

AN ORDER OF CELEBRATION FOR THE GATHERED COMMUNITY
Woodridge United Methodist Church
Sunday, December 7th, 2025 Hanging of the Greens 2nd Sunday in Advent

*** Opening Hymn** "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates" (*verses 1 & 3*) UMH #213

Welcome and Announcements

Joys and Concerns

Prayers of the People

Lord's Prayer

***Call to Worship**

Troy Smith: Beloved, we gather to remember who we are, not who the world tells us to be.

Many Voices: We tell the story together of the day that all the earth awaits.

Troy Smith: We recall the story of God's people, how God has called us to live in peace and righteousness in a world full of conflict and twisted morality.

Many Voices: We tell the story together of the day that all the earth awaits.

Troy Smith: We recount the story of our journey with God, the moments of God's provision, God's prodding, and God's prophetic guidance.

Many Voices: We tell the story together of the day that all the earth awaits.

Troy Smith: We gather to repent and return anew to God's story that guides our lives to work for peace and flourishing for all God's creation.

Many Voices: We gather to tell the story of the day that all the earth awaits.

All: Thanks be to God! Amen.

***Opening Hymn** "We've a Story to Tell to the Nations" (*verses 1 & 3*) UMH #569

***Passing the Peace**

Opening Prayer

Troy Smith: God of hope and peace, as we worship you this day, may we catch a glimpse of your peace; may we open ourselves to receive your grace; may we welcome one another, as you have welcomed us; may we prepare hearts and our lives, for Christ to be born in us once again. And when our worship is done, may we be renewed in body and spirit, prepared to bring your righteousness and justice to the world. In the name of Christ, we pray.

All: Amen!

Placing the Colors

Wally Jeske: 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 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (*verses 1 & 7*) UMH # 211

Setting the Garlands and Wreaths

Kathy Falout: 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 kingdom of God, which Jesus proclaimed, is also without end. The kingdom of God is realized wherever justice, love, and peace prevail.

Hymn

"Hark! the Herald Angels Sing" (*verses 1 & 3*)

UMH #240

Lighting the Candles

Wally Jeske: 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

"There's a Song in the Air"

UMH #249

Lighting the Advent Candle (Peace)

Troy Smith: Today we light the second candle of Advent, the Candle of Peace.

We remember that Christ is the Prince of Peace, who calls us to make peace in our homes, our community, and our world.

Many Voices: From the prophet Isaiah: "For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

[Light Two Blue Candles]

Troy Smith: God of peace, calm our hearts and fill our world with your Spirit of harmony.

All Voices: Teach us to follow the way of Jesus, who brings peace to all creation.

Amen

Blessing Our Children

Karen Smith

Offering Ourselves

Blessing our Gifts with Music

*Doxology

*Offering Prayer

All: Persistent God of new paths, we have been called to prepare the way—not with platitudes, but with changed hearts and lives. In this season of turning and anticipation, we offer these gifts as signs that we long to live by your story. Use them and use us to bear fruit worthy of repentance: fruit of justice, compassion, hospitality, and peace. Let our generosity reflect the nearness of your kingdom

and the urgency of your call. In the wilderness of fear and want, may this offering clear a path for hope and peace to be seen, known, and shared. In the name of the one who is coming and is already among us—Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Old Testament Lesson

Isaiah 11:1-10 (*NRSVue*)

*Gospel Lesson

Matthew 3:1-12 (*NRSVue*)

One Voice: The Word of God for the People of God.

Many Voices: Thanks be to God.

Responsive Song "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" (*verses 1 & 2*)

UMH #216

The Manger or Creche

Kathy Falout: 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

"Angels We Have Heard on High" (*verses 1, 3 & 4*)

UMH #238

Decorating Christmas Tree

Wally Jeske: 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 Chrismon 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

*Going Forth to the World