

A decorative border surrounds the text, featuring grapevines with leaves and clusters of grapes. At the top, bottom, and on the sides, there are circular motifs containing a lit candle with rays emanating from it, set against a background of grape leaves.

*As we begin preparing and waiting for the coming of our Lord, the Advent season reminds us to pause, catch our breath, and remember what's most important in our lives.*

*The Human Concerns Committee*

**We are grateful** for eyes that can see and ponder, for taste buds that know the sensuous pleasures of eating and drinking, for hands that hold and touch and feel, for ears that can delight in music and the voice of a friend, for a nose that can smell the aroma of newly mown grass or delicious food and also breathe the air that gives us life.

**We are grateful** for the treasure of loved ones whose hearts of openness and acceptance have encouraged us to be who we are. We are grateful for their faithfulness, for standing by us when our weaknesses stood out glaringly, for being there when we were most in need and for delighting with us in our good days and our joyful seasons.

**We are grateful** for the eyes of faith, for believing in the presence of God, giving us hope in our darkest days, encouraging us to listen to our spirit's hunger, and reminding us to trust in the blessings of God's presence in our most empty days.

**We are grateful** for the ongoing process of becoming who we are, for the seasons within, for the great adventure of life that challenges and comforts us at one and the same time.

**We are grateful** for the messengers of God – people, events, written and spoken words – that came to us at just the right time and helped us to grow.

**We are grateful** for God calling us to work with our gifts, grateful that we can be of service and use our talents in a responsible and just way.

**We are grateful** that we have the basic necessities of life, that we can have the means and the ability to hear the cries of the poor and to respond with our abundance.

**We are grateful** for the miracle of life, for the green of our earth, for the amazing grace of our history; we are grateful that we still have time to decide the fate of the world by our choices and our actions, grateful that we have it within our power to bring a divided world to peace.