

ADVENT 4

Candle lighting (*candles from previous weeks are lit first*)

Love abundant overflows pouring into our midst: (a)Rise, take heart and love deeply.

The glow of God the Divine Lover lightens our hearts

We are together and never alone. Gathered on this fourth Sunday in Advent we witness to God's deep love and tender compassion for the whole world. Our witness is love. [*the 4th candle is lighted*]

God's love comes to ground, and like an arc, large to hold, embrace, heal and restore.

We pray: God-who-never-ceases-to-love, kindle our hearts that we may burn anew with your love. Bless us with the flame of lively living and believing. Take our words and release them to speak of you; take our minds and broaden them to reflect your overflowing love; take our hearts and set them alight with your desire for goodness. In the name of the One full of love.

Hymn

140 O Lord how shall I meet you

Prayer

God of Advent, we are so close to Christmas that we can see your light shining in the dark as we come closer and closer.

And as we draw nearer we find ourselves distracted by all the busyness of the season help us not to lose our focus on you.

God of Advent, we have been waiting for what seems like a long time for that special day to celebrate the birth of your son.

We have waited with hopeful hearts.

We have waited with longing for your peace.

We have waited with a desire for your joy.

And now we wait with a yearning for your love to be born in us again.

God of Advent, when your steadfast love is birthed in us we will sing of you and your love forever and ever.

When we are filled with your love, we will open our hearts and hands to the lonely, the needy, the sorrowful, and those who are hurting. We pray that we are able to share your love with all we meet.

God of peace, of hope, of joy and of love, may all that we are and all that we do glorify you.....Amen.

Scripture Reading Luke 1: 46-55

Hymn 740 Tell out my soul

AN ADVENT PLAY by Mukti Barton

Hymn CH4 291 When out of poverty is born
(tune: Kingsfold)

1 When out of poverty is born a dream that will not die,
and landless, weary folk find strength
to stand with heads held high,
it's then we learn from those who wait
to greet the promised day,
'The Lord is coming; don't lose heart.
Be blest: prepare the way!'

2 When people wander far from God,
forget to share their bread,
they find their wealth an empty thing,
their spirits are not fed.
For only just and tender love
the hungry soul will stay.
And so God's prophets echo still
'Be blest: prepare the way!'

3 When God took flesh and came to earth,
the world turned upside down,
and in the strength of woman's faith

the Word of Life was born.
She knew that God would raise the low,
it pleased her to obey.
Rejoice with Mary in the call,
'Be blest: prepare the way!

words ©Kathryn Galloway (b. 1952)

Meditative Prayer

God, how can a baby change the world even before it is born?
The proud seem quite secure, the seats of power look unshaken.
The hungry are unfed, and the rich take plenty away.
So how can a baby change the world?
And yet, when it stirs in the womb, it changes somebody's world,
and when a child is born, our lives are changed for ever.
Who knows, at birth, what a child will become?
Did Mary sing her song when her son left home,
when he sat on a hillside, hung on a cross, and shattered the tomb?
Then how can a baby *not* change the world?
Who knows what a child will become?
For when, in a home or a nation, new life surges, strong as the incoming
tide, it changes the shape of the shoreline so that even the castles of
power are like sand.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

In the midst of our busy lives and preparations, O God, you come to us
in the child of promise and surprising joy.
With hope, we await the coming of your kingdom, when your love will
fill the world.
We thank you for the beauty of winter, with frosty mornings, barren
trees, nature resting, preparing for its rebirth.
We wonder at the infinite glory of your creation and know you by the
works of your hand.
We thank you for all the gifts we enjoy as part of our preparations,
especially the company and love of family and friends.
We thank you for the love and joy that fill our hearts at this time of
year.

May we also be filled with your spirit, compassion, and vision, that your loving kindness will be known through all our thoughts, words, and actions.

We remember those for whom this season will be difficult, even painful: those who grieve lost loved ones, relationships that have been broken, health issues that fracture peace, those without enough to eat or a safe place to live.

Help us to be present to those who feel alone, to share with those in need, to offer our time and attention to those who are anxious, to seek the strengthening of the lives and communities around us.

We pray these things in the name of Jesus, the One who comes, who taught us to pray, saying...OUR FATHER

Dedication of Offering

God's steadfast love is established forever – like the moon, an enduring witness in the skies.

God's faithfulness is as firm as the heavens – like stars that never grow dim.

May God bless this offering that Christ's light will shine throughout the ages. Amen.

Hymn 144 It came upon the midnight clear

Blessing

Our watching and our waiting is soon coming to an end. Christmas is coming....As we go out, may the peace of God in Christ guard your hearts and your minds.....now and forever. Amen.