

*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

Advent is all about getting ready. But what are we to be ready for? Was Mary ready for the angel Gabriel to appear to her? How about an angel in your living room? Would you be ready?

Mary is the model for what it means to be a follower. She shows us what surrendering to God is all about. She is the quintessential disciple of the one to whom she is about to give birth. But it wasn't an easy "yes." It wasn't just a "sure, whatever you say" kind of thing. It was startling; it was an angel in the living room, for heaven's sake!

And as Mary's song suggests, the transformation that this love brings is not just to individual hearts, but to the whole world. The world will be turned upside down – or rather right side up – by the power of this love that is coming, that has come, into the world. With her, we give thanks, and our spirits rejoice in God, our Savior.

Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy

When the angel Gabriel visited Mary, announcing God's plan for her to conceive and give birth to the Messiah, "Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?'" (Luke 1:34) And yet, only a few months later, Mary sings to Elizabeth,

My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name (Luke 1:46-49).

We, like Mary, hear God's call to be part of making God's dream for our salvation and flourishing a reality, and we question, "How can this be? I am only..." Yet, like Mary, the "onlys" that make us hesitate are gifts God can and will use as God's love transforms us into bearers of good news.

We wait as people who have encountered divine Love that disrupts the status quo and ushers us into abundant life marked by mutual love and peace that flows from the flourishing of all people.

We light these candles as signs of our shocking hope, our just peace, our fierce joy, and the love that transforms us. May Love grow within us, transforming us into bold witnesses of God's salvation with our voices and our lives. Amen.

Light the four outer candles of the Advent wreath.

LET US PRAY - Emmanuel, God-with-us, your light lifts up our hearts, our spirits, and our voices. We give you thanks for your birth long ago and presence with us always. Your hope is more trustworthy than our promises. Your peace is deeper than our prayers. Your joy teaches us to sing even when we want to cry. Your love is wider than the chorus of the galaxies, and yet your Star shines on us now in this church which has become a manger. Amen.

***Advent Call to Worship**

Stop. Listen. Pay attention. Love is coming near.

We wait in the love of the coming Messiah that transforms us.

The Hope Bringer, Peace Maker, Joy Sustainer grows in a womb, preparing to be born among us.

We wait in the love of the coming Messiah that transforms us.

With Mary, we long for the coming of the Child who will transform the world, bringing justice where injustice reigns, fullness where hunger persists, and favor to the ones the world calls lowly.

We wait in the love of the coming Messiah that transforms us.

So let us join our voices and our lives in magnifying God, our Savior!

We come to wait and to declare the coming of the Love that transforms us!

***HYMN OF PRAISE UMH#224 "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice"**

**1 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
give ye heed to what we say:
Jesus Christ was born today.
Ox and ass before him bow,
and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today!
Christ is born today!**

**2 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye hear of endless bliss:
Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened heaven's door,
and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this!
Christ was born for this!**

**3 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye need not fear the grave:**

**Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all
to gain his everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save!
Christ was born to save!**

We Hear God's Word

***Gospel Reading..... Luke 1:26-38 (NRSV)**

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." [a] 29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" [b] 35 The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born [c] will be holy; he will be called Son of God. 36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

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

CHILDREN'S SERMON

FAITH HYMN UMH #234 "O Come, All Ye Faithful" (verses 1-3)

**1. O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem.
Come and behold him, born the King of angels;**

Refrain:

**O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.**

**2. True God of true God, Light from Light Eternal,
lo, he shuns not the Virgin's womb;
Son of the Father, begotten, not created;
(Refrain)**

**3. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation;
O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;
(Refrain)**

“Message”

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

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

Holy God: We have journeyed with you to Bethlehem. We are tired from the journey. We have longed to see the Christ child. With searching hearts we follow the star, we peer into the manger.

The preparations for the season have distracted our hearts from our purpose. There are still many things yet to be done. You have spoken to our hearts and we have made preparations for your coming to our lives, as well. Many of the paths upon which you have led us have not been easy paths. Repentance, expectation, and longing have taken their toll.

And now we near the end of the Advent journey. We wonder if your visitation is a fairy tale. We hear the words that you are coming again, that you are visiting us with your son and your salvation, we hear these words like Christmas songs we will soon pack up until next year.

As we look for your visitation, may we be surprised. Surprised to find that you have been with us all along. You have never abandoned your people. You have been hard to find. But you have been best seen by those who allowed you to reveal yourself.

You are with us in our sicknesses and you are with us in our strength. You are with us in our failures and you are with us in our triumphs. You are with us in our families, in our grieving, in our fears. You are with us in our decisions. You are with us in our addictions. You are with us in our confusion, in wisdom and folly. You are with us in every attempt at a new start, every faltering act of love, every trembling beginning of reconciliation, every gift, every sleepless night, every dream deferred.

You have been with us all along. Help us to see you, to recognize you.

We ask that you be with those we have raised to you this day (name those mentioned)

Help us to find salvation in you. In every way that we can be saved, save us. These prayers and hopes we offer in confidence and gratitude for your love and presence. As we pray using the words Jesus taught us. Our Father...

***Offertory & Doxology (UM Hymnal 95)**

Offertory Prayer

Gracious and Generous God: We offer our gifts to you, knowing that the energy exerted in our giving is tiny compared to what we've expended finding the gifts for our families and friends. You have given us a glimpse of the gift you truly seek in the angel's conversation with Mary: when told that she would give birth to our savior, she simply said, "Yes, let it be according to your word." May that affirmation of faith and obedience be the gift we offer this day. In Christ, we pray. Amen. (Luke 1:26-38)

***Departing Hymn UMH #251**

"Go Tell It on the Mountain"

Refrain:

**Go tell it on the mountain,
over the hills, and ev'rywhere;
go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born.**

**1 While shepherds kept their watching
o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens
there shone a holy light. [Refrain]**

**2 The shepherds feared and trembled
when lo, above the earth
rang out the angel chorus
that hailed our Savior's birth. [Refrain]**

**3 Down in a lowly manger
the humble Christ was born,
and God sent us salvation
that blessed Christmas morn. [Refrain]**

***Benediction**

Beloved, the wait for the Messiah is almost over and has only just begun. Go from this space carrying the love that transforms us in your hearts, that your lives may give birth to hope, peace, joy, and love wherever you go. Amen.

***POSTLUDE**