



Order of worship

2nd Sunday of Advent

December 6, 2020

Call to worship *(from Psalm 85)*

Let us hear what the Lord God says,
because God speaks peace to the church.

**God's salvation is very close to those who honor the Holy One,
so that God's glory can live in our land.**

Faithful love and truth have met;
righteousness and peace have kissed.

**Righteousness walks before God,
making a road for God's steps.**

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 that far too often we find ourselves stuck, overwhelmed or aimless, trapped by fears and anxieties that paralyze us, constraining our actions. Simple acts of compassion – of connection with others – are enormously difficult. And sometimes anger, even rage, takes us hostage, and we treat others as enemies, failing to discern your beloved image in them. Free us from fear and anger so that we can love without restraint — so that we may be compassionate, as you are compassionate, because we are your children.

Assurance of pardon

Friends, hear the good news of the gospel: God's grace is stronger than any anger and fear that may hold us in their grip. God's grace liberates us, freeing us to live in love and compassion. Thanks be to God who in Christ empowers us to live fully and freely.



Prayer of illumination

Empower us by your Spirit, O God, to hear your Word amid the words that we read and speak this day. Enable us to discern your light and follow the path you set before us.

Scripture readings

Sermon

Affirmation of faith *(from a Short Declaration of Faith)*

We trust in God,
whom Jesus called Abba, Father.
In sovereign love God created the world good
and makes everyone equally in God's image,
male and female, of every race and people,
to live as one community.
But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator.
Ignoring God's commandments,
we violate the image of God in others and ourselves,
accept lies as truth,
exploit neighbor and nature,
and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care.
We deserve God's condemnation. Yet God acts with justice and
mercy to redeem creation.
In everlasting love, the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a
covenant people
to bless all families of the earth. Hearing their cry,
God delivered the children of Israel
from the house of bondage.
Loving us still, God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant. Like
a mother who will not
forsake her nursing child, like a father who runs to welcome the
prodigal home,
God is faithful still.

Call for the offering

God has given us resources, talents and life itself. So, let us now respond by offering our gifts, our time, our money and our lives to God as instruments in God's service.



Prayer of dedication

O God, we offer our gifts to you that may they 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, may become bearers of peace, love and justice on the earth. Amen.

Prayers of the people and the Lord's Prayer

O God on this second Sunday of Advent, we ponder our human predicament, recognizing how often we find ourselves overwhelmed by circumstances — stuck in ditches of various sorts, or given to aimless meandering on paths that lead nowhere, or buried under by seemingly insurmountable challenges and obstacles. And yet you have promised to lift every valley, straighten the crooked path and level the mountains in order to come to us and lead us home. We hear your promises, O God. Empower us by your Spirit to see the way you have set before us. Empower us as a community of faith to accompany one another on the journey. Help us to listen to each other with compassion when we feel fearful or angry or lost. And help us to recognize your tender love that is ever before us. Help us to believe the good news of the gospel that we are not left to our own devices. You have not left us in the ditch or aimlessly wandering in exile. You have come close in the incarnate Christ, one with a human face, who has left a footprint for us to follow.

We pray for the world of nations, including our own as we continue to grapple with a relentless pandemic. We pray especially for the vulnerable among us: for medical professionals and staff, for essential workers, for parents with school-age children, for the elderly and for those with preexisting health conditions. O God, help us to live responsibly, in ways that protect the wellbeing of others. We pray for all who are grieving the loss of loved ones during these difficult days.

We pray that you would grant wisdom to the leadership of our local communities, our cities, our states and our country that they might discern a path forward in these perilous times. Indeed, grant all of us wisdom and courage for the living of these days. We pray these things in the name of the one who taught us to pray, *Our Father ...*



Charge and benediction

Comfort, comfort my people, says the Lord.
So stand on the promise that every valley shall be lifted up;
every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.
Stand on the promise that the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and that all people shall see it together.

Alleluia! Amen.

© *Presbyterian Outlook*, 2020.

Liturgy written by Roger Gench
and provided for free distribution.

For more resources,
visit pres-outlook.org.