

First Lutheran Church – ELCA
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Sunday, November 29, 2020
1st Sunday in Advent

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICE OF LIGHT

EVENING HYMN

EVENING THANKSGIVING

PSALMODY, READINGS, AND CANTICLES

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

The first week of Advent is all about hope.

Think about hope as you hear Lamentations 3: 21-24:

“But this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, God’s mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in the Lord.”

One purple candle is lit.

Gracious God, As the Advent season begins, we cry out to you. We come to you looking for hope. When everything else we rely on fails us, our only hope is in you. When we do not understand what has happened, we hope in you. We can hope for better days because we trust you. We know you and we know you are here with us no matter what we are facing. Some of us see only darkness this time of year. Some of us find life overwhelming. Some of us are filled with Advent joy. Wherever we find ourselves today, Loving God, remind us that our hope is in you. Be with us on this journey. Amen

FIRST READING: Isaiah 64:1-9

A reading from Isaiah.

This lament comes from a people who have had their hopes shattered. The visions of a rebuilt Jerusalem and a renewed people of God, spoken of in Isaiah 40–55, have not been realized. Instead, the people experience ruin, conflict, and famine. This lament calls God to account—to be the God who has brought deliverance in the past.

¹O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence—²as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil—to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! ³When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. ⁴From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. ⁵You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. ⁶We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are

like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. ⁷There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. ⁸Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. ⁹Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved. (Ps. 80:7)

1Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.

2In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up your strength and come to help us.

3Restore us, O God; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

4O Lord God of hosts, how long will your anger fume when your people pray?

5You have fed them with the bread of tears; you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

6You have made us the derision of our neighbors, and our enemies laugh us to scorn.

7Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

17Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one you have made so strong for yourself.

18And so will we never turn away from you; give us life, that we may call upon your name.

19Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

As the Christians in Corinth await the advent of Jesus, Paul reminds them how the Lord has already enriched them through spiritual gifts and will continue to strengthen them until the coming day of the Lord.

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—⁶just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

CHILDREN'S SERMON

Today I am wearing blue because we are starting Advent, and the season of Advent is often depicted with the color of blue.

I also have my Advent wreath out here, too. Every year, for the four weeks before Christmas, we light each of these candles to remind us that we are waiting for Jesus to be born and to remember that people waited for 100s of years for people to be born. The big candle is for Christmas Eve.

You all, in your homes, can work with your parents to make your own Advent wreath. It can be candles if you mom or dad say it's okay and you only light it with them. It can be flashlights or electronic candles. It can be paper and you can add a paper flame on top. There is no wrong way to celebrate. So, today we will light this first week on our wreath.

The first candle is also called the HOPE candle. That's what this says is HOPE. So, hope is when you believe that things are going to be okay and you trust that God is going to provide for you. If things are hard, you HOPE that things will get better. So, sometimes we talk about things that give us hope. So for me, watching kids play gives me hope because you all have a lot of happiness and joy. Watching people take the time for each other to call or provide food or clothes for people gives us me hope.

Come up with a list with an adult of things that give you HOPE or draw a picture of what gives you hope:

Today's candle is also called the prophecy candle. When we light today's candle; we remember prophets like this guy, Isaiah. The prophets told people that a Messiah was coming. A Messiah was the anointed, or special or chosen one by God. We celebrate that the Messiah, or anointed one, was Jesus! The prophets said that God was with God's people in hard times and promised that God was going to make things better for them in the future. That is what gave people hope when things were really hard for them.

Just like a prophet, you can say things to people this week that will give them hope. So, please pray with me. Dear God, thank you sending Jesus to give us hope. Help me to say things this week that give others hope. Amen.

GOSPEL: Mark 13:24-37

The holy gospel according to Mark. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Jesus encourages his followers to look forward to the day when he returns in power and glory to end all suffering.

[Jesus said:] ²⁴“In those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. ²⁷Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. ²⁸“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. ³²“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

The transition between Thanksgiving and Advent is always a bit of a jarring for me. We eat up the turkey, we give thanks and bam, the stores are flooded with Christmas decorations. If the adds and decorations for Christmas weren't already up, they are by now. And while the rest of the world starts celebrating Christmas, we go into this church season that is little known to the rest of the non-religious world- Advent. A season of waiting. A season of contemplation in the middle of the busiest time of year.

On top of that, we always start with a passage that points, not to Jesus' birth really, but the end of time. We start with what is called an apocalyptic text that points to how things will be revealed or uncovered at the end of time. The word apocalypse meaning to "reveal," "unveil" or "uncover."

Before we get the passage we hear today, at the beginning of chapter 13, we hear the following: As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"

2 "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down." **3** As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, **4** "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?"

From there, Jesus continues his prophecy about what is to come. He speaks about angels collecting the chosen from the ends of the earth. Jesus reminds them that only God knows the hour of the end of times. They are reminded to work, watch and keep awake while they wait.

More than most years, this odd Sunday, the first Sunday of Advent has deep meaning. It actually feels like it makes sense and is fitting for where we are at. First, in his words, Jesus is reminding his disciples that their beautiful temples, though sources of great pride and spaces for deep worship, were not the center of their faiths or their futures. The buildings would, in fact, crumble.

