



Beyond Human Time

Sunday, December 3, 2023
Extended Advent 4



48 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY ~ (585) 223-0634 ~ www.blcfairport.org
The Rev. Abigail Zang Hoffman and The Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson, co-Pastors

Sunday, December 3, 2023

PRELUDE

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

VENI, EMMANUEL
setting, Beatrice A. Miller

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Stir up your power, and come! Isaiah wants God to rip the heavens open, crying out for an apparently distant, angry God to show up, to save, to restore. When we hear Jesus describing the coming of the Son of Man with stars falling from heaven, it can sound dire and horrible, not like anything we would ever hope for. But when we really look at the suffering of people God loves, we can share the hope that God would tear open the heavens and come.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

W. Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1854
arr. Cathy Moglebust

The Chancel Bells

assisted by percussionists: Glenda Lockard, Kathy Moragne, Rich Towsley

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather today.

It is time to worship!

We listen for God

It is time to hear!

We receive God's grace.

It is time to be loved!

We leave in peace.

It is time to serve others!

As we wait for Jesus' arrival, Emmanuel, God-with-us, is already here in this time and place.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

With God, there is always time for forgiveness. We trust God, and we confess our sins together.

Brief pause

Holy One,

We have not stayed awake. We have missed you when you appeared in our neighbors, in strangers half a world away, in the suffering planet. We have wasted the time and the skills that you gave us and assumed we were powerless to mend the breaches in our world. Sometimes, we have given up on your mercy, justice, and love. Speak tenderly to our anxious hearts. Tear open the heavens and heal what we have done. Amen.

People of God, hear this good news: In the name of † Jesus Christ, all your sins are forgiven. Forgiveness gives us the courage we need. Wherever we wait for God's time to come, we will witness wonders.

Amen.

GATHERING HYMN

Fling Wide the Door

ELW 259

GREETING

The grace of God, who was, who is, and who is to come, be with you all.

And also with you.

KYRIE



Lord, have mer - cy__ on your peo - ple. Christ have mer - cy__ on__ us.
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.__ Chri - ste e - le - i - son.



Shine your light in__ to our__ dark - ness. Fill__ us__ with your ho - ly love.
Heal all__ con - flicts be - tween na - tions. Teach us__ how to__ live as one.



Be our strength in times of__ trou - ble. Set us free from_ chains that_ bind.
 Show us how to love our__ neigh - bor. Run to those who_ cry for__ help.



Breathe new_ life in - to our_ spir - its. Pu - ri - fy our_ hearts and minds.
 Word made flesh who lives a - mong us; Christ our_ Lord, Em - man - u - el.

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE

“O that you would tear open the heavens and come down. . . .” (Isaiah 64:1a)

Let us pray.

We wait for you, O God.

We wait for you to come and save us.

We wait for you to end what hurts us.

As we light another Advent candle, arrive in our hearts, our homes, our world—
 even as we still wait.

You promise that all evil will cease one day.

Give us a glimpse of that today.

Amen.

The Advent candle will be lit as we sing:

(Sung 3 times: st. 1/All st. 2/Cantors st. 1/All)



1. We light the Ad - vent can - dles a - gainst the win - ter night,
 2. The first one will re - mind us that Christ will soon re - turn.



to wel - come our Lord Je - sus who is the world's True Light,
 We light it in the dark - ness and watch it gleam and burn,



to wel - come our Lord Je - sus who is the world's True Light.
 we light it in the dark - ness and watch it gleam and burn.

assisted by cantors Alison Henry, Marilyn Henry

HEARING GOD'S WORD

DISMISSAL TO WORSHIP FOR KIDS

All kids ages 3 through elementary are welcome to a special time of hearing the Word, conversation and activity! Parents can remain in the sanctuary while the kids gather in the room across the hall from the side entrance to the sanctuary. Kids will return during the offering so they can participate in Communion.

READING: Isaiah 64:1-9

This lament comes from a people who have had their hopes shattered. The visions of a rebuilt Jerusalem and a renewed people of God, spoken of in Isaiah 40–55, have not been realized. Instead, the people experience ruin, conflict, and famine. This lament calls God to account—to be the God who has brought deliverance in the past.

¹O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—
²as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!
³When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
⁴From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.
⁵You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.
But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we transgressed.
⁶We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
⁷There is no one who calls on your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.
⁸Yet, O Lord, you are our Father;

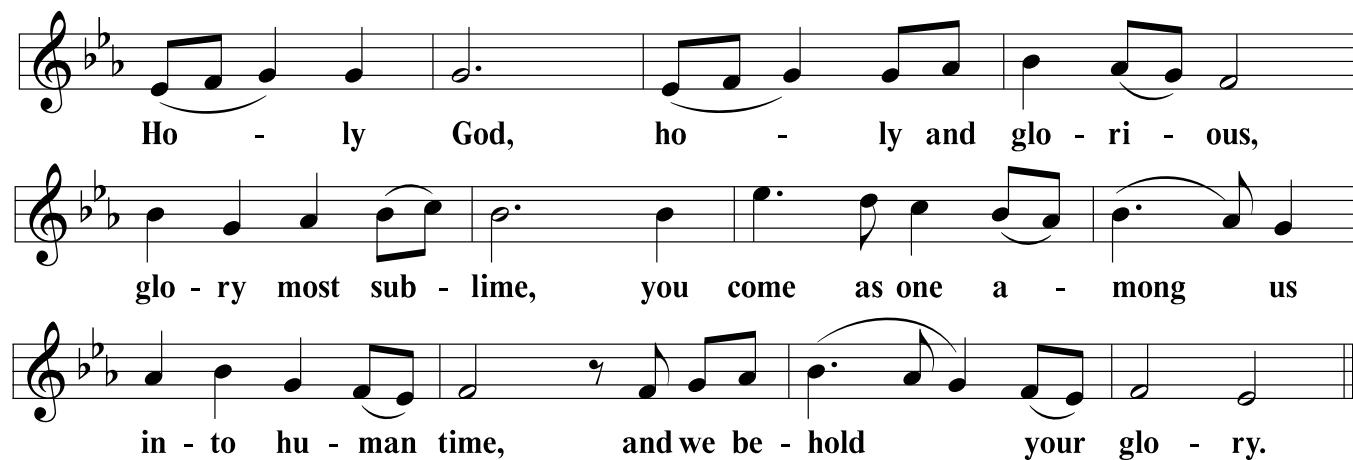
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.

⁹Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord,
and do not remember iniquity forever.
Now consider, we are all your people.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Ho - ly God, ho - ly and glo - ri - ous,
glo - ry most sub - lime, you come as one a - mong us
in - to hu - man time, and we be - hold your glo - ry.

The holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL: Mark 13:24-37

Jesus encourages his followers to look forward to the day when he returns in power and glory to end all suffering.

[Jesus said:] ²⁴“In those days, after that suffering,

the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light,

²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven,

and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

²⁶Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and

glory. ²⁷Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

²⁸“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and

puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these

things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you,

this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven

and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³²“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY	Come Now, O God	ACS 902
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Come, Now, O God



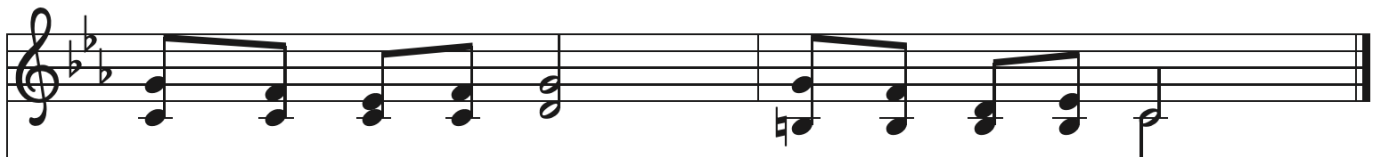
1 Come now, O God, when our love is for - sak - en.
2 Come, when we squan - der the free - dom you gave us.
3 Come, put an end to our self - serv - ing mad - ness.



