

Service of Holy Communion

November 29, 2020 Advent 1

WELCOME

PRELUDE

Organ

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, whose forgiveness is sure and whose steadfast love endures forever.

Amen.

Together let us honestly and humbly confess that we have not lived as God desires.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Loving and forgiving God,

we confess that we are held captive by sin. In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray. We have not welcomed the stranger; we have not loved our neighbor; we have not been Christ to one another. Restore us, O God.

Wake us up and turn us from our sin. Renew us each day in the light of Christ.

Amen.

People of God, hear this glad news: by God's endless grace your sins are forgiven, and you are free—free from all that holds you back and free to live in the peaceable realm of God. May you be strengthened in God's love, † comforted by Christ's peace, and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

GATHERING SONG #256 *Comfort, Comfort Now My People*

1 "Comfort, comfort now my people;
tell of peace!" So says our God.
Comfort those who sit in darkness
mourning under sorrow's load.
To God's people now proclaim
that God's pardon waits for them!
Tell them that their war is over;
God will reign in peace forever.

2 For the herald's voice is crying
 in the desert far and near,
 calling us to true repentance,
 since the reign of God is here.
 Oh, that warning cry obey!
 Now prepare for God a way.
 Valleys, rise to greet the Savior;
 hills, bow down in humble favor.

Text: Johann G. Olearius, 1635-1711; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-1878, alt.

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH

As the candle is lighted, this prayer is said.

We praise you, O God, for this evergreen crown that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent. As we light the first candle on this wreath, rouse us from sleep, that we may be ready to greet our Lord when he comes with all the saints and angels.

Enlighten us with your grace, and prepare our hearts to welcome him with joy. Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near.

Amen.

Holden Evening Prayer - The Magnificat

Marty Haugen

B^b F E^b B^b B^b/D E^b

1. My___ soul pro-claims your great-ness, O God, and my spir - it re-joic-es in
2. You have cast the might - y down from their thrones and up - lift - ed the hum-ble of

4 Cm⁷ F B^b B^b7 E^b Cm⁷ B^b/F F⁷

you,___ You have looked with love on your ser - vant here, and blessed me all my life
heart,___ You have filled the hun - gry with won-drous things, and left the wealth-y no

8 E^b/B^b B^b F/A Gm Dm E^b B^b Cm F⁷

through.___ Great and might-y are you, O Ho - ly One, strong is your kind-ness
part.___ Great and might-y are you, O Faith-ful One, strong is your jus - tice,

12 B^b F/A Gm Dm E^b B^b Cm⁷ 1.
F⁷

ev - er - more. How you fa - vor the weak___and low-ly one, hum-bling the proud of heart
stong your love, As you prom-ised to Sar-ah___and A-bra-ham, kind-ness for - ev - er more.

17 2.
F⁷ B^b F E^b B^b B^b/D E^b 3

My___ soul pro-claims your great-ness, O God, and my spir - it re-joic-es in

21 Cm⁷ F B^b B^b7 E^b Cm⁷

you,___ You have looked with love on your ser - vant here, and

24 B^b/F F⁷ E^b/B^b B^b *rit.* B^b/F F⁷ E^b/B^b B^b

blessed me all my life through,___ and blessed me all my life through.---

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. **By your merciful protection awaken us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and keep us blameless until the coming of your new day, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

THE WORD**FIRST READING: *Isaiah 64:1-9***

This lament comes from a people who have had their hopes shattered. The visions of a rebuilt Jerusalem and a renewed people of God, spoken of in Isaiah 40–55, have not been realized. Instead, the people experience ruin, conflict, and famine. This lament calls God to account – to be the God who has brought deliverance in the past.

¹O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—

²as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,

so that the nations might tremble at your presence!

³When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.

⁴From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him.

⁵You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways.
But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed.

⁶We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.

We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

⁷There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.

⁸Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.

⁹Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity forever.
Now consider, we are all your people.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: *Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19*

¹Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.

²**In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and come to help us.**

³Restore us, O God; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

⁴**O LORD God of hosts, how long will your anger fume when your people pray?**

⁵You have fed them with the bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

⁶**You have made us the derision of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.**

⁷Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

¹⁷**Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
the one you have made so strong for yourself.**

¹⁸And so will we never turn away from you;
give us life, that we may call upon your name.

¹⁹**Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.**

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

As the Christians in Corinth await the advent of Jesus, Paul reminds them how the Lord has already enriched them through spiritual gifts and will continue to strengthen them until the coming day of the Lord.

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—⁶just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Repeat alleluia

Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of e - ter - nal life.

GOSPEL: Mark 13:24-37

The Holy Gospel according to Mark, the thirteenth chapter

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus encourages his followers to look forward to the day when he returns in power and glory to end all suffering.

