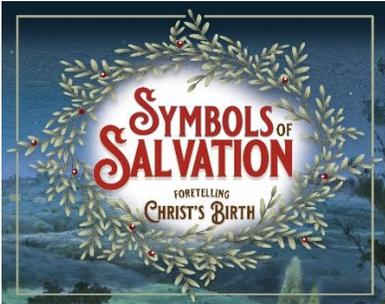

*As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present.
May we together experience the presence of God*

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We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord



Prelude

Welcome

Announcements/Joys & Concerns

This is a time of year when we cherish moments with family and friends by taking photographs. We look back on these images to remember what took place, to fill us with joy when family and friends are absent, and to remind us of their love. Today, we begin an Advent series on images through which God addresses His people, calls them to joy in His promises, and reminds us of His unfailing love and presence. These are living pictures of God's gracious acts to redeem His people. Today, we look at the burning bush and the Lord's address to Moses. This picture is even more meaningful because it was the pre-incarnate Christ who stood before Moses and spoke through the burning bush, foreshadowing the incarnation itself, which is the focus of Christmas.

FIRST READING Exodus 3:1-14

A reading from Exodus, the third chapter.

Moses at the Burning Bush

3 Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness and came to Mount Horeb,[a] the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. 3 Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight and see why the bush is not burned up." 4 When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." 5 Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." 6 He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

7 Then the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

9 The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. 10 Now go, I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." 11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" 12 He said, "I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

The Divine Name Revealed

13 But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I am who I am." [b] He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I am has sent me to you.'"

Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy

"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'" (Psalm 122:1 NRSV)
We are glad. Whether we drove in or climbed up, whether we logged on or tuned in. We are glad to be here in this community, with this family. It is a place of joyful hope, of radical welcome. It is a place where, together, we can wait in wondrous anticipation of the kingdom to come.

"Many peoples shall come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that God may teach us God's ways and that we may walk in Gods paths'" (Isaiah 2:3 NRSV).

We light this candle as a sign of our hope, our joyous hope that we can be restored – our faith restored, our strength restored, our confidence restored, our joy restored as we watch and wait with all God's people for the promise to be fulfilled.

Light the first candle on the Advent wreath.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, we rejoice that we can come into Your house today and worship You with those who love You, too. Thank You for inspiring and leading Your people to establish Your house here in this place.

We pray that all who worship here might experience Your love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness. O Almighty God, You are the great I AM who rescued Your people from their slavery in Egypt and redeemed us from our bondage to sin and its death by Your beloved Son. Grant that we may recognize Your presence, rejoice in Your saving gifts, and remember Your mercy in every time and space ; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

***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..... John 15:1-8

New Revised Standard Version

Jesus the True Vine

15 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. 2 He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes[a] to make it bear more fruit.

3 You have already been cleansed[b] by the word that I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. 6 Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7 If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become[c] my disciples.

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"

PASTORAL PRAYER

(Inspired by Psalm 122)

God of love and mercy, thank you for your great gift of your Child, Jesus Christ, who fills us with all that we need.

Merciful God, we are fully aware that not all your children are able to bask in joy or peace during this season.

We pray for peace within all walls: walls within our own homes, walls that surround each city and town.

We pray that during this season of Advent we may usher your promise of salvation into our lives and that we may share the Good News of our Savior with others.

We pray that the promise of your birth may be the promise that we live in and share at home, at work and at school.

May we be moved to compassion and action in your name.

We pray this in the powerful name of Jesus Christ who taught us all to pray, saying...

Offertory & Doxology (UM Hymnal 95)

(Wykoff only)

Offertory Prayer

God of peace and justice, in the past year we have once again witnessed the fruits of war: lives cut short, children made orphans, homes devastated, and hearts broken. These gifts we give this morning, may they be used to make human hearts ready for peace and for the reign of your son. In his holy name, we pray. Amen. (

Departing Hymn UMH #706 "Soon and Very Soon"

Author: Andraé Crouch (1976)

Copyright: © 1976, Bud John Songs, Inc./Crouch Music/ASCAP

**1 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

Go forth and live as one instructed in the ways of the Lord.

Take the weapons of your life

and turn them into instruments of peace and justice.

Praise be to our God who shows us the way!

*POSTLUDE