

Light & Hope

Have you been lighting candles for Advent this year? This is the third week so the light should be noticeably brighter than it was with just 1 candle when Advent started. For some, winter seems dark and gloomy. Shorter days and cold keep people indoors more bringing feelings of restlessness, 'cabin fever', even depression. Advent's coming as winter sets in, makes the Advent symbolism of increasing light an even more powerful reminder that God offered the world light, hope, and peace when he sent his son. Especially if you feel caught in winter gloom, you need to take hold of that light, hope, and peace that came in the Bethlehem manger! The best cure for gloom is to share the manger's gifts as far and wide as possible, especially this year. For many of us, winter has not really arrived – the weather feels more like early fall – but the darkness and gloom of a nearly 2-year pandemic, coupled with the social and economic struggles of this age, make the need for God's light, hope, and peace even greater than ever. Do not forget, the light we speak of does not originate from candles and strings of Christmas lights. They can only represent it. The real light is the light of Jesus' love and forgiveness brought to us through the manger, and the cross. It is this light we are called to let shine in the manner of our living. Take extra care to be this Christ-like light for those around you this Advent season. Share a cheerful word or greeting, even with strangers, especially where masks must cover a smile. Be a patient driver on the roads. Be considerate and say thank you to workers who serve you. Keep in touch with neighbors and friends in tangible ways like sending cards and make phone or video calls (hearing a voice; seeing a face; holding a specially chosen or made card, can be more powerful than texted or tweeted words alone). Share from your bounty with those in need. Do not forget, in the bright and cheery whimsy combined with often-overwhelming consumer-oriented Christmas trappings found everywhere this time of year; take the time and effort to share the wonder, joy, and glory of the Christ Child. He really is the reason for Christmas and the source of the light, and hope that empowers and sustains us. It is from him that the peace we crave comes!

Pray for:

- **Those affected by the tornados December 10 - 11th.** At least 88 are dead (74 of them in Kentucky), at least 109 are unaccounted for in Kentucky, the state the worst hit. Illinois, Tennessee, Missouri & Arkansas were hit too. Of the 110 people in a Kentucky candle factory, only 8 died. The rest have been accounted for. Considering the total destruction of the factory, this is a cause for thanksgiving! Remember: thousands have lost their homes, & whole towns have suffered severe damage.
- **Those dealing with flooding in South Sudan** – 200,000 have been forced from their homes. Some of the flood area is not accessible. An unexplained illness has also struck leaving at least 89 dead. The flooding is making investigating the illness difficult.
- **Those dealing with COVID.** More people are hospitalized in Ohio due to COVID now than have been in a year. 1 of every 5 current Ohio hospital patients is a COVID patient. Case numbers are growing worldwide. Delta is still dominant, but the Omicron variant is spreading fast. Pray for those trying to prevent it, cure it, & care for the sick. 37% of those who get COVID face long term symptoms. 1 of every 100 Americans over 65 has died of COVID. There have been more than 800,000 COVID deaths in the U.S.



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