



PRELUDE

WELCOME

LIGHTING THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE

The Advent wreath is a circle with no beginning and no end. It is a symbol of God's unending love and faithfulness.

Its light reminds us of Jesus, the light of the world. In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. (John 1:4-5)

Today we relight the first three candles of the Advent Wreath -- the candles of HOPE, JOY and PEACE.

Now we light the fourth candle of Advent. This is the candle of LOVE.

Jesus demonstrated self-giving love during his life on earth. Advent is a time for kindness, thinking of others, and sharing with others. It is a time to love as God loved us by giving us his most precious gift. As God is love, let us also be love.

In the Psalms we find these words:

"Your steadfast love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds.

-- Psalm 36:5

From the Gospel of John we hear:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

-- John 3:16

Let us pray:

Teach us to love, O Lord. May we always know your love and show it to others. As we prepare for our celebration of Jesus' birth, fill our hearts with love for the world, that all may know your love and the one whom you have sent, your son, our Savior. Amen.

CAROL #105 *People, Look East*

PRAYER OF PRAISE

Loving God who dwells within and among us, we praise you for your presence of love in the vulnerability of a human baby. We celebrate this greatest of gifts with wonder and good will toward others, and we delight in your Spirit. We praise you for your faithfulness As this year draws to a close, and trust in your provision for the year to come. Glory to God in the highest! Amen

RESPONSE #110 *Love Has Come*

PRAYER OF PREPARATION AND CONFESSION

Lord, we confess that we are both overwhelmed by the needs around us and insulated from them. In a world that needs our example of love we find it too easy to withdraw and close our ears to the cries for help. In knowing that we can't solve all of it, we are tempted to shut out all of it. We become critics of imperfect attempts to show love and also despair that we can make any difference. Open our hearts to the gentle guidance of your spirit as we learn to love as you do.

(silent prayer and reflection)

WORDS OF ASSURANCE—from Isaiah 40:1

Comfort, comfort now my people, says your God. Beloved, know this: Your sins are forgiven. The Lord, Emmanuel, abides with you. The peace announced by the angels is at hand.

Thanks be to God!

PASSING THE PEACE

CAROL #114 *Away in a Manger*

SOLO *Noel*, by Tomlin, Cash, and Redman
Sharon Eddy, soloist

SCRIPTURE READINGS 1Samuel 2:1-10
Luke 1:45-56

MESSAGE The Upside Down Kingdom

SONG #100 *Canticle of the Turning*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your 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 yours is the kingdom,
and the power,
and the glory
now and forever. Amen.*

HYMN #93 *Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates*

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE