

01 December 2024 – Communion / Advent 1

Welcome / Announcements / Land Acknowledgement

As we come to worship in Jesus' name we acknowledge with gratitude and respect the Lkwungen people – the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ – on whose traditional and unceded territory we gather.

Celebrations / Joys & Concerns

*God's blessing on you. God's blessing on you.
God's blessing, dear friends. God's blessing on you.*

Call to Worship / Advent Candles (PWS&D Resources)

As we enter the season of Advent, we remember God's call to seek justice in the world God loves.

We come longing for a brighter future for all.

We light the first candle of Advent, a symbol of God's hope, which shines in the darkness. May the light of this candle ignite a fire within your people, who are often afraid or hesitant to work for change.

Holy One, strengthen us by your Spirit to commit ourselves to walking with those who are oppressed and marginalized. May our actions reflect your hope, which transforms your world. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen

Songs of Advent¹ Hope

Imagine, with me, for a moment, the difficult days in the year 1816 in a small church in Austria. Your congregation has barely survived years of war. Napoleon, the power-hungry French general has attacked countries across Europe to establish dominance.

There's been twelve years of fighting. Families mourn the loss of young sons to battle. And your community is not only tired, but weak.

The weather is wild – the "Year without a Summer". You don't know it because there is no internet or Weather Channel yet, but the eruption of Mt. Tambora in Indonesia is the reason there are continuous storms, including snow in the summer.

The war and these strange weather patterns have pushed you to the brink. Your congregation and villages across the country are thrown into poverty, and because your crops have failed, there's widespread famine.

As you and everyone you know grapples with what is taking place, life feels like a chapter out of the book of Revelation.

And it is against this backdrop, that you hear, for the first time, the sweet words of this song, on a cold night before Christmas in your little church.

(singing) *Silent night, Holy night. All is calm. All is bright.*

Ever since those words were sung to a small congregation of boat-builders in a little Austrian town, they have brought great hope to people around the world.

Silent Night, one of the most beloved Christmas songs of all time, was written by a young Austrian priest named Joseph Mohr, to comfort his fearful, discouraged congregation. As the darkness seemed to overwhelm his church and as hope started to dwindle like a candle burnt down to the last inch of its wick, he wrote the song to encourage.

And did it ever spark hope! The song spread throughout Germany. Missionaries sang it from Tibet to Alaska and within a few years it found its way to the Inuit people at the highest reaches of Northern Canada.

It even ministered to soldiers on the battlefield. Perhaps you've heard the famous story during World War I, how German and British soldiers declared a temporary truce on Christmas Eve. Gunfire stopped. Fighting ceased. And the enemy soldiers joined together to sing Silent Night together. A song of hope in the trenches.

It doesn't take much to imagine a world in trouble, for we see evil and darkness at work all around us. We all know people right now who, like the traumatized and frightened congregation in the small Austrian town, need to know that there is a God who loves us, a God who cares.

As we prepare our hearts for Advent, we remember that Emmanuel brings true hope.

➤ ***Silent Night***

154

Gathering Prayer / Words of Hope (PCC Resources)

God of love, you come to your people to dwell with us. You come with power to transform all things. You come with promises to make all things new. You come with signs of your deep love for the world. You come, and your truth breaks into our lives shattering lies and half-truths, setting your people free. Your coming is our hope, and so, we offer you our praise and prayers in gratitude and anticipation. Come into our lives again, O God, and show us how to hope in the face of all that is discouraging,

Merciful God, in your gracious presence we confess our sins and the sins of this world... Forgive our sleepiness in the presence of your splendour. Forgive us when we abandon hope – expecting and looking for the same old thing in the same old way. Forgive us our

silence when we ought to have spoken up – our carelessness with your world and each other. Awaken us to your holy, hopeful presence so we may watch and wait for you now and always. Amen

The One who comes with justice also comes with mercy. The God of Judgment is truly the Christ of compassion. God offers forgiveness in the hope we will receive it gladly. Do not be afraid but rejoice in the God who comes to us.

➤ *Emmanuel, Emmanuel* (please remain seated) **114**

[The Texts Behind the Tunes²: Introduction](#)

Prayer for Understanding

Spirit of God, move within and among us today, to open God's Word, read and proclaimed, for us. Guide us to your truth. Help us discern and understand your Word. Amen

Scripture: **Jeremiah 33: 14-16** [OT 738]

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

Psalm 25: 1-10 responsive / displayed

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me.

Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;

let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.

Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.

Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord!

Good and upright is the Lord;

therefore the Lord instructs sinners in the way, leads the humble in what is right, and teaches them the way they should go.

All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep God's covenant and decrees.

Luke 21: 25-36 [NT 85]

There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. Then he told them a parable: Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

Message

➤ *All earth is waiting*

109

Offering and Prayer

We make our offering today with hopeful hearts, trusting that the Holy One who comes to us will bless our gifts and our lives, to make us signs of hope in the world God loves.