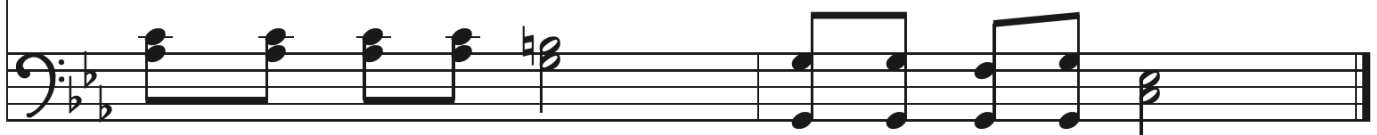
Come, when our bed - rock of faith has been shak - en.
Come, break the sys - tems of sin that en - slave us.
Come, while the world is en - shroud - ed in sad - ness.



Come, when our deep - est of hopes are mis - tak - en.
Come, though we won - der if you can still save us.
Come, turn the tears of our mourn - ing to glad - ness.



Come, Em - man - u - el. Come, Em - man - u - el.



THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Our prayers are always offered on behalf of the whole community.

People of God, we are each other's kin, and we are family with all creation. As we wait and yearn for God, we pray together for our community, for the church around the world, and for every need.

A brief silence.

#1 Call your church into holy fellowship as we await the restoration of all things. Reenergize your faithful people to live with hope and compassion, especially those who serve as missionaries near and far. Center us on your promise to come among us and make all things new. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

#2 All creation signals your presence, O God: the vastness of the cosmos, the turn of the seasons, and living things that both rest and flourish. Rekindle our commitment to care for the earth. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

#3 Let the nations tremble at your holy presence, that justice and liberation prevail in all corners of the earth. Restore peace to nations in conflict, teach righteousness to corrupt leaders and systems, and bring stability to areas facing uncertain futures. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Come, Lord Jesus to neighbors far and near. Deepen our kinship with these members and friends of Bethlehem and their families: Sara & Todd (Emerson), Abigail, Jim, Jim & Mary Jane, and John & Pat. Strengthen the ministries we share with others, especially our twinned parish in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Come, Lord Jesus to all who are hungry, thirsty, ill, or experiencing any struggles.

We pray for those who are grieving, especially the family and friends of:

- Don R., uncle of Amy W-P, who died on 11/20
- Jim T, brother-in-law of Sue T, who died on 11/12
- Marrgy S, cousin of Ruth G, who died on 11/12

We pray for those in need of healing, especially:

- Sue T who is undergoing treatment for Bell's Palsey
- Carol, friend of Kathy M, who is hospitalized with heart failure

Hear also these concerns we raise to you in our hearts or on our voice.

Silence for individual prayer.

Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

God, you are always with us. We gather these prayers together, and we entrust them to your endless love in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

SHARING GOD'S MEAL

THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

Share the peace in a way that cares for friend and neighbor.

If you worship virtually, share the peace through the comments section or text.

OFFERING

Information about supporting Bethlehem's ministry with your offerings is available in the Welcome insert in your pew rack or by visiting blcfairport.org/support-our-ministry.

OFFERING OF MUSIC

Prepare the Royal Highway

text, Franz Michael Franzén

Swedish folk tune / setting, James H. Laster

The Chancel Choir

OFFERTORY

1. Come now, O Prince of peace, make us one bod - y.
 2. Come now, O God of love, make us one bod - y.

Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile your peo - ple.
 Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile your peo - ple.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray. Loving God, for the time we have, and for the gifts we offer, we say:

Thank you.

For the chance to help others, and for the people whose lives will be better because of these gifts, we say:

Thank you.

For the ways you are changing the world, we say:

Thank you.

We pray in the name of Jesus, who appears wherever people need our help.

Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

God, our Creator

the abundance of your goodness overflows into creation.

Through the generations

your goodness continues to flow in friendship with humanity.

From beyond time into this moment

your goodness comes in this meal.

When the time was right, you entered our human existence in Jesus, who was born humbly, who spent his life with the unlikely and unloved, who healed and taught and preached the good news of your way.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Whenever we share this bread and cup,

Jesus is here with us, in this moment, in this time and place.

Whenever we share this bread and cup,

God takes us out of time and joins us with God's people in every time and place.

