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First Sunday in Advent
November 29, 2020

Presiding Minister: Justin Neugebauer
Musicians: Miriam Schwenn
Lector: Various Readers
AV Booth: David Gulck
Radio Broadcast: Is given in memory of Jess Hansen remembering his birthday today, November 29.

Hanging of the Greens Service

Service taken from the book "Everlasting Light" written by Sandy Dixon, who adapted this service from one written by the Rev. Dr. Judith Ridlen.

P: Presiding Minister L: Lector/Reader **C: Congregation**

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS Pastor Justin Neugebauer

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
C: Amen.
P: God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
C: Amen.
P: Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.
Most merciful God,
C: we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.
P: In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
C: Amen

THE DECORATION OF THE SANCTUARY

During the Advent season, we prepare for the one who has come, whom we expect to come, and who will come again. In this season, we recall God's entering history as one of us in his Son, Jesus Christ. We prepare our hearts so that God will find room and expression in our lives. As we proceed through the Advent season, we pray for the day when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. And we look toward Christmas – the fulfillment of God's love for all people.

Through many generations we have had reminders of Jesus' birth in the beautiful symbols of music, customs, and tradition so that we will not forget what our God has done. In the Hanging of the Greens, we share with Christians through the ages the memory and anticipation of Christ's coming. We festively decorate our church with the symbols of life, joy, and hope.

Jewish children at the Passover celebration ask, "Why do we do this? What does this mean?" The story of the angel of death passing over the homes of the Hebrews is retold so that the generations will not forget that mighty act of God. Christian children will ask, "Why do we this? What does this mean?" We tell the story again and then proclaim, "God is with us. Jesus Christ is born."

HYMN **O Come, O Come, Emmanuel** ELW #257 vs 1-4

1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Refrain
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

2 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. *Refrain*

3 O come, O come, O Lord of might,
as to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times you gave the law
in cloud, and majesty, and awe. *Refrain*

4 O come, O Branch of Jesse, free
your own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell your people save,
and give them vict'ry o'er the grave. *Refrain*

THE PARAMENTS AND THE BANNERS

For many months, during the Pentecost season, the color used by the church in the paraments has been green. Green symbolizes growth – in the Christian life for each individual and for each congregation of God's global church.

During Advent, we change the paraments to blue. Blue is the color of hope. We wait for the coming of the Christ child in eternal hope. On Christmas Eve, we will change the color to white, representing joy and the purity of Jesus Christ.

Banners have long been a tradition in the Christian community. They provide a colorful representation of many Christian symbols. By linking visible symbolism to the seasonal themes or specific Scriptures, they help us worship. We not only hear the themes of worship but can see them symbolized before us on the banners.

In Advent the rich colors of blue, purple and pink are used in addition to the familiar symbols of Christ's coming. In preparation for worship, we are able to meditate upon the significance of this season with the aid of these colorful additions to our sanctuary.

HYMN **My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness** ELW #251

1 My soul proclaims your greatness, Lord;
I sing my Savior's praise!
You looked upon my lowliness,
and I am full of grace.
Now ev'ry land and ev'ry age
this blessing shall proclaim—
great wonders you have done for me,
and holy is your name.

2 To all who live in holy fear
your mercy ever flows.
With mighty arm you dash the proud,
their scheming hearts expose.
The ruthless you have cast aside,
the lowly throned instead;
the hungry filled with all good things,
the rich sent off unfed.

3 To Israel, your servant blest,
your help is ever sure;
the promise to our parents made
their children will secure.
Sing glory to the Holy One,
give honor to the Word,
and praise the Pow'r of the Most High,
one God, by all adored.

THE WREATHS AND THE EVERGREENS

A wreath is symbolic of a crown. Long ago, crowns were given for prizes. They were usually made of leaves and were bestowed to give honor and glory. In placing these wreaths let us give honor and glory to Jesus, who came into the world to be our Savior. He alone is worthy, for He brought us victory over sin and death. We should also remember the crown of thorns Jesus wore, while He suffered and died to bring us this victory.

