

PRELUDE

WELCOME

THANK YOU to Nancy Curtis for leading our music this morning, Jim & Bonnie Evanson for worship team duties, and Jane Haugen for altar care.

CALL TO WORSHIP

“Teacher,” the crowd asked, “What should we do?”

If you have two shirts, give one away.

Hold onto hope.

Live like we belong to one another.

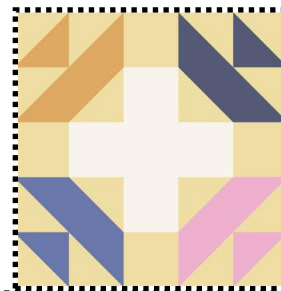
Speak the truth.

Look for God.

Do the good that is yours to do.

It's all that easy, and it's all that hard.

Let us worship our present and active God.



WE CAN'T GO ALONE

This quilt square design is called a "log cabin", and is meant to symbolize that together we can hold one another up and make something greater.

CANDLE LIGHTING: JOY

In a weary and worn world, how do we begin again? Where do we start?

Let us start small. Let us begin with what is right in front

of us. Let us do the good that is ours to do, and let us do it with joy!

Yes, let us begin with joy. Today we light the candles of hope, peace, and joy.

May these lights remind us of what could be.

May these lights inspire action. May the warmth of these lights fill us with joy.

May it be so! Amen.

CALL TO CONFESSION

Friends, there are times when the weight of the world can feel so heavy on us. Fortunately, when we come before God in confession, God removes that weight. God sees our shame, our guilt, our sin, and offers us grace. So join me in the prayer of confession.

Come and allow yourself to be freed. Come and allow yourself to begin again.

Let us pray:

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Liberating God,

There are days when the world can feel like it's crumbling. There are days when I doubt that I can make a difference.

I ask myself,

What could these two hands do?

What could this one voice say?

Shake me free of my own paralysis and self-doubt. Remind me that I am not called to fix everything. I am simply called to do the good that is mine to do. With hope in my heart and a fire in my bones, I pray. Amen.

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

Friends,

no matter how many times we lose momentum, doubt our own ability, or tell ourselves that the problems of the world are simply too big, God sees what we cannot. God calls us by name, surrounds us in grace, and invites us to begin again.

Trusting in this good news, join me in proclaiming these words of forgiveness:

We are loved. We are forgiven. We are invited to do the good that is ours to do.

Thanks be to God for this new beginning. Amen.

GATHERING SONG *Morning Has Broken*

ELW #556

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

KYRIE

ELW p. 203

CANTICLE OF PRAISE

ELW p. 204

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Listening God,

We know that you are constantly speaking to us. Through music, scripture, nature, and relationships, you make yourself known again and again. In gratitude, we long to return the favor. In gratitude, we long to meet you halfway.

So in this moment,

we are quieting the noise in our heads. We are closing our eyes. We are leaning in.

We are listening. We are doing the good that is ours to do.

Speak to us through the chaos. Speak to us as only you can. With hope in our hearts we listen, we pray, amen.

QUILT STORY: Jane

FIRST SCRIPTURE READING: Isaiah 58:9b-12

⁹ Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, he pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,¹⁰ If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. ¹¹ And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. ¹² And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in.


The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Al - le - lu - ia! Lord and Sav - ior: o - pen now your sav - ing word.



Let it burn like fire with - in us; speak un - til our hearts are stirred.



Al - le - lu - ia! Lord, we sing for the good news that you bring.

GOSPEL: Luke 3:7-16

The holy gospel according to Luke, the third chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

⁷ John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹ Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, “What, then, should we do?” ¹¹ In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise.” ¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” ¹³ He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” ¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

¹⁵ As the people were filled with expectation and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶ John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

The gospel of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Dale Guidi, LPA

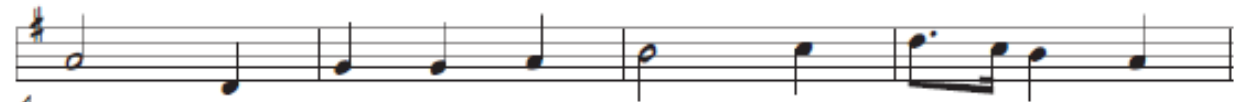
Hymn of the Day *If I Have Two Coats*

See page 6 of this bulletin

IF I HAVE TWO COATS



1. If I have two coats, God calls me to
 2. If I have some bread, and soup, all the
 3. If mon—ey is mine, God calls me to
 4. O God of great truth, John's call to o-



4 share; There's some—one near—by with no coat to
 more, I'm called to reach out to some—one who's
 live, as some—one who loves to gen—er—ous—ly
 bey, pre - pared us for Christ, who shows us your



8 wear. And if I don't know who that per—son might
 poor. And if I don't know who that per—son might
 give; And if I don't know some—one suff—ring near
 Way. May we have the cour—age to try some—thing



12 be, it's to a new friend—ship that
 be, it's to a new ta—ble that
 me, it's to a good neigh—bor that
 new, to reach to new neigh—bors and



15 God's call— ing me.
 God's call— ing me.
 God's call— ing me.
 so wel— come you.

Words by Carolyn Gillette.
 Music attributed to Johann Michael Haydn

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

John the Baptist's followers once asked him, "What shall we do?"

Church, knowing the state of the world, what is your answer?

In the Spirit of Jesus Christ, we say:

Do not be discouraged by the weight of the world. Instead, hold fast to hope. Roll up your sleeves. Feed the hungry. Tend the garden. If you have two coats, give one away. Do the good that is yours to do. In doing so, you will see God.

