

Living Table United Church of Christ
November 28, 2021 • First Sunday of Advent: Hope

Advent Candle Lighting

Hope

One: Cold are the people in these early winter days as the world is shaken by uncontrolled virus and hate-filled violence.

All: We long for the one who will fill us with hope.

One: We remember other dark days filled with Herod's murderous plans and a world trapped in oppression and despair.

All: There was an angel who spoke words of hope and shared God's dream and invited us to step in.

One: We light this solitary candle as a reminder that God is with us even now, as we wait, listen, and prepare for the one who is to come.

All: This is the candle of hope. With its light we are reminded to seek the vision of God who is, who was, and who is yet to come.

One: Cold are the people in these early days of winter. Yet we will remain steadfast, nurturing this single flame of hope.

All: We watch. We listen. We wait. We hold this fragile, flickering hope.

Gathering Prayer

Holy One, be with us as we begin this journey to Bethlehem. Open our ears to the messages of hope. Soften our hearts that we may be more accepting of those who journey with us. Fill us with courage enough to travel through the high places and the low place, the joys and the sorrows. Ready us for your coming into the world anew. Amen.

Gathering Song

"Longest Nights" vs 1 & Refrain

1. You shouldn't be here tonight
It doesn't seem quite right
Here where the cattle sleep
Here where they keep the sheep
Here in the mud and blood and hay
How could you end up in this place?

Refrain: Emmanuel, Emmanuel

God with us

Love for us

Born into the longest nights

Emmanuel

Welcome and Announcements

Acknowledging Our Need for God

adapted from "Human Ways" by Rachael Keefe

One: You keep your covenant with day and night
and populate the earth with your people.

**All: The sands of the sea remain as immeasurable
as our capacity to turn from You.**

One: Never has the world known peace
which we seem to pursue with violence
again and again
rejecting Your ways.

**All: We blame You for destruction –
earthquake, fire, disease, tidal waves –
while we spill oil into the oceans,
strip forests of life,
poison the very air we breathe,
not to mention valuing one life over another...**

One: Yet, You remain steadfast in Your love for us.

**All: Perhaps it is You who is waiting
with quiet anticipation
of something new.**

One: Have mercy on us for our human ways.

**All: Forgive our resistance to responsibility
and tendency to blame.
May Your waiting not be in vain.**

Moment of Silent Reflection

Words of Promise

One: In this season we watch, we wait, and we prepare. Yet, this is not the first time God will
break into the world and it will not be the last. Every day, God shines in us, around us,
and through us.

All: God is with us! We will attend to the hope and live in love.

We Share the Peace

Song of Centering

“Canticle of Turning” vs 1-3

1. My soul cries out with a joyful shout that the God of my heart is great,
and my spirit sings of the wondrous things that you bring to the ones who wait.
You fixed your sight on your servant’s plight, and my weakness you did not spurn,
so from east to west shall my name be blessed, could the world be about to turn?

Refrain: My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is about to turn.

2. Though I am small, my God, my all, You work great things in me,
and your mercy will last from the depths of the past to the end of the age to be.
Your very name puts the proud to shame, and to those who would for you yearn.
You will show your might, put the strong to flight, for the world is about to turn.

Refrain

3. From the halls of power to the fortress tower, not a stone will be left on stone.
Let the king beware for your justice tears ev'ry tyrant from his throne.
The hungry poor shall weep no more, for the food they can never earn;
there are tables spread, ev'ry mouth be fed, for the world is about to turn.

Refrain

Time for Children

Thoughts of the People

“Virgin Birth” by Rachael Keefe, *Barefoot Theology*

The miracle does not lie with Mary's virginity
or taking this story of Jesus' birth literally
Rather with the fact that God became incarnate
and changed human history forever after

And still, there is more to the story
of a young girl agreeing to bear God
into the world at great cost to herself
and her loved ones

A teenage, unwed mother consented—
make no mistake, she was not forced
There was likely a long pause before her
“Let it be with me as you have said”→

Mary agreed to bring Jesus into the world
and then she got out of the way
so that her story became Christ's story
with an invitation for us to do the same

May we all have the courage to bring
the Incarnate One into our world
then let our story become part of Christ's
on-going revelation of grace

Sacred Reading

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And Gabriel came to her and said, 'Greetings, favored one! The Almighty is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Almighty God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his realm

there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Almighty; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

Message

"On the Journey: Tentative Hope"

Rev. Dr. Rachael Keefe

Song of Reflection

"Breath of Heaven"

