

ADVENT II WORSHIP

December 5, 2021

Words of Welcome

Gathering Hymn: "Comfort, comfort"

Hymnal #67

**1. Comfort, comfort ye My people,
speak ye peace, thus saith our God;
Comfort those who sit in darkness,
mourning 'neath their sorrow's load;
Speak ye to Jerusalem
of the peace that waits for them;
Tell her that her sins I cover,
and her warfare now is over.**

**2. Hark, the voice of one that crieth
in the desert far and near,
Calling us to new repentance,
since the kingdom now is here.
O 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.**

**3. Make ye straight what long was crooked,
make the rougher places plain;
Let your hearts be true and humble as befits his holy reign.
For the glory of the Lord now o'er earth is shed abroad,
And all flesh shall see the token
that the word is never broken.**

The Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Officiant In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord.

People **Make straight in the desert a pathway for our God.**

Reader People of God: be glad! Your God delights in you, giving you joy for sadness and turning shadows to light. Be strong in hope therefore, for your God comes to save. You are God's beloved children.

We watch the lighting of the first and second Advent candles.

Celebrant Let us pray.

People **Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.**

SONG (10AM): "O come, O come, Emmanuel," verses 3 & 4

Hymnal #56

**3. O come, O come, thou Lord of might,
who to thy tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times didst give the law,
in cloud, and majesty, and awe.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**4. O come, thou Branch of Jesse's tree,
free them from Satan's tyranny
that trust thy mighty power to save,
and give them vic'try o'er the grave.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

The Confession & Absolution

Officiant Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

A substantial silence for reflection is kept.

Officiant Lord Jesus, you came to gather the nations into the peace of your kingdom: Lord, have mercy.

People **Lord, have mercy.**

Officiant You come in word and sacrament to strengthen us in holiness: Christ, have mercy.

People **Christ, have mercy.**

Officiant You will come in glory with salvation for all your people: Lord, have mercy.

People **Lord, have mercy.**

Celebrant

The almighty and merciful God grant us pardon and remission of all our sins, renewal of life, and the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The First Reading: Malachi 3:1-4

Reader A reading from the book of the prophet Malachi.

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight-- indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Song of Faith: Luke 1:68-72, 78-79

Blessed are You, O God of Israel;

you have come to your people and set them free.

You have raised up for us a mighty savior,

born of the house of your servant David.

Through your holy prophets you promised of old

that you would save us from our enemies,

from the hands of all who hate us.

You promised to show mercy to our forebears,

and to remember your holy covenant.

And you, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, *

for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,

To give his people knowledge of salvation *

by the forgiveness of their sins.

In the tender compassion of our God

the dawn from on high shall break upon us,

To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,

and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Scripture Drama: Luke 1: 5-25, 39-80; 3:1-6

READER Zechariah and Elizabeth lived about two thousand years ago. They were married, and loved each other. They were growing old, and had never had children, although they had prayed for a child for many long years.

ELIZABETH We've been hoping for so long..

ZECHARIAH Never mind, at least we have each other.

READER Zechariah was a priest who served in the great Temple of God in Jerusalem. One day, it was his turn to offer incense at the great altar. All the people who gathered to worship were praying outside. Suddenly, just to the right of the altar, an angel from God appeared to him. Zechariah was startled and overcome with fear!

ZECHARIAH AAAAGH!

ANGEL Don't be afraid, Zechariah! Your prayers have been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will give birth to your son and you must name him John. He will have a special calling from God, and be filled with the Holy Spirit even before his birth. He will bring many Israelites back to the Lord their God, for he will be a prophet like the great prophet Elijah. He will turn the hearts of parents back to their children, and he will turn the disobedient to righteousness. He will make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

ZECHARIAH How can I be sure this will come true? It seems unlikely to me. My wife and I are very old.

ANGEL I am Gabriel! I stand in God's presence! I was sent to speak to you and to bring this good news to you. Know this: What I have spoken will come true at the proper time. But because you didn't believe me, you will remain silent, unable to speak until the day when these things happen.

READER Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they wondered why he was in the sanctuary for such a long time.

NEIGHBOR 1 What's going on in there?

NEIGHBOR 2 It doesn't take THIS long to offer incense...

READER When he came out, he was unable to speak to them.

NEIGHBOR 1 He can't speak! His voice doesn't work!

NEIGHBOR 2 He must have seen a vision in the temple!

NEIGHBOR 1 Too much incense smoke, if you ask me.

READER When he completed the days of his priestly service, he returned home. And the angel's words were true: Elizabeth became pregnant. She kept it a secret for five whole months.

ELIZABETH I am afraid to share this good news; it seems too good to be true! This must be the Lord's doing. He has shown his favor to me by removing my disgrace among other people.

NEIGHBOR 1 I haven't seen Elizabeth for a while, have you?

NEIGHBOR 2 Not for months. Does she think she's too good for us?

READER When it was getting close to Elizabeth's time to give birth, her cousin Mary came to visit her. Mary was pregnant too. When Elizabeth heard Mary's voice, she felt her baby jump inside her!

ELIZABETH God has blessed you above all women, and he has blessed the child you carry. Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. Happy is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill the promises he made to her!

