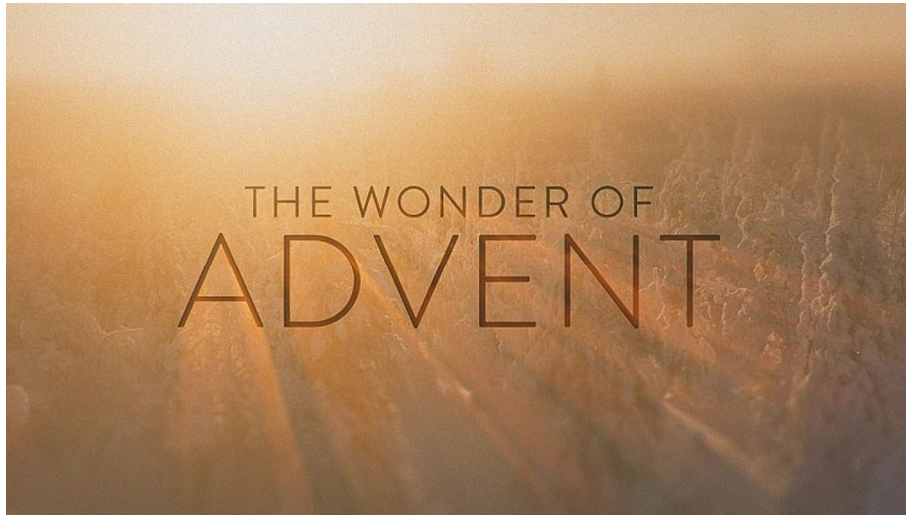


2024 ADVENT DEVOTIONALS
FIRST UNITED FIRST METHODIST CHURCH
OF PORT ORANGE





2024 Advent at First Church

9am Traditional Sunday Service

11am Contemporary Sunday Service

December Advent Season

12/1/24—Hope *(Advent Week 1)*

12/8/24—Peace *(Advent Week 2)*

12/15/24—Joy *(Advent Week 3)*

12/15/24 7p “Once Upon a Night!” Christmas
Cantata

12/22/24—Love *(Advent Week 4)*

12/24/24—Christ *(Christmas Eve)*

Christmas Eve Services

4p—Contemporary/Family Service

6p—Traditional/Candlelight Service

Advent Memories 2024



Matthew 6:10 [NRSV] *Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

Advent means the arrival or beginning of something. In our faith, we celebrate four weeks of Advent leading into Christmas Eve and Christmas. At first glance it would seem this is a historic advent remembering the birth of Christ, but it is more. It is the Advent of God's Kingdom come to Earth. When we celebrate, we celebrate the coming of God with us incarnationally in a baby in a manger. It is our hope swaddled in bands of cloth, but it is also our hope that has carried us through the ages. Christ has come and Christ will come again.

Stephen Covey, in 1989, wrote "7 Habits of Highly Effective People", a business and self-help book. Of his habits he included this one: Begin with the End in Mind. He suggested that we perceive our outcomes and act accordingly. For us as followers of Christ that takes on a big meaning. Advent is the beginning, but the ending is the Kingdom come by God's will. It is finally being that body of Christ in its fullness. It is being one with God earth and all as it is in heaven.

This Advent season let us celebrate the birth of our Saviour once again, but let's begin this season with the end in mind. God's Kingdom has come and is coming more each day. Now that is a celebration for the ages!

Lord, may we feel the warmth of this season and the glow of your promise of salvation that welcomes us to be looking for Your Kingdom come, and Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven and in us as well. Help us to begin each day with Your glorious end in mind. AMEN



From Pastor Tom Nelson

Picante Sauce for Christmas?

Many years ago when I was much younger I remember our church decorating a tree on the church platform. They decorated them with these blue and white ornaments that had all these different words in different languages on them. Words, letters, swirls, and symbols that I didn't recognize were painted on all the balls from the top of the tree to the bottom. I searched and searched the artificial stems very meticulously trying to understand what all these words meant. I didn't like not knowing. I was uneasy. Words like Mir, Kappia, Tügkülen, Lapè, Nye, Gutpela taim, Paz, and Pace. "Wait, isn't Pace a picante sauce," I thought? I searched and read and then searched some more. Then I finally found it. I found a word in the balls that I recognized. It said, "Peace". Could all these ornaments, all say the same thing? Could they all say the word, Peace?

