



Sunday, November 29 Worship Service

A Blue Advent Service for the First Sunday of Advent

Livestream / Video found at: <https://www.facebook.com/OPLutheran>

This year we will enter the season of Advent reflecting on the struggles and pain of this past year and both the challenges and the hope of the year to come. There will be one hymn woven throughout, sung by our musicians here at church and by you at home. The final stanza we will all sing together. I invite you to have a candle ready to light, whatever kind you like, when the time for lighting them comes. We will also celebrate Holy Communion during this service.

Hymn

O come, O come Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to you O Israel.

O Come Thou Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh
To us the path of knowledge show and teach us in her ways to go
Rejoice, rejoice Emmanuel shall come to you O Israel.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone. For the yoke that was weighing upon them, and the burden upon their shoulders, you have broken in pieces, O God our Redeemer.



Let us pray

God of mercy, hear our prayer this Advent season for ourselves and for our families who live with painful memories and despairing thoughts. Who struggle with the frustration, fear and uncertainty of living with the COVID pandemic, and how it has disrupted all our lives. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow, and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of your Christ, who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promise. Amen

The Liturgy of the Word

Isaiah 40:1, 25-31

Comfort, O comfort my people says your God. To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name, because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing. Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord and my right is disregarded by my God"? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted, but those who wait for the Lord will renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 121 (responsive)

I will lift up my eyes to the hills, from where is my help to come?

My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot be moved, and he who watches over you will not sleep.

Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord himself watches over you, the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

So that the sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.



The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; it is he who shall keep you safe.

The Lord shall watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth and forever more.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen

Matthew 11: 28-30

Come to me all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

The Gospel of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

Hymn

O come thou rod of Jesse, free your own from Satan's tyranny
from depths of hell thy people save, and give them vic'try o'er the grave
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to you O Israel.

A Liturgy of Remembrance

The First Candle

The first candle we light to remember those persons whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their voice, their face, the memories that bind them to us in this season. We hold them before God, giving thanks for their lives in ours.

Please take a moment to remember those who have died. You are invited to name them aloud or in the silence of your heart.



Lord, each of us takes our loved ones by the hand and leads them to you, the God of Love, here we present them to you. Accept our love and thanksgiving as we entrust them to your loving care. We want our loved ones to be free, at home with you. We ask that we may one day have a place beside them. We ask that you fill us with motivation and energy in the days ahead when we feel like giving up; remind us often of our true home when we are caught up in the desolation of the journey. Help us to find joy in the people, events, and the beauty of your creation which surrounds us.

Thank you for the gift each of these people have been in our lives. We want to believe that we will celebrate the treasure of love again when we are all in your presence forever. May this truth sustain us in the days to come. Take our sad and aching hearts and comfort us. Comfort us, for we only feel hollowness and emptiness. God of sorrowing, draw near! Amen.

Hymn

O come thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine Advent here.

Disperse the gloomy clouds of night. and death's dark shadows put to flight.

Rejoice, rejoice Emmanuel shall come to you O Israel.

The Second Candle

The second candle we light is to redeem the pain of loss, the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs, with the security they bring, the loss of health for ourselves or others, the loss of joy and the loss of peace in our lives from the stress of the condition of the world which groans in pain and fear, the loss of hope that things can ever get better. As we gather up the pain of the past, we offer it to you O God, asking that into our open hands and hearts you will place the gift of peace.

Please take a moment to remember the losses, the frustrations, the fear, the loneliness. You are invited to name these aloud or in the silence of your heart.

God of mystery we turn our hearts to you. We come before you in need of peace, grateful for the mystery of life and keenly aware of your promises of guidance and protection. We want to place our trust in you, but our hearts grow fearful and anxious. We so easily forget that you are with us in all that we experience. Teach us to be patient with the transformation of our lives and our world, and to be open to the changes which come into our lives. Amen.



Hymn

O come thou Key of David come and open wide our heavenly home
Make safe the path that leads on high, and close the path to misery.
Rejoice, rejoice Emmanuel, shall come to you, O Israel.

The Third Candle

We light this candle for those who have experienced a loss of direction in their lives.

God of the Exodus, you led Moses and your people through the wilderness to a new land. Hear our prayer. We want so much to have a sense of direction, to know where we are and where we ought to be headed. But the darkness and the questions stay. There are so many unknowns in the world right now. We look for direction but the path is unclear. You ask us to be filled with faith, to believe deep within that you are our signpost, you are our wisdom and guide, and to trust that you are always with us. Your words are clear "Do not fear, I go before you."

