



## Order of worship

4th Sunday of Advent

**December 20, 2020**

---

### **Call to worship** *(based on Psalm 89 and Luke 1)*

We will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord,  
We will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

**We declare that your steadfast love is established forever;  
your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.**

You promised Mary that she would bear a child — one who would  
inaugurate your commonwealth, your realm that will have no end.

**You have established your realm for all generations.**

### **Call to confession**

Our Advent hope is in a coming one who establishes peace and justice in our world. Yet we know that we have betrayed that hope by contributing to enmity and injustice. 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 Advent promise of grace and peace.

### **Prayer of confession**

O God, we have been created in your image; indeed, you have crowned us with glory and honor. But we have lived self-centered lives, thereby failing to reflect your glory. We have not treated others with dignity and respect. We have violated your good creation. We confess our sin, O God. Renew us and restore us to our rightful place as bearers of your image. Empower us as agents of your love and justice in all that we are and all that we do. Amen.



### **Assurance of pardon**

God's mercy abounds. God's Advent grace goes before us, after us, through us — sometimes even unbeknownst to us, restoring us and empowering us for participation in God's 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 Advent 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 Declaration of Faith)*

**Jesus, the long-expected Savior, came into the world as a child, descended from David, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of Mary, a virgin. He lived as a Jew among Jews. He announced to his people the coming of God's kingdom of justice and peace on earth. We affirm that Jesus was born of woman as is every child, yet born of God's power as was no other child. In the person and work of Jesus, God and a human life are united but not confused, distinguished but not separated. The coming of Jesus was itself the coming of God's promised rule. Through his birth, life, death, and resurrection, he brings about the relationship between God and humanity that God always intended. Alleluia. Amen.**

### **Call for the offering**

On this fourth Sunday of Advent, we ponder the gift of incarnation — of God becoming flesh so that we might be restored and given new life in Christ. The Christ child is the resplendent gift of the season — a gift of God's own self that frees us to respond with gifts in return.



### **Prayer of dedication**

Incarnate 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 the world around us so that they, and we, might become bearers of peace, love and justice on the earth. Amen.

### **Prayers of the people and the Lord's Prayer**

God, you lift up the lowly and fill the hungry with good things. You supplant ruthless competition with generosity in which all have enough. You envision a world in which the humiliated are restored to their rightful place as bearers of your image. In this season of Advent, help us discern the places where you are coming to us to repair and renew your good but broken creation. By the power of your Spirit at work in our lives, liberate us from chronic selfishness and self-negation so that we might discover our capacities for compassion and the pursuit of justice. Help us to see ourselves and others as bearers of your image — as people who shine like the sun.

Help us also to live according to your Great Commandment: to love you with our whole being, and to love others as ourselves. Help us to trust that your future is struggling toward realization even now in our midst. Empower us for solidarity with all who have been marginalized in our world, whose voices have been suppressed. Give us ears to hear their hopes and fears so that together we might restore your world on the foundation of the justice you intend for us in Christ.

Into your hands we place those who weigh heavily upon our hearts this week: those facing violence in their neighborhoods and countries; healthcare and frontline workers who are serving selflessly during this pandemic; those experiencing loss during this time — loss of loved ones, loss of health, loss of income, loss of security; leaders who are discerning new ways forward and plans for how to help those they govern in this challenging time; congregations and ministries who are now finding new ways to worship and serve during this Advent season; and for all those we name in these moments of silence.

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



### **Charge and benediction**

As you go from here, look upon your fellow mortals, and upon yourselves, with new eyes as bearers of God's own image, who are crowned with glory and honor and who shine like the sun. Embody divine majesty by lifting up the brokenhearted, by standing with the oppressed and by incarnating God's own love in your lives.

© *Presbyterian Outlook*, 2020.

Liturgy written by Roger Gench  
and provided for free distribution.

For more resources,  
visit [pres-outlook.org](https://pres-outlook.org).