

Introduction to the day: Forerunners and messengers advance the advent of our God. While John the baptizer's voice in the wilderness may be the principal focus of the day, Malachi's prophecy could as easily herald the coming Christ as forerunner of the LORD of hosts. Finally, all the baptized are called to participate in the sharing of the gospel. In so doing we prepare the way for the coming of Jesus and assist all people in capturing a vision of the "salvation of God."

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the diverse people of God.

OPENING SONG/PRELUDE

Holy

© Brenton Brown

(sung by Wing & A Prayer only)

WELCOME

The congregation invited to stand as they are able and face the baptismal font.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who alone does wonders,
who lifts up the lowly,
who fills the hungry with good things.

Amen.

Let us confess our sin, trusting in the tender mercy of our God.
God for whom we wait,

**in the presence of one another,
we confess our sin before you.**

We fail in believing that your good news is for us.

We falter in our call to tend your creation.

We find our sense of self in material wealth.

We fear those different from ourselves.

**We forget that we are your children
and turn away from your love.**

**Forgive us, Blessed One,
and assure us again of your saving grace.**

Amen.

God, in Christ Jesus, has looked with favor upon you!

Through the power of the Holy Spirit,

† your sins are forgiven.

You are children of the Most High,

inheritors of the eternal promise,

and recipients of divine mercy.

God strengthens you anew to follow the way of peace.

Amen.

Please remain standing and turn to face the altar as you are able.

GATHERING SONG *Prepare the Royal Highway*

(ELW 264)



1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; the King of kings is near!
2 God's peo - ple, see him com - ing: your own e - ter - nal king!
3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen to greet your prom - ised king!
4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; it comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley a lev - el road ap - pear!
Palm branch - es strew be - fore him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!
Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion its trib - ute too may bring.
His rule is peace and free - dom and jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:
God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!
All lands will bow be - fore him; their voic - es join your sing - ing:
So let your praise be sound - ing for kind - ness so a - bound - ing:

Refrain



Ho - san - na to the Lord, for he ful - fills God's word!

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.

KYRIE

Kyrie

Kent Liturgy

Music & Lyrics on next page

Leader

In peace, let us pray
to the Lord

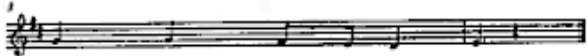
CONGREGATION



Lord have mer cy,



Christ have mer - cy,



Lord have mer - cy.

2

Leader

For the peace from above,
and for our salvation, let us pray
to the Lord

CONGREGATION



Lord have mer- cy,



Christ have mer - cy,



Lord have mer - cy.

Leader

For peace in the world,
for the health of God's church,
and for all unity, let us pray
to the Lord

CONGREGATION



Lord have mer-cy,



Christ have mer - cy,



Lord have mer - cy.

Leader

For this holy house,
and we who offer praise, let us pray
to the Lord

CONGREGATION



Lord have mer cy,



Christ have mer - cy,

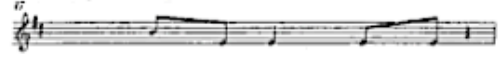


Lord have mer - cy.

Leader

Help, save, comfort and defend us,
gracious Lord

CONGREGATION



Lord have mer- cy,



Christ have mer - cy,



A - - - - - men

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming give to all the people of the world knowledge of your salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Please be seated

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING: Malachi 3:1-4 (Nancy Garman & Bruce Seiler)

God announces a covenant with Israel. A messenger like Malachi (his name means “my messenger”) will prepare the way for the coming of the Lord by purifying and refining God’s people, as silver and gold are refined.

A reading from Malachi.

¹See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. ²But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap; ³he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. ⁴Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Luke 1:68-79 (Nancy Garman & Bruce Seiler)

⁶⁸Blessed are you, Lord, the God of Israel, you have come to your people and set them free.

⁶⁹**You have raised up for us a mighty Savior, born of the house of your servant David.**

⁷⁰Through your holy prophets, you promised of old to save us from our enemies,
⁷¹from the hands of all who hate us,

⁷²**to show mercy to our forebears, and to remember your holy covenant.**

⁷³This was the oath you swore to our father Abraham:

⁷⁴to set us free from the hands of our enemies,

free to worship you without fear, ⁷⁵holy and righteous before you, all the days of our life.

⁷⁶And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare the way,

⁷⁷**to give God’s people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins.**

⁷⁸In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us,

⁷⁹**to shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.**

SECOND READING: Philippians 1:3-11 (Nancy Garman & Bruce Seiler)

The apostle Paul was the pastor of many new churches. He writes in this letter about his joy to be in partnership with the Christians of Philippi. Listen to how tender-hearted Paul, sometimes a stern preacher, is with his friends as he encourages them to grow in love and knowledge.

A reading from Philippians.

³I thank my God every time I remember you, ⁴constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, ⁵because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God’s grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation

of the gospel. ⁸For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. ⁹And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight ¹⁰to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, ¹¹having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

KIDS' MESSAGE & LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH (Lisa Herlocker)

As we light the Advent Candles, please join in singing verse 2 of [Light One Candle](#) (ELW 240)

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

The congregation is invited to stand as they are able to welcome the gospel

GOSPEL: Luke 3:1-6 (Pastor Carolyn)

John the Baptist is a herald of Jesus, whose way is prepared by “repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” As we hear the careful record of human leaders, we sense the spectrum of political and religious authority that will be challenged by this coming Lord.