Thanks be to God, due to the good care of many in our First Lutheran team, our buildings have not crumbled, but we have had to discover a faith that is less centralized in our building. Instead of sitting around coffee tables, we have congregated virtually on Zoom, relied on cards and made phone calls. We have felt and shared that the love Christ has placed in our hearts for each other knows no limits or bounds. It has roots in our building but isn't defined by or limited to that space. We have shared the Word in snail mail packets, radio, the website, newsletters, devotions, Facebook and more. Some of you have shared how you have listened to these services while walking in nature, preparing food for your families or just sitting on the couch. Though many of us have struggled with the process of worshipping outside our building, we have seen that our ability to honor God is not confined by this space. We have transformed or re-imagined a variety of spaces as being holy spaces.

Likewise, we are at a time where, despite the disorienting and unknown realities around us, we are being reminded to work, watch and keep awake. Regardless of where we worship, frankly regardless of how we worship, this is not “time off” for the church. Advent is all about meditation and reflection. It’s about preparing yourself for what is to come. It’s about working while you anticipate the future. Therefore, as you start the Advent season I am going to ask you to join me in reflecting on some questions.

- 1) What type of work does the world most need from us now?
- 2) What type of work do your brothers and sisters in the church most need from you?
- 3) What type of work are you personally equipped to complete?
- 4) What are you seeing going on in the world? What are you seeing going on in social media? In your place of work? In your family? In the eyes and faces of people you meet?
- 5) What helps you to stay awake, alert or attuned to God’s voice in your life? How can you cultivate spiritual practices that help you to stay awake?

Finally, the first Sunday of Advent is all about things being uncovered, unveiled or revealed... what will be and what already is. These past eight months for all of us have been hard. We have lost out on so many important gatherings, traditions and daily routines. Perhaps, though, what is more challenging, is what has been revealed to us in these past months. The reality of racial injustice has been powerfully revealed in conversations and events. As the COVID 19 crisis impacts various groups in our nations, who is most vulnerable in our society has been revealed to us. Disparities and struggles in the health care system have become uncovered. The unseen but important work of so many has been unveiled. What we really value and prioritize in life has also been revealed to us through what we are longing for, what we are working for and the sacrifices we have been willing to make.

Again, this week, I’m going to ask you, in the spirit of Advent to think about these questions.

- 1) What things have you seen revealed in the world these past few months?
- 2) What have these past few months revealed to you about yourself?
- 3) What have these past few months revealed to you about the church?

Lastly, it doesn’t appear that this COVID 19 crisis is coming to an end this month, nor next month. I would imagine that there is still a great deal of unveiling and revealing to be done. So, finally, I would ask you to reflect on this.

- 1) What do you want to be revealed about yourself in these next few months? How can you take steps towards making that happen?
- 2) What do you want to be revealed about our church body? How can you take steps towards making that happen?

Today I’m leaving you with more questions than answers but that is where we should begin Advent, I believe. Advent blessings to you all as we begin this annual journey together. May God be with you as you work, give you patience as you wait, give you perception as you watch and help you to stay awake to your callings in the world.

APOSTLES CREED (ELW p. 126)

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.

OFFERING & CGC MOMENT

We give thanks that First United Methodist, Westminster Presbyterian and American Lutheran were able to come together to celebrate Thanksgiving in a virtual worship this year. We give God thanks for the many ways our churches continue to partner with other congregations through the WACMA ministerial, WAYMA youth programs and other collective efforts.

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.

THE MAGNIFICAT

LITANY AND PRAYERS

CLOSING PRAYERS

FINAL BLESSING

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Office Hours - Monday—Thursday 8:00 am – 12:00 pm (noon) —1:00 - 4:30 pm & Friday 8:00 am—12:00 pm (noon).

Due to the rising numbers of Covid-19 infections, we will not have in-person worship or youth activities through January 19. Council will revisit this decision at their January meeting. Watch for more details to come regarding the Christmas services and Annual meeting. **Services** will be on-line or drive-in. You can drive to the church on Wednesday or Sunday and listen to the service on FM 107.9 on your radio. We will have bulletins and communion supplies in the mailbox in the parking lot and by the front steps. There will be ushers to direct you. **There will only be on-line services on December 9 & 13 as this is the Children's Christmas Program.**

Gift Cards will only be available in the office during office hours. Please call ahead to see if someone is available to get you cards. Thank You!

Poinsettias will be used at our Christmas services. If you would like to order one in memory or in honor of a loved one, contact the church office at 376-6148. Please indicate if you will be picking them up after the Christmas Day Service or if you will leave them here to be delivered to the shut-ins or nursing homes. Please leave the name of the person or persons you are giving one for. The cost of a poinsettia will be \$10. **The deadline to have your order in is Friday, December 4.** Thank you!



Christmas Program

Christmas is here! Time for the Christmas Program. The plan is this year is to have live reporters on the scene in Bethlehem, reporting live with interviews of the characters as we look at the birth of a Savior. We will be taping online (Zoom) and families will be helping in that process. Come see the Christmas story as you haven't seen it before-reported live to your computers!



The office will be closed Thursday, December 24 and Friday, December 25 for the Christmas Holiday.

Christmas Services – Drive-In (FM 107.9) & On-Line ONLY **Wednesday, December 23**

6:00 PM—Traditional candlelight communion service with Christmas hymns.

Thursday, December 24

4:00 PM—Traditional candlelight communion service Christmas hymns.

8:00 PM—Traditional candlelight communion service with Christmas hymns.

Friday, December 25

9:00 AM—Intimate traditional communion service with Christmas hymns.

2020 Offering – The last day to get your offering in for 2020 will be Monday, December 28. Please drop it off during office hours. All offering received through the mail will need to be in before Christmas. This allows us to get it deposited for this year. Thank you!



Annual Reports are due in to the church office by Wednesday, December 30.