

# Advent 2020



The season of Advent is upon us!

As 2020 has been a never before experienced time so too will the celebration of Advent at PSUC.

Each week in Advent we will highlight an aspect of the sanctuary decorations and provide the story behind them and their significance to the congregation.

If any of you have further information on the origin of these banners please send it along to Sherri ([office@prairiespirituc.org](mailto:office@prairiespirituc.org)) and she will pass it along to the Worship Team for documentation.

## Advent 1 – 27 November 2020



This week, we are introducing the three wreaths hung on the West side of the sanctuary – the McIntyre wreaths.

The McIntyre family are long time members of Sturgeon Creek United Church now Prairie Spirit United Church. In 2002 Colleen McIntyre was receiving surgery and convalescent care close to the Christmas season and as a gift to her and their congregation Colleen's husband, Dave McIntyre, purchased the three wreaths and presented them to the church. This was a surprise to Colleen, but a much-loved gesture. Dave passed away in 2005 and Colleen loves to look over and see the wreaths in Advent each year. It is Dave and Colleen's legacy to us, the congregation.

## Advent 2 – 4 December 2020



This week, we are highlighting the blue, white and silver banners originally from Kirkfield Park United Church. There are two banners: the Angel which appears first in the Advent story and in the sanctuary and the Star which we will see in week 4 of Advent.

On inquiry among members of the former KPUC, it was felt that the women of the UCW were involved in their inception having either made them or raised the money to have them made. Inez Roberts was one of the UCW women in particular who might have spearheaded this initiative. She passed away a number of years ago. It is known that the banners go back more than 30 years.

## Advent 3 – 11 December 2020



This week, we are highlighting the twin banners hanging on the wall by the organ originally from Silver Heights United Church.

With the leadership of the UCW at Silver Heights, the advent story was depicted in panels. Starting at the panel on the lower right – Mary is visited by the Angel Gabriel who tells her she is to carry the Son of God named Jesus (The Annunciation). Moving up on the right side, the next panel shows the holy family travelling to Bethlehem for the census taking followed by and then arriving at the Inn and stable. The top right panel shows the Wisemen on their journey to Bethlehem following the star.

Moving to the top left panel, we see the holy family in the stable. The next panel below depicts the Angels heralding the shepherds followed by worshippers gathered in the stable with the holy family. The last panel at the bottom depicts the departure of the holy family fleeing to Egypt to escape Herod and his soldiers. A lovely visualization of the story.

## Advent 4 – 20 December 2020



This week, we are highlighting the four advent banners originally from Sturgeon Creek United Church.

Sturgeon Creek United Church experienced a devastating fire in October 1992 which burned the sanctuary wing to ashes and rubble. In the fire all of the banners used to decorate the sanctuary for the seasons of the Church year were lost. The congregation relocated to the Spring Valley School auditorium on Quail Ridge Road during the rebuild of the sanctuary wing and worshipped there for the next 2 years.

For that first advent in the school the need for liturgical decorations for advent was deemed a priority. Ros Friesen approached an artist in the congregation, Vera Laser, to see if she could undertake this work. Over the next 4 weeks Vera produced the banners with fabric pieces bonded to felt, completing each one in time for it to be hung the following week. Others assisted her in this work by cutting out the fabric pieces according to Vera's designs in preparation for the banner assembly.

Additionally, two further banners were completed:

'In the Spirit' (Dove) for the time after Epiphany and before Easter

The Easter Butterfly for Easter Sunday.

# Christmas Eve – 24 December 2020



This week, we are highlighting the history of the Advent Wreath and Candles. The picture is of the Silver Heights Advent Wreath which we've used throughout the season.

The **Protestant** tradition began in the 1800's in Europe:

"Advent is a good time to remind ourselves that many of the Christian symbols we take for granted have rich meaning that often spans centuries. Ritual symbols are not merely designations. Rather, they are *vessels* that contain storied wisdom and the echoes of history. The tradition of the Advent wreath is no exception."

Source: <https://www.nightofsilence.com/blog/2018/11/28/advent-wreath>

The wreath started as a circle of greens with candles in it used in the darkest days of the year. The first Advent wreath is credited to *Johann Hinrich Wichern*, a Protestant running a mission school for children in Europe. In 1830, to address the children's daily questions of when Christmas would be here, he took a cart wheel and encircled it with candles – 20 red and 4 white (for Sundays) – which he hung in the school. Each day starting December 1<sup>st</sup> they would light one candle a day until Christmas.

The Advent Wreath tradition did not come to Protestant North America until the 1920's. The **Catholics** root their tradition in the 1600's where again the circle of greens with candles were used in the darkest days of the year.

"The wreath is made of various evergreens, signifying continuous life. Even these evergreens have a traditional meaning which can be adapted to our faith: The laurel

signifies victory over persecution and suffering; pine, holly, and yew, immortality; and cedar, strength and healing. Holly also has a special Christian symbolism: The prickly leaves remind us of the crown of thorns, and one English legend tells of how the cross was made of holly. The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolizes the eternity of God, the immortality of the soul, and the everlasting life found in Christ. Any pine cones, nuts, or seedpods used to decorate the wreath also symbolize life and resurrection.”

Each candle is a symbol for the Sundays in Advent:

“The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent. A tradition is that each week represents one thousand years, to sum up the 4,000 years from Adam and Eve until the Birth of the Saviour. Three candles are purple and one is rose. The purple candles in particular symbolize the prayer, penance, and preparatory sacrifices and good works undertaken at this time. The rose candle is lit on the third Sunday, Gaudete Sunday, when the priest also wears rose vestments at Mass; Gaudete Sunday is the Sunday of rejoicing, because the faithful have arrived at the midpoint of Advent, when their preparation is now half over and they are close to Christmas. The progressive lighting of the candles symbolizes the expectation and hope surrounding our Lord’s first coming into the world and the anticipation of His second coming to judge the living and the dead.”

Source: <https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/catholic-contributions/the-history-of-the-advent-wreath.html>

The tradition of the candles used varies across faiths.

“The most common Advent candle tradition, however, involves four candles around the wreath. A new candle is lit on each of the four Sundays before Christmas. Each candle represents something different, although traditions vary. Often, the first, second, and fourth candles are purple; the third candle is rose-colored. Sometimes all the candles are red; in other traditions, all four candles are blue or white. Occasionally, a fifth white candle is placed in the middle of the wreath and is lit on Christmas Day to celebrate Jesus’ birth.”

Source: <https://www.crosswalk.com/special-coverage/christmas-and-advent/advent-wreath-candles-understanding-the-meaning-history-tradition.html>

The Prairie Spirit United Church Advent wreath had Advent 1 – HOPE – a purple candle; Advent 2 – PEACE – a blue candle; Advent 3 – Joy – a pink candle; and Advent 4 – LOVE – a purple candle. The Christ candle is white, placed in the centre and signifies the birth of Jesus Christ when lit on Christmas Eve.

When reading the liturgical information in the back of the 2021 United Church of Canada calendar the designated colour for Advent is offered as “Blue (or Purple).” The Worship Team has gathered this information to clarify and direct our Advent wreath going forward.

Wait, Watch and See our 2021 Advent Wreath! Merry Christmas! God’s blessings to you!