I, like most people, love Christmas because of the change it brings in each one of us. We act differently around Christmas time right? We are happier, more excited about the season. We loudly sing Christmas songs when we don't normally sing out loud. We remember old family memories of our children, and our families from previous seasons. Sometimes we reminisce of family and friends that are no longer with us, but somehow are less sad because of the great memories and moments that are associated with the Joy that comes in Christmas. We laugh at stories of Christmas moments gone awry and salivate at cooking baked goods and dinner trimmings. We give gifts to show our love and appreciation for people in our lives without expectations of gain, and we put a few more dollars in the Salvation Army bucket to help make Christmas a special time in the lives of those less fortunate. We hit up 8 parties in only 4 weeks and eat way more peppermint than we should. And we get goose bumps upon hearing the Christmas story told for the 100th time and wipe

tears of joy watching the children sing Silent Night. But the one thing that I seldom experience at Christmas time, is peace.

I miss it every year. Peace is a calm, serene, tranquil, stillness in our soul that comes from knowing Christ. It is knowing who holds our future in His hands. Peace is the harmony that exists in our hearts when we are obedient to God alone and do all things to honor him. Peace doesn't exist without Him. Jesus said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) I want to admit something to you; peace is hard to come by on my own. The enemy uses the worries and trials of the world to assault any effort I make regarding providing peace for myself or my family. That tree with the ornaments taught me something a long time ago. Just as I searched that tree for answers as to what these Christmas decorations meant; I might be surprised to find out that I was holding the answers all along.

I learned that each 'peace' ornament on that tree represented a missionary that that church supported at some point in its long history and the word peace was written in the language of the country that he/she served in. That church will always be reminded that Christ isn't just for us Americans, he died for us all. Merry Christmas friends and may the 'Prince of Peace' be with you all.

Tony Sorrell





About twelve years ago we had just moved back to Port Orange from Ormond Beach and were anxiously looking for a new church. We had recently subscribed to the News Journal and one of the first articles read (Godwink?) was about a pastor who had loaned out his personal van to a family that had no other means of transportation, and the van was never returned. As we recall, the pastor wasn't concerned and implied that if the homeless family were in that great of a need for transportation, then they were meant to keep the van.

Obviously, this article was meant for us to see, and on the next Sunday morning we were sitting in First Church. However, the story continues. Before the service, the pastor had personally shaken hands and greeted every person in the sanctuary, something we had never experienced before. We knew immediately this was where we were meant to be. But wait, there's more! Before his sermon started, he placed a bathroom scale on the floor of the middle aisle, and with a witness from the congregation, weighed himself. Once the service was over, we learned he was raising money for a church project and individuals were pledging money for each pound lost from week to week.

We became members a few short months after that Sunday, and we've been blessed to find ways that we can both serve in this very special church. Eventually after several years, we relocated to Ormond Beach and joined a Flagler Beach church, but we are now back in Port Orange and have rejoined First Church. We've been welcomed back once again with open arms, and treated as family!

With much love,

Two Very Blessed Members

Popcorn Cakes

I was born in a small town in Ohio in 1937. My two older sisters (13 & 15 years older) were both married and gone by the mid to late 1940's when these memories occurred. My dad was a rural mail carrier and there were two ladies on his route who would each give him a popcorn cake for Christmas every year. One was a traditional popcorn ball recipe formed in a regular, tall angel food cake pan. The other was a shorter, flat, round wreath shape with a somewhat sweeter base. These were dyed either red or green with candied cherries forming holly clusters on top. I absolutely LOVED those cakes and eagerly awaited their arrival every year during the days before Christmas. Now I don't remember if my mom or dad liked popcorn balls or not, but I definitely do not remember them eating any of those cakes. That delicious task seemed to be left entirely up to me! And I was definitely up to the task. I savored every bite and made each cake last for several days.

Looking back on these memories now, I realize that their unselfish generosity in letting me eat all the popcorn cakes was just one of the many ways my mom and dad showed their love for me at Christmas and all through the year.

From Barbara Davis



KNOTT TRADITIONS

At the Knott house, one of the Christmas traditions is to use the Advent Calendar. It started with a mouse that was placed in pocket 25 and then moved each day until it reached day 1 (the day before Christmas!) The girls didn't need to ask "how many days until Christmas". They could look at the calendar and see. We now have a calendar with the nativity on top. A star goes from pocket 25 to pocket one and on Christmas Day the star goes above the manger.

