

Order for Worship
December 19, 2021
Fourth Sunday in Advent
Communion
Theme: Seeking Sanctuary (Love)

+ GATHERING +

WELCOME

PRELUDE Ave Maria – Eric H. Thiman

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CALL TO WORSHIP

We are seeking—

**deeper faith,
a place to belong,
the feeling that God is here in this room.**

We are seeking—

**joy that overflows,
the movement of the Spirit,
a hand to hold, when alone in the dark.**

We are seeking—

**the freedom to be,
the courage to love,
the conviction to act in the face of injustice.**

We are seeking,

**but here in this space,
we are found.**

Take a deep breath. This is your sanctuary.

God is here, and in God, we are found.

OPENING HYMN ELW 265 The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came

The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
with wings as drifted snow, with eyes as flame:
"All hail to thee, O lowly maiden Mary,
most highly favored lady." Gloria!

"For know a blessed mother thou shalt be,
all generations laud and honor thee;
thy son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold,
most highly favored lady." Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head;
"To me be as it pleaseth God," she said.
"My soul shall laud and magnify God's holy name."
Most highly favored lady, Gloria!

CALL TO CONFESSION

Mary's world turned upside down with the visit of an angel. This is a moment we can relate to, because over the course of the last year and a half, our world has seemed to turn upside down more than once. When those moments come, we hope to respond with grace; but more often than not, fear can get the best of us. So today we turn to God in prayer, asking for God's guidance and grace in the places and moments we need it most. Let us pray together now...

God of safe spaces,
we wish we were more like Mary, who in the face of great change, went and sought help. She did not wait for help to find her; she walked to the shelter she needed. Too often we wait silently for the world to change around us instead of speaking up for the things we need. Forgive us for failing to care for ourselves the way you would care for us. Give us the courage to be more like Mary. God of safe places, we wish we were more like Elizabeth, who greeted Mary with laughter and contagious joy. How many people have crossed our doorstep and how many times have we failed to see them? Give us the courage of Mary, and the grace of Elizabeth. Gratefully we pray. Amen.

Family of faith, even if we miss the person standing on our doorstep, even if we fail to care for ourselves the way God would care for us, even if we forget and ignore, turn away and shut down, God still loves us. There is nothing we can do to lose God's love.

Rest in this promise:

If we get lost,
we will be found.

If we mess up,
we are forgiven.

If we withhold love,
God is lavish in loving us.

We are claimed. We are loved. We are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

HYMN OF PRAISE Chosen Home
(sung to the tune of O Come, All Ye Faithful ELW 283)

We may not find home where it is expected.
Sometimes we have to leave to be who we are:
wholly created in God's holy image.
A place that truly sees us, a place that loves and frees us,
like tables set by Jesus is our chosen home.

May this – be a brave space for all people
where all are seen and loved among family,
space to grow and follow in our callings.
A place that truly sees us, a place that loves and frees us,
like tables set by Jesus is our chosen home.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

God's love is like an open door.

God's love is the streetlight that guides us home.

God's love is a warm bed to fall into.

God's love is a table with room for you.

God's love is a crackling fireplace.

God's love is the sun that streams through the windows.

God's love is the roof over our heads and the floor beneath our feet.

**God's love is a home for you and me, for neighbors and strangers,
for family and friends, for enemies and partners.**

God's love is a home for all.

Today we light the candle of love to remind us of this truth.

May it burn brightly in this space and even brighter in our hearts.

Amen.

ADVENT SONG ELW 253 He Came Down

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

Text: Cameroon traditional

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OPENING PRAYER

Holy God, we come to your Scripture today hoping that it will feel a bit like an open door, like Elizabeth welcoming Mary, like coming home. We want to fall into it. We want to find sanctuary here. We want to breathe easier just hearing these words. And we want to find ourselves laughing because this good news is just too good to keep inside. So hover close to us now, we pray. Open the door to our hearts so that we might find sanctuary in your words. Gratefully we pray. **Amen**

+ WORD +

FIRST READING: Micah 5:2-5a

The prophet Micah, having pronounced judgment upon Judah, speaks of a future shepherd-king who, like David, will come from the small town of Bethlehem. (Ephrathah refers to the area around Bethlehem.) This king will restore Israel and bring peace. New Testament writers understood this passage to be referring to Jesus.

²But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.

³Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has brought forth;

then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.

⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth;

^{5a}and he shall be the one of peace.

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 c. James Quinn, SJ, admin. Selah Publishng Co., Inc.

Music: Johann R. Ahle

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GOSPEL: Luke 1:39-55

Elizabeth, John's mother, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, are two women filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith. In Elizabeth's inspired greeting and Mary's song of praise we hear of a saving God who remembers, scatters, lifts up, and fulfills all things.

The Holy Gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

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

And Mary said,

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,

my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:

you, the Almighty, have done great things for me
and holy is your name.

