

## **December 21, 2025 + Fourth Sunday of Advent**

*We are called to let our light shine as instruments of the Holy Spirit so all may know God's love.*

### **Call to Worship**

We gather together in this place:

**prophets and dreamers, singers and poets,**  
we who dare to imagine a world renewed;  
**we who dare to dream God's dream.**

We proclaim expectation with Isaiah!

**God's redemption is near!**

Through tears and through trials,

**we hold fast to our hope.**

Do not fear, for God is faithful.

**Our redemption rises with the dawn.**

Come and worship, all you who dream and wait.

**We have come to wonder and praise.**

### **Confession & Forgiveness**

Through the holy prophets of old, God gives us knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of our sins. Let us approach the God who loves us, naming our need for redemption.

God of love, **you teach us songs of praise and call us to proclaim justice. We confess the ways that we instead use our words and voices in ways that cause harm. We share half-truths, spread gossip, and speak unkindly. We fail to speak up for the vulnerable. We pay lip service to our faith instead of taking risks in the name of love. Help us to love you and our neighbors with courage and conviction, in word and in deed. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.**

God looks upon us with favor and redeems us with mercy. We are forgiven and we are set free, through the saving love of Jesus Christ. **Thanks be to God! Amen!**

### **Opening Hymn**

"The First Noel"

1. The first Noel the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay; in fields where they lay, keeping their sheep, on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Refrain: Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel: born is the King of Israel.

2. They looked up and saw a star shining in the east beyond them far; and to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night. *Refrain*

3. And by the light of that same star three wise men came from country far; to seek for a king was their intent, and to follow the star wherever it went.

*Refrain*

4. This star drew near to the northwest, o'er Bethlehem it took its rest; and there it did both stop and stay right over the place where Jesus lay. *Refrain*

5. Then entered in those wise men three, full rev'rently upon the knee, and offered there in his presence their gold and myrrh, and frankincense. *Refrain*

### **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.**

### **Prayer of the Day**

God of liberation, **your love reaches beyond all boundaries of prejudice and fear. Your tenderness is offered not only to the powerful or deserving, but to all people, according to your infinite compassion. Teach us to love widely and boldly, honoring the dignity of all and trusting your promise that the way of love is the way of life. Amen.**

### **Canticle: Luke 1:46b-55**

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
**for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed:**

you, the Almighty, have done great things for me and holy is your name.

**You have mercy on those who fear you, from generation to generation.**

You have shown strength with your arm and scattered the proud in their conceit,  
**casting down the mighty from their thrones and lifting up the lowly.**

You have filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.

**You have come to the aid of your servant Israel,**  
to remember the promise of mercy, the promise made to our forebears,  
**to Abraham and his children forever.**

### **The Christmas Story**

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie  
above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light.  
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

2 For Christ is born of Mary and gathered all above while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love. O morning stars together proclaim the holy birth, and praises sing to God the King and Peace to all on earth!

3 How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given! So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven. No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in.

4 O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray  
Cast out our sin and enter in; be born to us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell  
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!

### Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He 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, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again 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.**

### Prayers of the People

Hear our prayers, Lord. **May your love make us whole.**

### Offering & Giving Prayer

Holy God, we bring our gifts and offerings to you because the voices of the prophets remind us of something bigger, something greater than any system this world offers us. We believe when we trust you with our resources, the kin(g)dom of God comes much closer to reality on earth. Help us steward these gifts to create abundant life and love. Amen.

### Lord's Prayer

**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**

### Litany of Love

Let us affirm God's gift of bold and liberating love.

**We believe in the power of love, a love that not only comforts but liberates. A love constructed with care, compassion, and courage, providing shelter and safety for all God's children.**

We believe in love's guardrails of grace and mercy. Love does not demand or wait for perfection, but scoops us up in arms of unconditional care, where we are, as we are.

**We believe, with gratitude, in a legacy of love, a long thread of memory recalling who we are and whose we are, stitching us into its tapestry of belonging.**

We believe love is not earned. Love is not control. Love is care and connection.

**We believe love holds no secrets. Love does not shame. Love speaks up. Love makes space.**

Because God's love doesn't give up on us, we will not give up on ourselves or each other.

**We will remember and bless. We will fix what is broken. We will look for the dawn of God's love in and around us.**

### Blessing

To embody love is more than sentiment. It is choosing, every day, to see the worth and goodness in ourselves, others, and this world. So go forth from this place modeling this love, and remember ✠ God is love.

Though it may be difficult to understand, we see what it means modeled in Jesus. May blessings flow from us as we seek to be love in this world.

### Closing Hymn

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

1. Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains, and the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.

Refrain:

Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

2. Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong? What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heavenly song? *Refrain*
3. Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing; come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn King. *Refrain*

### Dismissal

Go forth in love! Dream of creation renewed!

**Thanks be to God!**