1. I have traveled many moonless nights
Cold and weary with a babe inside
And I wonder what I've done
Holy father you have come
And chosen me now to carry your son

2. I am waiting in a silent prayer
I am frightened by the load I bear
In a world as cold as stone
Must I walk this path alone?
Be with me now
Be with me now

Refrain: Breath of heaven
Hold me together
Be forever near me
Breath of heaven
Breath of heaven
Lighten my darkness
Pour over me your holiness
For you are holy
Breath of heaven

3. Do you wonder as you watch my face
If a wiser one should have had my place
But I offer all I am
For the mercy of your plan
Help me be strong
Help me be
Help me

Refrain 2x

Prayers of the People

Pastoral Prayer

Prayer of Jesus

adapted from Richard McCall

Blessed One, our Father, Mother, Creator,

Holy is your name.

May your love be enacted in the world.

May your will be done

On earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread

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

Save us in the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For all that we do in your love,

and all that your love brings to birth,

and the fullness of love that will be,

are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Offering

Offertory

Presentation of Gifts

"O Come All You Faithful" Refrain Only

O come in adoration, O come in adoration,

O come in adoration, Christ is Lord!

Prayer of Dedication

The Great Thanksgiving

One: Come, people of God, come to the table of hope!

All: Our hope is in God, who made heaven and earth!

One: Come, people of God, come to the table of peace.

All: Christ is our peace, and healing for the nations!

One: Come, people of God, come to the table of life!

All: The Spirit will feed us and make us new!

One: You are our life, O God, (...)

we proclaim your endless glory, as we sing:

Song of Praise

"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" updated lyrics by Robert O'Sullivan

O hush the noise, you strife-filled souls,

And hear the message clear:

God wills a peaceful time on earth

For all the creatures dear.

Embrace the hope that builds no walls,

The love that knows no fear.

Believe the words the angels sang,

The song of peace we hear.

We Remember

One And now, Holy One, with grateful joy, we remember Jesus.
We remember that Jesus came to us humbly, putting aside all glory.
We remember that Jesus announced your favor.

All: Jesus taught us hospitality and mercy.

One: We remember that Jesus resisted evil,
loved well, and turned no one away.

All: Jesus taught us the ways of Love.

One: And we remember that on the night before he died, (...)
Whenever you do this, remember me. Let us pray.

All: Come, Holy Spirit, satisfy our hungry hearts. Bless our eating and drinking together, and sharing the blessings of community. Give us love for each other and make us servants of your peace, until the new age of justice comes, and every creature beholds it. Amen.

One: May the gathering of this community of faith be comforted and challenged during this Advent season.

All: May people see in us the courage and the generosity that characterized Jesus' life.

Sharing of the Elements

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We thank you, God, for breaking into our world and pouring into our lives and our experiences. We thank you, God, for this simple meal of thanksgiving and the stories of hope, peace, joy, and love we rediscover here. Amen.

Communion Song

“Waiting for You”

1. The earth cries out, nothing feels right.
The world cries out, no justice in sight.
Fires burning ev'rywhere,
Too many, too hot, too bright.

Refrain 1: We are waiting for you.
We are waiting for you.
We are waiting for that gloria in excelsis Deo.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

2. The child cries out, don't turn our the light.
Broken hearts cry out, no end of hurt in sight.
Greed and guns rule ev'rywhere,
Too many, too strong to fight.

Refrain 2: We are waiting for you.
We are waiting for you.

We are waiting for that gloria in excelsis Deo.

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Bridge: Let us be a sign of hope.

Let us be your arms of love.

Let us be the ones that say there is another way. (Repeat)

Refrain 3: We are waiting for you.

You are waiting for us too.

We are waiting for that gloria in excelsis Deo.

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

We are waiting for you.

You are waiting for us too.

Words of Sending Forth

One: The candle of hope shines brightly here to remind us that God is with us even now.

All: This candle reminds us that we are to embody that same hope for all the world.

One: As we prepare once again, for the coming of Emmanuel, will you endeavor to be beacons of hope?

All: We watch, listen, and wait for God's coming anew so that we might bring hope into the world!

Song of Sending

"Drawing Nearer"

Even in the midst of all of this
trouble on the news, no peace within
still there is a light in the distance
drawing nearer
drawing nearer

So open up our eyes to see your light
open up our hearts, they're clenched so tightly
steal in like a thief and steal our hearts
like a baby
like a baby
Even in the midst of all of this...

Benediction

Contact Us

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