

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 28TH WORSHIP SERVICE
THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT - A SERVICE OF HOPE

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*after a Hymn # indicates Hymns are from Supplement

WORDS OF WELCOME

INTROIT: #10* *“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”* (Public Domain)

**1. Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.**

**2. Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal spirit rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.**

CALL TO WORSHIP: (Based on John 1 & Psalm 25)

L: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

C: *in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.*

L: The light shines in the darkness

C: *and the darkness did not overcome it.*

L: Let us lift our souls to the Lord and put our trust in God

C: *Make us to know your ways, O Lord; teach us your paths.*

Lead us in your truth, and teach us, for you are the God of our salvation;

HYMN: #112 v. 2 (NCH) *“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”* (Public Domain)

**2. Oh, come, O Wisdom from on high, and order all things far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show, and help us in that way to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to you, O Israel!**

O COME, ADVENT: CANDLE LIGHTING RITUAL

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Week One: Hope

HYMN: O Come, Advent: v. 1

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O come and be the hope in all our lives though chaos and confusion still survive
We know the path of hate all too well we need our God with us, Emmanuel!
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to us and all things shall be well.

Candle Lighting Ritual
Scripture: (Luke 21:25-36)

The Coming of the Son of Man

²⁵ “There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. ²⁶ People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

²⁹ Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰ as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. ³¹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³² Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Exhortation to Watch

³⁴ “Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, ³⁵ like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

When the world seems scary; when we try to escape and hide
The Holy invites us to confront fear that we may find Hope

(Light Candle of Hope)

Where in the world do we find Hope these days?
*(Megan Ruiz, from The Presentation Lantern Center
will share about the Light of Hope they bring to Immigrants and Refugees
and how we may be a part of that Light of Hope)*

HYMN # 584 Chorus “I Am the Light of the World”

Song #59955 Contributors: Jim Strathdee Tune: © 1969 Desert Flower Music/Jim and Jean Strathdee Text: In response to a Christmas poem by Howard Thurman © 1969 Desert Flower Music/Jim and Jean Strathdee Reprinted and Streamed under OneLicense License #A-611234

SCRIPTURE:

Jeremiah 33:14-16

The Righteous Branch and the Covenant with David

¹⁴ The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵ In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: “The Lord is our righteousness.”

Psalms 25:1-10 - Prayer for Guidance and for Deliverance - Of David.

¹ To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

² O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me.

³ Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;

let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

- ⁴ Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.
⁵ Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.
⁶ Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.
⁷ Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord!
⁸ Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
⁹ He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.
¹⁰ All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

- ⁹ How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? ¹⁰ Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.
¹¹ Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. ¹² And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. ¹³ And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

A TIME OF REFLECTION: Struggle and Hope

- All readings on a week where we focus on Advent Hope sure contain a whole lot of struggle
 - Luke talks about being on watch not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life,
 - Praying for strength to escape all these things so you can stand before God
 - That strength to – not getting sucked into contributing to the negative behaviors and ways of treating others and ways of life
 - To not give up living in the ways of God
- David is writing with a heavy heart – Clearly in a place of danger
 - Turns to God trusts in God's salvation
 - Pleads to God to “Remember Me” not my sin
 - What does it mean for God to “Remember me?”
 - God instructs sinners – all is not lost for you, me and the next person
 - Humble added because those are the people who will hear and heed God's guidance. Guidance is offered to all.
- Thessalonians - Restoration of what is lacking in faith.
 - Points out reality sometimes our faith wanes but doesn't have to keep spiraling down
 - God can give strength to change things around
 - It is going to take loving each other and everyone else better with the help of God and encouragement of others
- Jeremiah is speaking from a place of imprisonment and is known as the weeping prophet who had to give many harsh pronouncements on Israel yet today offers a word of hope –
 - The day is surely coming when God will fulfill God's promise
- Struggle and hope go hand in hand because when hope is realized it is no longer hope it becomes reality

- Hope is not easy because struggle is always an element of hope and sometimes the struggle overwhelms the sense of hope. As I read my daily devotional this morning it speaks of hope very realistically about struggle and hope and faith so I want to close by sharing with you this devotion by Rachel Hackenberg. <https://www.ucc.org/daily-devotional/kicking-the-can/>

“What is the difference between prediction and procrastination, between the coming that is delayed and the delay of what is coming?”

