

# COMMUNITY WORSHIP

Come, Let Us Adore Him: Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy  
Third Sunday of Advent



# SERVICE OF WORD AND TABLE

## For the Third Sunday of Advent

### Greetings

We gather today to light the third candle known as the candle of joy. This third candle symbolizes rejoicing. During the third week of Advent, we are filled with joy for the near arrival of Jesus on Christmas day. This Sunday we reflect on the joy the shepherd's felt at the birth of Jesus.

**First reader:** No matter what troubles overwhelm us today, Isaiah reminds us that in all of our preparation and passionate pursuit of God's coming kingdom, we must not forget that God's salvation has come and is coming. "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3). With joy you will remember that God's salvation is already present among us.

**Community:** Faced with the troubles and the suffering of the world, we choose to live in joyful presence to God and one another. We will not turn away from the pain and the hurt in our world, and we will not stop rejoicing in God, whose salvation fills us to overflowing that God's love might flow through us and flood our troubled world with hope, peace, and joy.

**Second reader:** We light this candle of joy as a sign of our commitment to be present to ourselves, our friends, our families, and our neighbors that in sharing our vulnerable lives we might share in the glorious joy of God's salvation together.

*Light the third (pink/rose) candle of the Advent wreath.<sup>1</sup>*

## GATHERING IN PRAISE

+Opening Hymn    *Of the Father's Love Forgotten*

#184 UMH

### +Invitation to the Call to Worship

The heavens declare God's righteousness

**The Lord will give what is good.**

The Lord has done great things for us.

**I wait for the Lord, my soul waits.**

Come, let's go up to the mountain of the Lord.

**In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord.**

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from the UMC Discipleship Resources: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/come-let-us-adore-him-advent-candle-lighting-liturgy-2024>.

## Opening Prayer

More than anything, you are hope, O God. Your hope is like grass that grows everywhere. When the land is barren, suddenly from nothing, grass emerges. You are our grass. When we cannot see the horizon, when we do not have dreams, when injustice seems to prevail, we are raised by you, O Hope, and we can continue our journeys knowing that in the midst of the fog, hope comes. Amen.

## GATHERING IN WORD & PROCLAMATION

### Psalter Reading

Psalm 126

Reader: The Word of God for the people of God.

Community: **Thanks be to God.**

### Special Music

*Rise Up*

Kim Jamae Williams

### Gospel Reading

Luke 3: 7-18

### Reflection

### Special Music

*God of Queer Transgressive Spaces*

Edward Moran

### Prayers of the People.

*After each prayer, all are invited to respond: "Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer."*

You, O LORD, are good and forgiving, abounding in kindness to all who call upon you. Hearken, O LORD, to my prayer and attend to the sound of my pleading." We pray. *Silence*

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For our beloved community, we may practice what we preach and, with open arms, welcome those who identify as members of the community. May those in positions of power within Christian communities and religious spaces remember that Jesus welcomed all to the table without discrimination, we pray *Silence ...*

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For Pope Francis, that he shepherds the Synod on Synodality with an open heart and mind. May he center the experiences of the beloved persons and hear the pleadings of those who long for full inclusion in the church, we pray *Silence ...*

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For our world, that we may rejoice in the diversity that makes up the human race. That we may find ourselves curious instead of condemning those who are different from us, and that we rejoice in the many ways God's love flows through each of us, we pray *Silence ...*

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For the families and friends who have lost loved ones due to violence and discrimination towards queer persons. May God's love and peace be a balm to their aching hearts, and may they feel their loved ones close in spirit, we pray *Silence* ...

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For those who ever wondered if they were truly made in the image and likeness of God because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. May they know they are fearfully and wonderfully made in God's loving image; we pray *Silence* ...

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For those in the beloved community who have felt ostracized because the Word of God has been turned into a weapon and a tool of oppression. May God break through the barriers that have led to harmful interpretations; we pray *Silence* ...

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

We ask that God hear the sound of our pleading and sustain us in our work in recognizing and affirming the beloved community. May we hold together the desperation we feel and the hope for which we long. Amen.<sup>2</sup>

**Amen.**

**Hymn**

*Wake, awake, for night is flying*

**#720 UMH**

## **GATHERING AT THE TABLE**

**+Invitation**

*Presider*

As we have lightened the third candlelight of the advent celebration, with dancing hearts, resilient spirits, and open minds, let us worship God as Christ our Lord invites to his table all who desire the warmth of God's love and long for the flourishing of a new life.

