



St. Francis' EPISCOPAL CHURCH

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 24, 2023

The Season of Advent takes its name from the Latin words adventus, meaning "coming" or "visits." Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends today. This is an unusual year, as Christmas Eve is a Sunday. So we celebrate the fourth Sunday of Advent in the morning and Christmas Eve in the evening of the same day.

For Christians, Advent is the beginning of the liturgical year. We prepare for and anticipate the coming of Christ. We remember the longing of our Jewish ancestors for a Messiah and our own longing for forgiveness, salvation and a new beginning.

THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Leader Advent is a time to praise.

People **Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.**

Leader During Advent we remember God's past faithfulness.

People **Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.**

Leader During Advent we remember God's present goodness.

People **Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.**

Leader During Advent we remember God's future promises.

People **Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.**

The congregation listens as prayer is offered.

All join in singing.

(1st Sunday) We wait in
(2nd Sunday) We watch in
(3rd Sunday) We pre - pare in
(4th Sunday) We praise with
(Christmas Eve) We pro - claim with

hope_____ for the morn - ing Light,
for the love of Christ to il - lu - mi - nate_____ the night._____
We wait with
We watch with
We pre - pare with
We praise with
We pro - claim with

joy_____ for the Sav - ior's birth;
we wait in
we watch in
we pre - pare in
we praise with
we pro - claim with

hope for peace on earth.

Presider God in heaven, we look to you amidst a world filled with darkness. Help us to seek the light of your truth, as we remember your promises and offer our praise to you. Amen.

THE GREETING

Presider Blessed be the Holy One whose coming we await,

People **And blessed be the One who comes to set all people free. Amen.**

THE CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Deacon Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Silence is kept for a time.

People **Most merciful God,**
 we confess that we have sinned against you
 in thought, word, and deed,
 by what we have done,
 and by what we have left undone.
 We have not loved you with our whole heart;
 we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
 We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
 For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
 have mercy on us and forgive us;
 that we may delight in your will,
 and walk in your ways,
 to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Presider Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life.

People **Amen.**

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

Presider The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Presider Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

People **Amen.**

WE HEAR THE SACRED STORIES *Seated*

THE FIRST LESSON

Reader	A reading from the second Book of Samuel. 7:1-11, 16
	<p>When the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you."</p> <p>But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.</p>
	<p>The Word of the Lord.</p>
People	Thanks be to God.

THE PSALM OF THE DAY

89

The reader begins and then the congregation joins in the bold text.

Your love, O Lord, for ever will I sing;
from age to age my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness.

**For I am persuaded that your love is established for ever;
you have set your faithfulness firmly in the heavens.**

**"I have made a covenant with my chosen one;
I have sworn an oath to David my servant:**

**'I will establish your line for ever,
and preserve your throne for all generations.'"**

You spoke once in a vision and said to your faithful people:

"I have set the crown upon a warrior
and have exalted one chosen out of the people.

I have found David my servant;
with my holy oil have I anointed him.

My hand will hold him fast
and my arm will make him strong.

No enemy shall deceive him,
nor any wicked man bring him down.

I will crush his foes before him
and strike down those who hate him.

My faithfulness and love shall be with him,
and he shall be victorious through my Name.

I shall make his dominion extend
from the Great Sea to the River

He will say to me, 'You are my Father,
my God, and the rock of my salvation.'"

THE SECOND LESSON

Reader

A reading from the letter to the Romans.

16:25-27

Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith-- to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

The Word of the Lord.

People

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL SEQUENCE *Stand* **O COME, O COME EMMANUEL**

O come, thou Branch of Jesse's tree,
free them from Satan's tyranny
that trust thy mighty power to save,
and give them victory o'er the grave.

*Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel!*

THE GOSPEL

Deacon The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

1:26-38

People **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

The Gospel of the Lord.

People **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

GOSPEL SEQUENCE *Stand* O COME, O COME EMMANUEL

*Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel!*

SERMON

THE REV. LAURIE ANZILOTTI

After the sermon, silence is kept for a time.

THE ADVENT CREED

Our Advent Creed seeks to affirm our trust in God found in Jesus Christ.

Deacon Let us stand and affirm our hope in the light of Christ.

