

*As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present.*

*May we together experience the presence of God*

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***We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord***



**Prelude – Welcome – Announcements**

**Opening Meditation**

Sometimes when we are trying something new, or when we are facing a difficult decision, or when we want to celebrate something, or when we just feel lost and alone and uncertain about life, the universe and everything, we need a blessing. We don't always think of it that way, or word it like that. We say we need advice, or support, or companions, or someone to come along beside and lift us up again so we can see more than the tops of our shoes. We seek a blessing.

For many of us, we go home; we ask mom; we talk to dad, or brothers and sisters, close friends, those we grew up with, those who know us best. Somehow, we know that being there, being home with the ones we love, will make all things better. Maybe it won't be fixed, or solved, or wished away, but at least we won't be alone.

Mary, faced with an incomprehensible burden and gift, ran to Cousin Elizabeth's house, looking for someone who knew a little of what she was going through, looking for a place to hide until the reality of her condition could become something real. And she received a blessing.

Today I invite our readers forward as we still seek a blessing.

**Fourth Sunday of Advent Litany**

Last Sunday we lit the candle of joy. Today we light it and the candles of hope and peace again as we remember that Christ, who was born in Bethlehem, will come again to fulfil all of God's promises and bring us everlasting peace and joy.

**\*\*light the first 3 candles of Advent\*\***

The fourth candle of Advent is the Candle of Love. God's love is a perfect love. It holds nothing back. God, in love, gives us everything we need to live a life of hope and peace.

The bible says that "God so loved the world that he

gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Jesus shows us God's perfect love.

This is what love is like: Love is patient, love is kind and envies no one. Love is never boastful or conceited, rude or selfish. Love is not quick to take offense, it keeps no records of wrongs, it does not gloat over other people's troubles, but rejoices in the right, the good, and the true. There is nothing that love cannot face, there is no limit to its faith, to its hope, to its endurance. Love never ends.

Today we light the candle of love to remind us that Jesus brings us God's love and shows us how to love others.

**\*\*Light the fourth candle of Advent\*\***

Let us pray: Thank you God for the love you give us. We ask that as we wait for all your promises to come true, and for Christ to come again, that you would remain present with us. Help us today, and everyday to worship you, to hear your word, and to do your will by sharing your love with each other. We ask it in the name of the one who was born in Bethlehem. Amen.

### **Advent Song Verse 1 – FWS #2090**

**Light the Advent Candle, Four:  
Think of Joy forevermore  
Christ Child in a stable born,  
Gift of love that Christmas morn.**

**Candle, candle burning bright,  
Shining in the cold winter night;  
Candle, candle burning bright,  
Fill our hearts with Christmas light**

### **A Call to Worship**

Come, joy, lighten our spirits.

**Come, hope, lift us from despair.**

Come, peace, ease our frantic worry.

**Come, love, shine in all we do.**

Come, Jesus, be born in us.

**Come, Lord, set us free.**

Come, God,

**Rule in our hearts and teach us to sing with joy!**

## A Christmas Prayer

**Eternal God, by the birth of Jesus Christ you gave yourself to the world.  
Grant that, being born in our hearts,  
He may save us from all our sins,  
And restore within us the image  
And likeness of our Creator,  
To whom be everlasting praise and glory,  
World without end. Amen.**

## Praise Hymn #249

## “There’s a Song in the Air”

Author: *Josiah G. Holland (1872)*

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1 There's a song in the air!  
There's a star in the sky!  
There's a mother's deep prayer  
and a baby's low cry!  
And the star rains its fire  
while the beautiful sing,  
for the manger of Bethlehem  
cradles a King!

3 In the light of that star  
lie the ages impearled;  
and that song from afar  
has swept over the world.  
Every hearth is aflame,  
and the beautiful sing  
in the homes of the nations  
that Jesus is King!

2 There's a tumult of joy  
o'er the wonderful birth,  
for the virgin's sweet boy  
is the Lord of the earth.  
Ay! the star rains its fire  
while the beautiful sing,  
for the manger of Bethlehem  
cradles a King!

4 We rejoice in the light,  
and we echo the song  
that comes down through the night  
from the heavenly throng.  
Ay! we shout to the lovely  
evangel they bring,  
and we greet in his cradle  
our Savior and King!

## We Hear God's Word

**Gospel Reading..... Luke 1:39-55 (NRSV)**

### Mary Visits Elizabeth

39 In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, 40 where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit 42 and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43 And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? 44 For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be[a] a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

### Mary's Song of Praise

46 And Mary[b] said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
48 for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.  
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.  
50 His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.  
51 He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.  
52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;  
53 he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.  
54 He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

The word of God for the People of God, **Thanks Be to God**

### Children's Message

#### **Faith Hymn #234 "O Come, All Ye Faithful"**

1. O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,  
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem.  
Come and behold him, born the King of angels;

Refrain:

O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

2. True God of true God, Light from Light Eternal,  
lo, he shuns not the Virgin's womb;  
Son of the Father, begotten, not created;  
(Refrain)

3. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation;  
O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;  
(Refrain)

4. See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle,  
leaving their flocks, draw nigh to gaze;  
we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps;  
(Refrain)

### **\*Meditation\***

#### **Joys/Concerns**

#### **ADVENT PRAYER**

Lord our God,  
you have revealed yourself as One  
who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people;  
In a world that looks away from injustice,  
You cast your eyes on the destitute, the poor, and the wronged;  
You have called us to follow you,  
to preach good news to the poor,  
to proclaim release for the captives  
and recovery of sight for the blind,

to set at liberty those who are oppressed  
and to proclaim the time of your blessing.

Be present with your church, Lord,  
as we respond to your call.  
Open our eyes to the downtrodden.  
Fill us with compassion for the plight of the alien,  
the refugee, and the immigrant.  
Lead us into ministries that help orphans and widows.  
Give us courage to block the paths of the ungodly  
who exploit the poor.

Set us free from pious exercises  
that prevent us from the true worship you choose:  
Sharing bread with the hungry,  
Sharing homes with the homeless,  
Sharing clothes with the naked,  
Sharing hearts with our own kin.

So may your justice roll down like waters,  
your righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.  
Lead our footsteps to stand with the poor,  
that we might stand with you.

Have mercy, O God:  
Scatter the proud,  
Put down the mighty,  
Lift up the lowly,  
Fill up the hungry,  
And send the rich away empty-handed.

Our Father...

### **Offertory/Doxology/Prayer**

Loving God, as we present our tithes and offerings to you this morning for your blessing,  
we remember the greatest blessing the world has ever received: your precious Son, sent  
to redeem us, to pay the price for our sins. Thank you for showing us how to give from the  
heart.

### **Departing Hymn # 251 "Go, Tell It on the Mountain"**

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### **Refrain:**

**Go, tell it on the mountain,  
over the hills and everywhere;**

**go, tell it on the mountain,  
that Jesus Christ is born.**

**1 While shepherds kept their watching  
o'er silent flocks by night,  
behold throughout the heavens  
there shown a holy light. (Refrain)**

**2 The shepherds feared and trembled,  
when lo! above the earth,  
rang out the angel chorus  
that hailed the Savior's birth. (Refrain)**

**3 Down in a lowly manger  
the humble Christ was born,  
and God sent us salvation  
that blessed Christmas morn. (Refrain)**

### **A Loving Benediction**

Be people of love.

Let love live in your heart and share the love of Christ with all you meet. by loving your community.

Share love by loving those you do not know.

Share love by praying for our world.

In this Advent season, we need to see, feel, and share love.

As you go out into the wonder of God's creations, share love, joy, peace, and hope with those you meet. Amen.