

ORDER OF SERVICE

Holy Communion ELW Setting 7 (red) ~ 3 Advent

[* Indicates when the congregation is seated.

Please only stand as able]

[**Bolded** section of text is for congregation to recite]

Music Director: Gloria Berg

Gathering

* Prelude

* Welcome & Announcements

* Lighting of the third Advent Candle (Joy)

Two candles are already lit.

Youth: We have lit again the two candles in our Advent wreath, to remind us of God's gifts of hope and peace. Today we will light the third candle, the one representing joy.

Pastor: As we wait for Christmas, the birth of Jesus, we look forward to the joyful celebrations we will share with those we love. The prophet Zephaniah calls us to shout for joy, because God will gather together all people and renew them in love. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the angel told the shepherds not to be afraid for they brought 'good news of a great joy, which shall be to all people.' The good news of Jesus' birth and the promise of Shalom are still 'tidings of great joy' for us today.

Youth: The third candle reminds us of our joy in Jesus Christ.

Please assist Sunday School child. The third candle is lit.

Let us pray!

Thank you, God, for your promise of joy. As we prepare for Christ's coming, help us to recognize the moments of joy in our lives and to live joyfully so that others may come see the joy that comes from following in your way. Amen.

Hymn Lead Us Towards Christ (Trevor Hicks)

Refrain

Lead us t'wards Christ as we His coming await.

Lead us t'wards His light. This, O God, we pray:

Candle of hope shine in darkness,

Hope for the needs of the world,

Hope for a cure for all illness,

Hope that through Jesus is unfurled! *Refrain*

Candle of peace shine in darkness,

Peace for a world that's in strife,

Peace between races and nations,

Peace that through Jesus will find life! *Refrain*

Candle of joy shine in darkness,
Joy for a world on the mend,
Joy for our worship together,
Joy that through Jesus will not end! *Refrain*

***Children's Message**

Dear God,
help us to learn
that it is in giving
that we receive the greater gift:
the gift of joy.
In Jesus's name we pray.
Amen.

Hymn (red) ELW 242 Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

- 1 Awake! Awake, and greet the new morn,
for angels herald its dawning.
Sing out your joy, for soon he is born,
behold! the Child of our longing.
Come as a baby weak and poor,
to bring all hearts together,
he opens wide the heav'nly door
and lives now inside us forever.
- 2 To us, to all in sorrow and fear,
Emmanuel comes a-singing,
his humble song is quiet and near,
yet fills the earth with its ringing;
music to heal the broken soul
and hymns of lovingkindness,
the thunder of his anthems roll
to shatter all hatred and blindness.
- 3 In darkest night his coming shall be,
when all the world is despairing,
as morning light so quiet and free,
so warm and gentle and caring.
Then shall the mute break forth in song,
the lame shall leap in wonder,
the weak be raised above the strong,
and weapons be broken asunder.
- 4 Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night,

though dark the winter and cheerless,
the rising sun shall crown you with light,
be strong and loving and fearless.
Love be our song and love our prayer
and love our endless story;
may God fill ev'ry day we share
and bring us at last into glory.

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950. Text © 1983 GIA Publications, Inc., 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638.
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Apostolic Greeting (p. 175)

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

Response: **And also with you.**

Kyrie (p. 175)

Lord, have mercy on us; O Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy on us; O Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy on us; O Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy on us; O Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy on us; O Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy on us; O Lord, have mercy.

Canticle of Praise (p. 176)

Gloria, gloria, gloria, glory to God on high!
Gloria, gloria, gloria, glory to God on high!
And on earth peace to God's people. Glory to God.
And on earth peace to God's people. Glory to God.

Prayer of the Day

Gracious God, as we look upon this third Sunday Advent, we worship you with prayers of
thanks. We worship you with voices in song. We worship you with hearts and minds. We
worship you with thanksgiving and love. We worship you with joyfulness and praise.
Thank you, God, for the Advent gift of Worship! Amen.

***Choir** 'Hymn for Advent' (Hatch)

Word

* **First Reading: Philippians 4:4-7**

The First Reading is from the Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians, chapter 4:

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the

peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Response: Word of God. Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

*** Psalm: Isaiah 12:2-6 (sung responsively)**

Words from the prophet Isaiah will be sung responsively:

² Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not | be afraid,
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might, and has
become | my salvation.

³ **With joy you | will draw water
from the wells | of salvation.**

⁴ And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the LORD, call | on
God's name; make known the deeds of the LORD among the
nations; proclaim that this name | is exalted.

