

Today starts the new Advent season. Last Sunday we had our “Feast of Christ” and decorated the church. We had fewer numbers this year, but I think they did an excellent job. And I really appreciate all of their help.

We at St. Paul’s celebrate communion on the first Sunday of the month. I used to believe that all churches, with the exception of the Catholics, celebrate communion on the first Sunday of the month. But, as I’ve said before, not all UCC churches do. Some have communion every Sunday and others have it once a quarter.

The reason that I mention this is because we generally have the white paraments out for communion. White is the symbol for purity. It represents Jesus and his innocence and sacrifice. Instead, I wanted to keep the paraments blue for today since it is the beginning of Advent and it ties into our reading with Jeremiah.

Today we lit the first Advent candle, the candle of hope. The excitement that fills us as we prepare for Christmas. The hope that God sees us and protects us. The knowledge that we have done the best that we can and the hope that others recognize this. The hope that one day, we will all be together with him.

This past week it has been a little hard to keep our hope and joy going strong. The community has lost three great people this week, and sometimes we forget about the hope and focus on the here and now and get lost in our sadness.

I was talking with a friend this week, and she told me that the holidays are really hard for her. She lost her husband a couple of years ago and she misses him most around this time of year. I asked her why that was. When she started dating her husband, they started a number of new traditions around Christmas. And now that he was gone, she couldn’t do them any more.

I told her that it is OK to have that grief. It doesn’t matter that it is supposed to be a time of happiness. In fact, it makes sense that she would be sad now, because she has so many happy memories. That is the hope that I have, that one day we can get past the grief and return to happiness.

There is so much negativity in the world right now. We have wars in multiple parts of the world right now. Cease fires have ended and bombings have begun. Some countries are sending troops to their borders and are preparing for the worst. I have hope that one day this will all end, much like God’s hope for us as we hear in today’s reading from Jeremiah.

If you remember from last week, Jeremiah wrote the book of Kings as well as Jeremiah. And I call it the Book of Kings instead of First or Second Kings because it was originally one book and was split into two with the Greek translation. He wrote these books during the reign of King Josiah and his sons leading to the exile and fall of Judah. Jeremiah was believed to have continued to live in Judah for years after the fall until all of the Jews were exiled to Babylon or Egypt.

Today’s reading would have been after the exile. When the Lord came to Jerimiah and told him that He would keep His promise. That one day they would return

to Jerusalem and there would be rejoicing in the streets. Families would return and the grieving would be over.

God will keep his covenant with the house of David just as he kept his covenant with the day and night. And that is where we get the blue for our Advent season. Blue is the color of hope and it comes from the color of the sky at the beginning of each day. Just before the sun rises and night ends, we have hope for the new day. What has happened the night before is over and what is going to happen is still a possibility.

God has no intention of breaking that covenant with day and night, just like he has no intention of breaking his covenant with David. In this prophecy Jeremiah is telling us that one day, a descendant of David will once again rule Israel and a Levite will continue to be his priest. This is significant because it continues to show the lineage back to Jacob through the tribes of Levi and Judah.

Hope for us can be an opportunity at times. But, God will always have hope in us. As long as there is a day and a night, he will uphold his covenant with us. We might not see it and we might not understand why. But, we can have hope and trust in the knowledge that we know he loves us and has shared his hope, peace, joy, and love with us.