

SERVICE OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

December 6 and December 9, 2023



*Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory.
- Mark 13:26*



Bright "Fireball" meteor. August 2015 Perseids Meteor shower. Photo by Brad Goetsch

Gathering as the Body of Christ

CENTERING SONG

THE SUMMONS (vs. 1, 4, 5)

URW 60

GREETING

PRESIDER

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Presider: God of justice and peace, from the heavens you rain down mercy and kindness,

All: We raise our heads in expectation.

St Minister: that all on earth may stand in awe and wonder before your marvelous deeds.

All: We raise our heads in expectation,

St Minister: that we may yearn for the coming day of the Lord, to stand without blame before your Son, Jesus.

All: We raise our heads in expectation,

Presider: In expectation of your Son, Jesus the Christ who lives and reigns forever.

All: Amen.

*OPENING HYMN

O DAY OF GOD, DRAW NIGH (vs. 1, 2, 3)

UMH 730

*CONFESSION & WORDS OF ASSURANCE

[All are invited to turn toward the Baptismal Font.]

How good are we at watching for signs of God's presence in the world—in our lives, our homes? (silent reflection) Advent God, forgive us when we pay more attention to satisfying our own needs, than seeking You and Your will for our lives - for being more interested in possessing the material things of life, rather than Your spiritual gifts.

Turn our lives around so that we are looking in the right direction - towards You.

Only then can we hope to recognise the signs of Your presence in the world.

(Silent prayers of confession)

Beloved of God, hear the good news: In Jesus Christ we have been enriched in every way—in everything we say and in everything we know. In addition, through God's grace we do not lack any spiritual gift as we wait with anticipation for Jesus to be revealed.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

*SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

You are invited to pass the peace to each other in a way comfortable to you and your neighbor. Be mindful that some of our siblings may prefer non-contact ways of passing the peace, so kindly ask before hugging or shaking hands.

Peace be with you! **And also with you!**
Let us share this peace with one another.

Service of the Word

POEM[SAT. ONLY]

WAITING

JOY LENTON

“Waiting on God requires the willingness to bear uncertainty, to carry within oneself the unanswered question, lifting the heart to God about it whenever it intrudes upon one’s thoughts.” – Elisabeth Elliot

sunlight weakens
colour fades as mists descend
December's here
wrapping us in thick fogginess
hunker down, it's nearly Christmas

days slide by
in a rush toward the night
our souls moan and sigh
darkness outside increases
the onward march is ceaseless

we become hungry
for hope, for warmth, for light
a safe place to abide

while our souls grow accustomed
to the season we are in

clothed with silhouettes
the trees stand sentinel-bare
like bereft soldiers

guarding the fort of their thoughts
waiting for spring's reward
maybe you and I
can keep the vigil with them

our hearts tuned to spring
as wintry winds whistle hard
let's remain patient and calm

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Gracious and loving God, we come seeking guidance, comfort, a taste of something greater and deeper than ourselves. As we hear the word, may it move us, may it fill us, may it satisfy our longing for what we seek. **Amen.**

A reading from the Gospel of Mark, chapter 13, verses 24 through 37.

"But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory.

Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates.

Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. "But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come.

It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake--for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

Holy wisdom, holy Word. **Thanks be to God!**

SERMON

DR. ANNE THAYER

PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY

God of hope, who brought love into this world,

Be the love that dwells between us.

God of hope, who brought peace into this world,

Be the peace that dwells between us.

God of hope, who brought joy into this world,

Be the joy that dwells between us.

God of hope, the rock we stand upon,

Be the center, the focus of our lives always, and especially during this season of Advent, Amen.

Service of the Table

OFFERTORY SONG

INSTRUMENTAL

***THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION**

Holy God,
We give thanks for your creation,
fragile, yet fruitful,
enough for all.

We give thanks that you call us into community
where love and justice may flourish,
enough for all.

We give thanks that you invite us on this Advent journey.
Awake, curious, longing to meet you,
we set out for your table of grace.

