Order of Worship

2nd Sunday of Advent

December 8, 2024

Call to worship (Luke 1:76-79)

Zechariah sang to his newborn son:

"You, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way.

You will tell his people how to be saved
through the forgiveness of their sins.

Because of our God's deep compassion,
the dawn from heaven will break upon us,

to give light to those who are sitting in darkness
and in the shadow of death,

to guide us on the path of peace."

Call to confession

Scripture reminds us that repentance is part of our preparation to meet Christ. Let us therefore confess our sins together, trusting in his mercy and love.

Prayer of confession

Holy God, we confess we prefer the crooked paths
where we think we can hide from you.
We'd rather you didn't examine us too closely,
all we do and fail to do.
Yet you are coming not to judge,
but to save us from our sins and our love of sinning.
So come, Lord, by crooked path or straight,
to enter our aching hearts.
In the certainty of your grace
we make our prayer. Amen.

Assurance of pardon

Hear the good news! Christ is our peace. Through him we have forgiveness and new hope.

He comes to break the power of sin and set us free again. Alleluia! Amen.

Prayer for illumination

Jesus Christ, Word of God,
dwell in us as we turn to these pages,
holy ancient stories that proclaim your truth.
In the Spirit, give us ears to hear and hearts to believe. Amen.

Scripture readings

Sermon

Affirmation of faith (from The Shorter Westminster Catechism: Q1, Q37, Q36)

What is the chief end of humanity?

Humanity's chief end is to glorify God,
and to enjoy God forever.

What is sanctification?

Sanctification is the work of God's free grace,
whereby we are renewed in our whole selves after the image of God,
and are enabled more and more
to die unto sin and live toward righteousness.

What are the benefits which, in this life, accompany or flow
from justification, adoption, and sanctification?

The benefits which, in this life, accompany or flow
from justification, adoption, and sanctification are:
assurance of God's love, peace of conscience,
joy in the Holy Spirit, increase of grace,
and persevering in all these to the end. Amen.

Call for the offering

With gratitude for all God has given us, let us return our offerings to God, passing the plates along the aisle as we remember that it takes all of us together to make this church strong.

Prayer of dedication

Generous God, we thank you for all our blessings, and offer these gifts back to your service, that this church might continue to shine your light into the world. Amen.

Prayers of the people and the Lord's Prayer

Holy, beloved God,
we come before you seeking strength and comfort,
someone to help us bear the load
or to give us a load worth bearing.
In our praying,
give us open ears to hear your assurances
and open hearts to feel your peace,
even as we say together:

God of peace,
hear our prayers.

We pray for the church,
this family of hopeful people,
persistent in faithfulness and graciousness,
marked by a willingness to work in kindness
and not count the hours or the cost.
As the world darkens and the days grow short,
may Christ's light in us
shine with a steady flame,
bringing light, bringing healing,
bringing reconciliation, and bringing peace.
We pray for common sense, and the touch of faithful humility
that marked the life of your son, our Savior.
that we may determine to live lives of kindliness and grace.

God of peace,
hear our prayers.

God of faithfulness and truth,
we pray for the world around us,
for peoples whose names we do not know
yet whose hurts fill the news,
and whose afflictions touch us not nearly long enough.
We can change a channel, or turn a page,
but they endure the long days and months
of famine and thirst,
of war and feud,
of corruption and despair.
Solutions may not be easy for all the ills of this world,
but in each hurting place send your Spirit,
that those who do have the power to effect the changes
needed for justice, peace and honor
may use their power for wellbeing of all.

God of peace,
hear our prayers.

In this season of Advent, where many watch and wait,
be with those who at this time
wait by a hospital bedside,
watch anxiously for results in exams and tests
wait for news of an interview,
watch for a loved one to return.
May all who wait with anxiety find your peace,
and all who watch with fearfulness be calmed by your steady heart.

God of peace,
hear our prayers.

For ourselves,
the hopes and hurts, the brightness and gloom
that populate our waking and our sleeping hours.
Help us to separate our needs from our wants,
that we may discern where priorities in our ordered lives should lie.
In a world where consumption rules

and many have become accustomed to plenty,
remind us of the privileges we take for granted,
and the bounty we believe is our right, and not your gift.
Soothe our spirits, and fill us with good things —
the things which make for peace.

God of peace,
hear our prayers.

We pray for those who lie close to our hearts:

[intercessory prayers may be offered]

God of peace,
hear our prayers.

And now we pray as Jesus taught us, saying, **"Our Father ...".**

Charge and benediction

Go out in peace.
Not a storebought peace,
or an ignorant peace
or an easy peace.

But go out in the peace that comes from God,
who has begun good work in you,
who has scrubbed you clean until you shine,
who has straightened every crooked place,
who is a light in shadowed places.

Go out with a peace to change the world.

And as you go,
may the love of God who made you,
the strength of Christ you saved you,
and the wisdom of the Spirit who enlivens you,
go with you now and forevermore.

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Liturgy written by Carol Holbrook Prickett
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