⁵ **Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done | gloriously;
let this be known in | all the earth.**

⁶ Shout aloud and sing for joy, O | royal Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy | One of Israel.

Gospel Acclamation (p. 179)

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Alleluia, alleluia,

alleluia! Alleluia!

Gospel: Luke 3:7-18

Response: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

⁷ John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹ Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." ¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" ¹¹ In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." ¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" ¹³ He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." ¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages." ¹⁵ As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶ John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming;

I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” ¹⁸ So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

Response: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Hymn (red) ELW 843 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness

- 1 Praise the One who breaks the darkness
with a liberating light;
praise the One who frees the pris'ners,
turning blindness into sight.
Praise the One who preached the gospel,
healing ev'ry dread disease,
calming storms and feeding thousands
with the very bread of peace.
- 2 Praise the One who blessed the children
with a strong yet gentle word;
praise the One who drove out demons
with a piercing, two-edged sword.
Praise the One who brings cool water
to the desert's burning sand;
from this well comes living water
quenching thirst in ev'ry land.
- 3 Praise the one true love incarnate:
Christ, who suffered in our place;
Jesus died and rose for many
that we may know God by grace.
Let us sing for joy and gladness,
seeing what our God has done.
Praise the one redeeming glory;
praise the One who makes us one.

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*** Message**

Grace and Peace from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today I want to talk about one of the most beloved figures of the Christmas season – and, no, I am not talking about Santa, Rudolph, or Frosty. I am talking about angels. We see angels on Christmas cards, as decorations, and ornaments. And many lessons we hear during the Advent and Christmas season talk about angels being involved in the great story of Jesus' birth. The angel Gabriel comes to Mary during the annunciation,

announcing the birth of Jesus, and his first words are: fear not. An angel comes to Joseph in a dream and admonishes him to stay with Mary, though the child she bears is not from him, and the angel's first words are: fear not! Then, of course, at Jesus' birth, the shepherds in the field hear the angelic words: fear not; glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, and goodwill among all people.

We know of the 4 archangels: aforementioned Gabriel, whose name means, 'God is my strength'. Michael, whose name means, 'Who is like God?' Raphael, whose name means, 'God has healed'. And then the lesser-known Uriel, whose name means, 'God is my light'. These are beautiful angelic names, who are a message of God in themselves.

We experience God's angels as heavenly creatures who come to comfort, to assure us that there is nothing to fear whenever God is present, and to bring good news to all. And thinking of those angels, and feeling those good vibes, we may want to join the Apostle Paul in shouting with mirth: Rejoice! Rejoice in the Lord always, and AGAIN, I will say, rejoice! The Lord is near!

However, I left out one very important angel. And this angel is not like those angels we have come to expect during this season, those angels, which are often portrayed as whimsical. This angel doesn't wear a flowing robe, doesn't have any wings, or a halo; this angel is clothed with camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, looks quite unkempt, and leads a very down-to-earth, and, by the way, earth friendly life. I am talking of the angel named John.

Ever heard of this angel? I think I got some explaining to do. According to the entire Bible, what we call the Old Testament and the New Testament, angels are those who bring a message from God. The English word angel comes from the Greek word angelos, which literally means messenger -any kind of messenger. We still can see the roots of this word for message, angelon, in the word evangelism, which comes from euangelion, which means good news. And so it says about John the Baptist, See, I am sending my angelos ahead of you, who will prepare the way.

It is simply by bias of those who translated those holy texts that sometimes, an angelos would be identified with an angel, a heavenly creature, or with a mere human messenger of God's word. And John's name is a message in itself – in the original Hebrew, the name is 'Yochanan', which means, 'God stoops down', or 'God is gracious'.

And by the way, we find the same ambiguity about God's various messengers in Hebrew Scriptures as well: here the word is Malach, as in the prophet with the name of Malachi. Malach can mean heavenly messenger – or a malach is a very human and earthly messenger. No wings. No halo. No whimsy.

John seems to fall more in the latter category. Although in Orthodox iconography, John is often depicted with wings, as a true angel. Interesting, isn't it?

Now the message we hear from the angel John sounds a little different than the message of the heavenly messengers we encounter in the story surrounding Jesus' birth. Instead of a comforting and uplifting message, we hear: You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance! Remember, John was talking to people who were flocking out to him, those were people who were ready to be baptized and have their lives turned around. Can you imagine what would happen if I addressed anyone who asked to be baptized that way? And we may be more than confused by the quite different angelic messages we hear during this season. What now? Is it: fear not and rejoice, rejoice in the Lord always – or repent? The answer is: yes!

