

Advent 2, December 6, 2020, Order of Worship

Greeting In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Call to Worship, Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13 *You showed favor to your land, O Lord; you restored the fortunes of Jacob (Israel). You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins...I will listen to what God the Lord will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints—but let them not return to folly. Surely his salvation is near those who fear (respect with awe) him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. The Lord will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps* (compare this with Mark 1:2-3 and Isaiah 40:3).

Confession and Forgiveness for Advent

Let us honestly and humbly confess that we have not lived as God desires. *Silent reflection.*

Loving and forgiving God, we confess that we are held captive by sin. In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray. We have not welcomed the stranger; we have not loved our neighbor; we have not been Christ to one another. Retore us, O God. Wake us up and turn us from our sin. Renew us each day in the light of Christ. Amen. (from *Sundays & Seasons*, 2020, Augsburg Fortress, p. 24)

People of God, hear this glad news: by God's endless grace your sins are forgiven, and you are free—free from all that holds you back and free to live in the peaceable realm of God. May you be strengthened in God's love, comforted by Christ's peace, and accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus* (public domain) LBW 30, ELW 254

*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.*

*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 Kyrie In peace, let us pray to the Lord. For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord. For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord. For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord. For all these things we pray: Lord, have mercy. Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer of the Day Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

A reading from Isaiah, the 40th chapter (4-:1-11) Note: In grand, flowing, poetic lines, the prophet announces that the exile of God's people in Babylon is over. God will deliver Israel and will care for her as a shepherd cares for the sheep. This word can be trusted, because the only enduring reality in life is the word of God. Isaiah calls us all to be heralds along with John the Baptist, to lift up our voices fearlessly and say, "See, your God is coming!" We say it to one another in worship, in order to say it with our lives in a world in need of justice and peace. (*Sundays & Seasons*, 2020, Augsburg Fortress, p. 30) The prophet speaks to Isaiah:

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all humankind together will see it. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

A voice says "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?" "All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever." You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. He tends his flock like a shepherd: he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

Word of God, word of life.

Hymn from Isaiah ***Comfort, Comfort Now My People*** (public domain) LBW 29, ELW 256

***"Comfort, comfort now my people; tell of peace!" so says our God.
Comfort those who sit in darkness, mourning under sorrow's load.
To God's people now proclaim that God's pardon waits for them!
Tell that their war is over; God will reign in peace forever!***

***For the herald's voice is crying in the desert far and near,
Calling us to true repentance, since the Kingdom now is here.
Oh, that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way!
Let the valleys rise to meet him, and the hills bow down to greet him!***

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***Straight shall be what long was crooked, and the rougher places plain!
Let your hearts be true and humble, as befits his holy reign!
For the glory of the Lord now on earth is shed abroad,
And all flesh shall see the token that God's word is never broken.***

Alleluia Alleluia! Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia!

The holy Gospel according to Mark, the 1st chapter (1-8), Sermon (page 5)

Hymn of the Day On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry (public domain) LBW 36, ELW 249

***On Jordan's banks the Baptist's cry announces that the Lord is nigh;
Awake and hearken, for he brings glad tidings of the King of kings!***

***Then cleansed be every life from sin; make straight the way for God within,
And let us all our hearts prepare for Christ to come and enter there.***

***We hail you as our Savior, Lord, our refuge and our great reward;
Without your grace we waste away like flow'rs that wither and decay.***

***All praise to you eternal Son, whose advent has our freedom won,
Whom with the Father we adore, and Holy Spirit, evermore.***

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers (from *Sundays and Seasons*, ELCA worship guide)

God of power and might, comfort your people and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

Faithful God, you teach us to wait for you with faithfulness and patience. Sustain and support us in our doubts and questions. Nurture our faith as we discern and enact your mission. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

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Loving God, you hold the stars in the sky and breathe life into the earth. Renew the face of creation where it is in need of your healing touch. Mend the wounds of environmental damage and restore balance to ecosystems so that all creation can declare your praise. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Steadfast God, you never tire of seeking justice. Where people suffer from discrimination, judgment, and injustice, speak words of truth and comfort. We pray for our polarized nation; for those who deny the reality of the COVID crisis; for those who cling to party lines rather than the good of this one nation under Your reign. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of healing, you ask us to make uneven ground smooth. Level the disparities between your people. Sustain and support those with physical and intellectual disabilities. Accompany advocates who work for a world accessible to all. Teach us to celebrate the great diversity in our midst. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Tender God, you know sorrow and joy alike. We pray for those in our families and congregations who are not joyful in this holiday season. Comfort those who grieve, be a companion to all who are lonely, tend those who are sick or struggling with depression, and gather all people into your healing embrace. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Eternal God, we give thanks for the saints who have prepared your way in the wilderness and taught us to continue their faithful work. May all those who are dying cling to their witness, and to your eternal promises. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, **Our Father**

Closing Hymn *Prepare the Royal Highway* (public domain) LBW 26, ELW 264

*Prepare the royal highway; the King of kings is near!
Let ev'ry hill and valley a level road appear!
Then greet the King of glory, foretold in sacred story:*

Refrain: *Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God's Word!*

*Then fling the gates wide open to greet your promised king!
Your king, yet ev'ry nation its tribute too may bring.
All lands will bow before him; their voices join your singing: Refrain*

*His is no earthly kingdom; it comes from heav'n above.
His rule is peace and freedom and justice, truth, and love.
So let your praise be sounding for kindness so abounding: Refrain*

Benediction: The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord look upon you with favor, and give you peace. Amen.