

### Intro to our Advent Journey

Welcome to the first week in the season of Advent, our time of preparation and watchfulness as we wait for the coming of God in the flesh, Jesus Christ. Needless to say, this Advent season will be a bit different than Advents past, but the preparing and waiting will happen nonetheless. Along with our “untraditional” worship-from-home, our journey through Advent will be a little “untraditional” as well. As we journey through these four weeks leading up to Christmas, we will journey with the different characters in the Christmas story as we take a closer look at Mary, Joseph, John the Baptist, and the Shepherds, before spending time with God’s love incarnate on Christmas. May this journey inspire you in new and exciting ways as we journey creatively through this season. We pray, God, bless this journey.

If you have your Advent-in-a-Box (or if you have some candles lying around), I invite you to take a moment and set out your Advent Wreath. Although we are apart, we light this wreath together, led today by Aaron, Michelle, and Emilyn.

### Lighting the Advent Wreath

**Person 1:** The Advent wreath is a circle with no beginning and no end. It is a symbol of God’s unending love and faithfulness.

**Person 2:** The prophet Isaiah said, “The Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel.”

**Person 3:** The angel Gabriel said to Mary, “Greetings you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.” We rejoice that we too have found favor with God. God’s mercy extends to those who fear him from generation to generation.

**Person 1:** We light this candle and remember God’s gifts of mercy and favor as we wait and watch for the coming of our Messiah, Jesus Christ.

**Person 2:** We invite you to light the first candle of Advent with us as we prepare for Emmanuel, God with Us.

*\* Light 1st Candle\**

Advent Wreath Response | *Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah* v.1 ELW 240

*Light one candle to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.*

*He shall bring salvation to Israel, God fulfills the promise.*

### Confession + Forgiveness

Because it is so hard to wait, it is not easy to live through Advent's days. But watch what God does during this time. God waits for us to turn from our old ways to find the right paths; God waits for us to admit what we have done, and failed to do, so we might be forgiven and graced with new life. Let us approach the One who waits for us.

*(Silence)*

**Waiting God, it is never easy for us to confess our sins. There are the hurts we have caused to our families and friends, which we would like to forget. There are those we believe are impossible to love, and so we don't try. There are people who live on the edge of our society, and we ignore their cries for help. Forgive us, God who comes near to us. When we have lost our way, show us yours. Lead us in humility down the streets of your kingdom. Teach us your truth, so we might be able to keep your Word, revealed to us in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.**

God does not remember our sins, but does remember the promises which have been made to us. God does not shame us, but lifts us to new life. Lead us in your hope, O God, and teach us your love. You are the God of our days, we wait for you to come to us. **Amen.**

### Children's Message

Opening Hymn | *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* v.1, 2, 4 ELW 257

*O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,*

*That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.*

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.*

*O Come, O Wisdom from on high, embracing all things far and nigh:  
In strength and beauty come and stay; teach us your will and guide our way.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.*

*O come, O Branch of Jesse, free your own from Satan's tyranny;  
From depths of hell your people save, and give them vict'ry o'er the grave.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.*

#### Gospel Reading | Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, a descendant of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. The angel came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled by his words and began to wonder about the meaning of this greeting. So the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God! Listen: You will become pregnant and give birth to 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 him the throne of his father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end." Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I have not been intimate with a man?" The angel replied, "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 the Son of God.

"And look, your relative Elizabeth has also become pregnant with a son in her old age—although she was called barren, she is now in her sixth month! For nothing will be impossible with God." So Mary said, "Yes, I am a servant of the Lord; let this happen to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

#### Alternate Telling | *Modern Day Mary*

#### Reflection

In reflecting on Mary's role in the Christmas story, I came across a reflection by Fred Hiltz, Primate (or bishop) of the Anglican Church of Canada, whose reflection

hit me so deeply and so close to home that I would like to share his reflection with you today:

Mary is chosen by God to carry the holy child in her womb. Mary is both favored and troubled by the angel's message. Gabriel assures Mary that what is to be conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. Called to be the very vessel through whom the word of God becomes flesh of our flesh, Mary will be known through every age as *Theotokos* — the one who bears God. Through Mary, God will inhabit the world in the likeness of our human form, walk this earth and announce the reign of divine reconciliation, justice and peace for all people.