Do you believe and trust in God?

People **We believe and trust in God, eternal, almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

Deacon Do you believe and trust in Jesus Christ?

People **We believe and trust in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of all, the Only Begotten One; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, lived and loved among us, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; who descended to the dead, and on the third day rose again; Jesus, Our Savior, ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of the loving God, and will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

Deacon Do you believe and trust in the Holy Spirit?

People **We believe and trust in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic and apostolic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the dead, and life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Deacon O God whose Messiah's coming we await, keep us awake and alert to watch for the signs of your coming. As the fig tree puts forth its leaves and the portents of the new day dawns, keep us awake and alert for the second advent of Christ our Savior. "May the Light of Christ; ***shine in our hearts.***"

People's response **Shine in our hearts.**

The Presider offers a concluding prayer.

Presider Shine forth O God of Hosts, encourage, embolden and energize your people to keep awake and alert to the coming of Jesus the Christ, that he, at his second Advent, may find us ready to greet him and eager to serve those in need; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God for ever and ever. Amen.

THE PEACE

Presider The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People **And also with you.**

Presider Let us share with one another a sign of Christ's peace.

We invite you to extend the peace of God to those in the congregation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS *Seated*

GATHERING AT CHRIST'S TABLE

We return with thanksgiving the gifts God has given us. This includes bread and wine of the earth and financial offerings from our labor.

MEDITATION HYMN

LO HOW A ROSE E'ER BLOOMING

As the gifts are brought forward, the congregation stands.

Presider	Everything comes from you, O God,	1 Chronicles 29: 14
People	and we have given you only what comes from your hand.	

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING *Stand*

Presider	The Lord be with you.
People	And also with you.

Presider	Lift up your hearts.
People	We lift them to the Lord.

Presider	Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
People	It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Presider	It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, God Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. Because you sent your beloved Son to redeem us from sin and death, and to make us heirs in him of everlasting life; that when he shall come again in power and great triumph to judge the world, we may without shame or fear rejoice to behold his appearing. Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever proclaim the glory of your Name:
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People	Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed the One who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.
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Presider	We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love which you have made known to us in creation; in the calling of Israel to be your people; in your Word spoken through the prophets; and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus. For in these last days you sent him
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to be incarnate from Mary, to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In him, you have delivered us from evil, and made us worthy to stand before you. In him, you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.

On the night before he died for us, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore, according to his command,

People

**We remember his death,
We proclaim his resurrection,
We await his coming in glory;**

Presider

And we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to you, O Lord of all; presenting to you, from your creation, this bread and this wine.

We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant. Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice, that we may be acceptable through him, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country where, with St. Francis, St. Clare, and all your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation.

By Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty God, now and for ever.

People

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Presider And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

People Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

The Presider breaks the consecrated Bread. A period of silence is kept.

Presider Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

People Therefore let us keep the feast.

FRACTION ANTHEM

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world; have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world; have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world; grant us peace.

Presider The Gifts of God for the People of God.

Our bread is gluten-, dairy- and nut-free. This Eucharistic table does not belong to the Episcopal Church or to St. Francis'. This is God's table, and all are welcome. In the Episcopal Church, we receive both the bread and wine, the Body and Blood of Jesus. If you choose not to receive communion, please come forward and cross your arms over your heart to receive a blessing.

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

After all have received communion the Presider says

Presider God is with you.

People **And also with you.**

Presider Let us pray.

People **Eternal God, whom we await, you have fed us with the bread of heaven and the cup of salvation: keep us ever watchful, that we may be ready to stand before the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

BLESSING

Presider Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you,
scatter the darkness from before your path,
and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory;
and the blessing ...

People **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN

STAY AWAKE BE READY

Stay awake, be ready.

You do not know the hour when the Lord is coming.

Stay awake, be ready. The Lord is coming soon!

Alleluia, alleluia! The Lord is coming soon!

By the power, of the spirit, Mary will give birth to a son called Jesus.

By the power, of the spirit, Emmanuel is near.

Alleluia, alleluia! Emmanuel is near.

DISMISSAL

Presider Our worship is ended, our service in the world begins. As we await our coming Savior, go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God!**