

AN ORDER OF CELEBRATION FOR THE GATHERED COMMUNITY
Woodridge United Methodist Church
Sunday, December 1st, 2024 1st Sunday of Advent
Hanging of the Greens

Prelude

***Opening Hymn** "O Come, All Ye Faithful" (verses 1, 2 & 3) UMH #234

Welcome and Announcements

Joys and Concerns

Text Pastor Dave (224.600.0446) with your prayer requests or give him a note before worship service.

Prayers of the People

Lord's Prayer

***Call to Worship**

Troy Smith: Children of God, pay attention! The days are coming when God's peace will reign and all creation will flourish under the reign of our Creator.

Many Voices: The days are surely coming!

Troy Smith: Children of God, prepare your hearts! The days are coming and are already here when God will come near and show us how to recognize God's reign among us.

Many Voices: The days are surely coming and are already here!

Troy Smith: Children of God, be alert and listen! God has come near to build the kin-dom on the earth here and now. Will you join in?

Many Voices: The days are surely coming and are already here! We come to prepare our hearts to pay attention, to listen, and to follow God's call to build the kin-dom of earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

***Passing the Peace**

Opening Prayer

Troy Smith: God of hope, we praise you for surely-coming days when you will execute Shalom: love, peace, health, and well-being for the people who walked in darkness. We await with assurance the surely-coming days when AIDS is cured, when every gun is beaten into tools for rebuilding, when every child has the opportunity to develop God-given gifts, and when every adult sees every child as a gift from God. We desire, O God of our Hope, surely-coming days when no city fears hurricanes, no country fears nuclear bombs, and no tribe fears annihilation by another. We thank you for the surely-coming days when no person fears another because God chose to create all people in the diversity of God's image. We thank you for our hope and for your surely-coming days.

All: Amen!

Placing the Colors

Pastor Dave: The changing colors throughout the church year highlight the meaning of each season. Advent marks the beginning of a new church year, and the advent color is purple. Purple represents the Advent themes of anticipation and promise as we await the arrival of the Christ child.

Hymn

"Come, Christians, Join to Sing"

UMH #158

Setting the Garlands and Wreaths

Troy Smith: Green represents renewal, new life, freshness, and rebirth. Plants such as pine, fir, holly, ivy, and mistletoe are called evergreens because they seem not to die. Through the seasons of the year they remain ever-green, ever-alive. Thus they are seen as signs of things that last forever. The Hebrew prophet, Isaiah, tells us that there will be no end to the reign of the Messiah. Therefore, we hang these wreaths of evergreens shaped in a circle, which also has no end, to signify that the kin-dom of God, which Jesus proclaimed, is also without end. The kin-dom of God is realized wherever justice, love, and peace prevail.

Hymn

"Love Came Down at Christmas" (*verses 1 & 2*)

UMH #242

Lighting the Candles

Troy Smith: The candles have stood for Christ and for his sacrifice. 'The flames', one writer has said, 'the most universal of all symbols, burns and illuminates by offering itself. When Joseph and Mary presented Jesus in the temple, Simeon referred to the baby as "a light for all people." So, faithful disciples of Jesus have used candles to symbolize the light of Christ shining throughout a broken world. As we light these candles upon our altar and the Advent wreath, we symbolize Emmanuel, meaning, "God with us," whose transforming power heals the world of sin and evil, war and strife, stress and turmoil, suffering and despair. Jesus embodies hope and help for those held captive by oppression. His ministry guides us to personal peace and joy through the illumination of his message of the love of God for all creation.

Song

"The Candle Song"

Pastor Dave

Lighting the Advent Candle (Hope)

Mary Ann: Today, we light the first candle of Advent. It is a candle of hope.

Many Voices: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." – **Romans 15:13**

Mary Ann: Christ comes to us to offer us hope!

Many Voices: **Christ is our hope!**

All: **Christ is our hope!**

[Light One Blue Candle]

Advent Prayer

Mary Ann: Merciful God, we confess that we live in the world where it's easier to give up than have hope. We admit we have become accustomed to giving up – giving up our future plans, dreams, and new days. Our hope is in you, O Lord. We have long been asleep in spirit; awaken our souls. We have been ignorant to the suffering of our neighbors; open our eyes with your vision of love. Help us never forget Jesus brings to us your kingdom of love and justice. From this first day of Advent until Christmas, may we keep the light of hope shining through the season of Advent. Guide our words and actions so that they may point to the good news of new life through Jesus Christ. We pray in the name of the Lord, who is the light of salvation for the whole world.

Many Voices: **Amen.**

Hymn "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" (*verse 1*) UMH #211

Blessing Our Children Karen Smith

Offering Ourselves

Blessing our Gifts with Music

*Doxology

*Offering Prayer

All: Gracious God, in this season of anticipation, we offer our gifts with hopeful hearts. As we prepare for the fullness of your kingdom, may these offerings be a sign of our readiness and desire to live attentively. Use them to bring justice, righteousness, and joy to our world. Surprise us with your presence and help us to look up, to pay attention, and to embrace the hope you bring. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Old Testament Lesson

Jeremiah 33:14-16 (*NRSVue*)

Gospel Lesson

Luke 21:25-36 (*NRSVue*)

Troy Smith: The Word of God for the People of God.

Many Voices: Thanks be to God.

Responsive Song "There's Something About That Name" UMH #171

The Manger or Creche

Pastor Dave: The manger or creche is used as a reminder that Jesus was born in the humblest of places. Advent makes innkeepers out of all of us, asking each of us to make room for the arrival of Emmanuel – God with us. Why God chose to send his son into our world as a baby of humble birth, born in common surroundings, we do not know. What we do know is that God reached out to all people including the poor and wealthy, the simple and the wise, the powerless and the powerful. Whenever we see a Nativity we find ourselves with Mary and Joseph; with the Shepherds, and with the Wise Men; bowing before the manger, overwhelmed by God's expression of love.

Hymn "There's a Song in the Air" (*verses 1 & 2*) UMH #249

Decorating Christmas Tree

Troy Smith: The Christmas tree is the center of our festivities. Glittering with lights and ornaments, it is a part of the beauty and meaning of the season. The evergreen tree, decorated with the light of Christ and with Christmas ornaments, reminds us of his love. During this time of Advent, whenever you see a lighted tree, let it call to mind the One who brings light into our darkness, healing in our brokenness, and peace to all who will receive him. May these Christmas trees arrayed in beauty and splendor, remind us of the life-giving love of Jesus. *We invite everyone present to help decorate the trees during the postlude following the benediction.*

***Closing Hymn** "Joy to the World" UMH #246

Benediction

Postlude