READER Then Mary sang a song of holy joy.

MARY With all my heart I glorify the Lord! For God has looked with favor on the low status of his servant. Look! From now on, all generations will call me blessed, because the Mighty One has done great things for me. God has raised up the lowly, and cast down the mighty!

READER Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months, and then returned to her home. When the time came for Elizabeth to have her child, she gave birth to a boy. Her neighbors and relatives celebrated with her because they had heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy.

NEIGHBOR 1 Oh my gosh, did you HEAR the NEWS?

NEIGHBOR 2 It's amazing. You know, she is VERY old.

READER On the eighth day, it came time to circumcise the child. They wanted to name him Zechariah because that was his father's name.

NEIGHBOR 1 Zechariah is a nice strong name. It means, God remembers!

NEIGHBOR 2 Yeah, like God finally remembered to send you a baby!

ELIZABETH No, his name will be John.

NEIGHBOR 1 None of your relatives have that name.

NEIGHBOR 2 Let's ask the father. Surely he wants his son to be named after him.

NEIGHBOR 1 (*GESTURING/SPEAKING LOUDLY*)

WHAT - DO - YOU - WANT - TO - NAME - THE - BABY?

READER Zechariah took a tablet and wrote on it - to everyone's surprise.

ZECHARIAH hold up sign: "HIS NAME IS JOHN."

NEIGHBOR 2 Well, I never!

READER At that moment, Zechariah was able to speak again, and he began praising God. He was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied,

ZECHARIAH Blessed be the God of Israel, who has come to rescue our people, just as it was promised in the words of the prophets long ago!
God has remembered the promise to Abraham and Sarah, to save us from the power of our enemies, so that we can be free to serve God without fear, all the days of our lives!
And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High God, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way.
In the tender compassion of our God, the dawn from heaven will break upon us, giving light to those dwelling in the shadow of death, and guiding us on the path of peace!

READER All their neighbors were filled with awe, and everyone throughout the Judean highlands talked about what had happened. All who heard about this considered it carefully.

NEIGHBOR 1 What will this child become!?

NEIGHBOR 2 Indeed, God's power is with him!

READER The child grew up, becoming strong in character. He lived in the wilderness until he began his public ministry to Israel.
In the fifteenth year of the rule of the emperor Tiberius—when Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea and Herod was ruler over Galilee, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas—God's word came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. *Continued*

READER John went throughout the region of the Jordan River.

JOHN Come, be baptized! Be washed in the waters of the Jordan, to show that you are changing their hearts and lives, and seeking God's forgiveness!

READER This is just as it was written in the scroll of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "A voice crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight. Every valley will be filled, and every mountain and hill will be leveled.... And all humanity will see God's salvation."

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Homily

The Rev. Miranda Hassett

The Prayers

Officiant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Officiant As we pray together, you may unmute yourself if you choose, and you may pray using any version of this prayer that is in your heart. If you prefer to pray in silence, you can also turn off the sound on your computer as you pray. Now, let us pray as God's beloved children, using the prayer Jesus taught us.

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

The Prayers of the People for Advent

Susanne Watson Epting, alt.

To add a name to our prayer list at any time, or to join the email group that holds the community's concerns in prayer, email prayers@stdunstans.com.

Officiant

Let us pray together, saying, "Stay with us while we wait."

For the church that watches and waits for you, Lord Christ.

The people add their prayers for the church, silently or aloud.

God who has come and is coming again,

Stay with us while we wait.

For our nation and its leaders.

The people add their prayers for the country and those in authority, silently or aloud.

God who has come and is coming again,
Stay with us while we wait.

For the welfare of all nations and peoples.

The people add their prayers for the whole world, silently or aloud.

God who has come and is coming again,
Stay with us while we wait.

For the earth and the whole created order.

The people add their prayers for the whole world, silently or aloud.

God who has come and is coming again,
Stay with us while we wait.

For our local communities.

The people add prayers for the concerns and gifts of the local community, silently or aloud.

God who has come and is coming again,
Stay with us while we wait.

For all who suffer from any need or trouble.

We pray especially for those on our parish prayer list: ...
And for those we now name...

The people add their prayers for those who suffer in body, mind or spirit, silently or aloud.

God who has come and is coming again,
Stay with us while we wait.

For the special needs and concerns, hopes and thanksgivings of this gathered community.

The people add their prayers silently or aloud.

God who has come and is coming again,
Stay with us while we wait.

For those who have died, and those who mourn.

The people add their prayers for those who have died, silently or aloud.

God who has come and is coming again,
Stay with us while we wait.

Celebrant

O Lord, you have set before us the great hope that your kingdom shall come on earth, and have taught us to pray for its coming: Give us grace to discern the signs of its dawning, and to work for the perfect day when your will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Peace

Celebrant In the tender mercy of our God,
the Dayspring from on high shall break upon us,
to give light to those who dwell in the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.
The peace of the Lord be always with you!

People **And also with you!**

We greet one another, wishing one another the peace of Christ.

Birthday Blessings

The Blessing & Dismissal

Celebrant May Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you,
scatter the shadows from before your path,
and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory;
and the blessing of God Almighty, Source, Word, and Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Officiant Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God!**