

*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

If you are watching our Christian calendar, you will notice we are starting Advent a week early. We are doing so because this year Christmas Eve falls on what would be our 4th Sunday of Advent. You see, no matter how much we follow the development of the Christian year, we are always surprised when Advent comes. But ultimately this is a time of year when we cherish those precious moments with family and friends.

Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy

So, today let us begin by lighting our first candle of Advent. The candle of hope

The prophets of Israel all spoke of the coming of Christ, of how a savior would be born, a king in the line of David. They spoke of how he would rule the world wisely and bless all nations.

On Christmas day the Christ of our hope was born. On Good Friday the Christ of our hope died. On Easter day the Christ of our hope rose from the dead. He then ascended into heaven. On the last day, the Christ of our hope will come again to establish his kingdom over all things on earth.

As the follower of Christ, we await his return. We light this candle to remember that as he came to us as humbly in the manger at Bethlehem and gave light to the world, so he is coming again in power to deliver his people.

We light this candle to remind us to be alert and to watch for his return.

Light the First Candle

LET US PRAY - Loving God, we thank you for the hope you give us. Help us prepare our hearts for the Lord's coming. Bless our worship. Help us live holy and righteous lives. We ask it in the name of the one born in Bethlehem. Amen.

Advent Call to Worship

Let us prepare our hearts as we await the coming of our Lord,

Let us watch for the one who heard our cries and shouldered the suffering of our world,

Let us anticipate the coming of Christ's eternal world with wholeness, reconciliation and plenty for all.

Let us wait in expectation for the day when God's glory is revealed in all its fullness.

***HYMN OF PRAISE UMH#569 "We've a Story to Tell to the Nations"**

Author: H. Ernest Nichol (1896)

Publication Date: 1989

**1. We've a story to tell to the nations,
that shall turn their hearts to the right,
a story of truth and mercy,
a story of peace and light,
a story of peace and light.**

Refrain:

**For the darkness shall turn to dawning,
and the dawning to noonday bright;
and Christ's great kingdom shall come on earth,
the kingdom of love and light.**

**2. We've a song to be sung to the nations,
that shall lift their hearts to the Lord,
a song that shall conquer evil
and shatter the spear and sword,
and shatter the spear and sword.**

(Refrain)

**3. We've a message to give to the nations,
that the Lord who reigneth above
hath sent us his Son to save us,
and show us that God is love,
and show us that God is love.**

(Refrain)

**4. We've a Savior to show to the nations,
who the path of sorrow hath trod,
that all of the world's great peoples
might come to the truth of God,
might come to the truth of God.**

(Refrain)

We Hear God's Word

Gospel Reading..... Mark 13:24-37 (NRSV)

The Coming of the Son of Man

24 “But 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 the[a] elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

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[b] 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.

The Necessity for Watchfulness

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,[c] 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.”

The Word of God for the People of God, **Thanks be to God!**

CHILDREN’S SERMON

FAITH HYMN UMH #196

“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

Author: Charles Wesley (1744)

Publication Date: 1989

Tune Information

Composer: Rowland H. Prichard (1830)

Source: The English Hymnal, 1906 (harm.)

**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 every nation,
joy of every 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.**

“Message”

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer/Lord's Prayer for the Season of Advent

Good and gracious God, we give you thanks for gifts of life,
for gifts of love and joy during this season,
for gifts of comfort when we do not or cannot feel that joy,
for gifts of healing and mercy, for gifts of patience and serenity,
for gifts of hope as we prepare our hearts for Christmas.

Christ's presence changes our world,
so we pray that he may indeed be born in us once again,
that we may be continually born anew,
that the whole world would be reshaped and reborn
as your kingdom emerges around us and within us.

And as we come before you this day we raise to you:
(give names of those shared during joys and concerns)

May your Spirit stir within us, and cause us to long for the day
when earth will in fact be like heaven.

It is this radical vision of a new heaven and a new earth for which we pray,
using the words Jesus taught us. Our Father...

Offertory & Doxology (UM Hymnal 95)

Offertory Prayer

Great God of wonderful surprises: we enter this season of preparation for your Son's coming, looking not for just a memory of past events, but anticipating a return. We strive to get our lives in order and pray that our giving of ourselves to these preparations might reflect the earth-shaking importance of his coming. Help us to give ourselves generously, for we do not know the day or the hour. We pray in the name of the one who will come. Amen. (Mark 13:24-37)

Departing Hymn UMH #706

“Soon and Very Soon”

Author: Andraé Crouch (1976)

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**I Soon and very soon we are goin' to see the King,
Soon and very soon we are goin' to see the King,**

**Soon and very soon we are goin' to see the King,
Hallelujah, Hallelujah,
we are goin' to see the King!**

**2 No more cryin' there we are goin' to see the King,
No more cryin' there we are goin' to see the King,
No more cryin' there we are goin' to see the King,
Hallelujah, Hallelujah,
we are goin' to see the King!**

**3 No more dyin' there we are goin' to see the King,
No more dyin' there we are goin' to see the King,
No more dyin' there we are goin' to see the King,
Hallelujah, Hallelujah,
we are goin' to see the King!**

Benediction

(based on Mark 13:24-37)

And now go out into the world in peace.
Beware, keep alert, for we do not know the hour
when we will see the Son of Man coming in clouds
with great power and glory.
Be faithful in service and persistent in prayer;
be Advent people,
loving and serving the Lord. Amen.

***POSTLUDE**