Other traditions we keep are sending Christmas cards. We try to let everyone know how we did during the past year. Like Connie, we also make Christmas cookies. We can't wait until Christmas Eve, however, and make lots of different kinds all during December. We also try to visit family and friends in their homes during the holidays and take them some of the cookies we made. Attending the Christmas Cantata and Christmas Eve services is also something we do every year. They always help us get into the right spirit.

Donna Knott and family



Christmas Eve was always special in our house. My sisters and I were allowed to open one present, always from our grandmother, always sleeping apparel. Our mother read "The Littlest Angel", we had an accompanying record for the story as well. Then we shared one bed and waited for the morning to wake everyone as soon as it was light (most of the time, anyway, sometimes earlier!). Memories of sharing that time with family will never leave me. Merry Christmas and Happiest of New Years to all.

Susan Franchi (and my sisters, Dianne Kinzly, Jeannine Cotton)

The Littlest Angel is a **story of a four-year-old boy who dies and goes to heaven, but has trouble fitting in**¹². He misses his earthly life and does not behave like an angel. He is unhappy and lonely until an Understanding Angel helps him find his true gift¹. The story was written by Charles Tazewell and first published in 1946².



Christmas Gingerbread Men

3 ½ Cup Sifted All Purpose Flour

Tsp Soda

½ Tsp Salt

Tbsp Unsweetened Cocoa Powder

3 Tsp Cinnamon

2 Tsp Ginger

2 Tsp Cloves

1 Cup Softened Butter

Cup Sugar

1 Egg

½ Cup Molasses

- Mix ingredients - dough will be quite dry
- Cool in refrigerator.
- Roll out ½ inch thick
- Cut out with cookie cutters
- Place on greased cookie sheet
- Bake at 350 degrees for about 8 minutes

Frost and decorate



For the past 40 years we've been making these Ginger Bread Men on Christmas Eve!
Connie Van Brocklin

In grief, look at life. We all are grieving something in our lives. A loved one gone too soon, a career opportunity missed, a dear friend suffering, a lost home, a lost companion or pet, the good ole days, or lost love in general... The list could go on. We are all grieving something in our lives. The grieving process is different for everyone, there is no linear path, but one thing I have found that brings me great pause no matter where I am on in grief, is life. There is great strength in recognizing and celebrating the life and lives around us.



We are in the season of "life" right now. We anxiously await the Savior's birth! The one who came before us (John 1:15), the one who prepared a way (John 14:2-4), the one who gives us everlasting life in HIS presence (John 6:47). In the midst of the birth of the ONE, how in the world can we dismiss the life around us that HE uses to help us grow, believe, and transform the world? The "life" around us to help us know that there is hope and goodness abound? Have you stopped and recognized the life around you? The goodness of nature? The goodness in all that you do HAVE? In times of grief, our hearts can become desperate, desperate for love, desperate for family, desperate to be seen, desperate to be cared about, desperate to just be however we need to be. Romans 8:28 ensures us that there is hope, "God's breath is always present, sustaining and directing lives in times of desperation" (NIV). Wherever you are today, whatever you may be grieving in this moment, I encourage you to stop, breathe in the breath of God, and look around. I'm sure you will see much goodness, hope, love, and life.

Suzanne Eichler

"A Letter From Santa Claus" by Mark Twain

My Dear Susie Clemens,

I have received and read all the letters which you and your little sister have written me...I can read your and your baby sister's jagged and fantastic marks without any trouble at all. But I had trouble with those letters which you dictated through your mother and the nurses, for I am a foreigner and cannot read English writing well. You will find that I made no mistakes about the things which you and the baby ordered in your own letters—I went down your chimney at midnight when you were asleep and delivered them all myself--and kissed both of you, too...But...there were...one or two small orders which I could not fill because we ran out of stock...