**+Prayer of Confession & Pardon.**

**Rainbow-Raising God, who flew all the colors across the sky as an emblem of the promise to sustain life for all creation, we confess that our openness and affirmation has often had limits. For too long we have allowed PRIDE to be whitewashed, erasing the important dreams, visions and resistance of black trans femmes that forged a way forward for us all. Forgive our forgetfulness. For too long we have celebrated PRIDE for some of us, but not all of us. Forgive us when we use the rainbow flag to cover over the work, we have yet to do to demonstrate your fierce love for trans folk. Convict us with your grace, Transforming God, so that not one more anti-trans word will be spoken without our opposition. Until trans justice comes, we pray as we would live. Amen.<sup>3</sup>**

Presider: Hear the good news: Christ died for us while we were yet sinners; that proves God's love toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2023/07/23/prayers-of-lament-and-hope-for-lgbtq-people/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ucc.org/what-we-do/wider-church-ministries/gsjm/lgbtqia/trans-centered-worship-resources/>

**In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!**

**Glory to God. Amen.**

**+Sharing the Peace:**

*Presider*

Let us offer one another signs of reconciliation and love. We invite you to wave at others, clasp your hands and extend them toward others, or extend your open palms toward others as alternative expressions of passing the peace.

*During the Sharing of the Peace, the Communion Stewards will join the Presider at the table to the north of the communion table to wash their hands. They will remain on the side as the Presider returns to the table to proceed with the Communion liturgy.*

**Hymn**

*My soul gives Glory to my God*

**#195 UMH**

**+The Great Thanksgiving**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to God.**

Let us give thanks to the One who guides our life together.

**It is our joy to offer gratitude and praise.**

God of wild love and extravagant acceptance, Spirit of boldness and beauty, You are faithfully present in both the grit and glitter of life, and you are present here with us now. Awaken us to your dream for creation: A world in which every member of the human family is free to flourish however you have made them. Forgive us for the moments we have held back your ever-flowing current of love, dignity, and justice. Remake us into people eager to see you in the faces, bodies, and expressions of all people. Remind each of us to step out of the shadows of our lives and shine fearlessly and courageously. Ignite the Divine Light within us to sparkle through the prism of our bodies and brighten every corner of this Earth. Holy One, You call each of us beloved. Each of us cherished. Each of us desired. Each of us sacred. And so, we give thanks now and forever singing.

Sanctus

*Holy, holy, holy*

**#2257-b TFWS**

We gather in this precious given space oh God and in this moment, we respond to the words of Jesus, who tells us: "...where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." And it is with the power of Christ that we proclaim that this table is open to all people — no matter who you are or what you believe or what you've been told. Here at the Lord's table, we remember the simple gathering of a chosen family that came together for a meal that proclaimed a new way of being in this world. We remember God's radically inclusive love made real in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We remember the One who befriended the forgotten, embraced the outcast, and saw the Image of God in all people. We remember the One who confronted every power that disconnected, marginalized, oppressed, and "other-ed." It is here at this table that we find hope and imagination to see God's dream and promise of a world of wholeness, and it is here that we receive the nourishment and strength to continue on the paths of justice.

*Presider may hold hands over the bread, or touch or lift the bread.*

We recall that on the night he was betrayed, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

*Presider may hold hands over the cup, or touch or lift the cup.*

In the same way he took the cup, saying, “This is my blood, my very life, poured out for you. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

*Presider may raise hands.*

Let us declare the mystery of faith

### **Memorial Acclamation**

*Christ has Died*

**#2257-c TFWS**

*Presider may hold hands, palms down, over the bread and cup.*

God, we thank you for breathing this world into existence and proclaiming from its birth: “It is good.” We come to you with gratitude for the endless blessings that we see, feel, and know on our journeys of life. We celebrate the rich diversity of your creation — every beautiful body, every shade of skin, every expression of love. Through your Spirit, open our hearts to the joy we can find amid life’s challenges. Remind us that we are loved — fiercely and forever. And, however, the world may try to hold us down or tell us who to be, remind us that nothing can separate us from your presence. And so we pray. Amen.

**AMEN**

*Amen*

**#2257-d TFWS**

### **+The Lord’s Prayer**

We join in God’s dream of love and transformation. And now, with the confidence of children of God, let us pray the Lord’s Prayer in the language of your choosing.

### **+Invitation to the Table**

Beloved children of God, the table is set. Come and feast with the One who loves you more than you can possibly imagine.<sup>4</sup>

### **+Breaking of the Bread.**

### **+Sharing the Bread and Cup.**

**Special Music**

*Him*

**Sam Smith**

### **+Prayer of Thanksgiving**

**God, your bread and your cup renew our spirits. No matter the times we have failed to show up to your call, or to our own needs, or to the cries of our neighbors, you receive us again. May your unending grace be our foundation as we journey with Christ towards justice. Amen.**

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<sup>4</sup> <https://samlundquist.medium.com/prayers-for-queer-folks-a-pride-prayer-and-communion-liturgy>.

## GOING FORTH

**+Closing Hymn**

*Come thou long expected Jesus*

#278 UMH

**+Benediction**

*Presider*

May the divine light within sparkle you through the prism of your body and brighten the world with a glorious rainbow. Never forget you are loved. Fiercely and forever and the blessings of God almighty, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and remain with you always. Amen.

**Postlude**

*I Shall Not Leave from by Your Side*

Chris Shelton