



Order of worship

1st Sunday of Advent

November 29, 2020

Call to worship (*Psalm 80*)

Restore us, God!

Make your face shine so that we can be saved!

**Let your hand be with the one on your right side
with the one whom you secured as your own.**

Then we will not turn away from you!

Revive us so that we can call on your name.

Restore us, God of heavenly forces!

Make your face shine so that we can be saved!

Call to confession

We know that we have sinned before God and others, yet we also know that if we confess our sin we can be restored to a right and just standing before God and others. Let us therefore confess our sin, trusting God's promised mercy:

Prayer of confession

O God, we confess our passivity, our lack of vigilance in discerning the possibilities that you open up for us to participate in your healing, restoring work in our world and in our own lives. We have succumbed to paralyzing fears. We have ignored and even resisted the prodding of your Spirit, nudging us out of self-absorption and inertia. Empower us by your Spirit to be attentive, discerning and ready partners in our cosmic restoration project. Amen.

Assurance of pardon

God's mercy abounds. God's grace goes before us, after us, through us — sometimes even unbeknownst to us, restoring us and empowering us for participation in God's own work in the world. Friends, hear the good news of the gospel: we are forgiven and restored, set on right paths of justice and peace.



Prayer of illumination

O God, send your Spirit to us to open our hearts, so that that we may discern your Word in and through the words that we are about to hear.

Scripture readings

Sermon

Affirmation of faith *(from A Brief Statement of Faith)*

We trust in Jesus Christ, fully human, fully God.

Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:

preaching good news to the poor and release to the captives,
teaching by word and deed and blessing children,
healing the sick and binding up the brokenhearted,
eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners,
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.

Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,

Jesus was crucified,
suffering the depths of human pain
and giving his life for the sins of the world.

God raised this Jesus from the dead,
vindicating his sinless life,
breaking the power of sin and evil,
delivering us from death to life eternal.

With believers in every time and place,
we rejoice that nothing in life or in death
can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
Alleluia. Amen.

Call for the offering

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it. God has given to us many good gifts and calls us to respond. Let us now give in return.



Prayer of dedication

O God, we offer our gifts to you that they may be used to further the promise of hope, peace, love and justice in our community and in our world. Empower us, O God, to follow these gifts into our community and world so that they, and we, become bearers of peace, love and justice on the earth. Amen.

Prayers of the people and the Lord's Prayer

God of Advent, we stand at the threshold of this season, hopefully anticipating a birth in a stable in Bethlehem. We await his coming as the prince of peace and justice, the bearer of good news for all who are oppressed and the restorer of your intent for your world. As we wait on this first Sunday of Advent, help us also to ponder deeply his ultimate coming as our crucified and risen Lord to judge and to heal the brokenness of our world.

Indeed, help us to be vigilant in our waiting. Prod us to discern the commonwealth of God in our midst as it strains toward realization now. Empower us, as you empowered the psalmist, to call for your restoration of our world, our country and our lives and to participate in that work. We are like your people of old, wandering in a wilderness, longing for your glory to shine as a light in our darkness. Make your face shine in our midst once more and deliver us from all that threatens us. With the prophet Isaiah, we, too, implore you to “tear open the heavens” and come down to do “awesome deeds” in our midst — deeds of liberation for those in bondage and of hope for those in exile. Help us to recognize, with the apostle Paul, the abundance of your gifts that have been given to us for the good of the whole community — and empower us to place them in service of the common good. And may the evangelist Mark embolden us for vigilant waiting and watching so that we may leap in and participate at points where your future is crashing into our present time. Prompt us, arouse us to discern and act at those places where your love and justice are breaking forth in our lives and communities.

Indeed, during these tumultuous days of racial, political and social reckoning, help us to overcome paralyzing fear in our personal lives, in our communities and in our world. Calm the fear in us. Animate courage in us. Make us brave in confronting realities that deform and deface your world, so that we may participate in your reconciling work in our midst.

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And we pray for the world of nations, especially for those places where violence is wreaking havoc upon human lives and the life of your creation. We pray for countries dealing with devastation caused by hurricanes, wildfires and other natural disasters. We pray for those in our own country who have lost jobs, revenue, healthcare and loved ones during this relentless pandemic. Help us to serve as agents of your love and care to those in our midst who are suffering. And we pray for wise discernment by our nation's leadership as they negotiate ways in which to aid those most afflicted.

We prayer all these things in the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray saying, *Our Father...*

Charge and benediction

Wake up! Stay alert!

God's future is breaking into our present lives.

Be vigilant! Be discerning!

And ready to jump in at those places where God's future is straining toward realization now.

Fear not, for God's Spirit will empower us to participate in that future.

Lift up the broken hearted,

Stand with the oppressed,

And let all that you do be out of love. Amen.

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Liturgy written by Roger Gench
and provided for free distribution.

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