Whenever we share this bread and cup, we proclaim the mystery of faith.
Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Send the Spirit of your presence on us now, O God, so that we too will overflow with goodness.

Strengthen us by this meal, so that through us, your presence will flow out in mercy, justice, and love. Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

We prepare for you, praying as you taught us,

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who

sin against us.

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

The time is now! Taste and see God's goodness!

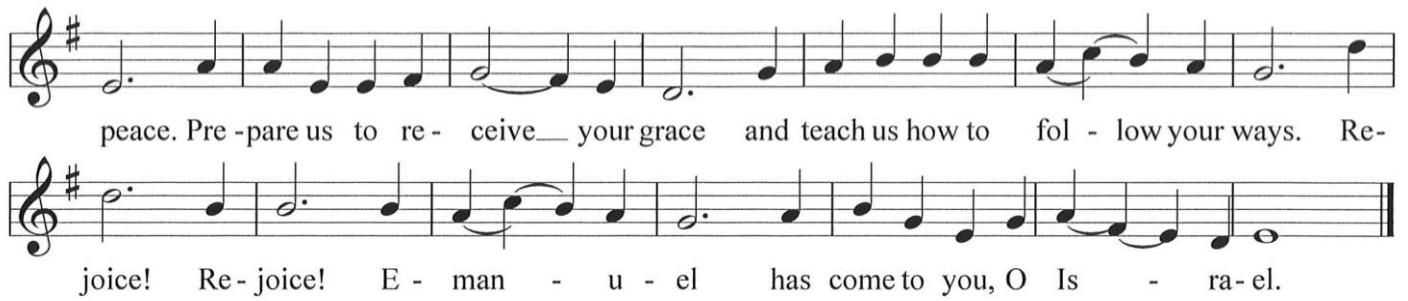
Thanks be to God!

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

Our communion bread is gluten-free, unless noted by the pastor. Grape juice is available; indicate your need to the communion assistant. If you worship through the Livestream and wish to receive communion, please reach out to one of the pastors.

THE COMMUNION





peace. Pre - pare us to re - ceive__ your grace and teach us how to fol - low your ways. Re -
joice! Re - joice! E - man - u - el has come to you, O Is - ra - el.

COMMUNION HYMN

We Are Waiting for Jesus

ACS 905

Cantor: st. 1

All: repeat st. 1; st2

We Are Waiting for Jesus



1 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.
2 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.



We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.
We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.



Sun of jus - tice, shine up - on us; we are trust - ing in your prom - ise.
Lov - ing Shep - herd, walk be - side us; stir our hearts, and gent - ly guide us.



We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.
We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.