God of the depths, we cry out to you to be our guide. Help us to have a strong sense of inner peace and direction and grant us the reassurance that we are on the right path. Take our lives and use them according to your will. Take all that is lost in us and bring it home to you. Amen.

Hymn

O come O come great Lord of might who to thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times once gave the law in cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

The Fourth Candle

The fourth candle we light as a sign of hope, the hope that the Christmas story offers to us. We remember that God, who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no more pain or suffering.



O God, whose spirit is known by those whose hearts are thankful, and who makes cheerfulness a companion of strength, lift up our hearts we pray, to a joyous confidence in your care. Guide us when we cannot see the way. Teach us to know that a shadow is only a shadow because the light of eternal goodness shines behind the object of our fears. Where there is love in life, teach us to find it; help us to trust it and enable us to grow in the power of love. So may our lives bring comfort and encouragement to others. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, whose life is our light. Amen

The First Candle of Advent

With that we also light the first candle of Advent, also known as the candle of Hope.

Blessed are you, God of hope, for you promise to bring forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse who will bring justice to the poor, who will deliver the needy, and crush the oppressor, who will stand as a signal of hope for all people. As we light these candles, turn our wills to bear the fruit of repentance, transform our hearts to live in justice and harmony with one another, and fix our eyes on the root of Jesse, Jesus Christ, the hope of all nations. O people of hope come,

let us rejoice in the faithfulness of the Lord. Amen.

Hymn

O come thou root of Jesse's tree an ensign for thy people be

Before you rulers silent fall, all peoples on thy mercy call

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to you O Israel.

Prayers of the People

In the Spirit of this season let us now confidently ask our God for all the good things we need, for ourselves as God's people coping with our many different losses, and with a world filled with uncertainty and suffering. God, hear our prayer

And in your mercy answer.

For our families and friends that we learn to help and support one another in this time of being apart. God hear our prayer

And in your mercy answer.



For all those we have loved who have died, for the losses we feel in our lives, that all may be redeemed by your Easter promise. God, hear our prayer

And in your mercy answer.

For our family and friends that you may bless them with love, peace and joy. God, hear our prayer

And in your mercy answer.

For peace throughout the world as proclaimed by the Christmas angels on that far away hillside. God hear our prayer

And in your mercy answer.

For greater understanding of the lessons of love and acceptance taught by Jesus your Christ. God hear our prayer

And in your mercy answer.

God of great compassion and love, listen to the prayers of your people. Grant to all especially the bereaved, troubled, struggling fearful and tired ones this Christmas, the blessing we ask in the name of Jesus the Christ. Amen.

The Words of Institution

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 trespasses

As we forgive those who trespass 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 and ever. Amen.

Communion Distribution and Blessing



Each of us comes bearing our own hurts, sorrows and broken places. Today, each of you are invited to offer your personal struggles and burdens to the God who loves us deeply and wants to carry our pain. God waits patiently, calling out, Let me carry your pain, your fear, your sadness. Come to me all who labor and are weary, I will restore and refresh you!

If you feel so moved, please feel free to come to the table at this time to light a candle. As you do, remember that it is God who lights a candle in our darkness and holds us close until we are able to shine.

If you wish, after lighting your candle, you may come forward to the altar rail for a blessing and anointing with oil, or you may return to your seat to pray. Those of you at home, please light your candle now. After you have done that, you may turn to one another and make the sign of the cross on each other's forehead saying "God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit bless and keep you today and always."

These lights in their brightness are only symbols, but as they burn and finally go out, we remember that suffering passes, though memory remains forever.

As we gather this morning, we embrace and claim the darkness and uncertainty that is present both in our lives and in the world. As people familiar with darkness we also know that we gather to be illumined by the light of the Christ Child this Christmas season. May this tiny child, born in a lowly stable, himself an outcast and marginalized, bring light, comfort, peace and joy this season.

Hymn

O come Desire of nations bind in one the hearts of humankind

Bid thou our sad divisions cease fill the whole world with heaven's peace

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to you O Israel

(All Sing)

O come O come Emmanuel. and ransom captive Israel

That mourns in lowly exile here until the Son of God appear

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to you O Israel

May the hope of the Christ Child sustain us in the darkness.

That together we may shine again. Amen.



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