



*Words for the Beginning
Do the Good That Is Yours
Sunday, December 15, 2024*



48 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY ~ (585) 223-0634 ~ www.blcfairport.org

PRELUDE

Chorale Prelude on ‘Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme’ – BWV 645

(Awake, the voice calls to us)

Johann Sebastian Bach

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Advent is a season of endings and beginnings. As the calendar year comes to a close, a new church year rushes in. Christ’s birth ushers us into new ways of living and loving—and yet, we feel the weight of many things coming to an end. The world as we know it spins madly on. As we move through new chapters, may these words for the beginning renew us and remind us of the ways we are called to live out our faith. No matter what you are facing, no matter what this new day brings, let love be your beginning.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

He Came Down

tune, Cameroon traditional
arr. John L. Bell

The Chancel Choir

“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.

GATHERING HYMN Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn ELW 242

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.

SPECIAL MUSIC

O Tannenbaum
(O Christmas Tree)

tune, German traditional
arr. Michael Koncilja

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE – 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.

The Advent candles 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. Three can - dles now are gleam - ing and show us the true way,



to wel - come our Lord Je - sus who is the world's True Light,

re - joice, the Bap - tist cries out, your Lord has come to - day,



to wel - come our Lord Je - sus who is the world's True Light.

re - joice, the Bap - tist cries out, your Lord has come to - day!

HEARING GOD'S WORD

DISMISSAL TO WORSHIP FOR KIDS

During this Advent season kids are invited to bring forward an offering to support Ambulances for Zimbabwe before leaving for 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 58:9b-12

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
¹⁰if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.

¹¹The LORD will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.

¹²Your 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 live in.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



We are called to pon-der mys - t'ry and a-wait the com-ing Christ,
to em-bod-y God's com-pas - sion for each frag - ile hu - man life.
God is with us in our long-ing to bring heal-ing to the earth, while we
watch with joy and won - der for the prom-ised Sav - ior's birth.

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL: Luke 3:7-18

John the Baptist heralds the mighty one who is coming. John teaches that preparation for God's reign is not a matter of identity but of bearing fruits of merciful justice, radical generosity, and vocational integrity.

⁷ John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Bear fruits worthy of repentance. 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; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is 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 thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

¹⁸ So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people. The gospel of the Lord.

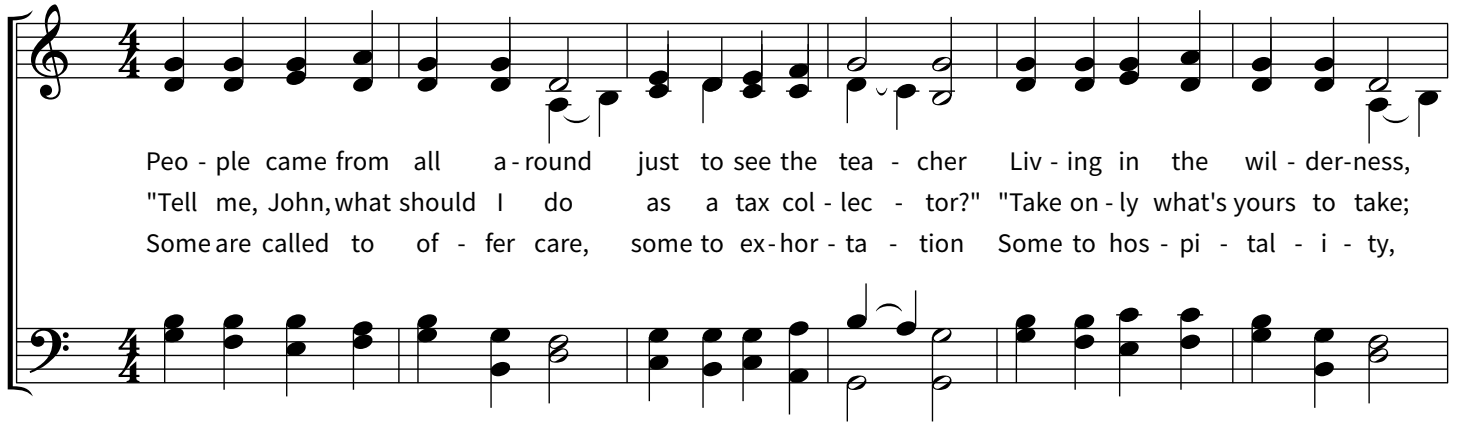
Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

