

The flowers on the altar this morning are given by Doug & Carol Fields in honor of **Orville & Irene Fields** who had October birthdays. Their sons, **Doug and Tom** and wives **Carol and Sue** honor their memory.

PRELUDE

CALL to WORSHIP:

One: We know all about interruptions this year.

Many: **Worship online. Tickets unused. Vacations cancelled. Gatherings delayed or held outside on lawn chairs and masks.**

One: We know all about our careful planning suddenly tossed, thrown out the window.

Many: **The normal rhythms and routines of Advent will be different this year.**

One: What are you waiting for? Honestly, deep in your heart. Name aloud to your screen and write down that question to hold for the coming twenty-five days.

Many: **We prepare for a silent night when we will celebrate the One who is God's love incarnate even this year. Come, let us enter this holy season of Advent, waiting, watching, and wondering what God is up to right now.**

OPENING HYMN:

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

No. 116

**O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel
That mourns lonely exile here, until the child of God appear.**

Refrain: **Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!**

**O 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. (Refrain)**

**O come, O Day-spring, come and cheer our spirits by your advent here;
Love stir within the womb of night, and death's own shadows put to flight. (Refrain)**

**O come, Desire of Nations bind all peoples in one heart and mind;
Make envy, strife and quarrels cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace. (Refrain)**

OPENING PRAYER

Patient, persistent, present God, we know that Advent is a time of both preparing and watching. This holy season calls for both moments of prayerful action and quiet waiting. We are so good at "to-do" lists and busyness. We like to feel needed and necessary. What we struggle with is slowing down, especially in a time when our normal routine is shopping, baking, parties, activities, church events, gatherings, concerts, and every day full of opportunities. This year is different. This year we have space to eat dinner in the glow of a Christmas Tree. This year we have time to hold each nativity figure, stepping into her/his sandals – letting her/his story sing to our story. This could be a holy season of encountering Your presence. That last sentence is our heartfelt prayer. As you interrupted Zechariah in the temple, help us experience You today in ways that guide us throughout this season. In the name of the One we await, Jesus the Christ, born in a barn and laid in a manger. Amen.

LIGHTING the CANDLE of HOPE – Poem by Ann Weems

The whole world waits in December darkness
for a glimpse of the Light of God.
Even those who snarl “Humbug!”
and chase away the carolers
have been seen looking toward the skies.
The one who declared he never would forgive
has forgiven,
and those who left home
have returned,
and even wars are halted,
if briefly,
as the whole world looks starward.
In the December darkness
we peer from our windows
watching for an angel with rainbow wings
to announce the Hope of the World.

ANTIPHON: For You, O Lord, My soul in stillness waits; Truly my hope is in You.

OUR ENCOUNTER with SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:5-23

⁵ During the rule of King Herod of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah (and) his wife Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron. ⁶ They were both righteous before God, blameless in their observance of all the Lord’s commandments and regulations. ⁷ They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to become pregnant and they both were very old. ⁸ One day Zechariah was serving as a priest before God because his priestly division was on duty. ⁹ Following the customs of priestly service, he was chosen by lottery to go into the Lord’s sanctuary and burn incense. ¹⁰ All the people who gathered to worship were praying outside during this hour of incense offering. ¹¹ An angel from the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw the angel, he was startled and overcome with fear. ¹³ The angel said, “Don’t be afraid, Zechariah. Your prayers have been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will give birth to your son and you must name him John. ¹⁴ He will be a joy and delight to you, and many people will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great in the Lord’s eyes. He must not drink wine and liquor. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before his birth. ¹⁶ He will bring many Israelites back to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ He will go forth before the Lord, equipped with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will turn the hearts of fathers^[a] back to their children, and he will turn the disobedient to righteous patterns of thinking. He will make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” ¹⁸ Zechariah said to the angel, “How can I be sure of this? My wife and I are very old.” ¹⁹ The angel replied, “I am Gabriel. I stand in God’s presence. I was sent to speak to you and to bring this good news to you. ²⁰ Know this: What I have spoken will come true at the proper time. But because you didn’t believe, you will remain silent, unable to speak until the day when these things happen.” ²¹ Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they wondered why he was in the sanctuary for such a long time. ²² When he came out, he was unable to speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he gestured to

them and couldn't speak. ²³ When he completed the days of his priestly service, he returned home.

SERMON

What are you waiting for?

MUSICAL INTERLUDE to PRAYER: **Veni Emmanuel**
Sarah Melcher, violin

arr. Mahnke

PASTORAL PRAYER & LORD'S PRAYER

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

**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.**

**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.**

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE