

## Order of Worship 12/3/23

Prelude

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus arr. Keveren

Welcome

Call to Worship

In God's house, we can be joyful.

**We can be grateful.**

**We can be hopeful.**

In God's house, we can be weary.

**We can be anxious.**

**We can be grieving.**

In God's house, we can be honest—

**inspired or tired,**

**delighted or doubtful,**

**connected or curious,**

**and everything in between.**

This is God's house. You are welcome exactly as you are.

**Let us worship our loving God.**

Hymn

#138 Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn (vs. 1-3)

Lighting the Candles of Advent

How does a weary world hope?

**By telling stories of hope,**

**by lighting candles in the night,**

**and planting seeds in the winter that**

**will bloom in the spring.**

By praying for children as they grow, and

picking up trash on the sidewalk.

**By insisting that small acts can make a**

**difference.**

There are a million ways to practice hope.

**So today we light the candle of hope as a**

**reminder and a charge.**

With God's help, may we bring hope

into a weary world. Amen. (Candles 1 is lit.)

## Prayer of Confession and Illumination

Friends, in today's scripture passage, a man named Zechariah is given good news from God and his response is to ask, "How can this be?"

Have any of you ever felt that way when receiving good news?

It can be hard to receive good news when we don't expect it.

It can be hard to accept God's grace and God's love when we think we don't deserve it.

But friends, scripture tells us over and over again of a loving, generous, and gracious God. So may we come to the prayer of confession today, not with fear, but with an awe so deep that we ask ourselves, "How can this be?"

Let us pray:

Gracious God, we are weary.

For weary bodies that ache and cry out, we pray:

**Forgive us for pushing ourselves too hard.**

**Reminds us that we deserve Sabbath rest.**

For weary minds that feel overwhelmed and saturated with news, we pray:

**Forgive us for creating so many distractions.**

**Remind us that in the quiet, we can hear you.**

For weary hearts that long to feel the joy of this season, we pray:

**Forgive us for being impatient with ourselves.**

**Remind us that healing takes time, and that joy and grief can coexist.**

For the weary edges of our faith that struggle to hold onto hope,

**Forgive us. Remind us of Zechariah and Elizabeth.**

**Remind us that your good news knows no bounds...**

Loving God, the source of our joy,  
as we turn our hearts toward your Word,  
we ask that you would soften us.

Soften the callouses on our hearts.

Weave yourself in between the cracks in our spirits.

And plant hope where there is room.

And as you do this,

like flowers toward the sun,

we will turn ourselves toward you,

eager to hear a Word so good that we cannot help but ask ourselves,

"How can this be?"

With openness and gratitude we pray,

amen.

Song of Response

#119 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (vs. 1)

Scripture Reading

Psalms 80: 1-7, 17-19

Scripture 2 as Skit

Luke 1:1-23

Passing of the Peace

Hymn #122 Comfort, Comfort You My People (vs. 1-3)

Homily Weariness Acknowledged is Weariness Shared

Prayers of the People

Gracious God,

You carry us through our days.

**You know every word on our tongue, every hair on our head.**

You know the dreams in our hearts, and the weight of our bones.

**You also know the weariness we bring with us into the morning and into this space. So with honesty**

**we come before you, both with hearts full of gratitude and with prayer requests on our lips.**

First, holy God, we thank you for the gifts of this life that give energy.

**For birthday candles and sunrises, for handwritten cards and jobs that we are passionate about.**

For stories that can make us laugh until we cry and for friends that feel like family. For the food pantry that gives our ministry heart, for the study that give your word texture, for the children who make us giggle, the building that shelters us, and the servants that make it all so.

**For all these gifts, thank you.**

In addition to these prayers of gratitude, loving God, we also bring you the things that weigh heavy

on our hearts. For gun violence, for family and friends in chemotherapy, for seasons of transition

and grief that won't let us go—we ask for your attention. For graceless moments, money anxiety, war mongering, fear that rest in our hearts, and for those whom we have named and left unnamed, we ask for your love and care.

**Take this yoke from us. Relieve some of the burden on our backs, and wrap your arms around places where we feel most tender.**

And as we enter into this new Advent season—a season marked with joy, hope and light—we ask

that you would remind us that our full humanity is welcome here. There is room for both joy and

grief. There is room for weariness and awe. There is room for faith and doubt, for nothing is too big or too far gone for your love to reach it.

**So with hope in our hearts, we unite our voices in thanksgiving, Amen.**

Hymn #128 One Candle is Lit (vs. 1-3)

Call to Communion and Stewardship

Prayer of Consecration and Lord's Prayer

Sharing Bread and Cup

Dedication Prayer

Hymn #132 When God Is a Child (vs.1-3)

Benediction

Family of faith,  
as you leave this place,  
you go into a weary world—  
so speak tenderly.  
Do the good that is yours to do.  
Choose connection.  
Hold onto hope.  
And remember  
that Christ took on flesh for you.  
You are God's beloved.  
So go rejoicing.  
The world needs it.  
Amen.

Postlude Holy, Holy, Holy arr. Keveren