

First Sunday in Advent

December 1, 2024



We Gather in Response to God's Invitation

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Altar is covered with a blue parament, the two candles symbolizing Jesus' humanity and divinity, and an empty stable at the center.

THE GIFT OF MUSIC TO GATHER US

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND AFFIRMATION OF MISSION:

We declare ourselves to be a Christ-centered Open and Affirming Congregation, welcoming persons into full membership and participation in the Body of Christ regardless of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identities and expressions, ability, culture, economic status, ethnicity, or family composition.

We recognize that there are differences among us, but believe that we can love alike even though we may not think alike. We proclaim this covenant of welcome to all who have known the pain of exclusion or discrimination in church and society. We invite all people to join us in our faith journey toward greater love, understanding, and mutual respect.

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING: HOPE

Bolded text indicates when the people speak.

From deep in the past, Jeremiah calls to us, "The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 33:14). Beloved, the days are surely coming when the yearning of the land; the longing of the sun, moon, and stars; the desperate need of the people of earth for flourishing and peace will receive their fulfillment.

While fear, anxiety, misinformation, and suspicion surround us on every side, we choose to watch and wait in hope, preparing our hearts to notice and cooperate with God's grace already at work in our midst.

Because of who YOU are and where YOU are on life's journey, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

We light this candle of hope as a sign of our commitment to pay attention and prepare for the days that are surely coming and are already here—the days when God’s kingdom of love, justice, and mercy will reign.

Light the first candle of the Advent wreath.

SINGING TOGETHER

“O Come All Ye Faithful” Brown #193 (refrain)

**O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord.**

*CALL TO WORSHIP (RESPONSIVE)

**An asterisk indicates when the people stand in body or spirit.*

One: Children of God, pay attention! The days are coming when God’s peace will reign and all creation will flourish under the reign of our Creator.

All: **The days are surely coming!**

Children of God, prepare your hearts! The days are coming and are already here when God will come near and show us how to recognize God’s reign among us.

The days are surely coming and are already here!

Children of God, be alert and listen! God has come near to build the kingdom on the earth here and now. Will you join in?

The days are surely coming and are already here! We come to prepare our hearts to pay attention, to listen, and to follow God’s call to build the kingdom of earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock

*OPENING PRAYER (TOGETHER)

Lover God, Creator of Our Hearts, through your Spirit, our love grows for our neighbors. Our hearts are drawn to your expanding light as we see through the faces of our neighbors. May the joy of your Divine Love spill into each corner of your Realm as we anticipate your love and light in this season of longer nights and bleak days. Amen.

*SINGING TOGETHER:

“Come Now Is the Time to Worship”

Chorus: **Come, now is the time to worship.**

Come, now is the time to give your heart.

Come, just as you are to worship.

Come, just as you are before your God.

Come.

Verse 1: **One day every tongue will confess You are God.**

One day every knee will bow.

Still the greatest treasure remains

For those who gladly choose You now. (Chorus)

Because of who YOU are and where YOU are on life’s journey, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

*Verse 2: Willingly we choose to surrender our lives.
Willingly our knees will bow.
With all our heart soul mind and strength,
We gladly choose You now. (Chorus)*

Brian Doerksen; CCLI Song #2430948 © 1998 Vineyard Songs (UK/Eire)

We Pray for Transformation and New Life

INTRODUCTION

A new church year is dawning. An air of anticipation challenges us to fresh beginnings. Are we weighed down by the cares of life? Have differences of opinion kept us from reaching out to our neighbors with love? Are we spending fruitless time looking at screens? This is a time to rid ourselves of old ways and embrace the newness that God offers?

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (*TOGETHER*)

God of the Possible and Probable, gloom often encapsulates us when life is confusing and conflict is great. Our faith is rattled, and we are swallowed by shadows of fear. The world often feels like the end is near even when a new beginning is around the corner. We forget that even when shadows have lengthened, there remains a crack in the surface. Light begins to stream into our space, and warmth dances upon our hearts. When fear unnerves us, may we cling to the hope of God's love and the possibilities of joy once again. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:

Take comfort, dear friends, that God's grace will fill our hearts with joy as we know that light grows ahead. May we cling to the crumbs of hope as we step into the nighttime with faith, knowing Divine Bliss accompanies us in each step.

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

In this Advent season, we remember "God to earth descends, with blessing in his hand." Christ's hands are dusty all the way from his birth on a dirt floor and to his journey on dirt roads to Jerusalem and to his death. Yet these hands are covered in the glory of God. These hands offer us the peace that only Christ can give. The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you!

(As a sign of our deep fellowship and communion with God and with one another, let us greet one another with a handshake or peace sign and bless one another with the peace that comes from being in Christ.)

