

WORSHIP SERVICE
November 29, 2020
First Sunday of Advent

WE GATHER FOR WORSHIP

Prelude

Welcome

God's Greeting

* We Greet One Another

* Call to Worship

A voice cries:

**"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God."**

As we worship today,

**let us prepare to welcome God's dramatic work in our midst,
in our hearts, in our community, and in all of creation.**

Let us worship God.

Advent Candle Lighting: Hope

On this first Sunday of Advent, we light the candle of hope. [*Light candle.*] Isaiah gives us a vision of a kingdom yet to come where everything has been made new and where creation is at peace. "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—and he will delight in the fear of the LORD" (Isaiah 11:1–3). We light this candle of hope as a sign of our waiting and expectation for the coming Christ.

* Opening Song: "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Lift Up Your Hearts #88

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.

Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;

the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary and, gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.

O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth.

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!

So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven.

No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive Him still the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray.

Cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today.

We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;

O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.

* Opening Prayer

WE ARE RECONCILED TO GOD

Unison Prayer of Confession

We wait and we hope. For many of us, Christmas feels like a time in which we do neither. The season has become one of parties and extra activities, plans with family, year-end deadlines, and purchasing gifts. There is not much space for us to wait and feel hopeful. So this morning we begin our time of prayer by carving out some space for silence, for silent prayers to God or maybe just for silence before God.

Time of Silence

Emmanuel, God with us, in this Advent season, we confess how difficult it is to slow down. We don't want to wait patiently for anything, and instead we buy into the busyness of the season, leading many of us to feel a lack of joy and a lack of hope. When we look at the world around us, it's hard to feel hopeful about the world, about our nation, about ourselves. We are surrounded by death, destruction, and pain, and we long for a day when your promised kingdom comes to make all things new. Give us hope that this day is indeed coming, and help us to rest in this because your promises are always true. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Our hope for a new creation is not tied to what humans can do, for we believe that one day every challenge to God's rule will be crushed. His kingdom will fully come, and the Lord will rule. Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Congregational Prayer

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 11:1–10

Message: "Be Not Afraid: The Hopes and Fears of All the Years"

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

Prayer of Application

- * Song of Response: "Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

Lift Up Your Hearts #56

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.

WE DEPART TO SERVE

- * Closing Prayer

Eternal God, for whom all people wait and search, open our eyes, closed by fear and blinded by self-pity, that we may see clearly the anxieties and uncertainties that beset our days. These are the very circumstances that make us long for your return.

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee, O Christ.

For those whose fears cause them to fight or to flee, who cannot name or feel or know the depths of their own sorrow or anger, who are so hidden they cannot even find themselves, who pretend when the work of holiness demands honesty: teach us vulnerability to name our fears, to experience hope, and to trust in you.

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee, O Christ.

For those whose fears cause them to freeze, who feel stuck in patterns and behaviors they know are not healthy or wise but do not know how to do or to be anything other than what they've always done and always been: teach us vulnerability to name our fears, to experience hope, and to trust in you.

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee, O Christ.

We pray for all who are leading the nations. Give them a sense of what is right, that they may work toward peace, the common good, and human flourishing for all. Call each of us as we enter our workplaces, communities, and homes to bring your presence with us, bearing signs of your light in dim and dark places. Teach us vulnerability to name our fears, to experience hope, and to trust in you.

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee, O Christ.

Eternal God, ever faithful to your promises, the earth rejoices in hope of our Savior's coming and looks forward with longing to his return at the end of time. Prepare our hearts to receive him when he comes, for he is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

- * Postlude

* Please stand if able.

Message: Pastor Randy Raak

Musician: Andrew Friend