

Happy New Year!

Before you think I have completely lost my mind, let me explain – Advent is the start of a new Christian year. No, we haven't fast forwarded to January 1st; it isn't Chinese New Year or anything like that. It is a new year with new hope.

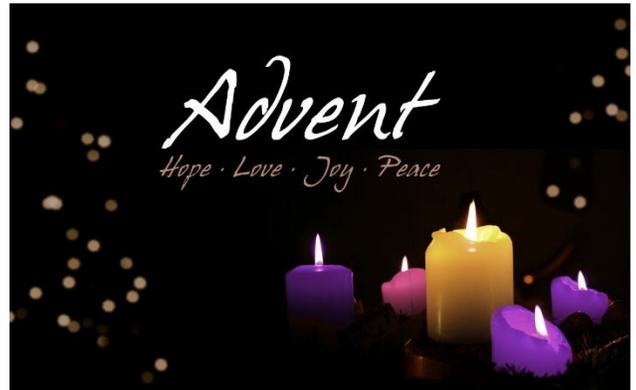
Advent is about waiting in expectation of something happening. But waiting isn't something of a virtue in society today. We don't always want to wait. We live in an on-

demand culture where everything has to be there when we want it. We have to have the latest DVD, or latest gadget or piece of new technology now. People often queue outside shops for days sometimes to be the first to get their hands on something new. In today's Covid-19 world, so much shopping is happening online with demands that things arrive almost instantly, and sent to our loved ones on time. Some people cannot wait. A jigsaw puzzle isn't finished on demand, it takes time, it takes patience. Advent is all about waiting, about wondering, about preparing ourselves for the celebration of the coming of Christ.

On the first Sunday of Advent we reflect on hope. This may be a hope in the promised Messiah, it may be a hope for the world that peace may prosper, or a hope that God's kingdom may be more fully visible, vivid in our actions. Advent reminds us of the past miracles and the present hope for the future event. For me, despite the season of Advent having themes of Hope, Peace, Joy & Love, I think we need to focus more on hope in these challenging times. I invite us to think seriously about the meaning of time and how we use it. Time is a precious gift from God, which gives us the opportunity to live as people of hope, peace, joy and love.

The word 'hope' is all around us. It was interesting when I started thinking about 'hope' and how many times I heard or used the word 'hope' in my everyday world. What is hope? According to Dr. Andrew, Hope is one of our central emotions, but we are often at a loss when asked to define it. Many of us confuse hope with optimism, a prevailing attitude that things will turn out for the best. But hope differs from optimism. Hope does not arise from being told to think positively, or from hearing an overly rosy forecast. Hope, unlike optimism, is rooted in unalloyed reality. Although there is no uniform definition of hope, I found one that seemed to capture what that sticks with me. Hope is the elevating feeling we experience when we see – in the mind's eye – a path to a better future. Hope acknowledges the significant obstacles and deep pitfalls along the path. True hope has no room for delusion. Hope is a positive expectation that something good is going to happen to you because of God's great goodness.

I think we can all agree that hope is not something we can touch, see, smell or hear, rather it is something that we feel deep in our soul. The absence of hope can be life-draining. The presence of hope can be life-giving. During this hope-inspired season, we are reminded that we offer hope to others through our givings, when we support the Food Bank and First United through our seasonal church givings. Perhaps there are ways you can give personally as well.



I believe that hope is a journey that we all take, supported by the presence of God. When we travel through difficult, confusing or uncertain times, such as now, our hope gives us that belief that there is a destination which is going to leave us in a better place than when we started. At those times of life when we run the risk of being overwhelmed by problems, trouble and worry, hope allows us to hold on to the promise of a blessing of God for us, even when we cannot imagine that any kind of blessing might be possible.

There are two types of hope, the garden variety which says things like “I hope it doesn’t rain this weekend”. There are ways we use the word ‘hope’ but really have nothing to do with the deepest longings and aspirations of the soul. But there is a far more important and significant kind of hope, and this kind of hope, like faith not only touches the recesses of the soul, it too, like faith, is a gift from God made possible by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Regardless of who you are or what conditions your life is in, you can’t function successfully without hope in God. If circumstances are bad, you surely need hope. And if they are good, you need hope that they will stay that way! It may take awhile but don’t give up hope. Hope has the power to fill our lives with happiness. Hope enables us to endure hardships and God uses these times to develop character and endurance in us.

So where does real hope come from? Scripture tells us where to look for hope. The Bible tells us that despite the trauma and tragedies of life, God is still in charge. No situation is without hope. You don’t need a ton of hope to get you through difficult situations, just a sliver will keep you going. Have courage and hang onto hope. Recall the evidences of God’s grace in your life. Have there not been times when He has taken care of you, times when you had all but given up hope only to have the cloud removed and the sun to shine once again. It reminds me of a cute quote I read one day that said “so far I have got through 100% of my bad days.” Don’t give up on hope. There is reason to believe!

We don’t know how or when but we trust that God will come again into our lives with love, forgiveness, reconciliation and healing. That’s what hope is. That’s what Advent is about. When we live like Jesus, we bring hope into the world. I challenge you during this season of Advent to have eyes that are open to those who could use the gentle touch of Christ’s love because they need to know that there is hope and when we open our eyes to someone in need and fulfill that need we are bringing the hope of Jesus into the world.

Hope can be a powerful force. Maybe there’s no actual magic in it, but when you know what you hope for most and hold it like a light within you, you can make things happen, almost like magic.

Always have hope! Amen

Rev. Tracy Fairfield



Mid-Fraser United Church Cluster Christmas Online Worship Services

We will be worshipping online on **Christmas Eve** at 7pm with live communion.

All are welcome to join us.

<https://www.trinitymemorialuc.com/pages/online-worship-instructions>

Christmas Day Open House

Join us on Christmas day for our "open house" from 10am-3pm on Zoom, with various clergy and lay people monitoring the platform. From 11am-noon children are more than welcome to chat about their gifts and share stories. Noon till 1pm we will take requests for carol singing, and the other blocks of time will be filled with regular chatting and visiting, poems, readings, and other fireside conversation so that we don't feel so isolated on this special day. Please join us.

Christmas day open house

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83237304353?pwd=ckVSYnhKbXV3OG5yM08zYkl3Q2ZDZz09>

Meeting ID: 832 3730 4353

Passcode: 33737

One tap mobile

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