[Jesus said:] ²⁴“In those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

²⁶Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. ²⁷Then 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.

²⁸“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. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³²“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It 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. ³⁵Therefore, 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, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

The Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

“Just wait till your father comes home!” Scary words for any child to hear in a house where Dad is the top authority. Dad will likely be displeased with what’s going on. He will be displeased with you. He might scold you, or punish you, or give you that look – the one that makes you crumple inside. Whatever it is, it’s not going to be pleasant, and that time between the words being spoken “Wait till your father comes home,” and the moment he walks in the door, are agony. That’s if you’re the child.

But what if you’re the other parent, or the oldest child in charge of the other kids until parents return? What if you’re the one who says “Wait until your father gets home!” Maybe it comes out in a burst of anger, or frustration; maybe tears are hiding behind the words, tears of exasperation. Maybe you’re thinking, “I can’t do this on my own. I need my spouse, or my parents – someone with authority – to come home and help me. I can’t handle it by myself.” In that case the waiting might be draining, but when the

front door opens and Dad walks in, there is relief. Finally, one who can make a difference has arrived; finally, this mess can be dealt with.

The people of Israel had come home from exile in Babylon, something they had longed for but hadn't known would ever occur. And yet, here they were – home again. Unfortunately, home was in ruins. The Temple was destroyed, houses and buildings were in disrepair, fields were overgrown and wild. The people did their best to make order out of the chaos, reestablish some normalcy, but it was beyond their abilities. They hadn't come back from exile loaded with resources, after all. And long-dormant fields take a while to produce again. How would they raise the funds needed to rebuild the Temple? Everything looked hopeless. It was more than frustrating; it was agonizing.

The prophet Isaiah called out to God on the people's behalf, "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down!" Rend the veil between this world and your world wide-open and come here. We need you! "The mountains would quake at your presence – as when fire kindles brushwood and causes water to boil." God's coming would not be a gentle thing – it would make buildings shudder, make nations gasp, make everyone sit up and take notice. Someone even more powerful than Dad is coming – it is God.

We don't have it nearly as bad as the people of Israel did after years of exile, then coming home to ruins. Even so, there are days when I, too, would like to cry out to God, "Tear open the heavens and come down!" Straighten us out. Show us where we're wrong and redirect us; heal our diseases; repair our relationships with fellow citizens; clean up the air and the water; make honest work available to all and make it pay a livable wage. Show us what we're supposed to do in this strange time. Come down, O God; our lives are a mess and we need you desperately.

This crisis has gone on a long time; we might think nobody is coming to help us, no one who can actually set things right. Although the economy could be in worse shape, it appears to be teetering on the brink of disaster. So many people are out of work; so many people who might be evicted from their homes. This shouldn't be, not here in our great nation. People have pitched in to help each other – collecting and distributing food, wearing masks and washing hands to try and fend off COVID, staying home from public places.

Even so, cases of the corona virus are rising so quickly across the country that hospitals are overrun and patients are shipped to other cities for treatment. Nearly two thousand health care workers have died of the disease – the people we rely on to take care of us, of our loved ones, when we are seriously ill. They have given their lives to fight COVID. Some 257,000 citizens of the United States have died from corona virus.

The numbers are sobering, and disruptive. Just when Shepherd King planned to start limited, in person worship, we received news that several local Lutheran pastors, interns, and members of synod staff have come down with COVID. The synod has urged congregations not to have in-person worship; our Council deliberated and decided to suspend in-person worship through the end of the year. It's frustrating. How long will this go on? How long will businesses and church buildings have to stay closed?

“O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, O Lord!” Come down and shake things up, turn us around, let us know what is real, give us the tools and opportunities we need to live.

According to the prophet Isaiah, we’re in this mess by our own fault. Our lack of trust in God, our inclination to take care of ourselves and let the neighbors worry about themselves, our system that favors those who already have plenty and ignores those with little...that’s why we’re in this situation. It’s not God’s fault. It’s not somebody else’s fault. / It’s my fault; it’s your fault. Our people are sick and our economy is foundering because we – all of us – have not cared for each other as we ought. We have run to idols, expecting them to save us, rather than turning to God, who alone can save.

Isaiah doesn’t leave the people in despair, though. After announcing their guilt, the prophet pleads with God on Israel’s behalf:

“O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. *[Don’t forget that we are yours!]*

⁹Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember wrong-doing forever. Now consider, we are all your people.”

We want Dad to come home, too – not to punish, but to see what’s happening, help us fix it, and remind us we are dearly loved.

