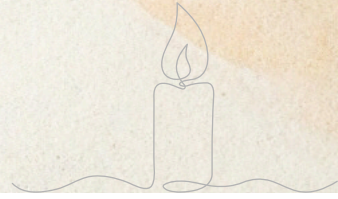


Hope Dares to Change

Week three | Music Sunday



We Continue our Journey Through the 2026 Advent Season!

For centuries, Christians around the world have marked the weeks leading up to Christmas with the lighting of an Advent wreath, a simple circle of candles that reminds us of God's presence breaking into the world.

Each week, we pause to light one more candle — symbols of hope, peace, joy, and love — until, on Christmas Eve, the Christ Candle shines at the center, reminding us that God's light has come and still shines among us.

We encourage you to make this Advent season your own. Your Advent wreath can be as traditional or as simple as you want. The traditional version uses three purple candles and one pink, with a white candle in the center. You can do this or simply use whatever candles you have on hand. What matters most isn't the color or the type of candles you use; it's the moment: the pause, the breath, the intention.

These devotions are meant to guide you through our Advent season journey, which this year will center on the theme *When Hope Dares...* You can use these weekly devotions on your own, with family or friends, or with your fellow FBC church community family. Read them when it works for you — that could be in the morning with coffee, or in the evening by candlelight. There's no wrong way to create space for God.

Our hope is that these reflections will help you slow down, notice the light already around you, and prepare room — in your heart, your home, and your life — for the coming of Christ.

WEEK THREE | Hope Dares to Change

This is our third week in the Advent season. It's also Music Sunday at First Baptist, when we spend the morning celebrating through worship music. This Sunday is a favorite Advent Sunday tradition for the First Baptist family. We give thanks for the musical gifts and talents shared in and by our church family and for the ways in which the music of the season invites us into worship and draws us into this, the third week of waiting and preparation at Advent. Simply awesome.

As you light this week's candle, take a moment to smile as you think about the ways in which the music of the season speaks to and through you, as well. And then take a moment to reflect on today's theme — *hope dares to change*.

Consider what God might be transforming in and around you in these moments. Pause, breathe, and invite God to make space in you for something new.

Let this flame remind you that welcoming change is part of welcoming Christ.

Read & Reflect

Matthew 2: 3-6

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

Sentiments from Rev. Julie Flowers sermon on Sunday, Dec 14

The African impala is a creature that can jump higher than 10 feet and cover a distance of greater than 30 feet when it does so. It might surprise you, then, to learn that these incredible animals can be kept in an enclosure in any zoo that has nothing more than a 3-foot wall to contain them. Why? Because these animals will not jump if they cannot see where their feet will fall. Herod couldn't be sure where his feet would fall if he let the child Jesus live, and so he was confined by that fear just like the African impala becomes confined by a simple wall in a local zoo.

Hope reminds us that our fear doesn't have to trap us, to confine us. It's real, it's powerful, but instead of being trapped by it, driven to destruction or distraction, to mistrust or manipulation by it, we can find strength in it...strength to choose a new way to act...strength to be open to change that comes...strength to resist the negative pull of fear. Strength to walk out in faith and love, even when we might be the most afraid. Strength to believe that we can make a difference in the world around us or in the lives of others, even if we are worried, doubtful, fretful, afraid. Hope reminds us that we can be open to change - that we can be open to what will be, even before we can see where our feet will fall.

Reflect:

- How do you respond when God's plans differ from your expectations? Do you resist change or do you embrace it wholeheartedly?
- Depending on your answer, how might you evolve your reaction in the future, so that you are embracing the "dare to change" sentiment vs. the "fearing the change" sentiment.

Carols of the Season

This week, let these carols play in the background while you read this week's take-home devotion. Maybe replay them each night while you make dinner together, making it your constant reminder of this week's *Hope Dares to Change* theme.

- O Come, All Ye Faithful
- Hark, the Herald Angels Sing!

Take-Home Devotion: Hope Dares to Change

This week, take time to reflect on the idea of letting go of control.

Much like last week's theme, blindly trusting the road ahead can be hard. Letting go can feel just as difficult, yet when we finally do, what unfolds next can be transformational. It can bring a new light to your days that you may not have expected or even seen coming.

This is what it means to hope. To dare to exhale, release your grip, and step forward in faith toward whatever God is calling you to do.

This week's scripture echoes that same invitation.

When Herod heard of a new king, he felt threatened; when the Magi heard, they felt drawn. The difference was trust. Hope dares to welcome the change that love brings, even when it unsettles what we thought we knew.

As we move closer to the end of the calendar year, consider this: what might God be inviting you to change? Maybe it's your outlook, choosing to see light instead of focusing on the darkness. Maybe it's releasing a habit, a worry, or a plan that's been holding too tightly to your heart.

Hope dares to change. Listen for the quiet whispers of Jesus guiding you forward, and trust that every small step you take toward love is a step toward His light.

Take-Home Tangible Element: Circular Touchstone

This week's token is a small circular metal piece stamped with the words **faith, hope, love**.

Its shape reminds us that life — and hope — move in cycles of change and renewal.

You're invited to choose how to make it your own:

- Carry it in your pocket or keep it nearby as a tactile reminder to lean into hope that moves past fear and opens your heart to change.
- Or create with it — use the provided cord to turn it into a bracelet, necklace, or keychain, a daily sign of God's love continuing to be born in you and through you.

However you use it, let it remind you that hope dares to keep moving, and that every time you notice this circle, you're part of the light God is bringing into the world.

Prayer for This Week

Dear Lord, help me to hear your whispers. To have the strength to listen and then to act. To make the changes you are encouraging me to make. To be the example for others who may also struggle to let go and trust what you call us to do. Help me to dare to change. Amen.