

It's that time of year again. Time to pull out our Advent calendars, candles, creches, and Christingles. These items that have traditionally helped mark the season... day by day or week by week, some, like creches or nativities, since the 13th century. Advent Calendars, Candles and Advent Wreaths since the 18th and 19th centuries. We have an array of these items as part of the Altar this evening.

While most of us are familiar with Advent Calendars, Advent candles, Advent wreaths, and creches... may be not so much with Christingles – which means 'Christ's Light.'

These are little candle bundles made from oranges, usually with a red ribbon around the middle and decorated with sweets. They were introduced in the mid-18th century by a minister in the German Moravian Church. Originally designed for Children's Christmas Services to encourage giving to help other children in need. They were given to each child sharing their offering, no matter how large or small. but not until the late 1960s in England.

This evening, for the service, we have designed our own creations and incorporated them as part of our Altar Advent Wreath.

The orange represents the world. While we have replaced the red ribbon, which symbolizes Christ's love and blood, with a cerulean blue ribbon to symbolize the Advent season and Mary's love for humankind in her "Yes" to being the Mother, who birthed the Light into the world.

The four tradition spokes symbolize the directions of north, east, south, and west, as well as the four seasons.

The candy represents the sweetness of God for all of creation.

The candle symbolizes the light that the Christ child's birth brought into the world.

Our reflection this evening will include Advent prayers, selected poems written by Ann Weems, and music created by Frank Walker... as well as lighting the Christingles.

Let us join our hearts in prayer as we begin watching, waiting, and sharing the first steps of our Advent journey to experience the Light exploding into the world... once again this year!

In December Darkness – Poem by Ann Weems

Circle us, Gracious Creator ... Circle us with the light of your presence, bright within a dark world.

Enable us to be overcomers of the darkness. Enable us to be light bearers of **HOPE**.

Let the light from this candle say to All ... God's **HOPE** is coming on earth, as it already is in heaven.

May the light from this candle of **HOPE** overwhelm the world. Friends, be not afraid, God's **HOPE** is at hand!

Musical Interlude while Lighting the Candle of HOPE

Toward The Light – Poem by Ann Weems

Circle us, Gracious Creator... Circle us with the light of your presence, bright within a dark world.

Enable us to be overcomers of the darkness. Enable us to be light bearers of **PEACE**.

Let the light from this candle say to All ... God's **PEACE** is coming on earth, as it already is in heaven.

May the light from this candle of **PEACE** overwhelm the world. Friends, be not afraid, God's **PEACE** is at hand!

Musical Interlude while Lighting the Candle of PEACE

Against Our Better Judgment – Poem by Ann Weems

Circle us, Gracious Creator... Circle us with the light of your presence, bright within a dark world.

Enable us to be overcomers of the darkness. Enable us to be light bearers of **JOY**.

Let the light from this candle say to All ... God's **JOY** is coming on earth, as it already is in heaven.

May the light from this candle of **JOY** overwhelm the world. Friends, be not afraid,

God's **JOY** is at hand!

Musical Interlude while Lighting the Candle of JOY

O Lord, You Were Born – Poem by Ann Weems

Circle us, Gracious Creator... Circle us with the light of your presence, bright within a dark world.

Enable us to be overcomers of the darkness. Enable us to be light bearers of **LOVE**.

Let the light from this candle say to All ... God's **LOVE** is coming on earth, as it already is in heaven.

May the light from this candle of **LOVE** overwhelm the world. Friends, be not afraid, God's **LOVE** is at hand!

Musical Interlude while Lighting the Candle of LOVE

Closing Thought

The Refugees – Poem by Ann Weems

Perhaps we might consider our own Advent tradition of lighting candles each evening or each week and offering these prayers; playing soft background music or as an interlude; then selecting holy words or poems or prose that quiet our hearts during this season of Advent.

The True Peace

Holy Words from Black Elk, Oglala Sioux Holy Man and Spiritual Leader

“The *first peace*, which is the most important, is that which comes within the souls of people when they realize their relationship, their oneness, with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the universe dwells Wakan-Taka (the Great Spirit, the Great Mystery) and that this center is really everywhere, it is within each of us.

This is the *Real Peace* [*True Peace*], and the others are but reflections of this.

The *Second Peace* is that which is made between two individuals, and the *third* is that which is made between two nations.

But above all you should understand that there can never be peace between nations until there is known that *True Peace* [*Real Peace*], which, as I often said, is within the souls of Men [Women].”