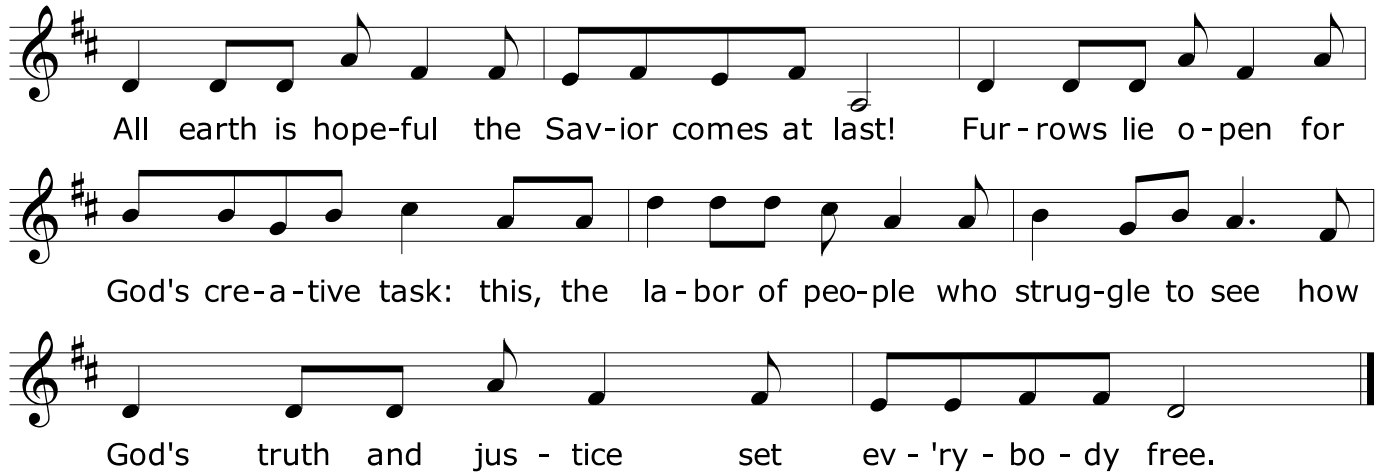
COMMUNION HYMN

Blessed Be the God of Israel

ELW 250

TABLE BLESSING

POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE



All earth is hope-ful the Sav-ior comes at last! Fur-rows lie o-pen for
God's cre-a-tive task: this, the la-bor of peo-ple who strug-gle to see how
God's truth and jus - tice set ev - 'ry - bo - dy free.

LEAVING TO SERVE

BENEDICTION

God our Creator, present before time; † Jesus our Redeemer, arriving at the right time; The Holy Spirit our Enlivener, acting in our time; Bless you now and always.
Amen.

SENDING HYMN	Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending	ELW 435
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DISMISSAL

Keep alert: trust God; go in peace.
Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Lift Up Your Heads!

based on *TRURO* (Williams) and
Dances from the Terpsichore – Michael Praetorius
arr. Paul Fey

BLC Musicians

Raelynn Clare, Music Director and Organist

Dr. Jim Jefferis, Director of The Chancel Choir

Rich Towsley, Director of The Folk Group and BLC Dulcimers

Thank you to all those who participated in worship this Sunday! Want to learn more about what roles are needed in worship or sign-up for a pre-scheduled role? Talk with Mark Finke or one of the pastors following worship or contact Mark directly at volunteersupport@blcfairport.org.

Communicate with us: Share more about who you are, request further information, or leave a prayer request or comment through our website - <https://blcfairport.org/share-in-worship/> - scroll down the page to request or share information.

What's happening at BLC this week? Visit the Calendar of Events at www.blcfairport.org. Zoom links for virtual meetings are also found there. If you would like to schedule a meeting or event, please email the church office at office@blcfairport.org or visit <https://blcfairport.org/blc-facility-request/>

Church office hours: Our co-Pastors are available Sunday-Thursday and on-call for emergencies. Contact them directly to schedule an appointment either by calling (585) 223-0634 or emailing pastor.hoffman@blcfairport.org or pastor.amy@blcfairport.org.

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We Light the Advent Candles: WORDS: Gracia Grindal (1943 -); WORDS: German folk tune; Words © 1999 Hope Publishing Company

Come, Now, O God: Text: David Bjorlin, b. 1984; Music: LOST IN THE NIGHT, Finnish folk tune

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We Are Waiting for Jesus: Text: John Helgen, b. 1957; Music: JESUS BRINGS PEACE, John Helgen

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Old Problems and New Beginnings

By now the last of the leaves have likely fallen from trees in northern climes, and any still holding on look dry and dead. If snow has arrived, its thick blanket shows the stains of city filth and grime, reminding us of the waste we are pouring over the land and into the water. This is the season we begin a new year in the life of the church and, as with our worship, we begin with a confession of our participation in the world's suffering.

Heavy hearts and burdened consciences will relate to Isaiah's confession, "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away" (Isa. 64:6). Then, just as the cold nights in the northern hemisphere reach their longest, Mark addresses us with promises that the signs of the coming of the Son of Man will include the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars. Hold on, there is hope!

The promise of Advent is that God is always at work in the world, bringing new beginnings and a new creation to people and powers long bent on destruction. Yet, because we live in the generation that exists between the "already" of Christ's resurrection and the "not yet" of God's full restoration of the creation, we cannot know when that final day will arrive. Instead of becoming preoccupied with the end times, we are counseled to live our lives in a state of preparedness—trusting that our home is God's home and that God is coming once again to dwell with us. That trust is the strength that sustains us as we "wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:7).