Evergreens have also long been considered symbols of eternity, a sign of God's everlasting nature, and an indication that the faithful will experience eternal life in communion with God is Jesus Christ.

The Advent custom of decorating with evergreen branches comes to us from the peasants of the Middle Ages, who believed that preparations should be made for the coming of Jesus Christ. On the first Sunday of Advent, each family would gather evergreens and place them near the hearth in their home. We continue that tradition today as we hang the greens in our sanctuary, our church home.

As Isaiah 60:13 tells us: "The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, the cypress, the plane, and the pine, to beautify the place of my sanctuary." The evergreens we use to decorate our sanctuary will remind us of God's abiding love in Jesus Christ and of our eternal relationship with God.

HYMN **Blessed Be the God of Israel** ELW #250

1 Blessed be the God of Israel
who comes to set us free
and raises up new hope for us:
a Branch from David's tree.
So have the prophets long declared
that with a mighty arm
God would turn back our enemies
and all who wish us harm.

2 With promised mercy will God still
the covenant recall,
the oath once sworn to Abraham,
from foes to save us all;
that we might worship without fear
and offer lives of praise,
in holiness and righteousness
to serve God all our days.

3 My child, as prophet of the Lord
you will prepare the way,
to tell God's people they are saved
from sin's eternal sway.
Then shall God's mercy from on high
shine forth and never cease
to drive away the gloom of death
and lead us into peace.

THE WORD

The Word of God as we read from our Bible is a love story between God and humankind. The Bible is a storybook. God has made a covenant with His people. The covenant has been broken and then renewed over and over throughout history. God is Creator and Redeemer; God loves each one of us. In return, He expects love from us for Him, for ourselves, and for our neighbor.

The Bible is also a book of faith, giving us direction in life. The Bible is a book of revelation, unveiling relationship wit God throughout time, that we might be witness to them. The Bible is a book of vocation, giving us a vision of how we are to live our lives in relationship with God and others. This vision of how we are to live our lives comes to us as we listen to the Advent Scriptures each week. It is clear we have a responsibility in fulfilling God's reign on earth.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come.

C: By your merciful protection awaken us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and keep us blameless until the coming of your new day, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 64:1-9

L: A reading from Isaiah Chapter 64.

[1]O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—
[2]as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!
[3]When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
[4]From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.
[5]You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.
But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we transgressed.
[6]We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
[7]There is no one who calls on your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.
[8]Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.

[9]Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD,
and do not remember iniquity forever.
Now consider, we are all your people.

L: Word of God, word of life,
C: Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

L: We read from Psalm 80 responsively by full verse.

[1]Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.
C: [2]In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and come to help us.
L: [3]Restore us, O God;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.
C: [4]O LORD God of hosts,
how long will your anger fume when your people pray?
L: [5]You have fed them with the bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.
C: [6]You have made us the derision of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.
L: [7]Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.
C: [17]Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
the one you have made so strong for yourself.
L: [18]And so will we never turn away from you;
give us life, that we may call upon your name.
C: [19]Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

GOSPEL: Mark 13:24-37

P: The Gospel according to Mark the 13th chapter.
C: Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said:] [24]"In those days, after that suffering,
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
[25]and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.
[26]Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. [27]Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

[28]"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. [29]So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. [30]Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. [31]Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

[32]"But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. [33]Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. [34]It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. [35]Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come,

in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, [36]or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. [37]And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

P: The Gospel of our Lord.
C: Praise to you, O Christ.

THE SERMON Pastor Justin Neugebauer

HYMN **Come Thou Long Expected Jesus** ELW #254

1 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 ev'ry nation,
joy of ev'ry longing heart.

2 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.