**You have mercy on those who fear you,
from generation to generation.**

You have shown strength with your arm
and scattered the proud in their conceit,

**casting down the mighty from their thrones
and lifting up the lowly.**

You have filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.
**You have come to the aid of your servant Israel,
to remember the promise of mercy,**
the promise made to our forebears,
to Abraham and his children forever.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY ELW 723 Canticle of the Turning

My soul cries out with a joyful shout
that the God of my heart is great,
and my spirit sings of the wondrous things
that you bring to the ones who wait.
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight,
and my weakness you did not spurn,
so from east to west shall my name be blest.
Could the world be about to turn?

My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,
and the world is about to turn.

Though I am small, my God, my all,
you work great things in me,
and your mercy will last from the depths of the past
to the end of the age to be.
Your very name puts the proud to shame,
and to those who would for you yearn,
you will show your might, put the strong to flight,
for the world is about to turn.

My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,
and the world is about to turn.

Text: Rory Cooney, b. 1952, based on the Magnificat
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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!”**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

CALL TO OFFERING

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 in the narthex.

MUSICAL OFFERING

Come Thou Almighty King – Felice de Giardini
David Lewis, trumpet

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OFFERING PRAYER

Good and gracious God, we give these gifts for the seekers. We give these gifts for those who need sanctuary. We give these gifts for those who build sanctuaries. We give these gifts for those who have lost sanctuary, and for those who find sanctuary all over the place. Use these gifts to bring us closer to home. With joy and hope in our hearts we pray. **Amen.**

+ MEAL +

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

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.

The congregation will receive the bread and wine/juice in our seats together.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Most High God, you have come among us at this table. By the Spirit's power, form us to be bearers of your word, sharing gifts of mercy and grace with all, through Christ Jesus, our host and our guest. **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

257 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

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.

O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer;
O Sun of justice, now draw near
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadow put to flight.

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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DISMISSAL

Go in peace, filled with love.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness (Kingsfold) – David Cherwien

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We celebrate with Madison Paige Truskowski and Chase Ryan Truskowski this morning as they celebrate taking their first communion this morning.

Mark your Calendar

- Tuesday, Dec. 21 6:30pm Longest Night Worship
- Wednesday, Dec 22 7pm Handbell rehearsal
- Friday, Dec. 24 10:30am Set up Luminaries
3pm Family Communion Worship
7pm Traditional Christmas Eve Communion Worship
- Sunday, Dec. 26 9:30am Worship (& zoom)
10:30am Clean up luminaries

Handbells at 3:00 Christmas Eve, rehearsal on and 12/22 at 7:00.

Worship Attendance		
12/12/2021 – In Person– Zoom - 24 households		
Giving Amounts	Total received between 11/28-12/13/2021	Amount Needed between 11/28-12/13/2021
General Fund	\$13,272.07	\$11,216
Building Fund	\$369.14	
<i>Weekly average is based on the 2021 budget. A weekly building fund amount needed is no longer reported as the building fund has been used for the mortgage, which has been paid off. All other building expenses are included in General Fund budget and giving. The above numbers include electronic giving. Mint duty is being done every other week for the time being.</i>		
Capital Campaign Activity Update		
Capital Campaign Contributions Pledged		\$ 260,000.00
Capital Campaign Contributions received between 11/28-12/13/2021		\$450
Capital Campaign Contributions received to date		\$ 253,789.65

A gift was made to the general fund in memory of Nancy Terpoilli by Mary Jane Schaffer.

Help Requested with Luminaries:

Everyone is welcome to join the Youth Group members and families as we set up, and clean up the luminaries. Your help is greatly appreciated during any or all of the times listed below.

December 24 (10:30am)- Set up luminaries

December 26 (10:30am)- Clean up luminaries

New Member Small Group

Interested in becoming a member of St. John's Lutheran Church? A new member small group will be offered in the beginning of 2022. The small group will meet after the 9:30 AM Sunday worship service on January 16, 30 and February 13. New members will then be formally received into the community during the 9:30 AM worship service on Sunday, February 20.

If you are interested in being part of the new members small group, please let Pastor Becky know by January 9th.

All breakfast and lunch bags must be delivered to St. John's by Monday, December 20th at noon to the boxes in the fellowship hall labeled MANNA.

The link to sign up for how many breakfast or lunch bags YOU would like to donate is below! <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B084FA8AD2CAAFD0-manna>

Help us feed our neighbors!

St. John's will host the First Monday Community Dinner at Pennsburg UCC on January 3rd. Volunteers are needed to help prepare and serve the food, as well as donate items for the meal. To see the list of items needed and to volunteer click here:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0f4eaeac23a1f9c16-first>

POINSETTIAS

We have 24 7" poinsettias (20 red, 4 white) that are available for sponsor (in memory or in honor of someone) or purchase at \$12/each.

They will be available for pick up after the 7pm service on December 24th. If you would like to sponsor please call or email the church office no later than December 20th (215-234-4888 email stj.stown@verizon.net).

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>



3pm—Family Christmas Eve Service
including communion, a children’s sermon and favorite
Christmas carols

7pm—Traditional Christmas Eve Service
including candle lighting, communion and brass

Both services will be live streamed on Zoom. To connect to either service, please use the link below:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83021224743?pwd=b1RmUS9LcXd1Z041K2JlUx5aUtRZz09#success>