

# 1 FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

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## LIGHTING OF THE FIRST ADVENT CANDLE

One: For such a time as this,

**Many: God's Love becomes flesh. Again.**

One: For such a time as this,

**Many: A child is born to us. Again.**

One: Though the night of our despair long lingers,

**Many: There comes a Light no shadow can overcome.**

One: Though our hearts ache for a justice we cannot yet see,

**Many: The Holy One works for those who watch and wait.**

One: Though distanced from one another and well-acquainted with death,

**Many: Our Deliverer draws near to bring us new life.**

One: No ear has yet heard, no eye has yet seen God's glory fully revealed.

**Many: And so we wait.**

One: We know not when or where or how our Hope will be made manifest.

**Many: And so we watch.**

One: The One who loves us does not slumber.

**Many: So let us keep awake.**

One: Hope of the nations, come.

**Many: Hope of our hearts, come.**

*The first candle is lit. Silence is kept.*

**ALL: FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS, KINDLE OUR HOPE.**

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### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

For our tendency to put our hopes in everything but you, forgive us. In the bitterness and despair we feel when our hopes are not realized, comfort us. O, that you would tear open the heavens and come into our wandering hearts with your love. O, that you would reveal your steadfast goodness and restore our hope. Honor our hope: That you would walk with us through these times, that you would redeem these times. Amen.

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### CALL TO THE OFFERING

For such a time as this God comes to be with us, again. These times also call us to deeper compassion and increased generosity. The Pension Boards of the United Church of Christ created the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross to support retired UCC clergy and church staff and surviving clergy spouses. Through the generosity of churches like ours, these servants of the church receive emergency financial assistance, help with health care costs, and annual "thank you" checks. We give not only to meet their needs, not only to thank them for their ministries, but also to make room in our hearts and their lives for a new thing to break forth.

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### PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Creator God who came to us as one of us, Spirit who lives among and within us, Redeemer who comes to us again in ways both mysterious and plain, at times long-awaited and in unexpected moments: See how your love has opened our hearts. Bless these gifts of hope and compassion, faithfulness and gratitude. For all your love has already done, thank you. For all you will yet do, through these gifts and by your Spirit, we praise you. Amen.