



Advent
AS
Invitational
LIVING

Grace United Church of Christ

November 27, 2022

Rev. Dr. Michael H. Bone, Minister

First Sunday of Advent

When a portion of the service is preceded with an *, you are invited to stand in body or spirit.

Words printed in bold are an invitation for you to join in the spoken or sung response.

PRELUDE

For the Beauty of the Earth, arr. Joel Raney
Cheryl Neff Lorenz

***WORDS OF WELCOME (Pastor and People)**

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

In this safe space, may God grant us the vision to see the Holy in each other and the Holy in ourselves.

***CALL TO WORSHIP (Liturgist and People)**

I rejoiced when people said to me:

"Let us go to the house of God!"

And now, Jerusalem, we stand within your gates.

All the tribes assemble here
giving thanks to the Holy Name.

**Peace be within your walls
and security within your towers.**

For the sake of my relatives and friends
I will say, "Peace be within you!"

**For the sake of the Holy Name
I will seek your good.**

The Lifting of the Greens

An Act of Worship for the Beginning of Advent

(This intergenerational liturgy places symbolic pieces of evergreen vegetation prominently in the worship space to celebrate God's incarnate love, touched and seen in Jesus of Nazareth.)

Liturgist Let us prepare for God's eternal Word, touched and seen in Jesus, by bringing things that we can touch and see as signs of God's goodness and love.

People [Sung to the tune of *Jesus Our Brother, Strong and Good*]
**Love that rules the universe
lived and suffered, died for us:
life abundant, touched and seen,
ever living, ever-green.**

Cedar Wood: A Sign of Majesty

Liturgist Listen to this promise from the prophecies of Jeremiah:
The days are coming, says the Living God, when I shall make a righteous Branch spring from David's line, a king who will rule wisely, maintaining justice and right in the land.

Participant 1 Cedar was regarded as a royal tree, signifying immortality. We place this cedar branch to praise the living Christ whose love forever rules the universe.

People **Love that rules the universe
lived and suffered, died for us:
life abundant, touched and seen,
ever living, ever-green.**

Holly and Ivy: Signs of Pain and Love

Liturgist Here are some words of insight from the prophecies of Isaiah:

He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.

Participant 2 Ivy has bitter bark and prickly leaves; its berries are red, the color of blood. We place holly and ivy to remember how Jesus endured bitter suffering, wore a crown of thorns, and gave his life for us.

**People Love that rules the universe
lived and suffered, died for us:
life abundant, touched and seen,
ever living, ever-green.**

An Evergreen Wreath: Sign of Life and Peace

Liturgist Listen to these words of hope from the prophecies of Isaiah:
The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; For a child has been born for us, ... and he is named: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, ... with endless peace, and justice and righteousness evermore.

Participant 3 The green that remains when other leaves fall shows life undying and hope forever green. We place this wreath, shaped in a circle, as a sign of life and hope, for a circle has no end, and the wreath is ever-green.

**People Love that rules the universe
lived and suffered, died for us:
life abundant, touched and seen,
ever living, ever-green.**

The Christmas Tree: Light in Darkness

Liturgist Listen to these words from the Gospel of John:
Here is good news:
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through the Word.... What has come into being ... was life, and the life was the light of all people.
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not understand it or overcome it.
The living Christ declares, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

Participant 4 May this tree remind us of Jesus Christ, who gives life to the world and made his executioners' cross into a tree of light.

**People Love that rules the universe
lived and suffered, died for us:
life abundant, touched and seen,
ever living, ever-green.**

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE (Family and People)

We shall light the Advent candles
praying that our preparation for Christmas may help us
to look outward in love,
and to look forward in hope.

**Risen Christ, Light of the world,
shine in our lives
and shine among us now.**

Let us pray that waiting for Christmas may show us
how to be patient when things take time,
how to live for Christ day by day,
and how to wait for promises not yet fulfilled.

**Risen Christ, Light of the world,
shine in our lives
and shine among us now.**

In Isaiah, chapter 2, the prophet declares that in days to come

God will judge between the nations,
and arbitrate for many peoples.

