**Week 1 – Hope**

**Reader 1:** Advent means ‘coming.’ It is a time of expectation. A time for us when we look back and remember the coming of a Savior, and also to look forward to a time when he will fulfill his promise and come again. Each candle represents a theme of the season; themes we might feel throughout the year, but during the Advent season, they are themes that help us to focus on what God has done through the Savior he sent.

**Reader 2:** This week, the theme and candle represents hope. As we join Ruth and Naomi in Chapter One, they are in a place where hope seems far from their minds. Yet hope can come even in the most unexpected times and places. Ruth gives Naomi hope when all seems lost, and God gave Israel hope when they were in their darkest moments. Hear these words from Jeremiah 33.

**Reader 3:** 14 “ ‘The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will fulfill the good promise I made to the people of Israel and Judah.

15 “ ‘In those days and at that time

I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David’s line;

he will do what is just and right in the land.

16 In those days Judah will be saved

and Jerusalem will live in safety.

This is the name by which it will be called:

The LORD Our Righteous Savior.’

**Reader 4:** As we begin this journey through Advent together. We light the candle of ‘Hope’ remembering God is our ultimate hope. Our hope will find ultimate fulfillment in his promises.

(Light a white outer candle)

**Week 2 – Peace**

**Reader 1:** We left Naomi and Ruth in Bethlehem, at the beginning of the barley harvest. This followed a long journey both literally, and figuratively as they returned from Moab and experienced deep loss in their family. Yet even in that, Ruth brought hope to Naomi through her love, loyalty and devotion. If hope can seep through for Naomi in her most desperate hour, hope can reach any one of us at any time!

**Reader 2:** This week our Advent Candle represents **peace.** As Ruth and Naomi get settled in Bethlehem many things need to fall into place for them to do well in their new life. One of the first is finding food. The field Ruth ends up in just happens to be that of Boaz, a close relative of Naomi’s husband Elimelech. There can be no doubt that God has providentially arranged this connection. It is through this connection God will continue to shower Naomi and Ruth with his love and bring them peace as things fall into place.

**Reader 3:** Peace is what God promised to those who trust him. He assured us of this with the coming of Jesus, when the angels sang in Luke 2:

“Glory to God in the highest,

and on earth peace among those

with whom he is pleased.”

God has made peace with us by the coming of his Son Jesus.

**Reader 4:** This week we light the candle of **peace.** We stand grateful that God would care for normal people such as Ruth and Naomi and us even still today. We are even more grateful that he would send his Son Jesus to Bethlehem, in a stable, in a manger, to make peace between us and God our Father.

(Light the second candle, or both if the first is not lit)

Week 3—Joy

**Reader 1:** A new love, a redeemed family. These all contribute to the swirling emotions Ruth and Naomi must be feeling throughout chapter three. The possibilities for her future and for Naomi’s, are great. Joy has swelled up in them!

**Reader 2:** The third candle we light this week represents **joy.** Joy is more than an emotion. It is the sense of accomplishment you get in a job well done. It is tied to the proud feeling you get knowing you are part of something greater. It is the sense you get knowing God has made promises and you as his child participate in those promises and have great assurance.

**Reader 3:** The promises of God are wide. However, in this Advent season, we remember the promise of **Joy** the angels brought when they met the shepherds in the fields:

“And the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Chris the Lord. And this will be a sign for you; you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and laying in a manger.’” (Luke 2:10-12)

**Reader 4**: This week as we light the candle of **joy.** We join in joyful expectation. Expectation that the promises God makes are true and will ultimately fulfill by him. But also, in joy knowing that God sent his Son, Jesus, a Savior to pay our penalty and restore us to true and right relationship with himself.

(Light the third candle, and all others if they have not been lit.)

Week 4—Love

Reader 1: At times it is hard for us to understand love from a broad context. We often get lost in our culture’s assumptions. A culture which often thinks of love as only a feeling, or an emotion. Boaz shows us a different way, a broader way to love. His adoration for Ruth, cause him to express love for her, and for her relatives as he fulfills the obligation of the kinsman redeemer. The bible teaches us that we too ought to understand love more broadly.

Reader 2: Love is about self-sacrifice, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have love you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:12-13) Jesus teaches us that love puts the needs of others ahead of our own, even at great sacrifice to ourselves.

Reader 3: The Apostle Paul taught us that, “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends…” (1 Cor. 13:4-8)

Reader 4: Today as we light the fourth candle of Avent, the candle representing love, we remember, “We love because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

(Light the fourth candle, or all the candles if they are not yet lit.)

Christmas Day

Reader 1: Hope, Peace, Joy and Love are bursting at the seams on this Christmas Day! The anticipation we have held has led us here, and now we can celebrate! “*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6)*

Reader 2: Today as we light the Christ candle, we are reminded that Jesus is at the center—the top. He is the one of which our lives are to focus on and our relationship with God is engaged through. *“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, that man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all…” (1 Tim. 2:5-6)*

Reader 3: Our hope is in the Lord. Our peace comes through the sacrifice Jesus made to restore us to right relationship with God. We have eternal joy because of the love God showed us through Jesus. May our Christmas celebrations radiate everything we have been given in Christ; and may our new year be filled with thanksgiving as we are reminded of him.

(Light the Christ [white] candle, and all others that have not been lit.)