THE POINSETTIAS AND THE CHRISTMAS TREE

The most popular flower of the Advent-Christmas season is the bright red poinsettia. This attractive flower was discovered growing wild in Mexico by Dr. Joel Roberts Poinsett, first American Ambassador there from 1825 to 1829. In Mexico, the plant was referred to as the "Flower of the Holy Night" or the "Flaming Leaf." Dr. Poinsett brought several of the plants to America, where there were developed into the type of flower we see today.

The poinsettia's symbolism is two fold. The star-shaped formation of red leaves reminds us of the star that shone on that first Christmas. The red flower reminds us of the blood of Jesus upon the cross, the Jesus who is our Savior.

The Christmas tree is a wonderful sign of God's love and faithfulness. Never losing its green color, the Christmas tree reminds us of God's steadfast love, which endures forever.

Legend has it that Martin Luther was the first person to decorate his home with a Christmas tree. Luther was walking home one Christmas Eve when he saw the glitter of stars shining through the snow-covered branches of the fir trees. Luther was so awed by the sight that he took one of the trees home with him and placed candles on the branches, to demonstrate to his family what a glorious sight he had seen.

From this first Christmas tree in the Luther household, the custom spread. Now Christmas trees are used in homes, in churches, and in communities, wherever the birth of Christ is celebrated and the love of Christ is shared.

HYMN **O Little Town of Bethlehem** ELW #279 vs 1-2

1 O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by;
yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

2 For Christ is born of Mary,
and, gathered all above
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the king,
and peace to all the earth!

CHILDREN'S SERMON

HYMN **O Little Town of Bethlehem** ELW #279 vs 3-4

3 How silently, how silently
the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heav'n.
No ear may hear his coming;
but, in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

4 O holy child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in,
be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
oh, come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Immanuel!

THE ADVENT WREATH AND CANDLES

The Advent wreath is a simple circle of evergreen branches. Because the branches come from outdoors during winter in the Northern Hemisphere, the evergreen testifies to the continuation of life made possible for us through Jesus Christ. Bending the branches so that the ends touch to form a circle further symbolizes God eternal who fills us with eternal love, which has no end.
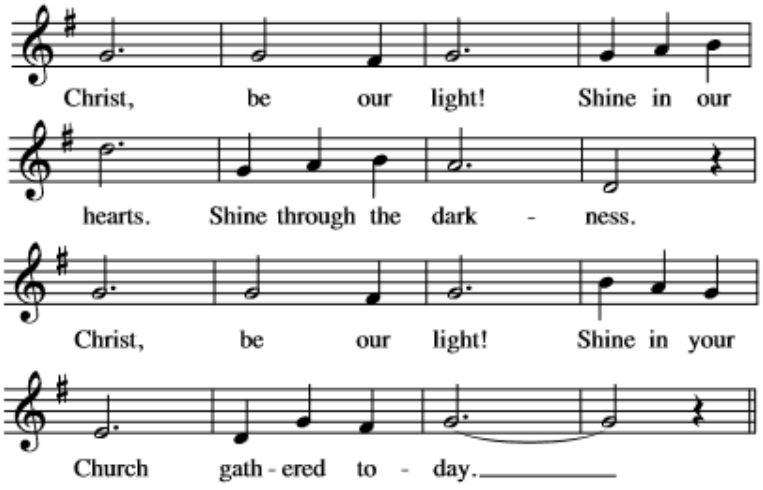
During Advent, we prepare by lighting candles each week. Four candles encircle a central Christ candle. The candles signify God's Son as the light of the world. As we see the darkness of the world and the darkness of the winter season, we are witness to the Word of God come into the world – the light of all people. The light comes into the world, shines in the darkness, and is never extinguished by the world. Christ is the light of the world!

Each Sunday in Advent, we light the candles from the preceding weeks, along with a new one. The Christ candle is not lit until Christmas Eve. The Advent wreath, with the increasing brightness from the candles, witnesses to the light that cannot be put out and is visible reminder of the light and hope that Advent brings to us each year.

