

Introduction

God keeps the promise made to David to give him an everlasting throne. The angel tells Mary that God will give David's throne to her son Jesus. She is perplexed by Gabriel's greeting and by the news of her coming pregnancy, but she is able still to say, "Count me in." We who know that Jesus is called king only as he is executed still find it a mystery hard to fathom, but with Mary today we hear the news of what God is up to and say, "Count us in."

CALL TO WORSHIP

Let us come together in this place to feel the warmth of God's presence.

We are here to spend time with our Creator and listen for the Spirit.

God waits for us. God calls us to place our trust in Him, our Creator and Redeemer.

God calls us to listen once again for the voice of the Spirit speaking to us in our lives.

We find ourselves weary and broken. Only You can heal us and refresh us.

Only You can open our hearts and minds.

Let us remember who created us and loves us just as we are.

Let us worship together as we await the coming of the Messiah. **Amen.**

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Almighty God, you know us inside and out. You are present alongside us in our past, present, and future. We cannot escape your presence. You know us before we were born. You watch over us day and night, and always hear our prayers.

We come before you now wanting to hear your voice. Forgive us when we stray and bring us closer to your Spirit once again. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection

God of love, **We confess that we have turned away from you, God. We have not trusted in your promises to hear us. We have not believed that you are by our side through everything in our lives. We let worry and fear consume us. We do not always treat our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may know your deep love for us again and glorify your holy name in all that we say and do. Amen.**

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was crucified and died for us and for all our sins. As a minister of the church of Christ, I declare to you that God forgives all of your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. God has never left you. Return to the Lord your God, with joyful hearts, ready to accept God's gift of grace. **Amen.**

Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that would obstruct your mercy, that willingly we may bear your redeeming love to all the world, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH: ADVENT 4

We praise you, O God, as we mark this fourth week of preparation for Christ's birth. Open our eyes and open our hearts to see your presence among us in the Word made flesh. Enlighten us and restore our faith that we may feel you working in our lives again. We pray all these things through Christ, our Messiah, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near. **Amen.**

First Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Instead of David building a house (temple) for God, God promises to establish David's house (dynasty) forever. Centuries later, after the Babylonian exile, no king sat on the throne. Even then, however, the people of Israel remembered this promise and continued to hope for a king, the messiah, God's anointed.

¹Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." ³Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

⁴But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: ⁵Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. ⁷Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" ⁸Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

Psalm: Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

¹Your love, O LORD, forever will I sing;

from age to age my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness.

²**For I am persuaded that your steadfast love is established forever;
you have set your faithfulness firmly in the heavens.**

³"I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn an oath to David my servant:

⁴**'I will establish your line forever, and preserve your throne for all generations.'**"

¹⁹You spoke once in a vision and said to your faithful people:

"I have set the crown upon a warrior and have exalted one chosen out | of the people.

²⁰**I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him.**

²¹My hand will hold him fast and my arm will make him strong.

²²**No enemy shall deceive him, nor shall the wicked bring him down.**

²³I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him.

²⁴**My faithfulness and steadfast love are with him,
and he shall be victorious through my name.**

²⁵I will set his hand on the sea, and his right hand on the rivers.

²⁶**He will say to me, ‘You are my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.’**

Second Reading: Romans 16:25-27

Paul closes his letter to the Romans by praising God because, in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, God has revealed the promised, divine plan of salvation for all humanity. Paul proclaims this gospel of Christ in order to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations.

²⁵Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—²⁷to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

In this annunciation, Luke makes clear that God comes with good news for ordinary people from little known places. This king will not be born to royalty in a palace, but to common folk in a stall. Here Luke highlights the role of the Spirit, a special emphasis in this gospel.

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.”

²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

³⁰The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” ³⁴Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

³⁵The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray to the Lord on behalf of the Church, the world,
and all people according to their need.

A brief silence

O come, O come, Emmanuel, that the Church, your people Israel, and the whole world may rejoice in the splendor of your appearing. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

O Wisdom, of the Most High, fill the Church with your Spirit. Sustain and order its proclamation and its works of charity, especially in the presence of its enemies, according to your most holy will. Come, and teach us wisdom. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

O Emmanuel, the ransom of your people Israel: deliver also your persecuted Church from hardship. Keep it patient, faithful, and steadfast. Help us to honor their witness and provide for their needs. Turn us all back to you. Come; and teach them courage. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

O Adonai, ruler of the House of Israel, rule also in the hearts and lives of your people in this congregation. Give us your Word and show us your glory. Come; and make our hearts glad. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

O Bright and Morning Star, you gladden the hearts of those who sit in darkness. Shine upon all who are overwhelmed by grief, despair, doubt, anger, confusion, hatred, or unbelief *especially we name*. Come; soften their hearts and lead them into the brightness of your holy love.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Graciously answer our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Offering Prayer

Let us pray together over the gifts we have received....Almighty God, **You are Creator of all that is in heaven and on earth. We rejoice that we have many blessings to be thankful for in our lives. You have changed our lives forever with your grace. Grant us courage to change the lives of others with your Good News. Bless our congregation, this community, and all the offerings we give back to you for your holy work, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray together:

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

SENDING PRAYER

Let us pray. Lord God, in this time of holy worship you have refreshed us with your Word and given us new hope. You provide manna when we are hungry, and water to renew us. Send us forth now as witnesses of your Good News for all, that we may be light for the world, as we wait for Jesus, your Son and our Lord. **Amen.**

BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you. Know that God is closest to you when you feel furthest away. May Christ's presence guide you in all you do. May the Holy Spirit shine in you and bring others closer to God's love and ✠ give you hope. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go and spread God's love as we prepare for the Messiah! **Thanks be to God**

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