

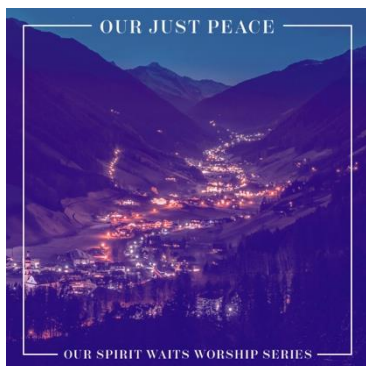
PrairieLand Parish

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**



Opening Meditation

Everything this time of year feels necessary. Important. Like it won't be Christmas unless I make it to every party, every sale, every program. Many of us experienced a Christmas season (or two or three) where it didn't feel safe to gather, which lends even more import to the opportunities we get to gather and celebrate now. I must say, though, it feels like the only thing not on my schedule or my to-do list right now is time to breathe.

Today as we gather, we find our center by focusing on peace. Peace for our world, peace for our country, peace for our community and peace in our lives. It's time to stop and take a moment to enjoy the peace this season offers us.

Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy

In days when God's people longed for peace, Isaiah declared, "Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins" (Isaiah 40:1).

We who gather today also seek comfort and peace, yet we are unsatisfied with ideas of peace that tell us to keep quiet and go with the flow. We long for real peace, true peace, just peace. We wait as people who yearn for peace that bears the fruit of community, equity, and flourishing for all.

We light these candles as signs of God's shocking hope and just peace. May they be beacons calling us to repent and to live the good news of Jesus Christ as we wait and watch and labor for the day when all people can gather together to worship and glorify God. Amen.

***Light two candles of the Advent wreath. ***

Let us pray: Loving Father in Heaven, as we wait for your plan to unfold, give us the patience we need. Remind us of the peace we can access when we take time to still ourselves before you and remember that you are God. We thank you that you are both sovereign and gracious. Help us to find rest in the midst of what feels like chaos in our world. Amen.

***A Call to Worship**

Come! Listen! A voice cries out: "In the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

We come, and we wait in the just peace of the coming Messiah.

Pay attention! God is removing barriers and leveling the playing field, making a way for all people to witness the glory of the Lord.

We pay attention, and we wait in the just peace of the coming Messiah.

We wait, and we work as God's landscapers, filling in valleys and making rough places a plain, bringing justice where conflicts and obstacles once reigned.

We wait, and we work in the just peace of the coming Messiah.

As we gather, may we prepare our voices to proclaim and our hands to get messy as our lives declare the coming of our Savior and Comforter.

We come to worship and to grow in the just peace of Jesus Christ, the coming Messiah.

***Praise Hymn UMH #431 "Let There Be Peace On Earth"**

**Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me;
let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.
With God our creator, children all are we.
Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.**

**Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now.
With every step I take, may this be my solemn vow:
To take each moment and live each moment
in peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.**

***Gospel Reading..... Mark 1:1-8 (NRSV)**

The Proclamation of John the Baptist

1 The beginning of the good news[a] of Jesus Christ.[b]

2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,[c]

"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,[d]
who will prepare your way,

3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord;
make his paths straight,' "

4 so John the baptizer appeared[e] in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And the whole Judean region and all the people

of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. 8 I have baptized you with [f] water, but he will baptize you with [g] the Holy Spirit."

This is the Word of God, for the people of God, **Thanks be to God!**

Faith Hymn UMH#211 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (verses 1-3)

**O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**O come, thou Wisdom from on high,
And order all things far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show
And cause us in her ways to go.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**O come, O come, great Lord of might,
Who to thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times once gave the law
In cloud and majesty and awe.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Message

Sharing of Our Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

Merciful and Patient God, how we must try your patience. We rush through the seasons of our lives as though we had a mighty schedule to keep. We plot out our days, minute by minute, crowding each moment with tasks, stresses and pressures. And we begin to notice the growing darkness and anxiety in our lives. We proclaim boldly each year that we will not let ourselves get so caught up in the commercial pressures and demands and yet, here we are, back in the same old trap of "not enough time; not enough energy". The very plans we weave become bonds which imprison us.

Help us bind ourselves to you, loving God. Help us slow down and reflect on the many ways in which you bless us. Let us drink deeply of your peace. Remind us again of the

most precious gift of all, the gift of loving relationship between you and your Creation. May we cherish the people and the peaceful moments you offer to us. As we have lifted before you our joys and concerns, (*share names of those voiced today*) so lift our spirits to remember that you are always with us, offering your healing touch and your compassionate care. Help us to place our trust in you, for we ask it in Jesus' Name. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE TABLE (UMH #6/7)

Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him,
who earnestly repent of their sin
and seek to live in peace with one another.
Therefore, let us confess our sin to God.

CONFESSION AND PARDON

In the act of confession, we acknowledge how we have missed the mark, and we call upon God to save us from the destruction of sin and turn us back toward life. Let us now confess our sin before God and one another.

CONFESSION AND PARDON.

**Merciful God,
we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have failed to be an obedient church.
We have not done your will,
we have broken your law,
we have rebelled against your love,
we have not loved our neighbors,
and we have not heard the cry of the needy.
Forgive us, we pray.
Free us for joyful obedience,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Hear the good news:
Christ died for us while we were yet sinners;
that proves God's love toward us.
In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!
**In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!
Glory to God! Amen.**

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

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

It is right, and a good and joyful thing,
always and everywhere to give thanks to you,

Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
You formed us in your image
and breathed into us the breath of life.
When we turned away, and our love failed,
your love remained steadfast.
You delivered us from captivity,
made covenant to be our sovereign God,
and spoke to us through the prophets.
And so,
with your people on earth
and all the company of heaven
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.
Your Spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor,
to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
and to announce that the time had come
when you would save your people.
He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners.
By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection
you gave birth to your Church,
delivered us from slavery to sin and death,
and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.
At his ascension you exalted him
to sit and reign with you at your right hand.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread,
gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:
"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over he took the cup,
gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:
"Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant,
poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,
we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving
as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here,
and on these gifts of bread and wine.
Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ,
that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ,
one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world,
until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church,
all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father (God), now and for ever. **Amen.**

And now, with the confidence of children of God, let us pray:

Lord's Prayer

BREAKING AND SHARING

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery
in which you have given yourself to us.
Grant that we may go into the world
in the strength of your Spirit,
to give ourselves for others,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

***Offertory/Doxology**

***Offertory Prayer**

Almighty God, we enter this season from a chaotic world filled with violence, division, and injustice. We hear your prophet Isaiah promising comfort -- then John the Baptist calling us to construction projects. We are reminded we are called to prepare the way, to be the designers of peace, the builders of justice, the producers of kindness. As we bring our offerings to you, we pray that our giving continues to point to the Christ who comes in love and compassion. May our giving in this season reflect our hope for the promised kingdom to reign in our world. We pray this in the name of the Messiah, Jesus our Savior. Amen. (Mark 1:1-8)

***Departing Hymn FWS #2142 "Blessed Quietness" (verses 1 & 5)**

**1 Joys are flowing like a river
since the Comforter has come,
who abides with us forever,
makes the trusting heart a home.**

Refrain:

**Blessed quietness, holy quietness
what assurance in my soul!
On the stormy sea speaking peace to me
how the billows cease to roll!**

**4 What a wonderful salvation,
where we always see God's face!**

**What a perfect habitation,
what a quiet resting place! [Refrain]**

***BENEDICTION**

May you go from this place blessed with comfort that you may also give comfort, supported by God's sustaining that you may also provide sustenance, and surrounded by peace that you may also make God's just peace a reality. Amen.

Postlude