

**Third Sunday of Advent
December 14, 2025**

Gathering
God invites us to enter His presence

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

Preparation for Worship (*Time for Silent Preparation*)

 **Call to Worship** (*Responsively*)

John Steinginga

The Lord has done great things for us!
And we are filled with joy!
Our God has turned our weeping into singing,
our tears into songs of joy!
O Christ of God, come anew in our hearts this day,
and remain in us forever.

—based on Psalm 126

 **Invocation**

John Steinginga

God of Israel,
with expectant hearts
we your people await Christ's coming.
As once he came in humility,
so now may he come in glory,
that he may make all things perfect
in your everlasting kingdom.
For he is Lord for ever and ever. **Amen.**

 **Opening Hymn 82**

O Come, Let Us Adore Him

Advent Candle Lighsting
(*Lighting of the First, Second, & Third Advent Candle*)

Pamela Johnson

Reader: Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; the one who follows me will not walk in darkness but have the light of life."

All: We light these candles as a sign of the coming light of Christ.

Reader: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has
shined.

—Isaiah 9:2, NRSV

I will lead the blind by a road they do not know,
by the paths they have not known I will guide them.

I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I will do and I will not forsake them.
—Isaiah 42:16, NRSV

The LORD says to his servant, “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”
—from Isaiah 49:6, NRSV

Come, Lord Jesus, our light and our salvation.
Let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Confessing ***God invites us to be honest with Him***

Call to Confession

John Steiginga

In spite of God’s love for us and gift of love to us, we often act in destructive and hateful ways. We close our hearts to God and disobey God’s law. Together let us confess our sin.

Prayer of Confession

John Steiginga

Merciful God, always with us, always coming: We confess that we do not know how to prepare for your Advent. We have forgotten how to hope in miracles; we have ignored the promise of your kingdom; we get distracted by all the busyness of this season. Forgive us, God. Grant us the simple wonder of the shepherds, the intelligent courage of the Magi, and the patient faith of Mary and Joseph, that we may journey with them to Bethlehem and find the good news of a child born for us. Now, in the quiet of our hearts, we ask you to make us ready for his coming. **Amen.**

Time for Silent Confession

Assurance of Pardon

John Steiginga

Surely God’s salvation is at hand for those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.
Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
righteousness and peace will kiss each other.
Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,
and righteousness will look down from the sky.
The Lord will give what is good,
and our land will yield its increase.
Righteousness will go before him
and will make a path for his steps.
In Christ, God’s salvation is at hand, and righteousness has come.
Thanks be to God!
—based on Psalm 85:9-13, NRSV

Leader: This is the Promise of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God!

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Offering

Thankful of the gifts God has given us, we offer ourselves to Him

Invitation Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
bring an offering, and come into his courts.
Worship the LORD in holy splendor; tremble before
him, all the earth.

—Psalm 96:8-9, NRSV

Offering

Offertory *Joy to the World*
(Tenor Saxophone Duet: Greg and Pamela)

! Doxology

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. A-men.

! Prayer of Dedication

What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring
a lamb. If I were a wise man, I would do my part. Yet what I can, I give him,
give him my heart.

! Passing of the Peace

Leader: The Peace of the Lord be with You

All: And also with you

Proclaiming

God speaks to us through His Word

! Preparation Song

In the Fullness of Time (See Screen)

Prayer of Illumination

Creator God, you remind us that the darkness of ignorance and doubt
cannot overcome your life-giving Word. May your Holy Spirit, who first
inspired these words of Scripture, shine your light and once again
awaken us to the hearing and living of this radiant truth. In Jesus' name, **Amen.**

Scripture Reading

Zephaniah 3:9-20

- ⁹ “For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord.
- ¹⁰ From beyond the rivers of Cush my worshipers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering.
- ¹¹ “On that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me; for then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain.
- ¹² But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD,
- ¹³ those who are left in Israel; they shall do no injustice and speak no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue. For they shall graze and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.”
- ¹⁴ Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!
- ¹⁵ The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil.
- ¹⁶ On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: “Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak.
- ¹⁷ The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.
- ¹⁸ I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival, so that you will no longer suffer reproach. ¹⁹ Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.
- ²⁰ At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes,” says the LORD.

Sermon

“Joy in God’s Justice and Mercy”

Rev. John Sheldon



Hymn of Response 143

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

Responding

We respond to God’s Word



Profession of Faith (In Unison)

**I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only begotten of the Father before all worlds;
God of God, Light of light,
very God of very God;
begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made.
Who, for us and our salvation,
came down from heaven,**

**and became incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary,
and was made man.**

—from Nicene Creed

Prayers of the People

Eternal God,
for whom all people wait and search,
even when they don't realize it,
we cry out today for a live and present Word from you.
As our season of discontent approaches the day of your coming,
we pray that you would speak to us in the graceful ways that you know best.
Open our eyes that have been closed by fear and blinded by self-pity,
that we may see you even in the anxieties and uncertainties
that beset our days and threaten to overwhelm us like a cloud of darkness.
Help us to see that amid the hustle and bustle
of this holiday time—the crowded stores and rude shoppers,
the impatient drivers, the frayed generosity—
you have become incarnate,
sanctifying the smallest tasks of love, generosity, and kindness
that we are enabled by your grace to perform.
We think of the needs of others at this time, O Lord,
and we are embarrassed by our selfishness.
May the answer to our prayers begin with us to redeem the times.
Bring to all those who are in need the alleviation of their poverty
or comfort for their minds and spirits.
Enable us to do what we can to help them—
to share our own happiness and prosperity,
to provide a listening ear or friendly word,
to do errands or acts of kindness.
But let us not be content so long as conditions exist
that foster human distress from generation to generation
through the repetition of ignorance, filth, and disease.
We pray that the promise of your birth—
that peace shall be on earth—
may soon be fulfilled,
both in our troubled hearts and in our troubled world.
Come to us, Lord, for we need your presence in our own lives.
We pray especially for those dear to us who are sick, or troubled,
or unsure, or near the hour of their death.
Comfort, comfort your people, and fill each heart with your love.
We pray for the world into which you came
and which you still love.
Touch us anew with the hope that is the heritage
of those who love you and trust your promises.
Through Jesus Christ, who is the joy of those who are happy
and the comfort of those who mourn,
as we join the church in the family prayer:
Our Father . . .

Commissioning

God sends us out into the world as His witnesses



Commission Hymn 132

Angels We Have Heard on High

Benediction & Blessing

May the Lord make you increase and abound in love
for one another and for all,
just as we abound in love for you.
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.

— 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13, NRSV

(John – Is there anything you can add here to this prayer that would be considered a blessing over the Christmas Luncheon that folks are going to go downstairs and participate in, in the fellowship hall?? Or maybe change this Benediction altogether to something more fitting of a blessing of food/dinner?)

Postlude