

Order for Worship  
November 28, 2021  
First Sunday in Advent  
Theme: Homesick (Hope)

+ GATHERING +

PRELUDE                      Lo, He comes with clouds descending – Mahlon Balderston

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WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

Can one be homesick for something you've never known?

**We are homesick for a just world,  
for peace like rivers,  
for the end of suffering.**

Yes, we are homesick—

**for joy that is contagious,  
for nations that feel like neighbors,  
and for hospitals that run empty.**

We are homesick for the world God promises.

**We are homesick, but we are on our way.**

God is here and God is still creating, as we gather for worship this day.

OPENING HYMN                      ELW 260 The King shall come

The King shall come when morning dawns and light triumphant breaks,  
when beauty gilds the eastern hills and life to joy awakes.

Oh, brighter than that glorious morn shall dawn upon our race  
the day when Christ in splendor comes, and we shall see his face.

The king shall come when morning dawns and light and beauty brings.  
Hail, Christ the Lord! Your people pray: come quickly, King of kings.

Text: John Brownlie

Music: A. Davisson, arr. Theodore Beck, arr. c. 1969 Concordia Publishing House

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CALL TO CONFESSION

When you're a kid and you get homesick at a sleepover or a summer camp, you call home and your parents come and get you. Sometimes, that's what love looks like. Love bails us out. In the same way, when we call upon God to confess that we've messed up, or forgotten something, or

overlooked the truth, God answers with grace. God answers with love. So let us confess today, knowing that nothing could keep God from loving us.

*Silence for reflection.*

Gracious God,

**we find ourselves with two options every day—to stay homesick for the world you had in mind, or to allow cynicism to win. Do we hope against hope, or do we throw in the towel? Do we insist on a better world, or do we assume it’s impossible? Forgive us for the days when cynicism wins. Forgive us for numbing our homesick hurt instead of using it to fuel a better world. Kindle in us a hope that won’t let go. Gratefully we pray, Amen.**

Family of faith, even when we throw in the towel, even when we give up on hope, God does not give up on us. We are loved. We are claimed. We are invited closer to God’s home. So hear and trust this good news:

**There is room for us in God’s house, and nothing can separate us from that love. We are claimed. We are forgiven. We are welcomed home. Thanks be to God!**

HYMN OF PRAISE See Fig Leaves Now Sprout  
(sung to the tune of *Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming ELW 272*)

See fig tree leaves now sprouting,  
soon summer comes again  
Creation groans in labor  
for God’s reign to begin.  
We wait with baited breath;  
homesick for God’s true kingdom,  
age without hate or death

Sun, moon, and stars above us  
speak of God’s promised day.  
To make space for our new home,  
this world must pass away  
When we are filled with dread,  
the words of Christ uphold us:  
“Arise and raise your head”

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

We hope for a world where all are fed.

We hope for a world with more bridges than walls.

**We hope for a world with wide open doors.**

**We hope for a world with contagious laughter.**

We hope for a world where trees grow tall and creeks run clean.

We hope for a world where all people feel at home—in their bodies, in the church, in their physical homes.

**We hope for that world.**

**We long for that world.  
We are homesick for that world.**

So today we light the candle of hope, because hope keeps our hearts alive as we wait.  
May this light be a reminder that the wait is always worth it.  
We are close to home. May we carry hope with us. Amen.

*Light candle.*

ADVENT SONG ELW 253 He Came Down

He came down that we may have hope;  
he came down that we may have hope;  
he came down that we may have hope;  
hallelujah forevermore.

Text: Cameroon traditional  
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#### OPENING PRAYER

God of the stars and God of our hearts—our days will pass but your words will last. The earth might fade but your words will last. Our memories might blur but your words will last. The grass will wither but your words will last. The sky could go dark and your words would last. So as we listen today, help us to hold onto what will last. Help us hold onto you. Gratefully we pray,  
**Amen**

+ WORD +

FIRST READING: I Thessalonians 3:9-13

*Upon Timothy's report from the congregation at Thessalonica, Paul is exuberant with gratitude for them. In this passage from his letter, Paul voices overflowing thanks, joy, and blessings for the people of this growing church.*

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

<sup>11</sup>Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. <sup>12</sup>And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. <sup>13</sup>And 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.

Word of God, word of life.  
**Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

ELW 510 Word of God, come down on Earth

Word of God, come down on earth,  
living rain from heav'n descending;  
touch our hearts and bring to birth  
faith and hope and love unending.  
Word almighty, we revere you;  
Word made flesh, we long to hear you.

Text: James Quinn, SJ, b. 1919

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GOSPEL: Luke 21:25-36

*God will fulfill God's purposes and, already, hidden signs of that fulfillment abound. On that great day there will be dismay, perplexity, confusion, and terror, but God's people shall be given strength to stand boldly and receive God's promised redemption.*

The Holy Gospel according to Luke.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said:] <sup>25</sup>“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. <sup>26</sup>People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>27</sup>Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. <sup>28</sup>Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

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

<sup>34</sup>“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, <sup>35</sup>like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. <sup>36</sup>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.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY ELW 257 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

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, O Wisdom from on high,  
embracing all things far and nigh:  
in strength and beauty come and stay;  
teach us your will and guide our way.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, O King of nations, come,  
O Cornerstone that binds in one:  
refresh the hearts that long for you;  
restore the broken, make us new.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to you, O Israel.

Text: *Psalterium Canticum Catholicarum*, Köln, 1710; tr. composite  
Text sts. 2, 6, 7 © 1997 Augsburg Fortress.  
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#### STATEMENT OF FAITH

We believe that God has come to us;  
**that God brought us into being,  
that this God gave us breath and purpose,  
that we have been blessed to be a blessing to others,  
that we have fallen short of this commandment  
but that God has nevertheless loved us despite our brokenness.**

We believe that God is coming to us;  
**that God is not happy to leave us alone,  
that this God will come to us as a particular human being,  
that God will be made known to us in flesh and bone like ours,  
that Mary will soon give birth and Joseph will soon clap his hands in joy  
that Jesus Christ will be born and our salvation made complete.**

We believe that God will come to us;  
**that God will have the final word and that Word will be good,  
that this God will give us the presence of the Spirit to continue our work,  
that we are called to be disciples to all the corners of the earth,  
that the day is coming when tears and pain will be no more,  
and all will gather at the Table to sing an endless and perfect “Alleluia!”**

## CALL TO OFFERING

Family of faith, it does not take long to see that we are not home yet. There are people who are hungry, oceans that are polluted, churches that are fading, walls that are growing. We are clearly not home yet. So until we reach that promised day, until we make it home, giving what we can to make a better world matters. When we give our tithes and our offerings, we help build God's home here. So with hopeful hearts, let us give.

*If you gave your offering online, mailed it to the church or dropped it in the basket on your way into worship – thank you. Please feel free to get up during the musical offering and present your offering to the basket in the front of the space or on the windowsills.*

## MUSICAL OFFERING

Wake, awake, for night is flying – J.S. Bach

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## OFFERING PRAYER

Holy God, we are homesick. We long for the day that you spoke of when swords will be beaten into plowshares, the lion will lie down with the lamb, and justice will roll like waters. Until that holy day comes, take these gifts and use them to build that world here. We are hopeful, and in the name of Hope, we pray. **Amen.**

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

## LORD'S PRAYER

**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.**

+ SENDING +

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

## BLESSING

As you leave *this* service, *your* service begins:

Comfort the homesick.

Open your doors to others.

Seek sanctuary.

Be brave enough to go home by another way.

And remember that here in God's house, all are welcomed—so come back soon.

In the name of our Foundation—God, Spirit, and Son.

**Amen**

## SENDING HYMN

Come, Thou long-expected Jesus

*Sung to the tune of ELW 455*

Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free!  
From our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;  
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver, born a child, and yet a king:  
born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all-sufficient merit raise us to thy glorious throne.

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**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, filled with hope.

**Thanks be to God.**

**POSTLUDE**

He is King of Kings – African-American spiritual  
setting by Charles Callahan

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### **Mark your Calendar**

Today, Nov. 28	Planning meeting for Journey to Bethlehem following worship
Tuesday, Nov. 30	7pm Advent Pilgrimage in Palestine on zoom
Wednesday, Dec. 1	7pm Confirmation Learning
Saturday, Dec. 4	9-11am Open Link Food Collection
Sunday, Dec. 5	8:45am Faith Formation (preK—grade 5) 9:30am Worship (& zoom)

**Advent Pilgrimage in Palestine** – *starting Tuesday, November 30 at 7 PM*

During the Advent season we often talk a lot about the Holy Land of the past without talking much about the Holy Land of the present. What is going on in Bethlehem today?

Pastor Becky will be leading a three week Advent conversation guided by ELCA Young Adults and ELCA Peace Not Walls on the WAY to Bethlehem. Conversations will take place on Tuesdays, November 30, December 7 and 14 at 7 PM in the Fellowship Hall.

If you would like to connect to the conversation using Zoom, please use the link below to join us virtually. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84120654612?pwd=RkRDMVpGT3pISHJGUG9BMTRNOUhQT09>

**Drive Thru Journey to Bethlehem** – Saturday, December 18 from 4-6 PM

Rain date – Sunday, December 19 from 4-6 PM

The committees and teams of St. John's will be creating a Drive Thru Journey to Bethlehem event for the congregation and community this December. Even if you're not on a committee or team, you can still be part of the event! **The next planning meetings are today following worship and Monday, Dec. 6th on zoom:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81878337530?pwd=Q3RpZXROUTV0cE9BbTE0QU5vK1pOdz09>

**COOKIES!** We are asking for homemade cookies to share at the bonfire at the Journey to Bethlehem event. Please contact Kathy Drosey or Linda Lewis if you can help. Cookies are due at the church by December 13th.

**Annual Congregational Meeting** will be held within worship on Sunday, December 12th at 9:30am. Save the date and plan to be in worship to vote on the proposed budget, elect new council members and hear our ministry emphasis for 2022. St. John's 2022 Budget is available for you to review.

**Advent Gift Outreach Opportunity**

There will be two opportunities to participate in gift collections that will benefit two different organizations.

1) The residents of Pennsburg Manor—gift tags for them will be available on the Christmas trees in the parlor and narthex. These gifts should be wrapped and returned to the church by Dec. 12th with the gift tag from the tree firmly attached to the gift.

2) The children and families who are served through Gemma Services (formerly Silver Springs Martin Luther School). Gifts available for purchasing can be found online (see website for link). Gifts on this list are also due back Dec. 12th, but should be UNWRAPPED.

Please contact Pastor Becky or the church office if you have any questions.



**Longest Night Worship** – *Tuesday, December 21 at 6:30 PM*

For those who have experienced loss, the holidays can be a particularly painful time, stirring up grief in acute ways. As a result, churches around the world have adopted the practice of having a “Blue Christmas” or a “Longest Night” service during the Advent season. In the Northern hemisphere, this service is often observed on December 21st, the Winter Solstice, which is the longest night of the year.

Worship this evening will offer space for prayer, reflection, and remembrance amidst the holiday hustle and bustle. In this pandemic season of life, grief and loss are magnified and nearly universal, and we hope that these words and this worship experience will provide a space of calm, quiet, and healing.

To connect to the service using Zoom, please use the link below:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84822432054?pwd=THFuOWZ0dWovWnJlZGRVaktzR2hCZz09>