



## HERBS OF CHRISTMAS

During the joyous Advent season at Duke Memorial United Methodist Church, a candle will be lit each Sunday symbolizing Peace, Hope, Love and Joy, in turn; then, on Christmas morning, the Christ candle will be lit. The four candles that are violet, or purple, are so colored because purple is the regal color, signifying the triumphal entry of the King of kings, the Ruler of many hearts.

Purple is also the color of penitence, a reference to the purple garments worn by Jesus when he was mocked (John 19:2; Mark 15:17). The white color of the Christ candle in the center is a symbol of the Creator, His light, joy, purity, innocence, glory and perfection.

Herbs are also symbolic of the Advent season; they have been valued through the centuries for many reasons--flavor, aroma and medicinal purposes. Herbs are frequently mentioned in the Bible as they are native to gardens in the Holy Lands.

Among the Biblical herbs used in the boxwood garland surrounding our Advent candles and in the basket on the table in the narthex are BASIL; DILL, a symbol of tithing (Matthew 23:23); HOREHOUND, one of the bitter herbs of Passover, believed to have been mixed with the sweet herbs and bedstraw of the manger; LAVENDER; WORMWOOD (Proverbs 5:4, Revelations 8:11); MARJORAM; MINT; PENNYROYAL; RUE (Luke 11:42); HYSSOP (Psalms 51:7, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean."); CUMMIN (Isaiah 28:25); CORIANDER (Exodus 16:31); THYME, considered a manger herb and a symbol of courage; and ROSEMARY, considered by some to be the principal herb of Christmas and a symbol of remembrance.

Legend has it that, on their flight to Egypt, the Holy Family stopped to rest. The fragrant rosemary grew nearby and Mary laid her blue cloak upon it, causing it, to this day, to grow as if something gentle were laid on it. The blossoms that had always been white became the blue color of Mary's cloak. During the Middle Ages, sprigs of rosemary were placed in babies' cradles to ensure safe, peaceful sleep.

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