

---

# SBCC NEWS

---

## Advent at SBCC 2017

This past Sunday at Sunset Beach Community Church we commenced our worship service with the lighting of the first Advent candle. For some of you this a familiar part of worship during this season, while for others it may have been new. Even for those for whom the practice of lighting Advent candles is familiar, there can be variation in the practice among churches and denominations that make it different from one place to another. So here's a few thoughts on why and how we're celebrating the Advent season at SBCC this year.

The word "Advent" is derived from a Latin verb which means "to come." Many years ago Christians began observing a season of Spiritual preparation prior to the celebration of the birth of Christ, marking the four Sundays before Christmas Day in special ways. Not unlike the challenges we face in our day, these Christians believed that intentional practices of reflection

were necessary to prepare our hearts to engage in true celebration of the birth of the Christ. Have you ever lamented that you were spending so much time decorating, shopping for gifts, and preparing for guests at Christmastime that you had little time to think about what you were celebrating? Advent, then and now, is a season intended to slow us down and carve out space for reflecting on the significance of Christ and the meaning of Christmas.

Additionally, Christians recognized that, just as the people of God waited and prepared for Christ's *first coming*, those of us living after he was born, was crucified, and was raised now wait and prepare for his *second coming*. When we celebrate Advent, we not only remember the coming of Jesus as a baby, we look forward with anticipation to his return as our King.

Our themes for the four Sundays of Advent at SBCC are *waiting, preparing, responding, and hoping*. Every Sunday of Advent people from our church family will present readings, light candles, and offer prayers to help lead us in reflection and worship. Since the fourth Sunday of Advent falls on the same day as Christmas Eve this year, we'll be marking the



### **Themes for the Sundays of Advent**

*December 3rd – Week 1: Waiting*

*December 10th – Week 2: Preparing*

*December 17th – Week 3: Responding*

*December 24th (Morning) – Week 4: Hoping*

***December 24th (Evening; white): Light of the World***

---

fourth Sunday of Advent at our morning service at 9:30am, then ending our 6pm Christmas Eve Service (see details below) by lighting the white Christ candle.

There's a few more pieces of information concerning Advent and Christmas that you might find interesting and incorporate into your own practices this year. In the church calendar, the new *church* year begins with the first Sunday of Advent. That means that in the life of the church, our "New Year" began this year on December 3rd. May I be the first to wish you a Happy New Year! Additionally, while December 25th is of course recognized as Christmas Day, every day from December 26th to January 5th is also considered a "Day of Christmas." Maybe you thought that the Christmas carol, "The Twelve Days of Christmas" was a made up tale, but it reflects the practice of Christians of celebrating *twelve days of Christmas* in honor of our Savior's birth. In light of that, why not shock your friends and confuse your enemies by wishing them a "Merry Christmas" on New Year's Eve?

There are a number of ways we'll be celebrating the season this month, described below. Carole and I are delighted to spend this, our first Advent at SBCC with you and to join you in preparing for the Lord's coming as a church family.

Advent Blessings,

*Terry Maner, Pastor*

## Special Events & Services this Month

**December 17th, after the  
9:30am Worship Service:**

***Christmas Fellowship  
Luncheon***

**December 24th, 9:30am**

**4th Sunday of Advent/  
Christmas Eve Morning  
Worship Service**

**December 24th, 6pm**

**Christmas Eve Service:  
*A Festival of  
Lessons & Carols***

Mark your calendars and join us for the following special events and services this month.

### **December 17th: Christmas Fellowship Luncheon**

We'll celebrate the Advent & Christmas season with a Christmas Fellowship Luncheon following our morning worship service on December 17th. SBCC will provide Roast Beef, Baked Ham, Vegetarian Lasagna, Scalloped Potatoes, Green Bean Casserole, and drinks. A variety of salads and desserts are still needed. If you would like to bring either a salad or dessert to share, please call *Janet Guido* at (910) 575-3301 or email Janet at [angel51477@hotmail.com](mailto:angel51477@hotmail.com). There is no charge for the luncheon (a freewill offering will be received). Please join us for this festive opportunity to celebrate Christmas as a church family.

**December 24th, 9:30am: 4th Sunday of Advent Worship**

December 24th this year falls on the Fourth and last Sunday of Advent, so we'll celebrate that during our morning worship service at 9:30am. Readers will share Scriptures and light the four candles of Advent. We'll hear the fourth message in the "Coming Home for Christmas" series from Luke 15 & sing together of the hope we have in Christ's coming. Join us as we mark the end of Advent and the coming of the light of the world.

**December 24th, 6pm: Christmas Eve Service – A Festival of Lessons & Carols**

At 6pm on December 24th we'll celebrate the birth of Jesus through a special Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. This year our service follows the pattern of "*A Festival of Lessons & Carols*", a service combining a series of Scripture readings, Christmas carols, and special songs that recount the story of our Savior's birth, from Genesis to John's Gospel. Readers of all ages will lead us and the congregation will be the "choir" as we sing the songs of Christmas. I'll offer a Christmas Eve message, we'll receive a special offering to support the mercy ministries of the church, and we'll light the white Christ candle in celebration of our Savior's birth. We still need readers from our church family (including your visiting, child, teenage, or young adult extended family members who would love to read a passage!), so please email ([tmaner@comcast.net](mailto:tmaner@comcast.net)) or phone the church office (910) 575-0553 to enlist to read. Join us for this beautiful and meaningful way to celebrate Christmas.

**As 2017 comes to a close...**

I want to thank you for the way that you've welcomed Carole and me into the Sunset Beach Community Church family this year. We've been through so much together in such a short time, and we're so grateful for the partnership that continues to grow as we head into 2018. We're hopeful and expectant for God to work in us and through us in fresh ways in the new year.

On behalf of the elders and deacons of SBCC, I want to thank you for your generous financial giving that has carried us through the challenging transitions in leadership & location and supported the ministries & missionaries of the church so generously. We encourage those of you who are able to consider offering an end of the year gift, not only to ensure that we end 2017 "in the black," but also so that we may begin the new year well supplied for the work God has in store for us.

Martin Luther once said that the song of the angels, "*Glory to God in the Highest*," is "the very heart of worship." May we join the angels in singing that song this season and always.

For the Greater Glory of God,  
*Terry Maner, Pastor*