

Holding Space, Advent I: HOPE

This liturgy (worship service), was crafted by a small group of individuals who were part of a larger group of Lay Worship Leaders who gathered to learn about EPIC (Experiential, Participatory, Inclusive/Image Rich, and Connective) worship leadership, to reflect on the theme of **holding space** in Advent, and collectively prepare for the season.

Based on the readings of the Revised Common Lectionary for Year B, the resource offers prayers and hymn suggestions, and, as time and energy permitted, reflection ideas. Where the authors have used or adapted material written by others, credit is offered at the bottom of the document. The left-hand column identifies the portion of the liturgical element. The middle column contains the words that may be shared. Spoken text for one voice is in regular font. The text for many voices is in **bold** font. Text that is to be shared in unison or responsively is offered in sense lines. The right-hand column offers any guidance for participation or movement.

This resource is offered to you as a gift by all of those who had a hand in preparing it. You are encouraged to adapt it for use in ways that fit your context, with the prayer that it may assist you in creating and **holding space** for hope, peace, joy and love to enter.



Liturgical Element	Content	Guidance
Word of Welcome	Whether you are here for the first time, or are a long-time member, we are blessed to have you with us. No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey God welcomes you. On this the first Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of Hope, we gather and worship God together as one. We wish your heart will hear something personal and relevant this day—a word of comfort, a spur to action, a call to a deeper relationship with God. Children are welcome at all services.	

Candle Lighting Litany ¹	Come gather in the light. We gather this day as a people of God. Come gather as a people of Hope. We gather as ones who choose to pause. We gather as ones who choose to hold space. In the days that feel uncertain, in the nights that feel long, in the prayers that feel unanswered, and the quiet aches and longings, we carry in our hearts: we hold space for hope, and for one another. When hope feels fragile like a flickering wick, we resist the urge to rush toward certainty. We hold space in holy waiting. <i>Candle is lit.</i>	
Sung Response #90 More Voices (adapted) ²	Don't be afraid through Advent's waiting for hope is stronger than our fear. Keep holding space for hope to enter... For God has promised, promised to be always near.	

¹ Lloyd Bruce, FSLDW Regional Minister

² Jennie Delmotte, Music Director at Sackville United

Gathering Prayer	<u>Sheep</u>: Advent is looking back in gratitude and ahead in faith. God of Advent Promise, hope is in the air. And in this moment, we hold on to the timeless truth of Advent - hope, peace, joy and love. You break into our worship service with the astounding gift of delight. <u>Calf</u>: Advent is looking back in gratitude and ahead in faith. God of Advent Promise, we long to receive Good News. As this time of blessed waiting is upon us, we set our eyes on the cradle in the Bethlehem stable. And yet, we know we must not rush. We linger where we are. We take time to ponder. We notice the small things. We hear the quiet whispers. In this way, we experience Emmanuel! <u>Shepherd</u>: Advent is looking back in gratitude and ahead in faith. God of Advent Promise, may this first Sunday in Advent be a day of rich blessings and deep hope. We pray in the name of the One who brought hope into a troubled world, Jesus the Christ. Amen.	
Invitation to Reflection (or Confession)		

Prayer of Reflection (or Confession)		
Assurance of Grace		
Hymn/Song	Voices United #7. "Hope is a Star" MV #220 "Hope shines as the solitary star"	
Wisdom Texts		
Ancient Wisdom	Isaiah 40:1-9 Mark 13:24-37	

Modern Wisdom	Wild Geese, by Mary Oliver You do not have to be good. You do not have to walk on your knees For a hundred miles through the desert, repenting. You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves. Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine. Meanwhile the world goes on. Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain are moving across the landscapes, over the prairies and the deep trees, the mountains and the rivers. Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air, are heading home again. Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination, calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting — over and over announcing your place in the family of things.	Play VU #7 “Hope is a Star” underneath this reading. Or some appropriate classical melody.
Reflection	*Because talking about the advent of Christ is a focus on what’s happening now. “It’s now, baby! *Tell stories about seeing Jesus in the here and now and getting ready to recognize and work with people.	
Hymn/Song	VU #10. Prepare the way of the Lord or MV #83. Let my Spirit Always Sing	

Prayers of the People	God who dwells beyond us, God who dwells among us, God who calls us to dwell together, bless us now as we gather our thoughts and prayers. Send your Advent spirit searching within our hearts and know us through and through. Hear the thanks we raise for the Bethlehem miracle each season. Hear our gratitude for the promise of Advent each season. Hear our mingled thanks and concern, O God, for the people who share our life, for the ones who care for us and for the ones who need our care. For the hope they bring us; for the love they call forth from us; for the joy we know in relationships; we give thanks and praise. Bring healing for those who are sick; for the comfort of the grieving. Bring uplifting hope for the tired and peace for those in turmoil... here in our community and for all of your creation. In the silence hear our prayers..... Silent pause God who dwells beyond us, God who dwells among us, God who calls us to dwell together; Hear our prayers and in your love, answer. Amen	
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Prayer of Jesus	The Lord's prayer from Voices United or an alternative from the UCC website or Gathering.	
Hymn/Song	VU #424. " May the God of Hope Go with Us"	
Commissioning and Benediction	Go now in peace into this Advent season. Carry the light of hope with you. And may the presence of God uplift you, the gentleness of Christ live in your hearts, and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit guide you. Today and always.	