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, ²during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, ⁴as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

⁵Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;

⁶and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Please be seated

SERMON (Pastor Carolyn Brodt)

The congregation is invited to stand as they are able

HYMN OF THE DAY *People, Look East* (ELW 248)



1 Peo - ple, look east. The time is near of the crown - ing
2 Fur - rows, be glad. Though earth is bare, one more seed is
3 Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim, one more light the
4 An - gels an - nounce with shouts of mirth him who brings new



of the year. Make your house fair as you are a - ble,
plant - ed there. Give up your strength the seed to nour - ish,
bowl shall brim, shin - ing be - yond the frost - y weath - er,
life to earth. Set ev - 'ry peak and val - ley hum - ming



trim the hearth and set the ta - ble. Peo - ple, look
that in course the flow'r may flour - ish. Peo - ple, look
bright as sun and moon to - geth - er. Peo - ple, look
with the word, the Lord is com - ing. Peo - ple, look



east, and sing to - day— Love, the Guest, is on the way.
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Rose, is on the way.
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Star, is on the way.
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Lord, is on the way.

CREED

Let us join with Christians throughout the world and confess our shared faith using the words of the Apostles' Creed.

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.

Please be seated.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION (Nancy Garman & Bruce Seiler)

In this season of watching and waiting, let us pray for all people and places that yearn for God's presence.

You send messengers into the world to proclaim the day of your coming. Make our bishops, pastors, deacons, and lay preachers confident in their preaching, that their words and our lives witness to your grace. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Send your Spirit to all living creatures that are endangered. Provide them with shelter and care, and bring us into right relationship with the earth that you create and call good. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Send leaders to our nations, cities, schools, and businesses to work on behalf of those who have lost parents, spouses, and loved ones; immigrants; the imprisoned; those living in poverty; and all who are oppressed. Make them bold in their commitments to justice and reconciliation. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Send your servants to care for those who suffer. Use our ministries and our lives to reach out with compassion to those who are hungry, oppressed, lonely, or ill (*especially*). Grant them healing and wholeness. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Send prophets to speak difficult truths, even when they are poorly received. Embolden those who ask hard questions and challenge accepted ways. Instill in youth and elders alike a passion for pointing to Jesus in all things. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We remember your saints, both those publicly celebrated and those more humbly remembered. Confident that your work will be completed, we live in faith until the day of your coming. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

The congregation may offer additional prayer concerns either aloud or in the chat box

God of new life, you come among us in the places we least expect. Receive these prayers and those of our hearts, in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

OFFERING

We acknowledge that all we have is a gift from God and in gratefulness we return to God a portion of the time, finances, and gifts that God has given us. Thank you so much for your continued support.

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray.

God of abundance, we bring before you the precious fruits of your creation, and with them our very lives. Teach us patience and hope as we care for all those in need until the coming of your Son, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy God, the Beginning and the End,
our Salvation and our Hope,

we praise you for creating a world of order and beauty.

When we brought on chaos, cruelty and despair,

you sent the prophets to proclaim your justice and mercy.

At this end of the ages

your Son Jesus came to bring us your love and to heal all the suffering world.

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.

Remembering, therefore,

his life, death, and resurrection,

we await his coming again in righteousness and peace.

Send your Spirit on us

and on this bread and wine we share:

strengthen our faith,

increase our hope,

and bring to birth the justice and joy of your Son.

Through him all glory and honor is yours,

Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,

in your holy Church, both now and forever.

Amen

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us using the words of the language of your heart.

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever.

Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Come to the banquet, for all is now ready.

*All are welcome to join in our communion celebration.
Please follow the directions of pastor Carolyn and the ushers.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray.

God for whom we wait,
in this meal you give us a foretaste of that day when
the hungry will be fed with good things.
Send us forth to make known your deeds and to
proclaim the greatness of your name,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

The congregation is invited to stand as they are able

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

BLESSING

The God of hope
fill us with all joy and peace in believing,
so that we may abound in hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
through Christ Jesus for whom we wait.

Amen.

SENDING SONG

Christ, Be Our Light

(ELW 715)

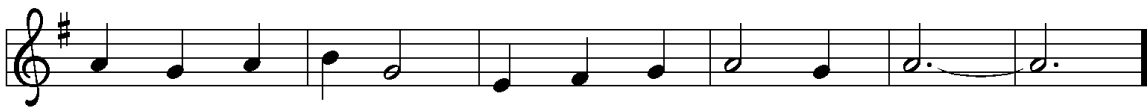
Music & Lyrics on next page



1 Long - ing for light, we wait in dark - ness. Long - ing for
 2 Long - ing for peace, our world is trou - bled. Long - ing for
 3 Long - ing for food, man - y are hun - gry. Long - ing for
 4 Long - ing for shel - ter, man - y are home - less. Long - ing for
 5 Man - y the gifts, man - y the peo - ple, man - y the



truth, we turn to you. Make us your own,
 hope, man - y de - spair. Your word a - lone
 wa - ter, man - y still thirst. Make us your bread,
 warmth, man - y are cold. Make us your build - ing,
 hearts that yearn to be - long. Let us be ser - vants



your ho - ly peo - ple, light for the world to see.
 has pow'r to save us. Make us your liv - ing voice.
 bro - ken for oth - ers, shared un - til all are fed.
 shel - ter - ing oth - ers, walls made of liv - ing stone.
 to one an - oth - er, signs of your king - dom come.

Refrain



Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the



dark - ness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your



church gath - ered to - day.

Please be seated.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

After brief announcements related to the ministry of Bethel, the congregation is invited to stand and face the baptismal font as they are able.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ is near.
Thanks be to God and we will.