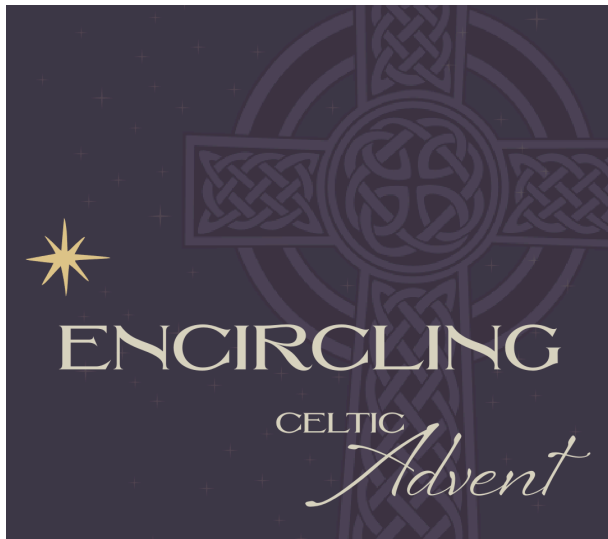


CELTIC ADVENT: ENCIRCLING

November 30, 2025

Jen Brown-Murphy, Student Minister



Isaiah 2:1-5

The word that Isaiah, son of Amoz, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2 In days to come, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. 3 Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 4 He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. 5 O house of

Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage(s) slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
2. Isaiah is a prophet who was addressing the people of Judah during a time of crisis, when the Assyrian Empire was expanding into the region. Isaiah's prophecies often focus on how Judah needs to deal with the challenges this crisis brings. Isaiah wants Judah and its king to trust God and God's commitment made to David and his successors, and is pointing out the good news that God will be their restorer. As Christians, we can see in this good news the promise of Jesus.
 - a. In what ways do you, like the people of Judah, need to trust God this Advent season?
 - b. In what ways have you seen or can you see the presence of God in your life, even in times of crisis?

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3. Isaiah's vision points to a hopeful future where all peoples are drawn to God - to hear God's word and to learn and follow God's ways. When weapons of war are turned into tools for planting and growing crops. What would a hopeful future where all peoples are drawn to God look like to you? What things that cause harm would be changed into things to bring growth and renewal?
4. This year, we are journeying through a longer, Celtic Advent. You can read about **Celtic Advent below**. In *Celtic Advent: Following An Unfamiliar Path*, Christine Sine shares that Scottish theologian Prof. John Macquarrie observed that "the Celt was very much a God-intoxicated person whose life was embraced on all sides by the divine Being."
 - a. What would it look like in your life to be embraced on all sides by God?
 - b. Are there practices that help you feel God's embrace on a daily basis? During Advent?
5. The word *encircling* means to "surround or form a circle around something." What images or experiences come to mind when you think of the word *encircling*?
6. A circle creates a boundary. Can you envision God's encircling

embrace? How might this help you have strong and healthy boundaries during the busy Advent season? Throughout the year?

CELTIC ADVENT

Advent is a holy time of preparation for the mystery of the incarnation—God's love taking human form to bring hope and restoration to a sin-ridden world. Advent is usually practiced in the church as a four-week preparatory season before Christmas, signified by the color blue or purple.

This 4-week season was only made official in the 9th century in one part of the Christian world (the Western Church).

Before that, the early Celtic Christians practiced 40 days of preparation for any major life event, and many Christians across Europe also practiced a longer, 40-day Advent (mirroring Lent, which is 40 days of preparation before Easter, also marked by the color purple).

This longer period of Advent is still carried among Eastern Christian Orthodox traditions, and goes by various names, like "St. Martin's Lent" or the "Christmas Fast."

This 40-day Lent-like Advent was about longing, prayer, and fasting, awaiting and preparing for the holy mystery of the Christ-child.

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