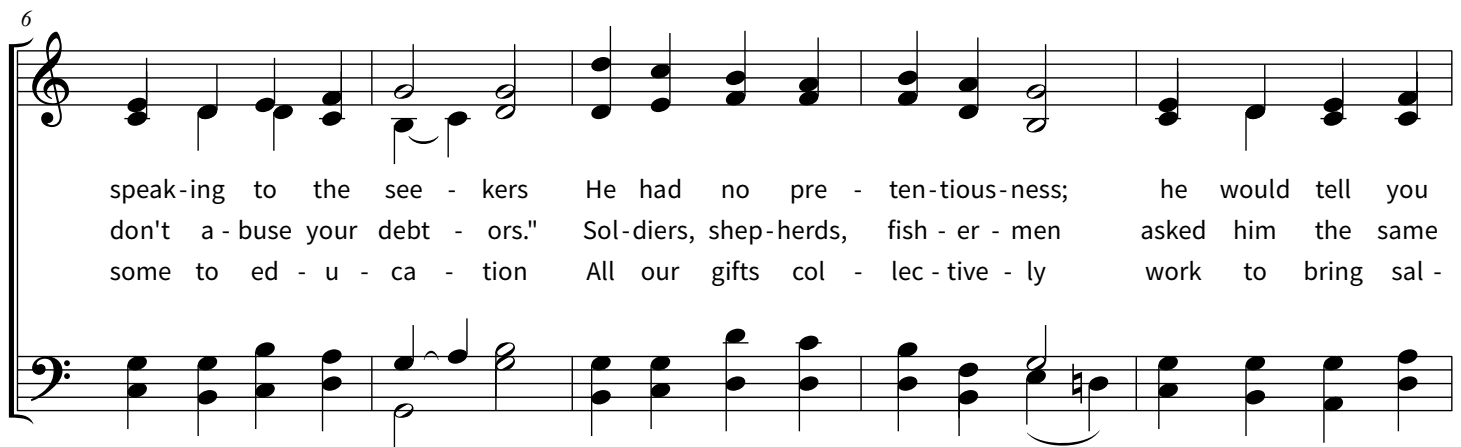
DO THE GOOD THAT'S YOURS TO DO

TEMPUS DEST FLORIDUM 13.13.14

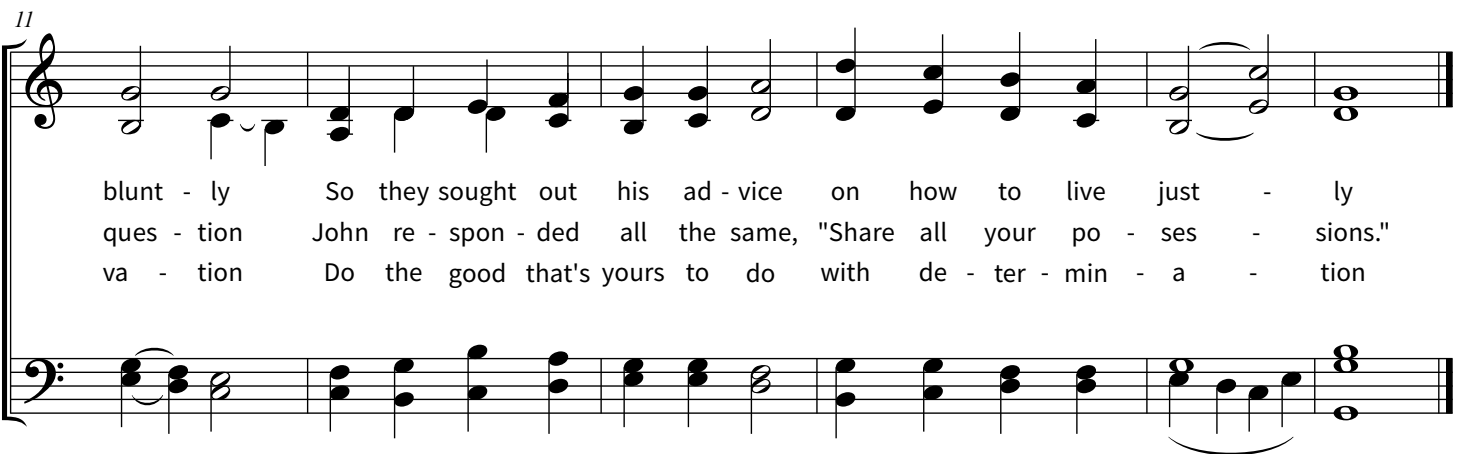
Words by Anna Strickland, 2024

Music from the *Piae Cantiones*, 1582; arr. Ernest Macmillan, 1930


Peo - ple came from all a - round just to see the tea - cher Liv - ing in the wil - der-ness,
 "Tell me, John, what should I do as a tax col - lec - tor?" "Take on - ly what's yours to take;
 Some are called to of - fer care, some to ex - hor - ta - tion Some to hos - pi - tal - i - ty,



speak - ing to the see - kers He had no pre - ten - tious - ness; he would tell you
 don't a - buse your debt - ors." Sol - diers, shep - herds, fish - er - men asked him the same
 some to ed - u - ca - tion All our gifts col - lec - tive - ly work to bring sal -



blunt - ly So they sought out his ad - vice on how to live just - ly
 ques - tion John re - spon - ded all the same, "Share all your po - ses - sions."
 va - tion Do the good that's yours to do with de - ter - min - a - tion

APOSTLES' CREED

Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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

As we prepare for Emmanuel, God-with-us, let us pray for all people and places that long for God's presence.

A brief silence.

#1 God who reforms, fill your church with courage to do your will. Empower your people in taking risks that bear fruit. Raise up leaders who will proclaim the good news. Lord in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

#2 God who creates, you hold in balance diverse ecosystems. Encourage efforts to protect wild lands from devastation. Care for animals and people in the path of destructive fires, storms, and other disasters. Lord in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