LIGHTING OF THE FIRST ADVENT CANDLE ***Hope for Those Who Wait***

Song Leader: Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.

Congregation:
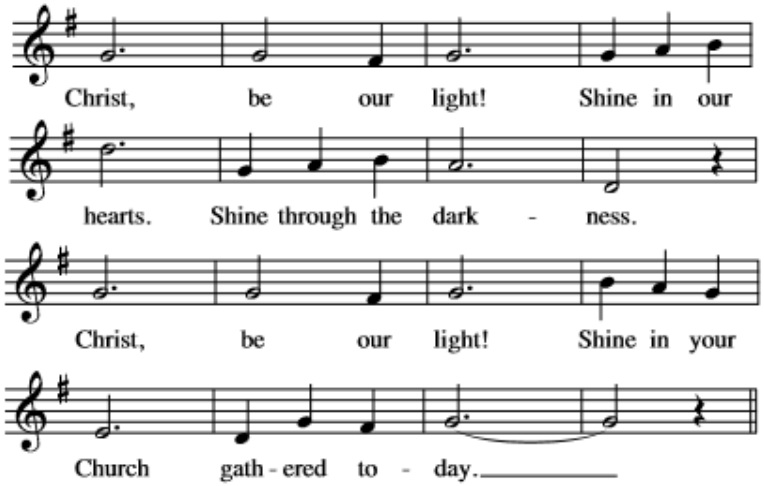


RESPONSIVE LITURGY

L: Advent is a time for the human heart to wait, while trusting God's eternal time.
C: How long, O Lord, how long?
L: For those waiting for answered prayer:
C: Grant your steadfast patience.
L: For those waiting in the face of uncertainty:
C: Grant unshakable confidence in your sovereign provision.
L: For those waiting for justice and mercy to reign:
C: Grant a glimpse of your glory in our wounded world.
L: For all of us waiting for God's kingdom to come:
C: Grant that we might have the peace of Christ as we wait, the love of Christ as we act, and the grace of Christ as we speak.

CANDLE LIGHTING

This morning we light the **first candle** which reminds us that throughout history, God's people have spent time waiting, wandering and wondering about the timing of God's eternal plan. Like the people of old, we long for God's presence to illuminate the areas of life where we are called to wait. This morning we echo the words of the Psalmist, "Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!" (Psalm 27:14)

Congregation:



Choral Group: . . . . Christ be our Light.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE *(response is . . .)*

P: Lord, in your mercy,
C: hear our prayer.

SHARING THE PEACE

P: The peace of the Lord be with you all.
C: And also with you.

OFFERING

HOLY COMMUNION

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

P: Gracious God, you reveal your Son to us in word and sacrament. Open our hearts to receive him now. As the scriptures are proclaimed and the meal is shared, grant us to see and know the presence of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

P: The Lord be with you.
C: And also with you.
P: Lift up your hearts.
C: We lift them to the Lord.
P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

P: In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

MUSIC *Time for Reflection*

POST COMMUNION BLESSING

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

P: We give you thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life. In your mercy, strengthen us through this gift in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

L: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:
C: 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.

BLESSING

P: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord's face shine upon you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you with favor and ✢ give you peace.
In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

SENDING HYMN **Angels from the Realms of Glory** ELW #275

1 Angels, from the realms of glory,
wing your flight o'er all the earth;
once you sang creation's story,
now proclaim Messiah's birth:
Come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the newborn king.

2 Shepherds, in the fields abiding,
watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing,
yonder shines the infant light.
Come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the newborn king.

3 Sages, leave your contemplations,
brighter visions beam afar;
seek the great desire of nations,
you have seen his natal star.
Come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the newborn king.

4 All creation, join in praising
God, the Father, Spirit, Son,
evermore your voices raising
to the eternal Three in One.
Come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the newborn king.

CHALLENGE

P: Go in peace, serve the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.