There was a word or two in your mama's letter which...I took to be "a trunk full of doll's clothes." Is that it? I will call at your kitchen door about nine o'clock this morning to inquire. But I must not see anybody and I must not speak to anybody but you. When the kitchen doorbell rings, George must be blindfolded and sent to the door. You must tell George he must walk on tiptoe and not speak—otherwise he will die someday. Then you must go up to the nursery and stand on a chair or the nurse's bed and put your ear to the speaking tube that leads down to the kitchen and when I whistle through it you must speak in the tube and say, "Welcome, Santa Claus!" Then I will ask whether it was a trunk you ordered or not. If you say it was, I shall ask you what color you want the trunk to be...and then you must tell me every single thing in detail which you want the trunk to contain. Then when I say "Good-by and a merry Christmas to my little Susy Clemens," you must say "Good-by, good old Santa Claus, I thank you very much." Then you must go down into the library and make George close all the doors that open into the main hall, and everybody must keep still for a little while. I will go to the moon

and get those things and in a few minutes I will come down the chimney that belongs to the fireplace that is in the hall—if it is a trunk you want--because I couldn't get such a thing as a trunk down the nursery chimney, you know...If I should leave any snow in the hall, you must tell George to sweep it into the fireplace, for I haven't time to do such things. George must not use a broom, but a rag—else he will die someday...If my boot should leave a stain on the marble, George must not holystone it away. Leave it there always in memory of my visit; and whenever

you look at it or show it to anybody you must let it remind you to be a good little girl. Whenever you are naughty and someone points to that mark which your good old Santa Claus's boot made on the marble, what will you say, little sweetheart?

Good-by for a few minutes, till I come down to the world and ring the kitchen doorbell.

Your loving Santa Claus

Whom people sometimes call

"The Man in the Moon"



With its initial publication in 1865, "Christmas Bells" has become a popular and widely recognized poem about the Christmas season. The poem was originally titled "Christmas Bells, 1863" and was written during a time of great personal tragedy for Longfellow. His wife had died in a fire, while his son also received severe injuries in the Civil War. Despite these difficult circumstances under which it was written, "Christmas Bells" has impacted its readers for years. Recently, a movie has been released about this poem. "I Heard the Bells" is available on streaming platforms.

Christmas Bells

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet, The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!



And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along, The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till, ringing, singing on its way
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime, A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound, The Carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
There is no peace on earth, I said;
For hate is strong, And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
God is not dead; nor doth he sleep!
The Wrong shall fail, The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men!

Luke 2:8-11

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And ^[a]behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly



afraid. ¹⁰Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. ¹¹For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

I grew up in a small town in western Pennsylvania. Every December our church put on a living Nativity show, a major undertaking! Most people contributed in one way or another. It featured a constructed stable, live animals, and homemade costumes. Mary wore blue, the Wise Men put on long fancy robes. The angels had shiny white gowns with halos. Shepherds were dressed plainly in brown, grey, and olive green. I was ALWAYS a shepherd. ALWAYS! Every year we stood in the dark field, waiting to see bright lights and hear Luke Chapter 2 being read aloud. As soon as the scripture ended, the music started. This was the signal to hurry to the manger where Mary, Joseph, a donkey and a plastic baby boy doll from the church nursery were waiting for us. As I knelt beside the manger, I had time to think about questions involving those original stable visitors. Was the shepherd taking a nap before being startled awake by an angel? Did those shepherds play rock paper scissors to decide which one had to stay behind? Did anyone believe their story the next day? Luke doesn't tell us if anyone else in that crowded city saw this heavenly show, but God certainly made sure the shepherds saw it! The father wanted to be sure they got the message.

He wants to be sure that WE get this beautiful message also. “For unto us is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour who is Christ our Lord. Amen!

Barbara Dionne

While shepherds watched their flocks at night UMC Hymnal
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1. While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
all seated on the ground,
the angel of the Lord came down,
and glory shone around,
and glory shone around.

2. "Fear not!" said he, for mighty dread
had seized their troubled mind.

"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
to all of humankind,
to all of humankind.

3. "To you, in David's town, this day
is born of David's line

a Savior, who is Christ the Lord,
and this shall be the sign,
and this shall be the sign:

4. "The heavenly babe you there shall find
to human view displayed,
all meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
and in a manger laid,
and in a manger laid."

5. Thus spake the seraph and
forthwith

appeared a shining throng
of angels praising God on high,
who thus addressed their song,
who thus addressed their song:

6. "All glory be to God on high,
and to the earth be peace;
good will henceforth from heaven
to earth

begin and never cease,
begin and never cease!"

While Shepherd Watched Their Flocks by Night

Trad.

