St. James United Church

First Sunday of Advent: Hope

November 29, 2026
10:30 am



St. James United Church

Minister: Rev. Sean Handcock
Supply Minister: Rev. Helene Burns; Cell: 902-499-9575
Email: minister.sambrojollimorepc@gmail.com
Secretary: Liz Cann
Office Phone: 902-868-2791; Email: office.sambrojollimorepc@gmail.com
Address: 3811 Old Sambro Road, Sambro, NS B3V 1G1
Website: www.sambrojollimorepc.com

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Acknowledging the Territory
Friends, on this day as we gather, we acknowledge that we live and work and worship on lands that are the ancestral, and by law, the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaw peoples. May we strive to live with respect on this land, and in peace and friendship with its people.

Welcome and Announcements

Birthday/Anniversary Song
Happy birthday/anniversary to you, to Jesus be true,
may God's richest blessings abide unto you.

Introit (VU 60)
O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold him, born the King of angels.
O come, let us adore him! O come, let us adore him!
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Call to Worship and Gathering Prayer
As Advent begins, we come with open hearts, O God.
We come seeking the light of your hope,
your peace in our world and in our homes,
your joy in the gifts you have given us,
your love and wholeness in a world that is often broken.
Gather us in, O God, as we prepare our hearts to welcome your Son, the Light of the World. Amen.

Introduction to the Greening Service

Story of the Advent Wreath

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

By John Moses, *Gathering-Advent/Christmas 2020*, p. 68. Used with permission.

Advent 1: HOPE

We have come again to the first Sunday of Advent, the beginning of a new year in the life of the church. We will discover the voices calling us to dream of a broken world healed. We will sing the songs of longing and we will wait in hope. Hope is the theme of this day.

All: What does hope look like?

Sometimes, hope looks like a refugee family arriving at the airport, wondering if they can find a home in this new country. Or maybe hope looks like the school kids marching in a call for action on the climate crisis. They know that planet Earth is in danger and the future looks grim, but they won't be silent or give up. It could be that hope looks like a congregation of mostly grey-haired people refusing to close their Sunday school, still trying to make a place and a welcome for new generations. Hope looks like the people we see in the news. Hope looks like the people here beside us.

All: What does hope feel like?

Hope feels like the first warm day of spring. You know it will get cold again but summer will come. Hope feels like a door that has always been locked and barred moving when you push it. It may only move a little bit and you may wonder if you have the strength to open it, but the barrier has become a possibility. Hope feels like an encouraging word just when you thought you couldn't go on any longer.

All: What is it like to live in hope?

Hope always looks up, always strains to see the first glimmer of light along the horizon. Hope always listens—always listens to the angel voices of kindness and mercy. Hope doesn't believe the haters and the doomsayers. Hope trusts God. Hope believes that we are God's beloved children. Today, we light the candle named Hope. May its light help us find our way.

(Light the first blue candle.)

Advent Candle Song (MV 220)

Hope shines as the solitary star.
Faith is the inner light.
You and I together mirror the Light of Lights,
and illumine the pathway home.

Story of the Stained Glass Windows

Hymn: VU 9 v. 5 "People, Look East"

Angels, announce with shouts of mirth
Christ who brings new life to earth.
Set every peak and valley humming
with the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east and sing today:
Love the Lord is on the way.

Story of the Hanging of the Greens

"The Magi Begin Their Journey" (based on Matt. 2:1-2, 9-10)

Hymn: VU 9 v. 1 "People, Look East"

People, look east. The time is near
of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able,
trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east and sing today:
Love the guest is on the way.

Story of the Poinsettia

Hymn: VU 9 v. 2 "People, Look East"

Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,
one more seed is planted there:
give up your strength the seed to nourish,
that in course the flower may flourish.
People, look east and sing today:
Love the rose is on the way.

Story of the Christmas Tree

Hymn: VU 9 v. 3 "People, Look East"
Birds, though you long have ceased to build,
guard the nest that must be filled.
Even the hour when wings are frozen,
God for fledging time has chosen.
People, look east and sing today:
Love the bird is on the way.

Story of the Christmas Lights

Hymn: VU 9 v. 4 "People, Look East"
Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim
one more light the bowl shall brim,
shining beyond the frosty weather,
bright as sun and moon together.
People, look east and sing today:
Love the star is on the way.

"An Angel Speaks to Mary" (based on Luke 1:26-38)

Story of the Angels

Hymn: VU 38 vv. 1 & 3 "Angels We Have Heard on High"
Angels we have heard on high,
sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply,
echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Come to Bethlehem and see
Christ whose birth the angels sing.
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Story of the Ringing Bells

Choir Anthem

Prayers of the People and The Lord's Prayer

Invitation to the Offering

Offering Hymn (tune VU 81)
As we offer gifts most rare
at that manger crude and bare,
and we bend our knee before
Christ, whom heaven and earth adore,
so our humble hearts we bring
Christ, to you, our heavenly King.

Prayer of Dedication (together)
Loving God, accept our gifts, the work of our hands and hearts. We pray that your Spirit of Hope will make a difference in the world, as we await with wonder the birth of Christ. Amen.

Hymn: VU 48 v. 1 "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing"
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King,
peace on earth and mercy mild. God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;
with the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Benediction

Song for the Journey (VU 75 v. 6)
All glory be to God on high,
and to the earth be peace.
Good will to all from highest heaven
begin, and never cease.

The Life and Work of St. James United Church

A warm welcome to each one who has come to worship. Whether you are visiting, are new to the area, or a regular member of this congregation—we are glad you are here!

Harbour Views Winter Newsletter: It's that time again — time to send in your submissions to the Harbour Views Winter Newsletter! The deadline for submissions is Monday, Nov. 30. Please send them to jennjwhite@gmail.com and put "Newsletter" in the subject line.

Memorial Tree Lighting: On Tuesday, Dec. 1 at 6:30 pm we will light our tree with blue bulbs, sing carols and warm up with hot chocolate and cookies. With each donation of $3 a blue bulb will turn white in memory of someone. This is a way to remember loved ones during the holiday season and support the work of our church. Please contact Aronda 868-2617, Barb 868-2478 or Crystal 430-7968 to make arrangements.

Breakfast with Santa (sponsored by SACA): 8:30-11:00 am, Saturday, Dec. 5 in St. James hall. Share breakfast with Santa; photos, cookie decorating and more.

Christmas Luncheon: 11 am-1 pm, Saturday, Dec. 12. Cost $10 (cash only). Join us for a lovely lunch and holiday cheer. There will be a craft/bake table; contributions to it are much appreciated. Please place a value on items contributed to the sale.

Down Home Christmas Concert: On Sunday, Dec. 13 at 6:30 pm get into the Christmas spirit with an evening of music by local musicians and singers of all ages. No admission; an offering will be taken. Non-perishable food will be accepted for the Food Bank.

Advent and Christmas Services

Advent 1 - Hanging of the Greens: Sunday, Nov. 29. We present the symbols of Christmas at this all ages service.

Advent 2 - Mitten Tree Service: Sunday, Dec. 6. Decorate with mittens, gloves, hats, socks and bring toys to help those facing hardship this Christmas. There will be Sunday School for the children and refreshments following the service.

Advent 3 - Service: Sunday, Dec. 13. Our theme is Joy!

Advent 4 - Carol Communion Service: On Sunday, Dec. 20 communion will be sung to the tunes of Christmas carols.

Christmas Eve Service: 6:30 pm, Thursday, Dec. 24. Come journey to the Bethlehem stable and celebrate the birth of Jesus.

1st after Christmas: Sunday, Dec. 27. Stories and Carols**.**