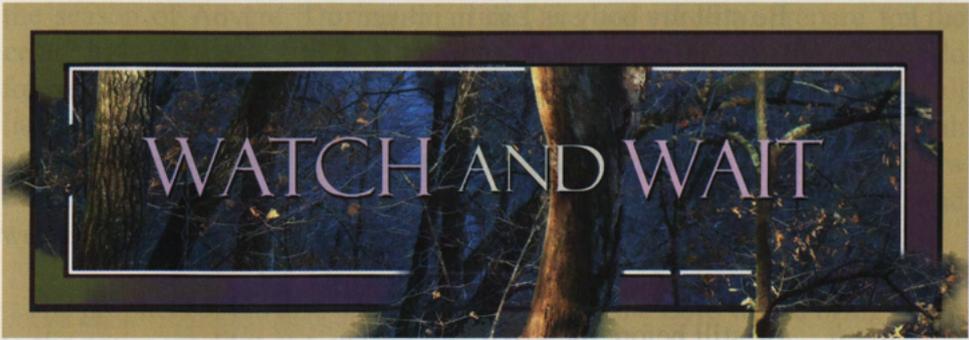
A photograph of a single lit purple Advent candle. The candle is tall and cylindrical, with a bright flame at the top. It is positioned in the center of the frame. The background is a dark blue night sky with silhouettes of trees and some leaves. The entire image is framed by a purple border, and a white rectangular box with a purple border is superimposed over the top center, containing the word "ADVENT" in purple capital letters.

ADVENT



WATCH AND WAIT

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Year B

Isaiah 63:16-17, 19b, 64:2-7

Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Mark 13:33-37

Gathering

(An unlit purple candle, a bible open to this week's gospel, a card lettered with the words "So that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15: 28) and a card on which is drawn a star of David in blue ink rest on a table covered with purple cloth.)

Advent begins. We are called to watch and wait mindfully, prayerfully, for the Lord who comes. Last week we considered the actions of a shepherd in the context of Jesus who is also king of the universe. We considered the divine care and value given to each of us by our royal shepherd. How did you manifest the same care for others this past week?

Prayer

(The candle is lit. Members sit in quiet attention to the presence of God. After a suitable time, several members lead the community in prayer as follows.)

All: Be still before the LORD;
wait for him.

Psalm 37:7

I: Be still my body as I sit in prayer.

All: Be still before the LORD;
wait for him.

Psalm 37:7

II: Be still my thoughts as I wonder at your presence.

All: Be still before the LORD;
wait for him.

III: Be still my hands as I consider your work.

All: Be still before the LORD;
wait for him.

IV: Be still my heart as I wonder at the variety of your gifts.

All: Be still before the LORD;
wait for him.

HEARING THE LORD'S GOSPEL

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has already said.)

When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. Pausing between them, the leader then poses these two questions: “What draws you to this gospel?” “Where do you resist this gospel?” The community pauses for a time of silent reflection. After about a minute, the leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After a time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)

Reflection

And so we begin: both the start of our new liturgical year as well as

the season of Advent. During this time, we are asked to prepare for the celebration of the Coming that would change and will change the world forever. We remember the great gift of Jesus Christ, Son of God, born for all humanity. We hear of those who foretold of this birth, like the prophet Isaiah 800 years prior, and of their great waiting. We remember the many Hebrew people who devoted their lives to serving the Lord while they waited. And we also consider that we are called to wait.

The prophets of old also spoke of a time when the Lord would bring peace to the entire world (Isaiah 60:18). During Advent, we also wait for this return. “Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again”, yes? And so even today, we continue to wait with expectation.

Time seems to move so fast in our age. Our more contemporary experience of waiting often seems so difficult. We live in a world of microwave dinners, smart phones and remote controlled televisions. The pace of our lives is much faster than in the past. So in our *culture of instant*, it is in this season of Advent that we are also asked to be watchful and alert while we wait. How *patient* and *reflective* are we? How *mindful* are we of what God seeks from us in our everyday lives?

It has been said that waiting is often harder than work (Peter Marshall, Preacher, 1902-1949). Waiting is, after all, an action. Waiting challenges us to be mindful of our lives. It affords us the opportunity to be both watchful and alert. The Lord Comes.

Questions for Reflection and Conversation

- ◆ For what do you hope in this Advent this year?
- ◆ For what do you think God hopes for you in Advent this year?
- ◆ What contributes to or detracts from your being a patient person?
- ◆ How deep is your yearning for God?

HEARING THE GOSPEL'S LORD

(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: “What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?” “How are you/we being called to live in response to God’s word?” After a pause, the leader invites the community

to a time of conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)

Response in Action Suggestions

- ♦ Wait mindfully, patiently, this week as you are caught in a line at a supermarket or some other place.
- ♦ Set aside ten minutes each day this week for reflection and prayer. Sit in quiet and let your prayer be, “Come Lord Jesus, come.”

Prayer

(After a brief pause, the gospel or a portion of it, either of the other readings as appropriate or the responsorial psalm are proclaimed. The idea is to select a text that lends itself to inviting members to the time of silent prayer that follows. Following the proclamation, the leader poses these questions to the members: “What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now?” “What do you say to him in response?” The community pauses for a full five minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental selection may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two, or a brief expression that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally. The community receives this without additional comment. Following this sharing, the leader prays as follows on behalf of all.)

Leader: “Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe,

All: who has kept us alive, sustained us and enabled us to reach this season.

Amen.

Traditional Jewish Prayer,
Shehechyanu -“ Who has kept us
alive?”

(Members join in singing, “My Soul is Thirsting”. The song may be found on the Internet.)