

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 21, 2025

PRELUDE

Dave Roos

Gathering

## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, whose home is heaven and earth,  
whose salvation is sure. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God  
and of one another.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Long-expected God,  
**we confess that we look to ourselves  
for the peace and security only you can provide.  
We reach for swords and spears,  
reluctant to release our grip on the ways of war.  
We become impatient while waiting  
and weary of keeping awake.**

**Free us from self-reliance,  
and teach us to live in harmony with our neighbors.  
Increase our trust in God's timing,  
and awaken us to your advent among us,  
that we may abound in the hope you have promised.  
Amen.**

God judges us not as we deserve,  
but according to God's own righteousness.  
† You are freed and forgiven, saved by grace,  
and ready to welcome the Savior. **Amen.**

GATHERING HYMN

ELW #256

"Comfort, Comfort Now My People"

- 1 "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 them that their war is over;  
God will reign in peace forever.

- 2 For the herald's voice is crying  
in the desert far and near,  
calling us to true repentance,  
since the reign of God is here.  
Oh, that warning cry obey!  
Now prepare for God a way.  
Valleys, rise to greet the Savior;  
hills, bow down in humble favor.
- 3 Straight shall be what long was crooked,  
and the rougher places plain.  
Let your hearts be true and humble,  
as befits God's 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.

#### ADVENT WREATH CANDLE LIGHTING - The Candle Of Love

Let us pray. O God, **you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son. Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred that infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; and unite us in bonds of love. Work to accomplish your good purposes in us, so that, in your good time, every people and nation may serve you in harmony. We pray this through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

READING

Psalm 146

DIALOG

LIGHTING OF THE FOURTH CANDLE: "Love"

#### ADVENT HYMN ACS #901 "Now the Heavens Start to Whisper"

- 1 Now the heavens start to whisper,  
as the veil is growing thin.  
Earth from slumber wakes to listen  
to the stirring, faint within:  
seed of promise, deeply planted,  
child to spring from Jesse's stem!  
Like the soil beneath the frostline,  
hearts grow soft to welcome him.

- 2 Heavy clouds that block the moonlight  
now begin to drift away.  
Diamond brilliance through the darkness  
shines the hope of coming day.  
Christ, the morning star of splendor,  
gleams within a world grown dim.  
Heaven's ember fans to fullness;  
hearts grow warm to welcome him.
- 3 Christ, eternal Sun of justice,  
Christ, the rose of wisdom's seed,  
come to bless with fire and fragrance  
hours of yearning, hurt, and need.  
In the lonely, in the stranger,  
in the outcast, hid from view;  
Child who comes to grace the manger,  
teach our hearts to welcome you.

#### GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. **With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that hinders our faith, that eagerly we may receive your promises, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

#### Word

#### BIBLE READING

Romans 1:1-7

#### CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

#### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

TFF #45 "Emmanuel"

Emmanuel, Emmanuel,  
His name is called Emmanuel:  
God with us, revealed in us!  
His name is called Emmanuel.

#### GOSPEL

Matthew 1:18-25

## SERMON

Pastor Julie Brenden

## HYMN OF DAY

ELW #266

“All Earth is Hopeful”

- 1 All earth is hopeful, the Savior comes at last!  
Furrows lie open for God's creative task:  
this, the labor of people who struggle to see  
how God's truth and justice set ev'rybody free.
- 2 People of Israel, you heard the prophet tell:  
"A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel";  
she conceived him, "God with us,"  
our brother, whose birth  
restores hope and courage to children of this earth.
- 3 Mountains and valleys will have to be prepared;  
new highways opened, new protocols declared.  
Almost here! God is nearing, in beauty and grace!  
All clear ev'ry gateway, in haste, come out in haste!
- 4 We first saw Jesus a baby in a crib.  
This same Lord Jesus today has come to live  
in our world; he is present, in neighbors we see  
our Jesus is with us, and ever sets us free.

## APOSTLES' CREED

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

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our**

**Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come 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 OF INTERCESSION

In our waiting and watching, we come to you in prayer, O God, trusting your promise to renew the church, the nations, and the whole creation.

Responses: God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Draw near to us, O God, as we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ, Emmanuel. **Amen.**

Meal

OFFERING & HYMN                      ELW #282 - vs 1, 3, 4      “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear”

- 1 It came upon the midnight clear,  
that glorious song of old,  
from angels bending near the earth  
to touch their harps of gold:  
"Peace on the earth, good will to all,  
from heav'n's all-gracious king."  
The world in solemn stillness lay  
to hear the angels sing.
  
- 3 And you, beneath life's crushing load,  
whose forms are bending low,  
who toil along the climbing way  
with painful steps and slow:  
look now, for glad and golden hours  
come swiftly on the wing;  
oh, rest beside the weary road  
and hear the angels sing!
  
- 4 For lo! The days are hast'ning on,  
by prophets seen of old,  
when with the ever-circling years  
shall come the time foretold,  
when peace shall over all the earth  
its ancient splendors fling,  
and all the world give back the song  
which now the angels sing.

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray. Nourishing God, **you are water in the wilderness and streams in the desert. Through this meal, satisfy our parched places, that we may rejoice and be for the world signs of your kingdom come. Amen.**

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.  
**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,**

**thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
 Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,  
 as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
 and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
 For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,  
 forever and ever. Amen.**

COMMUNION & HYMN ELW #286

“Your Little Ones, Dear Lord”

- 1 Your little ones, dear Lord, are we,  
 and come your lowly bed to see;  
 enlighten ev'ry soul and mind,  
 that we the way to you may find.
  
- 2 With songs we hasten you to greet,  
 and kiss the ground before your feet.  
 Oh, blessed hour, oh, sweetest night  
 that gave you birth, our soul's delight.
  
- 3 Oh, draw us wholly to you, Lord,  
 and to us all your grace accord;  
 true faith and love to us impart,  
 that we may hold you in our heart.
  
- 4 Until at last we too proclaim,  
 with all your saints, your glorious name;  
 in paradise our songs renew,  
 and praise you as the angels do.

COMMUNION BLESSING

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray. God our host, **at this table you have fed us with joy and gladness.  
 Send us forth, eager to share the feast, welcome the stranger, and bear  
 good fruit in the name of Jesus. Amen.**

Sending

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BENEDICTION

May God who comes among us, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit,

grant you patience in waiting, peace in the darkness,  
and good news to share today and always. **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN      ELW #294      “In the Bleak Midwinter”

- 1      In the bleak midwinter,  
        frosty wind made moan,  
        earth stood hard as iron,  
        water like a stone;  
        snow had fallen, snow on snow,  
        snow on snow,  
        in the bleak midwinter,  
        long ago.
  
- 2      Heaven cannot hold him,  
        nor earth sustain;  
        heav'n and earth shall flee away  
        when he comes to reign;  
        in the bleak midwinter  
        a stable place sufficed  
        the Lord God almighty,  
        Jesus Christ.
  
- 3      What can I give him,  
        poor as I am?  
        If I were a shepherd  
        I would bring a lamb;  
        if I were a wise man  
        I would do my part;  
        yet what I can I give him—  
        give my heart.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Keep awake. **Thanks be to God.**