Lighting of the First Advent Candle

We light this candle because we refuse to let go of Isaiah's
hope

that swords can be beaten into plowshares,
and spears into pruning hooks,
and that nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

**Risen Christ, Light of the world,
shine in our lives
and shine among us now.**

***ADVENT HYMN**

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF RECONCILIATION (People)

**Holy God, we aspire to love and trust you,
But so often we get in the way of ourselves.
We see only the deep sadness of the world, and do not
notice your people at work amid the sorrow.
We assume that things will never get better,
And do not see all that is good right now.
We close our eyes and complain about the darkness,
Rather than see the light that shines all around us.
Help us, Holy One. Help us to grow in love and trust, in
compassion and hope, so that as the Christ Child
comes to us once again,
We will see him, and know him, and rejoice. Amen.**

ASSURANCE OF BLESSING

A GIFT OF MUSIC Behold the Days are Coming - DeFrange

SACRED TEXT Psalm 122 NRSVUE

CENTERING HYMN **Keep Awake, Be Always Ready**

SACRED TEXT Isaiah 2:1-5 NRSVUE

REFLECTION "Come on, let's go!"

***SUNG RESPONSE**

O, come, let us adore him,
O, come, let us adore him,
O, come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.

***INVITATION TO FAITHFUL SHARING**

***DOXOLOGY**

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God, all creatures here below.
Praise God, above, ye heavenly host.
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost!**

***DEDICATION OF GIFTS (Pastor and People)**

Who do we give to?

We give to God.

Why do we give?

So our possessions won't possess us.

What do we give?

Our whole lives, surrendered to God's will.

God of love, you abide with us; you provide for all our needs and guide us in your ways. Out of gratitude for your care, we bring our gifts before you. Use them for your work of caring, that all may feast at the table of abundance, walk without fear, and drink deeply from the cup of compassion. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

MORNING PRAYER

THE PRAYER OF JESUS

**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 debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,
And the power, and the glory,
Forever. Amen.**

CHURCH FAMILY UPDATES

***SENDING HYMN** **Come, O Long-Expected Jesus**

***WORDS OF SENDING AND PEACE**

***SENDING RESPONSE** **Sent Forth by God's Blessing**
Sent forth by God's blessing, our true faith confessing,
The people of God from this dwelling take leave.
The service is ended, O now be extended
The fruits of our worship in all who believe.
The seed of the teaching, receptive hearts reaching,
Shall blossom in action for God and for all.
God's grace did invite us, and love shall unite us
To work for God's realm and to answer the call.

POSTLUDE **From the Sunrise - Almario**

Attributions:

Invitation to Confession, Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness were written by Beth Merrill Neel on her blog, 'Hold Fast to What Is Good'. Used with permission.

Invitation to Generosity and Words of Sending and Peace were written by Rev. Mia M. McClain and published on the UCC Worship Ways website for the 1st Sunday of Advent, November 27, 2022.

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Live stream can be found at:
<https://www.facebook.com/gracetown/live>

Grace United Church of Christ

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THIS WEEK'S CALENDAR

Monday	7pm	Catching Our Spiritual Breath (A time of prayer) on Zoom
Tuesday	9am-noon	Tuesday Crew meets here to do work on our building and grounds. You are welcome to join in!
	9am-noon	Office Hours
Wednesday	9am-noon	Office Hours
	10am	Yoga in the Family Activity Center
Sunday	9:15am	Adult Sunday School in HeBrews Café
	10:15am	Worship
	12 noon	Women's Christmas Luncheon

WORSHIP LEADERS

Scott Porter is helping lead worship as our liturgist.

Altar flowers are presented by **Steve and Kay Mitchell** to the Glory of God.

Our greeters this morning are **Roger and Becky Porter**.

Our participants in our Lifting of the Greens liturgy are **David and Cathy Clark, Jerry and Mary Bixler, the Beck family, and Jerry Mohn**.

Lighting our Advent candle is the **Marks family**.

Dave Forman, Mike Pirogowicz, Paul Sodergren, and Jim Lynn serve as our Livestream and Sanctuary Technicians and **Tom DeFrance** serves as musician and accompanist.

