training? Story-telling training? Pilgrimage? Prayer? (For specific information, check www.episcopalchurch.org/reconciliation)

Lighting the Candle

Readings can be said by one or two different people depending on the needs of your family or congregation.

The first and second candles are lit.

All: Light of the world, in grace and beauty,
mirror of God's eternal face,
transparent flame of love's free duty,
You bring salvation to our human race.⁵

Reader 1: Sacred Mystery, we light the third candle of Advent for joy and grace.

The third candle is lit.

Reader 2: We kindle it with joy. We kindle it with joy. We recall the times we have struggled to practice your Way of Love and yet we continue to joyfully walk on the journey you set before us.

All: Sacred Mystery, visit us and fill us with your Spirit. Bring your good news to life within us. Give us courage to walk in the way of the beloved community that you set before us. Amen.⁶

⁵ Throughout the liturgy, the prayer said at the beginning is slightly adapted from the Phos Hilaron on page 23 of *Enriching Our Worship 1*, the word "human" was added before "race".

⁶ Throughout the liturgy the prayers said by Reader 2 and at the end have been adapted from the Liturgy for Lighting Advent Candles from the United Church of Christ: https://www.ucc.org/worship_worship-ways_year-a_ace_advent-liturgy-for

ADVENT IV

Proclaiming the Dream of Beloved Community

Pray the Collect for This Sunday

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Read the Scripture Together: Luke 1:39-55

I³⁹ In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰ where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴² and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³ And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴ For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

⁴⁶ And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.

⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things,

and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Reflection: Proclaiming the Dream

This time of Advent is full of preparation and prayer, where we are called to make preparations for the indwelling of the Lord. But we are also called to proclaim this Good News in the world. Mary was carrying Christ into the world; it wasn't always easy or comfortable, and yet she was able to deliver this life-giving change into a broken world—a broken world that led her to boldly share the challenges of God who bestowed her with a child. Mary knows that God will cast out the mighty and the rich and lift up the lowly. She is moved to proclaim this powerful message.

During our own preparations for Advent, how can we emulate Mary, teach Mary, and encourage children to embody Mary? How can we carry Christ into a broken world, especially when it isn't easy or comfortable? Where are we called to boldly proclaim the dream of God put to words by Mary in the

Magnificat? Ultimately, we are able to enter into this proclamation through God's bountiful grace and mercy, following the example of the ever-blessed Virgin Mary.

— the Rev. Lydia Simmons

In the Labyrinth: Proclaiming the Dream of Beloved Community

Healing, reconciliation, and justice are big ideas, but they all begin with exploring our stories, shared history, and deepest longings. If you listened closely to your church and your neighbors and civic partners, what might you hear? What experiences have people had around race, ethnicity, and culture? Is there a shared vision of Beloved Community? What collective commitments and behaviors could you all make that would begin to foster Beloved Community?

Make It Real: Listening & Learning Session

Gather in groups of ideally no more than seven people each. Review the **Conversation Tips**:

Speak from your own experience. Be genuinely curious about what others share. Imagine you can disagree without someone being wrong. Avoid debate and stay with the story. Seek Christ in others and seek to embody his loving, liberating, life-giving way.

Ask each participant to tell a story using one of the prompts below. Allow at most two minutes for each story, with a little silence but no discussion between each. Each group should designate a timekeeper who will gently but clearly indicate when each speaker has 30 seconds left, then 10 seconds, and when time is up.

Story Prompts for Group Sharing:

1. When I walk around this neighborhood/town/city/community, I feel...
2. When I look at our neighborhood/town/city/community, I dream of...
3. To me, Beloved Community looks like...
4. I was especially aware of my race when I...
5. I was saddened about race in our neighborhood/town/city/community when...
6. I was grateful for race in our neighborhood/town/city/community when...
7. To foster Beloved Community, I hope to...

Offer everyone the opportunity to share a story. If there is time, go a second round and invite each person to choose a different prompt. Leave 10 minutes to discuss the following questions:

- What surprised you? Did someone's story change the way you view a situation or idea?
- What stories and perspectives do you wish you could hear? How can you humbly invite those voices to the listening & learning process?

Lighting the Candle

Readings can be said by one or two different people depending on the needs of your family or congregation.

The first, second, and third candles are lit.

All: Light of the world, in grace and beauty,
mirror of God's eternal face,
transparent flame of love's free duty,
You bring salvation to our human race.⁷

Reader 1: Sacred Mystery, we light the fourth candle of Advent for peace and promise.

The fourth candle is lit.

Reader 2: We kindle it with peace. We hear the joy in Mary's song and witness her faith, which proclaims your kingdom come.

All: Sacred Mystery, you are the prime mover in our lives. We ask that, in these days of preparation, you inspire us to proclaim, by word and example, the dream of your beloved community. Amen.⁸

⁷ Throughout the liturgy, the prayer said at the beginning is slightly adapted from the Phos Hilaron on page 23 of *Enriching Our Worship 1*, the word "human" was added before "race".

⁸ Throughout the liturgy the prayers said by Reader 2 and at the end have been adapted from the Liturgy for Lighting Advent Candles from the United Church of Christ: https://www.ucc.org/worship_worship-ways_year-a_ace_advent-liturgy-for

CHRISTMAS EVE OR CHRISTMAS DAY

Lighting the Candle

Readings can be said by one or two different people depending on the needs of your family or congregation.

The first, second, third, and fourth candles are lit.

All: Light of the world, in grace and beauty,
mirror of God's eternal face,
transparent flame of love's free duty,
You bring salvation to our human race.⁹

Reader 1: Rejoice, people of God. The Light has come into the world. Sacred Mystery, we now light the candle of your nativity.

The Christ candle is lit.

Reader 2: With the company of heaven and with sounds of great joy, you come to us. Now is the time of celebration and joy.

All: Blessed Jesus, our Life and Light, thank you for coming this night (day) to us. Fill us with joy at your coming and make us instruments of your love. Help us to love those you loved, the least, the last, and the lost. Amen.¹⁰

⁹ Throughout the liturgy, the prayer said at the beginning is slightly adapted from the Phos Hilaron on page 23 of *Enriching Our Worship 1*, the word "human" was added before "race".

¹⁰ Throughout the liturgy the prayers said by Reader 2 and at the end have been adapted from the Liturgy for Lighting Advent Candles from the United Church of Christ: https://www.ucc.org/worship_worship-ways_year-a_ace_advent-liturgy-for