Where is the anchor to hold a person steady between delicious excitement over the possibility of incredible goodness, and resigned recognition that such goodness is still a long way away?

What is the role of faith when we believe renewal is certain but we are too weary, too discouraged, too disenchanted to count the signs and measure the seasons until renewal is born?”

I think that is why being a part of a faith community is so important for where we lack, another can encourage pray for us and visa-versa.

“What is the difference between Advent prophecy and justice delayed, between apocalyptic hope and dreams deferred?”

I’m asking for a friend, of course.

Hope is not a pie-in-the-sky, wish-upon-a-star spiritual practice. Hope is hard. Painful at times, too. To know so clearly the goodness that is desired and needed; to catch the faintest hint of that holy sweetness you most long for; to have a prophetic inclining of the wild goodness God most longs for; and yet to be bound in time and flesh by “not yet” is heart-wrenching.

To receive hope, to know and proclaim hope, to trust hope in the midst of life’s many confinements is radical and raw. Jeremiah, in his place of confinement, pulled off the feat. By contrast, my trust in hope has been a bit sore and wary, protective and cautious. The “not yet” has been overwhelming the “now” (and vice versa).

In full confession, today my best effort at Advent is to kick the can of hope down the street to tomorrow, when I might have the courage to pick it up.

Prayer

These are days for daring hope, O God, but I am hesitant to trust in possibility—even holy possibility. Forgive and encourage me, I pray.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION:* (Based on BOW UCC Confessions p.p.531-2 D & G)

L: Almighty God, Spirit of purity and grace,
whose salvation is never far from a contrite heart, hear our confession of sin.

**All: Gracious God, we confess what seems always within us;
broken things that never seem to mend,
empty places within us that never seem to mend,
hopelessness that creeps in when times get tough,
and buds of goodness that seem to never fully blossom.**

Moment of Silent Confession and Reflection

L: O God of love and grace,

**All: help us to accept ourselves;
bring to full bloom the buds of those good and true things within us,
for in doing so your glory will shine through our lives. Amen.**

ASSURANCE OF PARDON:* (Based on BOW UCC Assurances p.533a)

L: We Confess our sin so that we can be set free from the bondage of the past.

Therefore, I announce in the Name of Christ Jesus, we are set free:

Set free from the enslaving bonds of our past;

Set free to live powerfully in every present moment;

Set free to love God, to love our neighbor and

to work with one another with a sense of hope as we bring hope to others.

Jesus said; I have come that you may have life, and have it more abundantly. Praise God!

All: We will trust and believe that we are forgiven and saved by God's love for us.

Thanks and praise be to God.

A TIME OF PRAYER:

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

CALL FOR OFFERING:

L: Our offering is a faith statement.

Throughout the scriptures we see how God blesses people for their benefit and so that those blessing may flow forth from their lives to be a blessing to others.

James 1:17-18 reminds us that *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸ He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created."*

By offering our treasure and our very selves to God, through our giving

we believe that God has blessed us with good gifts, that we are blessed to be a blessing, that what we do here in this church does make a difference in this world.

Let us give as the Spirit guides.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION:* (Based on BOW UCC p. 550 [F])

L: O God, the giver of every good and perfect gift,

All: Accept we pray, this offering of your people.

Grant that they may be symbols of our love and of ourselves now offered more fully to you.

Use these gifts and us, we pray, to bring hope to the hopeless and to the end that your realm may come and your will be done on earth, even as it is done in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen

HYMN OF PRAISE: Doxology #778

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God all creatures here below;

Praise God for all that love has done; Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.

SUMM-IT UP:

SENDING HYMN: v.v. 1 & 5 *"Christ Be Our Light"*

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CHARGE & BENEDICTION: * (BOW UCC p. 552 [C])

What endures is not the edifices we build, but the work of God
we accomplish through our ministries in the name of Christ Jesus.
Let us go forth from here with filled with the light of hope in our hearts,
empowered by the Holy Spirit to be God's instruments
rooted in love to further the work of Jesus
and to move us closer to God's reign of peace.
As we do that may the grace of God, deeper than our imagination;
The strength of Christ, stronger than our togetherness;
Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit;
Guide and sustain us today and in all our tomorrows . Amen.

POSTLUDE:

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