➤ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*

306

Holy One, we offer our gifts with humble hearts, knowing the world's needs are great and our gifts alone will be enough. We offer our gifts in hope that you will bless them and use them to help fulfil your purpose revealed in Jesus Christ. Amen

The Apostles' Creed

539

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

Invitation to the Lord's Table (adapted from Jerie Lukefahr)

Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace. The prophet gave us many names to use when we speak of Jesus.

Friend. Disciple. Neighbour. Beloved. Jesus gives us many names to use when we speak of each other.

Communion. Eucharist. Heavenly banquet. The Lord's Supper. This meal is known by many names, but only one person prepares it, and invites us to partake of it, and that is Christ, our brother, our saviour and our friend.

We are never closer to Christ than when we gather here together. The invitation is for each of us: all who are faithful – all who doubt. All who are fearful – all who are strong.

Come to the table – it may be familiar, or it may be brand new to you. This table does not belong to the church, it belongs to Jesus Christ – and it is he who invites everyone to share in the bread of life and the cup of grace. Come share this joyful feast.

➤ ***Canticle of the turning***

† Celebrating Together with Thanksgiving (from *enfleshed*)

The Holy One be with you

And also with you

Open your hearts to the One who is Love

We open our hearts to you, O God

Let us give thanks to God with us

To the One who took on flesh, we give thanks and praise

Creator of all that is, Mother of life itself, by your hand we were formed. You made us relational. You created us to thrive – not alone, but together. You shaped the entire cosmos so that every form of life depends on another. You never intended for us to power through these lives alone. You made us strong and resilient people, but equally vulnerable and dependent on you, the earth, and all our neighbors.

You gifted us with the need to rely on one another, bone of each other's bone, flesh of each other's flesh. In your wisdom, you created us with both desire and need to be in community. Therefore, we join our voices with your people on earth and all the company of the heavens, singing praise to you...

- ***829 Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest.***

In our longing for your presence with us, we often expect your arrival in traditional places of power. We seek our hope and salvation in the false promises of dominance and might. But instead, you brought us salvation through vulnerability. You too became bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. God, in the form of a baby, you made yourself dependent on us. An infant, revealing the transformative power of giving and receiving love through human flesh.

Throughout the life of Jesus, we saw lives transformed by your willingness to make yourself vulnerable. And yet, that same vulnerability also came at a price. Though some fed you and raised you and befriended you, others persecuted you to the point of death. Seeking to eradicate their own feelings of vulnerability, those in power preyed on yours. Still, today, we often crucify the ones who dare to risk it all on love.

On the night of his arrest, Jesus shared a meal with his companions. He took bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to his disciples, saying: *"This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."*

After the meal, he took the cup, blessed it, and shared it saying: *"This cup that is poured out is the new covenant."*

In remembrance of all you have done to save us, we proclaim the mystery of our faith...

- **523** *Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.
Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.*

Pour out your Spirit on these gifts, O God. Give us a taste of resurrection hope that lasts through even the most challenging of relational betrayals. Meet us in this bread and this cup – hear the prayers of your people in this aching world. Come, O Come, Emmanuel.

Sharing Bread and Cup

The one who was with God in the beginning, is with us in this bread.

The one of whom the prophets spoke now speaks to us in this cup.

In these gifts God comes to us so that we may come to God.

The bread of life – the cup of grace – we remember and share with thanksgiving.

Please come forward to receive Holy Communion – everyone is welcome at this table.

If you are unable to come to the front, please signal an elder who will come and serve you.

We use gluten and dairy-free bread. Juice and wine are available.

Closing Prayer

Loving God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have united us with Christ. Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your Spirit, to give ourselves for others as we live and work to your praise and glory. We sing our prayer together in Jesus' name...

- **Our Father in heaven** (*The Lord's Prayer – no repeats*) **469**

The Texts Behind the Tunes: In the ancient context: **Exodus 19-20**

- ❖ **Exodus 19:16-20, 20:1-3** [OT 694]

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled. Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God. They took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now all of Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord had descended upon it in fire; the smoke went up like the smoke of a kiln, while the whole mountain shook violently. As the blast of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses would speak and God would answer him in thunder. When the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain, the Lord summoned Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

Then God spoke all these words, *"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.*

Blessing (from 1 Thessalonians 3)

Now may our God and our Lord Jesus direct our way. And may the Lord make us increase and abound in love for one another and for all. And may God so strengthen our hearts in holiness that we may be blameless before the Lord at the coming of Jesus with all the saints. And may the grace and peace of Jesus, the love of God and the nurturing community of the Spirit embrace us all. Amen

¹ ©2024 Skit Guys, Inc. Only original purchaser is granted photocopy permission. All other rights reserved. "Skit Guys" is a trademark of Skit Guys, Inc. Printed in U.S.A.

² An Advent Program created by the Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, Moderator of the 2024 General Assembly/Professor of Hebrew Bible, Emerita, Vancouver School of Theology © 2024.