1. While shepherds watched Their flocks by night all seated on the ground,
2. "Fear not," said he, for mighty dread had seized their troubled mind,
3. "The heavenly Babe you there shall find to human view displayed,
4. Thus spake the seraph and forthwith appeared a shining throng
5. "All glory be to God on high, and to the earth be peace;

good will henceforth from heaven to earth
begin and never cease,
begin and never cease!"

6. "All glory be to God on high,
and to the earth be peace;
good will henceforth from heaven
to earth
begin and never cease,
begin and never cease!"



Daughter, Beth, was a very outgoing, talkative child, who never met a stranger and who loved visiting with various of our neighbors. Dressed in an old colorful curtain wrapped around her waist as a long skirt, she was set to go. At six years old she had a dramatic, artistic flair and during that Advent/Christmas season had heard and seen pictures telling the story of the birth of

the Baby Jesus in a stable in Bethlehem. As our family was decorating the house, Beth decided to arrange a creche outside the front door, she decorated and filled a basket, and three teddy bears to represent the Holy Family. So, as it happened one day, Jehovah's Witness were strolling on our street and stopped at our house to witness and distribute their brochures. Beth wrapped in her curtain, greeted them at the door and described to them in detail the story of Jesus birth to Mary and Joseph as she had learned in Sunday School and depicted by the three teddy bears. To their credit, the witnesses listened politely with few comments and left quietly.

Carolyn Beekman Kiel



Who were those wise men?

Magi, in Christian tradition, the noble pilgrims “from the East” who followed a miraculous guiding star to Bethlehem, where they paid homage to the infant Jesus as king of the Jews (Matthew 2:1–12). Christian theological tradition has always stressed that Gentiles as well as Jews came to worship Jesus—an event celebrated in the Eastern church at Christmas and in the West at Epiphany (January 6). Eastern tradition sets the number of Magi at 12, but Western tradition sets their number at three, probably based on the three gifts of “gold, frankincense, and myrrh” (Matthew 2:11) presented to the infant.



When I was in my 20s, I found a booklet that I introduced to my family for a Christmas Eve service. It contained Scripture readings, and each reading was followed by the appropriate carol. My mother accompanied us on the piano as we passed the booklet to the next reader. Even the kids who could read joined in to read the short passage about the birth in the stable. I added to the readings over time and continued using that service for decades of Christmases to follow. It was/is a beautiful family time.

If someone would like a copy of the service, I've retyped the entire thing and can send it by e-mail.

Brenda Bain

bksphorne@aol.com

We hope that these shared memories fill your heart with the Christmas spirit and prepare you for the birth of our savior!

A calendar of events for this month

*December 8th Christmas Cantata at Coronado Methodist,
NSB*

December 15th Christmas Cantata at First UMC Port Orange

December 22nd Campfire Caroling at First UMC 6p

December 24th Contemporary /Family Service 4p

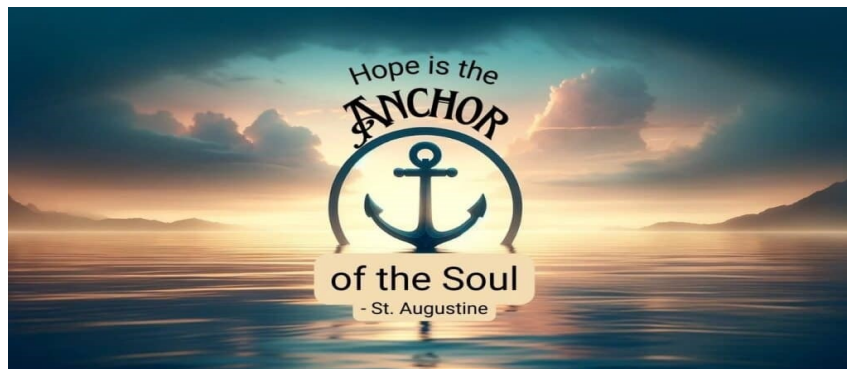
December 24th Traditional / Candlelight Service 6p



Bible Verses for the New Year

As we step into the New Year, the Bible offers a wealth of verses that inspire new beginnings and personal growth. These selected verses speak to the heart of what it means to start anew, guided by faith and hope.

- **Psalm 96:1:** Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.
 - **Ephesians 4:23-24:** Be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.
 - **Philippians 3:13-14:** But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.
 - **Jeremiah 29:11:** For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.
- Proverbs 23:18:** Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.





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