



PRELUDE *I Wonder as I Wander*
- Cathy Draper, flute
- Ian Alvarez, piano

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, PEACE and JOY.

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.

HYMN #105 *People, Look East*

PRAYER OF PRAISE—written by Henri Nouwen

**Lord Jesus,
Master of both the light and the darkness,
send your Holy Spirit
upon our preparations for Christmas.
We who have so much to do
seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day.
We who are anxious over many things
look forward to the peace
of your coming among us.
We who are blessed in so many ways
long for the fulfillment of your kingdom.
We whose hearts are heavy
seek the joy of your presence.
We are your people,
walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.
To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"**

RESPONSE #110 *Love Has Come*

PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND REFLECTION

We hear that we are loved, but we struggle to receive it. We err on the side of fear and judgment rather than faith and love. We hear there is life abundant, but it sounds too good to be true and we don't believe it.

Forgive us when we choose darkness over light. Have mercy on us when we choose judgment over love. Remind us that you hear our cry in the wilderness and we will be set on the path of life.

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

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS Luke 1:67-79
Isaiah 60:1-5

MESSAGE Illumination

HYMN #247 *Now the Green Blade Rises*

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 #744 *Arise! Your Light Has Come*

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Linus and Lucy*

- Ian Alvarez, marimbas
- Mackenzie Alvarez, marimbas

“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” John 20:19