In the gospel reading from Mark, Jesus describes a day when God will tear open the heavens and come down. The sun and moon will be darkened; the stars falling from the sky. There will be widespread suffering, but then... the Son of Man will descend through the clouds, coming with great power and glory.

God, living in the realm where God alone reigns, seems to be in another dimension, one we cannot reach. In our desperation, we long for the barrier between God’s realm and this world to be breached, broken open, so God’s power and truth and love and justice will invade our world and make it right. One day, that will happen.

And the day is coming. What Isaiah called for and Jesus depicted, is coming. The curtain separating this world from the next will be split in two. Power, authority, truth from on high will descend to heal us, to show us the way, to repair what is broken, to give us a future of hope. The Son of Man will come in the clouds with great power. Jesus will return to gather us and cleanse us again, to reconcile us to each other and to God, to transform us into true citizens of the kingdom of God.

The heavens already opened once, when God came down and became human. We will celebrate that occasion on December 25, the birth of the baby Jesus. The world was desperate then and God sent his Son. Even if things feel desperate now, we are not abandoned to ruin, despair, and death. The veil separating this world from the next, cannot keep God’s strong help from us. God is coming. Let’s be ready, as we count down the weeks until his arrival, the warm, breathing, helpless baby, born to love us. Born to save the world.

HYMN OF THE DAY #244 *Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers*

- 1 Rejoice, rejoice, believers,
and let your lights appear;
the evening is advancing,
and darker night is near.
The bridegroom is arising
and soon is drawing nigh.
Up, pray and watch and wrestle;
at midnight comes the cry.
- 4 Our hope and expectation,
O Jesus, now appear;
arise, O Sun so longed for,
o'er this benighted sphere.
With hearts and hands uplifted,
we plead, O Lord, to see
the day of earth's redemption
that sets your people free!

Text: Laurentius Laurenti, 1660-1722; tr. Sarah B. Findlater, 1823-1907

THE NICENE CREED

With the whole Church let us confess our faith.

We believe in one God,

**the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

**the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

For us and for our salvation

**he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
 in accordance with the scriptures;
 he ascended into heaven
 and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
 He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
 and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
 who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
 who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
 who has spoken through the prophets.
 We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
 We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
 We look for the resurrection of the dead,
 and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God of power and might, tear open the heavens and come quickly to this weary world.
 Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

A brief silence.

We pray for the ministry we share in Christ's name. Open our hearts to your call for
 justice, peace, and healing. Attune us to the needs of the world as you draw near. Hear
 us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for this planet in need of restoration: for devastated habitats, polluted waters,
 thawing ice, blazing fires, swelling floods, and long-lasting droughts. Renew the face of
 the earth and our relationship to it. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for all people who care for others in our community and around the world. Fill
 them with compassion and the power to respond with justice for those who are
 oppressed, with welcome for those who are excluded, and with relief for those who
 suffer. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for people who are in crisis as the seasons change: those without homes
 facing severe weather, those who are unemployed or underemployed, and those in
 poverty or facing food insecurity. Relieve their burdens, sustain their bodies, and ease
 their minds. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for the people in our families and congregation who live with depression,
 anxiety, chronic pain, addiction, and other invisible illnesses. Ease their suffering and
 support them when they struggle. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Listen, now, to the prayers of this gathered people...

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.
And also with you.

THE DOXOLOGY *Sung to the tune of O Come, O Come Emmanuel*

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise him, all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heav'nly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Text: Thomas Ken, 1637-1711

OFFERING PRAYER

Generous God, you have created all that is, and you provide for us in every season. Bless all that we offer, that through these gifts the world will receive your blessing. In the name of Jesus, Emmanuel, we pray.
Amen.

(Please have the bread and wine/juice ready for Holy Communion)

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING (setting 1)

The Lord be with you. **And al - so with you.**

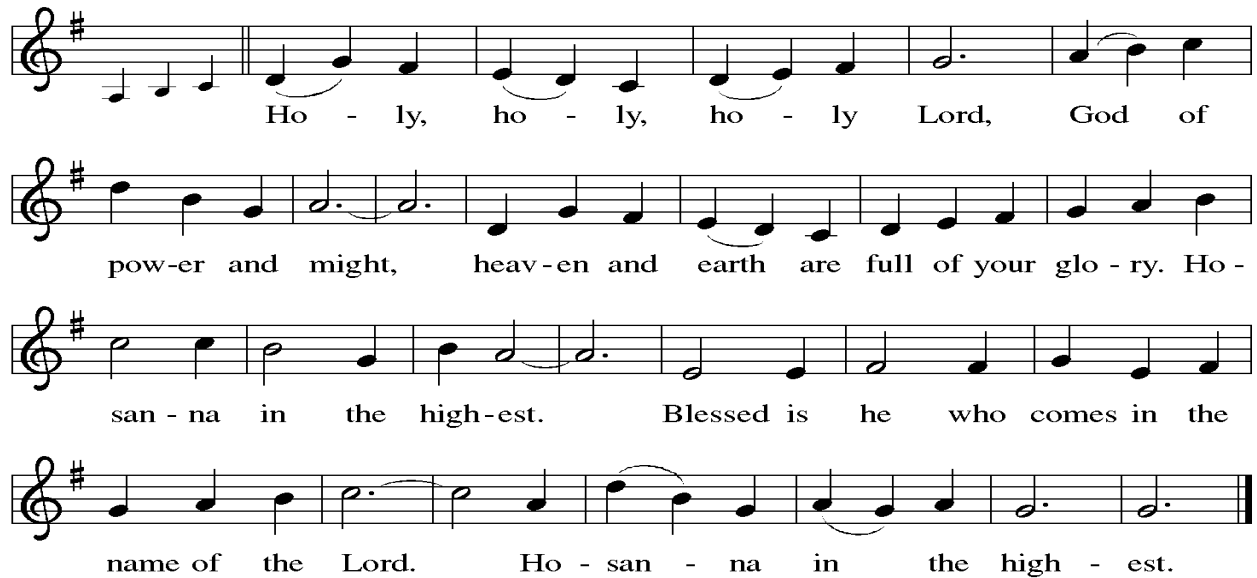
Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE FOR SUNDAYS IN ADVENT

It is indeed right, our du - ty and our joy,
 that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you,
 al - mighty and merciful God, through our Sav - ior Je - sus Christ.
 You comforted your people with the promise of the Re - deem - er,
 through whom you will also make all things new
 in the day when he comes to judge the world in righ - teous-ness.
 And so, with all the choirs of an - gels,
 with the church on earth and the hosts of heav - en,
 we praise your name and join their un - end - ing hymn:

"Holy, Holy, Holy"


Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of
 pow-er and might, heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -
 san - na in the high-est. Blessed is he who comes in the
 name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

God who, in the beginning, made order out of chaos bringing forth creation; who blessed Abraham and Sarah with a child, who led Israel from slavery into freedom, who through the prophets foretold the coming of a suffering servant, and who made Mary mother of a Son to be called Emmanuel – God, most high, who has redeemed us through Jesus Christ, our Lord – we remember...

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

LORD'S PRAYER

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.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Even as we watch and wait, Christ is here. Come, eat and drink.

Take the bread and eat, this is the body of Christ, given for you. (*please consume the bread*)

Take the cup and drink, this is the blood of Christ, shed for you. (*please drink from the cup*)

BLESSING AFTER COMMUNION

The body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Gracious and abundant God, you have done great things for us, and we rejoice. In this bread and cup you give us life forever. In your boundless mercy, strengthen us and open our hearts to the world's needs, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

I hope you all had a safe and happy Thanksgiving weekend.

Due to an increase in COVID cases here in San Antonio, and especially in the Lutheran Church in this area, Shepherd King's council decided to cancel all in-person worship through the end of the year. We hate to do this. It has been so long since we've been together here. But we don't want to risk anyone's health. I hope you'll continue joining us every Sunday online. One day – not too long from now – we will be back here in person.

Advent Devotions – Advent Devotional booklets are available to pick up at the church, one per family. Call ahead of time to find out when someone will be here and then come get one.

We are sad to learn of a couple more recent deaths. Longtime secretary Edla Graff has died, and so has longtime member, Martha Volz. We are grateful for their faithfulness to Shepherd King and we commend them into the merciful care of God.

As you can see, Shepherd King has a large, home-made Christmas card. Thanks to Denice Hoggatt for getting the materials, and to Julia Colvin for illustrating the card. You are invited to stop by the church and sign the card, either writing directly on it, or by putting a note or a picture on a piece of paper and tacking the paper to the card. We hope to have lots of members and friends sign. Then on Christmas Eve we will scan the messages on the card so you can see what others have written.

Don Irwin will be a guest musician here on the fourth Sunday in Advent, December 20. He will offer an extended prelude, so we'll begin rolling the cameras that morning at 9:45. We look forward to welcoming Don here and enjoying his music.

BLESSING

The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting, the long-expected Savior fill you with love, the unexpected Spirit guide your journey, † now and forever.

Amen.

CLOSING HYMN #257 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Refrain

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

5 O come, O Key of David, come,
and open wide our heav'nly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery. *Refrain*

Text: *Psalterium Cantionum Catholicarum*, Köln, 1710; tr. Composite Text sts. 2, 6, 7 © 1997 Augsburg Fortress.
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DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

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