



*Advent Evening Vespers*

ADVENT EVENING VESPERS  
Wednesday, December 15, 2021

Mark Hart  
Lead Vocalist and Song Leader

Brandon Mowry  
Pianist

The Rev. Dr. Laurinda Hafner  
Worship Leader

*Congregational responses are in bold*

WELCOME

WORSHIP LEADER

---

GATHERING MUSIC

SONG LEADER AND CONGREGATION

---

Mark:

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel.  
That mourns in lonely exile here, until the Child of God appear.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

ALL:

O come, O Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh.  
To us the path of knowledge show, and help us in that way to go.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

ALL:

O come, O come, O Adonai, who came to all on Sinai high,  
and from its peak a single law proclaimed in majesty and awe.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

ALL:

O come, O Day-Spring, come and cheer our spirits by your advent here;  
Love stir with-in the womb of night, and death's own shadows put to flight.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

Mark:

O come, Desire of Nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind.  
Make envy, strife and quarrels cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!

A voice calls out in the wilderness.  
It sings of a home for all.  
It speaks of justice and peace.  
We could choose to ignore it.  
We could drown out that song.  
We could choose not to listen.  
Instead, we come into this space.  
We let the world grow quiet.  
We listen.  
A voice calls out in the wilderness.  
Do you hear it?

**We hear it. In listening, we worship.**  
Let us draw near to God.

God of open doors and porch lights, of welcome mats and candles in the window—  
we cannot thank you enough for your open-door policy. You are forever welcoming  
us home.

**God, whose love is like the sun warming me from the inside, if you are my home,  
then your word is the streetlight guiding me there.**

May we then this night walk Your way, as we look for a light.  
Our bags are heavy—  
we're carrying an array of grief and fear on our backs.  
But we're on our way.  
We're looking for Your light.  
We're listening for Your word.  
When you see us coming, when you feel our hearts move,  
we hope you'll run down the driveway and catch us.  
Leave the light on.  
We are on our way home.

**In every place,  
to everyone,  
God calls us,  
to find, share and reflect the Lights of Lights**

*Within Our Darkest Nights*  
*We will sing it through several times*

Within our darkest night,  
 you kindle the fire that never dies away, never dies away.

Within our darkest night,  
 you kindle the fire that never dies away, never dies away.

**LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE: JOY****WORSHIP LEADER AND CONGREGATION**

"John, son of Zechariah, went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as 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. Every 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; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'" (Luke 3:3-6)

We have lighted two candles--for hope and peace. Tonight, we light the third candle--the candle of JOY.

Joy is seeing people you love after months apart.

Joy is hearing, "Come on over, it has been too long!"

Joy is the stretches and giggles of a newborn child.

Joy is making it home when the journey is long.

Joy is your dog sliding to meet you at the door.

Joy is the energy of a new season.

Joy is feeling found when you thought you were lost.

So tonight, we light the candle of joy, because the welcome God has for us is nothing short of joyful.

Rest in that good news. Let it wash over you.

Family of faith, we are close to home.

*A time of quiet as the Advent candle of JOY is lighted.*

"The dark does not destroy the light;  
 it defines it.

It's our fear of the dark that casts our joy into the shadows."

*The song leader will sing it through once; the congregation is then invited to sing it three times.*



## GOSPEL LESSON

## WORSHIP LEADER

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.”

Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation and be satisfied with your wages.”

(Luke 3:7-14)

How do we prepare the way in this time and place?

I've witnessed the modern day prophets  
Dipping your two-edged sword in fear and hate  
Divining pure from sin, saved from heretic  
Confident in their judgments

There are others, too, who take a different path  
Coating your sword with sugar and stories  
Tickling our ears with prosperity and self-help

We've come so far from Brother John  
Your blade in hand  
Sharp yet washed in the wilderness of prayer  
Dripping with Good News  
The antidote for our stealthy, venomous existence

“Sever your selfishness so generosity may grow  
Cut out the cheating so honesty may flourish  
Amputate all falsehoods and threats  
That your power may raise the powerless”

This is Your Way  
Repentance  
Integrity  
Compassion  
Solidarity

Make your way in us, O God  
Make your way in us

**QUIET MEDITATION**

---

*At this time, you may like to read and reflect on the words that have been read, gaze at the candle - or simply enjoy the peace and calm.*

## Spoken Prayer

## Quiet prayer

May the light of the evening's moon and stars; and of the morning sun, remind us that joy is always there. Even as we wait for Christ to be born again, we share in the mystery that God is never far away. It is this joy that lifts our souls. It is this joy that restores us and holds us. It is this joy that is always shining through.

**God of darkness and light, do not let us be overpowered by discouragement and despair. May the dawn of each new day become a sign that your joy shines through. Help us to believe that your light is radiant and shines even in our deepest darkness. Amen.**

## SUNG RESPONSE

SONG LEADER AND CONGREGATION

---

*O Little Town of Bethlehem*

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see you lie;  
above your deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.  
Yet in your dark streets shines forth the everlasting light;  
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in you tonight.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given;  
so God imparts to human hearts the glorious love of heaven.  
No one discerns God's coming, but in this world of sin,  
where yearning souls long to be whole, the dear Christ enters in.

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

## A STATEMENT OF FAITH

WORSHIP LEADER

---

**We are not alone, we live in God's world. We believe in God: who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the Spirit. We trust in God.**

**We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God's presence, to live with respect in Creation, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope. In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God!**

Be people of joy.

Let joy live in your heart and share the joy of Christ with all you meet.

Share joy by seeing the good in each other.

Share joy by remembering good times and hoping for good times to come.

Share joy by praying for our world.

In this Advent season, we need to see, feel, and share joy.

As you go out into the wonder of God's creations, share joy, peace, and hope with those you meet.

**Amen.**

**FOLLOWING THE BENEDICTION, YOU MAY LEAVE QUIETLY AS YOU WISH**

---