

LET THERE BE

Hope

THE SEASON OF
ADVENT

First Chinese Baptist Church
December 1st, 2024

Welcome and Announcements

Lisa Lee

Birthdays

Pastor Thurman

“It Came Upon a Midnight Clear”

Communion Offering

RMMO

Offering & Doxology

Advent Service

The Candle of Hope

Rev. Lauran Bethell

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

“Simeon’s Hope”

Pastor Steve Thurman

Communion

“What Child Is This?”

Benediction

God be with You

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel."

The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Luke 2:25-35



How Do We Find Hope in a Weary World?
Responsive Reading - Rev. Lauran Bethell

Leader: How does a weary world hope?

People: By telling the stories of hope, by lighting candles in the night, and planting seeds of prayer in the winter that will bloom in the spring.

Leader: By insisting that small acts can make a difference.

People: With God's help, may we bring hope into a weary world. Amen.

Lighting the FIRST CANDEL OF ADVENT

Rev. Bethell: Dear Family of Faith today we light the Candle of Hope!

No matter how many times we lose ourselves to distractions, no matter how many times we ask ourselves, "How can this be?" God's love keeps showing up for us.

So, say this with me:

We are loved. We are claimed. We are forgiven. Thanks be to God!

Pastoral Prayer: Rev. Lauran Bethell

Now Let's Sing: *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

O Little Town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary,
and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wond'ring love,
O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King,
and peace to men on earth!

How silently, how silently,
the wondrous Gift is giv'n;
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of His Heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming,
but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still,
the dear Christ enters in.

Some background on our series...

Dear Brothers and Sisters on our pilgrimage through Advent this year I wanted the visuals to be abstract. Why? Well, we have been through so much these past few years. Violence, hate speech, and pictures of loss on our many screens. So, I wanted to give you something else to look at and struggle with in this our Advent journey. So, I'm praying that over the next few weeks you will come to the realization that our Savior was born into a weary world just like ours.

Warning! I will superimpose on this canvas of chaos the nativity. But the visual will not look like pictures you are used to so just go along. Who knows you may discover within the abstract the Christ child walking beside and with you during this Christmas journey.

- **If you get a chance this week read Luke 1:1-23. You will discover a man named Zechariah who lived in a time of struggle and loss just like ours and in the midst of it all he received good news from God. But, instead of rejoicing he responded with, "Nope! How can this be?"**

After reading the Scripture let me know what you think the Bible is teaching though this scripture? Answer this question, "Where is the HOPE found?"

Your fellow pilgrim
pastorjack@fbcfresno.org

Also, for Advent this year I thought it would be appropriate for our pastoral leaders to lead our church in our Christmas preparation. We are so fortunate to have talented and strong pastoral leadership that serves both here in our church, in education and globally. Today The Rev. Lauran Bethell leads us on this first Sunday of Advent.

A short biography: Since 1986, Lauran has been passionate about sharing the hope and healing of Jesus with victims of human trafficking and prostitution and offering prevention opportunities for those at risk. Lauran served in Chiang Mai, Thailand as the first director of New Life Center for 14 years before God led her to share her pioneering experiences as a global consultant in 2001. Based in Europe for 18 years, Lauran traveled throughout the world encouraging Christians in their anti-trafficking endeavors. She continues her ministry in this weary world with victims of trafficking. Thank you, pastor, for being part of our fellowship but also for your willingness to go on our behalf into the world!

An Old Fashioned
**FLANNELGRAPH
CHRISTMAS**

December 15th at 11 am

Cookie reception to follow
Please bring your favorites to share

Interim Pastor Steve Thurman · steve@fcbcfresno.org
Rev. Jeannie Gong – 中文牧師 · jeannieg@fcbcfresno.org
Music Director Jeff Burkett · jeff@fcbcfresno.org
Office Manager Elizabeth Ott · liz@fcbcfresno.org
Pianist Cristobal Abejo

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