You light our path one step at a time,
beckoning us onto a Way that offers us
new eyes to explore the vision of the Promised One;
new senses to feel the heartbeat of the Vulnerable One
new courage to share the urgency of the Ruler of Peace.
One more step, one more stretch, one more challenge
takes us deeper into the mystery of your abundant life:
a world healed, renewed; all nature, all people at peace.

Along the Way, we join our voices with those of all created beings
in Heaven, and on Earth singing:

**Holy, holy, God almighty
You are wholly, Love and light
Heaven and earth are flowing with your glory,
Holy God of power and might.
Sing Hosanna, in the highest
Sing hosanna, we proclaim!
Crying blessed be the faithful, who are coming in your name.**

We give you thanks for sending us Jesus, Emmanuel, God-with-Us, whose life, death and resurrection have become for us the Way to find you, to know you, to join with you in creating your new heaven and new earth.

We remember the night
when Jesus gathered at table with his friends
in a time of struggle and fear,
took bread, blessed it and gave it to them saying
“Take and eat: for this is my body.”

And after supper, as Jesus looked forward to your desired day of joy and power; he took the cup of wine, again gave You thanks and praise and said “Take this, all of you, and drink. This is the cup of the new covenant, my life poured out for you. I will drink this with you again in the reign of God. Share this bread and this cup in memory of me.”

Come now, Holy Spirit of God—
As you were present at creation,
be present now,
and let these gifts of bread and cup
become for us the bread of life and the cup of blessing.

As you were sent by Jesus
to accompany us on our journey of faith,
be present now,
and transform this community,
sharing this bread and cup, into one body in Christ.

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

PRESIDER

We have a few COVID related options for those who wish to partake. If you wish to receive from the ministers, take an empty cup from the stack on the aisle table and approach the minister, who will place a piece of bread in your open hand. All bread is gluten free.

Or you may take one of the sealed celebration cups with the wafer on top and juice beneath; hold them out to the minister for a blessing. A minister will pour grape juice into your cup. Eat, drink, and dispose of the cup in the waste baskets at the side aisles as you return to your seat.

If you are unable to come forward, please signal the ministers and we will come to you at your seat. Those who prefer not to partake in Communion are invited to a different kind of divine encounter through an interfaith prayer of blessing. If this is your preference, we invite you to meet the minister at the baptismal font.

Whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here at this table where Christ is the host.

COMMUNION SONG

NOW THIS BANQUET

URW 121

Going Forth as the Body of Christ

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

PRESIDER

Presider: We give you thanks, Holy God, that through this meal we have been strengthened and nourished to not only watch and wait, but to follow in your footsteps, and in so doing, be transformed into the image and likeness of Christ as we faithfully serve others in his name. **This we do together as we look forward to the final feast where all will be gathered together at your table to share in life everlasting, Amen.**

***CLOSING SONG**

O DAY OF GOD, DRAW NIGH (vs. 4,5)

UMH 730

***BENEDICTION**

SENDING & POSTLUDE

INSTRUMENTAL

*A voice cries out in the wilderness to prepare
For the greatness it knows will soon arrive
Go, and make ready for joy is coming anew*

Cover Art:Bright “Fireball” meteor. August 2015 Perseids Meteor shower. Photo by Brad Goetsch

<https://improvephotography.com/50740/photograph-shooting-stars/>

Call To Worship: The Revised Common Lectionary. <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/prayers.php?id=48> (accessed July 1, 2023).

Confession & Words of Assurance: Moira Laidlaw. <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2011/11/confession-assurance-advent-1-b.html> (accessed July 1, 2023)

Prayers Of The Community: https://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Advent.htm (accessed July 1, 2023)

Poem: <https://poetryjoy.com/2020/12/03/waiting-the-holy-work-of-advent-and-beyond/>

Communion Liturgy: Rev. Susan A. Blain, Minister for Worship and Gospel Arts. Communion Prayer for Advent Year A December, 2019 <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/advent-communion-service-year-a-december-2019/>

****The worship planning team creates all other parts of the liturgy except where noted.***

LANCASTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY WORSHIP TEAM

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THE WORSHIP TEAM SEEKS:

To serve the universal church of our Creator.

To minister to the unique and diverse needs of the seminary community.

To foster an expansive culture of worship that values difference and challenges the normative.