As human beings, we may think in a more polarized fashion: yes or no, in or out, right or wrong, happy or serious, rejoice or repent. But, as all of you probably can attest, life often is not so clear and easy, but rather ambiguous, sometimes even downright messy. Yes, we have every reason to rejoice: because God became one of us, to walk with us, to be with us, and to take on our burden of guilt and hurt and wrongdoings. We are forgiven and whole in God's eyes. Grace, God's amazing grace, comes first. That's a reason to rejoice, to rejoice always.

Grace is a gift. But we need to unwrap it – and use it. We have to live in this grace, and, yes, live up to that grace, or at least attempt to live up to it. And that's where the angel John comes in. Many may listen to John and his message and simply hear the part where it comes to God's expectations of us: repent, bear fruit of repentance, do this, don't do that. And we may just try to close our ears or simply sit there, smiling and nodding politely, well, yeah, somehow it's part of the Advent season, but I don't really want to hear that, and I don't really care. But if we do that, we might miss that there is a lot of grace connected with the angel John's message. God cares – about us, about humanity, about all of creation – that's why God wants us to change our minds, change our hearts, change our thinking. And God knows peace and goodwill are only possible if and when we take care of one another.

And this angelic message of taking care of each other is at the root of what at first sounds more like John's rather profane to-do list: if you have two coats, give one away, share your food; you, tax collectors, don't take bribes but only what is allotted to you; you, soldiers, don't blackmail and try to get 'protection fees' out of the people. John's angelic and challenging message is about care and goodwill for the neighbour. Now if everyone listened to that angelic voice, and changed their attitude to the point that they truly cared for their neighbour and their neighbours' well-being – can you imagine what a world this would be? It probably comes very close to what the angelic host proclaim to the shepherds in the field, 'peace on earth, and goodwill among all people' – if we only let God challenge us, and if only we let God work through us.

And how blessedly different are all those angelic messages we hear during this season compared to many of the political messages we are exposed to these days! I take the 'Fear not' and 'Take care of each other' over any message that says, "Be very much afraid, especially of those who are different from you", and, "Everybody for themselves; my freedom comes first. What do I care about the plight of those in need?"

So here's to all the angelic voices we hear around us – the ones that comfort us, and the ones that challenge us. And here's to all of God's angels: those heavenly creatures with wings and halos, and those unassuming and very down-to-earth ones who walk into our lives and, often unbeknownst to them, bring us a message from God and let us know: God is near. Don't be afraid, even though the burden of your life is heavy, and the road ahead of you may be rough. Repent. And rejoice. Always. Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Hymn of the Month (blue) 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.

Text: Mary Louise Bringle, b. 1953. Text © 2006 GIA Publications, Inc., giamusic.com. All rights reserved.

Apostles' Creed (p. 217)

With the whole church we confess our Christian faith.

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

Response: Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

As we prepare for Emmanuel, God-with-us, let us pray for all people and places that long for God's presence.

A brief silence.

God who reforms, fill your church with courage to do your will. Empower your people in taking risks that bear fruit. Raise up leaders who will proclaim the good news. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

God who creates, you hold in balance diverse ecosystems. Encourage efforts to protect wild lands from devastation. Care for animals and people in the path of destructive fires, storms, and other disasters. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

God who leads, this world cries out for true justice. Guide legislatures, judges, and lawyers in actions steeped in love and restoration. Increase the desire to advocate for all who are confronted with discrimination and oppression based on race, gender, sexuality, class, or age. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

God who embraces, help us notice the places where your people are hurting or sick. We pray especially for those on our prayer list and those in our hearts Show your compassion and remember your people in love. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

God who abides, you dwell among the people of this congregation. Deepen our relationships with one another, and make us aware of the diverse talents and gifts present here may it be in administration, decorating, music, teaching, fellowship, care, and many more. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

God who listens, you want your children to love each other and be concerned for each other's well-being. We thank you for those of our friends in Christ who gather around our prayer box and lift up the urgent and last-minute petitions which someone concerned has placed in there, asking that prayers be made for them. Continue to bless our Prayer Box ministry. Lord, in your mercy,

receive our prayer.

God who consoles, we thank you for the time we have had with loved ones who have died. Comfort us with the promise of everlasting life in you. Lord, in your mercy,

receive our prayer.

Saviour of the nations, come, and receive these prayers and the pleas of our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Sharing of the Peace (p. 180)

The peace of Christ be with you always.

