

St. John's Lutheran Church — Walhalla, SC
Fourth Sunday of Advent — December 20, 2020
Worship in St. John's Fellowship Hall and Courtyard, weather permitting
(also on Facebook) — 9AM

God keeps the promise made to David, to give him an everlasting throne. The angel tells Mary that God will give David's throne to her son Jesus. She is perplexed by Gabriel's greeting and by the news of her coming pregnancy, but she is able still to say, "Count me in." We who know that Jesus is called king only as he is executed still find it a mystery hard to fathom, but with Mary today we hear the news of what God is up to and say, "Count us in."

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

GATHERING SONG — Medley—"Jesus Name Above All Names / Emmanuel"

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, whose forgiveness is sure and whose steadfast love endures forever. **Amen.**

Together let us honestly and humbly confess that we have not lived as God desires.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Loving and forgiving God, **we confess that we are held captive by sin. In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray. We have not welcomed the stranger; we have not loved our neighbor; we have not been Christ to one another. Restore us, O God. Wake us up and turn us from our sin. Renew us each day in the light of Christ. Amen.**

People of God, hear this glad news: by God's endless grace your sins are forgiven, and you are free—free from all that holds you back and free to live in the peaceable realm of God. May you be strengthened in God's love, † comforted by Christ's peace, and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

THE APOSTOLIC 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.**

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

Leader: Let us pray . . . Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that would obstruct your mercy, that willingly we may bear your redeeming love to all the world, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH - "Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah" (Verses 1-4)
see next page

ADVENT 4 PRAYER

We praise you, O God, for this wheel of time that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent. As we light the candles on this wreath, open our eyes to see your presence in the lowly ones of this earth. Enlighten us with your grace, that we may sing of your advent among using the Word made flesh. Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near.

Amen.

THE MESSAGE

Pastor Rachel L. Connelly

HYMN OF RESPONSE

“That Boy Child of Mary”

see next page

THE APOSTLES’ CREED

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate and was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again 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

God of power and might, fulfill your promise and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

A brief silence.

Gracious God, all generations call you blessed. In this holy season we pray for our neighbors of other denominations and faiths. Inspire the faith of their people. Cultivate understanding among us and strengthen us in love and service to our community.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Righteous God, you humble the powerful and lift up the lowly. We pray for the leaders of all nations, that they amplify the voices of people in need. Guide all people entrusted with leadership, to create societies in which everyone can flourish.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Compassionate God, you fill the hungry with good things and send the rich away empty. Nourish those who lack access to adequate food and nutrition. Bless the work of advocates, community organizers, and food pantries. Encourage others to provide for their neighbors in need.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Healing God, you pour out mercy to all you cry out to you. Surround everyone in need of healing in body, mind, or spirit with your tender presence.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Eternal God, you are faithful to the promises you made to our forebears. We give thanks for the ministry of Katharina von Bora Luther and other ancestors who organized, planned, dreamed, encouraged, and reached out as they served you. We give thanks for the bold leadership of female leaders in our own time. Inspire others with their steadfast witness.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **C Amen.**

SONG OF PREPARATION

“What Child is This”

see next page

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

THE LORD’S PRAYER

THE BLESSING

The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting, the long-expected Savior fill you with love, the unexpected Spirit guide your journey, † now and forever. **Amen.**

SENDING / POSTLUDE

“Savior of the Nations, Come”

see next page

DISMISSAL

P Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

THE FIRST READING: LUKE 1:39-55

³⁹In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?" ⁴⁴For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

⁴⁶And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. ⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; ⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

NEW TESTAMENT READING: ROMANS 16:25-27

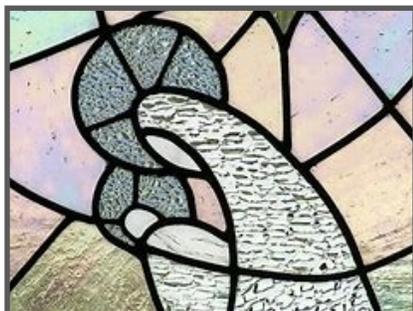
²⁵Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—²⁷to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

GOSPEL READING: LUKE 1:26-38

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The 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. ³⁶And 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. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

P The Gospel of the Lord. C Praise to you, O Christ.



SONGS FOR WORSHIP

Jesus Name Above All Names / Emmanuel

Jesus name above all names
Beautiful Saviour glorious Lord
Emmanuel God is with us
Blessed Redeemer living Word

Emmanuel, Emmanuel,
his name is called Emmanuel;
God with us, revealed in us;
his name is called Emmanuel.

That Boy-Child of Mary

Refrain

That boy-child of Mary was born in a stable,
a manger his cradle in Bethlehem.

- 1 His name is Jesus, God ever with us,
God given for us in Bethlehem. *Refrain*
- 2 How can he save us, how can he help us,
born here among us in Bethlehem? *Refrain*
- 3 Gift of the Father, to human mother,
makes him our brother in Bethlehem. *Refrain*

Text: Tom Colvin, 1925-2000
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Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah

Light one candle to watch for Messiah;
let the light banish darkness.
He shall bring salvation to Israel,
God fulfills the promise.

Light two candles to watch for Messiah;
let the light banish darkness.
He shall feed the flock like a shepherd,
gently lead them homeward.

Light three candles to watch for Messiah;
let the light banish darkness.
Lift your heads and lift high the gateway
for the King of glory.

Light four candles to watch for Messiah:
let the light banish darkness.
He is coming, tell the glad tidings.
Let your lights be shining.

Text: Wayne L. Wold, b. 1954
Music: Yiddish folk tune

What Child Is This

- 1 What child is this, who, laid to rest,
on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the king,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the babe, the son of Mary!

Text: William C. Dix, 1837-1898

Savior of the Nations, Come

- 1 Savior of the nations, come;
virgin's son, make here your home.
Marvel now, O heav'n and earth:
God has chosen such a birth.
- 3 Wondrous birth—oh, wondrous child—
from his throne, a virgin mild!
Very God, and Mary's son,
eager now his race to run!
- 6 Praise we sing to Christ the Lord,
virgin's son, incarnate Word!
To the holy Trinity
praise we sing eternally!

Text: attr. Ambrose of Milan, 340-397; Martin Luther, 1483-1546;
tr. hymnal version; Text © 2006 Augsburg Fortress.

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