For this we believe: small acts of love *can* make a difference.

Amen.

PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE

Loving Creator,

There are days when the world feels like it's on fire. There are days when we are inundated with bad news, days when we are up to our eyes in grief, days when we have reached the end of our rope. Lord, in your mercy,

Receive our prayer.

On those days, loving God, we reach for you. On those days, we return to this sanctuary. On those days, we light candles. On those days, we sing. On those days, we fight tooth and nail to hold onto hope. So in an effort to release the fears that trap us, we name them aloud and give them to you. Lord, in your mercy,

Receive our prayer.

For wars that cannot find an end, for children who cannot find food, for teenagers who cannot find peace— Lord, in your mercy,

Receive our prayer.

Holy God, draw near. For the people in our community who are hurting and need your touch, especially Lynnette, Bea, Randy & Linda, Mike & Vicky, Carol, Holly, Anita, Mollie, Larry, Denice, Gary, Curt, and Karen. For people who are lonely, for people spending their holidays in the hospital, for the tender challenge of every new beginning— Lord, in your mercy,

Receive our prayer.

Loving God, draw near. And as you draw near, remind us that we too can make a difference. When the weight of the world overwhelms us, remind us that faith looks like giving your second coat away. Lord, in your mercy,

Receive our prayer.

Infuse us with hope. Swat away our insecurities. Drown out our doubts. Silence the fears that cage us and remind us that change always come from “small acts of great love.” So with hope in our hearts, we roll up our sleeves. With hope in our hearts, we strive to do the good that is ours to do. Lord, in your mercy,
Receive our prayer.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.
And also, with you.

COMMUNION GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Loving God,

We come to this Table today longing for a new beginning.

In a world that so often feels like it’s ending, we crave the hope of a new beginning. We long to heal from the endings and crash landings of our hurting world and start again, rooted in your good news.

So week by week, bit by bit, we return to your Word. Week by week, bit by bit, we return to each other. Week by week, and bit by bit, we repeat the truths that we so often need to hear, trusting that by your grace, it is never too late to start again. So in this spirit of beginnings, we come to your Table.

Once more we ask that you would meet us here. Pour out your Spirit on this ordinary meal, that in this bread and cup we may glimpse a new day. May the sight of everyone being welcomed at this Table remind us that all are loved by you. May the evidence that there is food for all remind us that no one is meant to go hungry.

May the fact that our own sin, shame, and doubt do not keep us from this Table remind us that you welcome and love us as we are. And may all of these Communion truths serve as building blocks for a new day, for a new beginning.

With hope in our hearts, we pray. With hope in our hearts, we gather. With hope in our hearts, we begin again. Meet us here.

And so, with grateful hearts, let us practice connection by joining our voices together in prayer, saying the words your son taught us to pray. . .

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 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.

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

Friends, Advent is a season of waiting. We wait for Christ to be born. We wait for the feeling that love is near. We wait for God's promised day. Advent is a season of waiting. And while we humans are good at many things, waiting is not high on that list. We are an impatient and anxious bunch, eager for the hope of what comes next.

Maybe that's why this Table is such a gift. For when we come to this Table, for just a moment, the waiting stops. When we come to this Table, for just a moment, we get a glimpse of God's promised day. We get a glimpse of a world where all are fed and all are welcomed. And for just a moment we can believe the angels when they say, "Be not afraid."

For just a moment, Mary's words tumble through our minds—words of justice and hope, words like, "the hungry have been filled" and "the humble have been lifted."

So come to this Table. Come catch a glimpse of what could be. Come end your waiting, for love is hovering close. This is what it's all about. God is all around us. So come. This good news is for you. All are welcome here.

COMMUNION SONG



- 1 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
- 2 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
- 3 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;



you suf-fered death our lives to save: have mer - cy now, we pray.
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mer - cy now, we pray.
e - ter-nal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

I Wonder As I Wander

Appalachian Folk Tune

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Nourishing God,

Sometimes we tell ourselves that too much has taken place to begin again. We think the world is too far gone. We think we have made too many mistakes. We tell ourselves that we couldn't possibly begin again.

But then we come to this Table and we get a glimpse of your kingdom. We come to this Table and all are welcomed, all are seen, all are fed. And just like that, we have hope. Just like that, we begin again.

Thank you for the gift of this fresh start. Thank you for planting hope deep in our bones. Thank you for meeting us in ordinary bread and juice to remind us that it's never too late to build your kingdom here. We are grateful. We are so grateful. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BENEDICTION

As you leave this place, may you have the wisdom to lean on one another.

May you have the courage to hold onto hope, the compassion to do the good that is yours to do, and the confidence to trust that God sees you as a blessing.

For in a world full of dead ends, Advent invites us to begin again. So, start here. Start now. Start with love and begin again.

In the name of Christ, our new beginning, go in peace.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SENDING LITANY

based on ALC's Purpose Statement and Guiding Principles

We have gathered in joy, and now we are sent to embrace the world with God's love.

We ask God to help us continue to

gather to be empowered by the Spirit for life's journey.

Compel us to

seek God's will through prayer, scripture study, and faith sharing.

Give us courage to

reach out and welcome all people with unconditional love.

Inspire us to

live with a generous spirit in our community and world.

Help us

serve our hurting world with love and compassion. Amen.

SENDING SONG *Take My Life That I May Be*

ELW #685

POSTLUDE *Take My Life That I May Be*

William Havergal

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