Response: **And also with you.**

*** Offering**

Hymn (red) ELW 244 Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers

- 1 Rejoice, rejoice, believers,
and let your lights appear;
the evening is advancing,
and darker night is near.
The bridegroom is arising
and soon is drawing nigh.
Up, pray and watch and wrestle;
at midnight comes the cry.
- 2 The watchers on the mountain
proclaim the bridegroom near;
go forth as he approaches
with alleluias clear.
The marriage feast is waiting;
the gates wide open stand.
Arise, O heirs of glory;
the bridegroom is at hand.
- 3 The saints, who here in patience
their cross and suff'rings bore,
shall live and reign forever
when sorrow is no more.
Around the throne of glory
the Lamb they shall behold;
in triumph cast before him

their diadems of gold.

- 4 Our hope and expectation,
O Jesus, now appear;
arise, O Sun so longed for,
o'er this benighted sphere.
With hearts and hands uplifted,
we plead, O Lord, to see
the day of earth's redemption
that sets your people free!

Text: Laurentius Laurenti, 1660-1722; tr. Sarah B. Findlater, 1823-1907

Meal

Offering Prayer

Creator God,

you made the whole world, even the farthest stars, and you draw near to feed us. We praise you for these gifts of bread and wine. Strengthen us with this food that we may live in expectation for the advent of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Great Thanksgiving (p. 180)

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

Preface

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ. You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Response (p. 181)

Holy, holy, holy Lord God,

God of might and power;

holy is the Lord.

Holy, holy, holy Lord God,

God of might and power;

holy is the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest,
hosanna here on earth.
Blest is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest,
hosanna here on earth.
Blest is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Thanksgiving at the Table III (p. 132)

Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life: Blessed are you for the birth of creation. Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light. Blessed are you for your promise to your people. Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams. Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will. Blessed are you for your Son Jesus, the Word made flesh.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith: **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.** With this bread and cup we remember your Word dwelling among us, full of grace and truth. We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection. We look with hope for his coming. **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Holy God, we long for your Spirit. Come among us. Bless this meal. May your Word take flesh in us. Awaken your people. Fill us with your light. Bring the gift of peace on earth.

Come, Holy Spirit.

All praise and glory are yours, Holy One of Israel, Word of God Incarnate, Power of the Most High, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer (p. 182)

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as 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 forever. Amen.

Invitation

God feeds us with tender mercy. Come to the table. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Words of Distribution for live-stream

The body of Christ given for you. The blood of Christ shed for you.

O Lamb of God (p. 182)

O Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
Have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us.
O Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
Have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us.
O Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
grant us your peace, grant us your peace.

*** Distribution**

At the direction of the usher(s), communicants come forward, entering the center aisle from both sides and receive the bread from the pastor and then proceed to take wine from the common cup or an individual cup from the tray closest to the pew you are sitting in (used cups are placed in baskets right beside the Worship Assistant). Individuals not receiving communion are welcome to come forward to receive a blessing.

*** Communion Hymns (red) ELW 253, 468, 462**

Table Blessing

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.
Amen.

Prayer after Communion

Generous God,
we thank you for the gift of life, for the bread of salvation. We thank you for coming among us, for leading us into peace. We thank you for showering us with mercy, for sending us into the world. Come, Lord Jesus, and go with us as we feed the hungry in your name.
Amen.

Sending

Prayer for Potluck Lunch

Thank you, God, for bringing us together, sharing food and fellowship with each other. Thank you for the joy of eating, for the joy of talking, for the joy of listening, for the joy of laughing, for the joy of helping, for the joy of worshiping, for the joy of resting, for the joy of loving, for the joy of Advent waiting. We thank you, God, for the Advent gift of joy.
Amen.

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favour and give you peace. **Amen.**

Hymn (red) ELW 867 In Thee Is Gladness

1 In thee is gladness amid all sadness,
Jesus, sunshine of my heart.
By thee are given the gifts of heaven,

thou the true redeemer art.
Our souls thou wakest; our bonds thou breakest.
Who trusts thee surely has built securely
and stands forever: Alleluia!
Our hearts are pining to see thy shining,
dying or living, to thee are cleaving;
naught can us sever: Alleluia!

- 2 Jesus is ours! We fear no powers,
not of earth or sin or death.
He sees and blesses in worst distresses;
he can change them with a breath.
Wherefore the story tell of his glory
with heart and voices; all heav'n rejoices
in him forever: Alleluia!
We shout for gladness, triumph o'er sadness,
love him and praise him and still shall raise him
glad hymns forever: Alleluia!

Text: Johann Lindemann, 1549-1631; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-1878, alt.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Prepare the way. **Thanks be to God.**

*** Postlude**

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