*SUNG RESPONSE

"Love Has Come"

Sing #110, vs 1

With one voice the angels sing, songs that make creation ring.

Prophets hear and call us to live in spirit and in truth.

We Listen for God's Word

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Because of who YOU are and where YOU are on life's journey, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

Speak to us, God. Speak to us in the waiting, the watching, the hoping, the longing, the sorrow, the sighing, the rejoicing. Speak to us by your Word in these Advent days, and walk with us until the day of your coming. Amen.

HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING

JEREMIAH 33:14-16

The Righteous Branch and the Covenant with David

¹⁴The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

PLAIN AND SIMPLE

"It's Not Fair"

Pastor Dave

LETTER READING

1 THESSALONIANS 3:9-13

Paul prays to God on behalf of the church in Thessalonica. Our reading begins.

⁹How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? ¹⁰Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

¹¹Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. ¹²And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. ¹³And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

GOSPEL READING

LUKE 21:25-36

Jesus offers signs of the coming of the Son of Man, followed by a parable of the sprouting leaves of the fig tree. He then exhorts his listeners to be alert for Christ's second coming. Hear the Good News.

²⁵"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. ²⁶People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. ²⁸Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

²⁹Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. ³¹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³²Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. ³³Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³⁴"Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, ³⁵like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole

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earth. ³⁶ Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place and to stand before the Son of Man.”

May these words of hope and joy in anticipation of God’s coming realm of love, justice, and peace renew your lives.

Thanks be to God.

MEDITATION:

“The Hope that Brings Joy”

Pastor Dave

SINGING TOGETHER

“Light of the World”

Sing! #147

**You are the moon you are the sun. You shine your light on everyone.
We offer praise for all you’ve done. Light of the world.**

**You are the wind you are the rain. You are the song, you’re our refrain.
You are the One who calls our names. Light of the world.**

**Light of the world in us reveal all that our eyes can never see.
Show us a world, joyful and free, Light of the world.**

**Light of the world bring lasting peace. Justice and mercy for the weak.
Show us the paths our lives must take, Light of the world.**

We Respond to God’s Word

A TIME FOR PRAYER

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

You are invited to share joys and concerns we can pray for together. Let our sharing itself be an act of prayer.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO SHARING OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

You are invited to place your gifts in the offering basket as you arrive or depart from our worship together. (Along with your regular offering you are invited to make an offering to the York County Food Bank by putting your loose change in the can. With your change we can make a joyful noise to the Lord!)

God continues to increase love in our hearts for our neighbors within our congregation, community, and world. Through our various gifts, we are able to strengthen our connections and grow with our God, Holy Crafter of Gifts.

DEDICATING OUR OFFERING (TOGETHER)

Joyous God, Originator of all Gifts,

This day and always, we celebrate the gifts of our hands and hearts. We share

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our talents and time, knowing our energy builds the world with love. We share our treasures, knowing that all gifts we entrust to your Church will build your Realm. With joy, we devote our first fruits to loving you and your children. Amen.

We Go Out to Serve

*SINGING TOGETHER

“Glory to God, Forever”

Verse 1: Before the world was made, before You spoke it to be,
You were the King of kings, yeah You were, yeah You were.
And now You're reigning still, enthroned above all things.
Angels and saints cry out; we join them as we sing.

Chorus: Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to God forever.
Glory to God, Glory to God, Glory to God forever.

Verse 2: Creator God You gave me breath so I could praise
Your great and matchless name, all my days, all my days.
So let my whole life be a blazing offering,
A life that shouts and sings the greatness of our King. (*Chorus*)

Bridge: Take my life and let it be
All for You and for Your glory.
Take my life and let it be Yours.
Take my life and let it be
All for You and for Your glory.

Take my life and let it be Yours. We sing! (*Chorus*)

Steve Fee, Vicky Beeching; CCLI Song #5384338 © sixsteps Songs; Thankyou Music; Worship Together Music

*GOOD WORDS FOR GOING FORTH

Beloved, go from this place blessed with a hope that takes root and grows, preparing us to notice, listen, and join in with God's kingdom work among us.

May the Creator of Our Hearts fill us with Joy,

May the Light of Christ fill our hearts with Hope,

And may the Spirit of Tranquility assure our souls with Strength. Amen.

*BENEDICTION RESPONSE

“It Came Upon the Midnight Clear” Brown #197 v. 3

For lo, the days are hastening on, By prophet seen of old,
When, with the ever-circling years, Shall come the time foretold,
When the new heaven and earth shall own The Prince of Peace their King,
And the whole world send back the song Which now the angels sing.

Because of who YOU are and where YOU are on life's journey, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

TAKE WITH YOU GOD'S GIFT OF MUSIC

WE RETURN TO THE WORLD

RENEWED AND EMPOWERED BY GOD'S SPIRIT

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