Of this moment of annunciation, much has been offered by way of commentary through the centuries. Marie Azzarello, a sister of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame religious community in Montreal, writes: "... in many analyses it is a moment of consent. She did consent but it is important to note that she freely gave her consent. Otherwise we see her only as a passive, docile, obedient woman rather than a strong and courageous woman, prepared to live with the Holy Spirit working in and through her life, one in whom the purposes of God are fulfilled not only for her own moment in time but indeed for all time".

Mary's moment of annunciation is followed quickly by her visit to Elizabeth. As they greet one another, one's word becomes known in time as the Hail Mary and the other as Mary's Song or the Magnificat. Mary's Song truly is the song of so many in our day.

Of Mary's Song, Azzarello writes, "to pray the Magnificat each day as a disciple of Jesus is to pray in union with Mary in joy, faith, and thanksgiving to God as the source of our being; it is to sing of God's everlasting love and mercy which extends from age to age and to proclaim Mary's hope in the fulfilment of the divine promises in favour of the whole of humanity... To pray the Magnificat is an expression of our desire to be honest about the state of our world and shows our conviction that the kingdom of God that Jesus preached is not a vision for an end time but a vision that begins now, in this world..."

This is strong commentary and it is a challenge to live the gospel of which we sing. It leaves us pondering to what extent Mary's Song is truly our song; the song of our life and our work; the song of the Church and its life and work in the world.

Hymn of the Day | *Annunciation (Magnificat)* from *Holden Evening Prayer*

*[Annunciation by Menks?]*

*My soul proclaims your greatness, O God, and my spirit rejoices in you.*

*You have looked with love on your servant here, and blessed me all my life through.*

*Great and mighty are you, O Holy One, strong is your kindness evermore.*

*How you favor the weak and lowly one, humbling the proud of heart!*

*You have cast the mighty down from their thrones, and uplifted the humble of heart.*

*You have filled the hungry with wondrous things, and left the wealthy no part.*

*Great and mighty are you, O Faithful One, strong is your justice, strong your love, as you promised to Sarah and Abraham, kindness forevermore.*

*My soul proclaims your greatness, O God, and my spirit rejoices in you.*

*You have looked with love on your servant here, and blessed me all my life through.*

Advent Creed

We believe in God the Father, creator of heaven and earth. The one who is full of patience, who is not afraid of silence, who does not need to fill each moment with activity and noise. The one who is beyond bluster and flurry, and who does not jostle for attention.

We believe in God the Son, Savior of creation, who slipped into Bethlehem one night, mostly unnoticed, who lived thirty years without headlines or hurry, who frequently took time alone with his patient Father, who waited for the right time to become the suffering servant, who stood quietly before the noise of his accusers, whose silence overpowered their words, who died, then rose again on a quiet Sunday morning.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens, empowers, renews and refreshes, sometimes arriving with obvious power, sometimes with the quiet breath of a whisper.

We believe in one God who patiently waits for us, and who longs for us to do the same. Amen.

Prayer of the Day + Lord's Prayer

Lord, **going out from this silence, teach me to be more alert, humble, and expectant than I have been in the past: ever ready to encounter you in quiet, homely ways: in every appeal to my compassion, every act of unselfish love which shows up and humbles my imperfect love, may I recognize you: still walking through the world. Give me that grace of simplicity which alone can receive your mystery. Come and abide with me. Amen.**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray: **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, forever and ever. Amen.**

Sending Hymn | *Of the Father's Love Begotten* v. 1, 2, + 5 ELW 295

*Of the Father's love begotten ere the worlds began to be,  
He is Alpha and Omega, He the source, the ending he,  
Of the things that are, that have been, and that future years shall see,  
Evermore and evermore.*

*Oh, that birth forever blessed, when the virgin, full of grace,  
By the Holy Ghost conceiving, bore the Savior of our race,  
And the babe, the world's redeemer, first revealed his sacred face,  
Evermore and evermore.*

*Christ, to thee, with God the Father, and, O Holy Ghost, to thee,  
Hymn and chant and high thanksgiving and unwearied praises be:  
Honor, glory, and dominion, and eternal victory  
Evermore and evermore! Amen.*

Blessing + Dismissal

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel. Go with us now into the world. We can begin again! Everything is about to change. So make everything new. Make us new. Reveal your glory in our lives and in the rhythms of our lives, so that nothing will get in the way of your coming. **Amen.**

Go in peace to prepare the way of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**