#3 God who leads, this world cries out for true justice. Guide legislatures, judges, and lawyers in actions steeped in love and restoration. Increase the desire to advocate for all who are confronted with discrimination and oppression based on race, gender, sexuality, class, or age. Lord in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Gracious God, in this season when we remember that you came to earth as a child, help us to better know and care for these children, youth and young adults: Michael, Nathan, Nate, Noah, and Nate. Strengthen the connections we share with the ministries we serve, especially the ministry of our twinned parish in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe. Lord in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Gracious God, you are near to all who call upon you.

We lift up prayers of thanksgiving for:

- Riley Russell, son of Russ and Erica K, and grandson of Roger and Rosemarie K, who was born on 11/26, Riley was born early and remains hospitalized in Erie, PA

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

- Gary W, former member of BLC, who died on 11/23
- Stephen H. III, the son of family friends of Roger and Rosemarie, who died tragically on 12/5
- Joe, brother-in-law of Pat E

We pray for those in need of healing, especially:

- Lisa R, who has moved to Ashley Woods
- Steve, neighbor of Kathy M, who is recovering from a recent hospitalization
- Jess, friend of Kim K, who is undergoing cancer treatment
- Pete K, friend of Bob R, who is experiencing complications from ALS
- Marina V, friend of John and Paulette C, who has pancreatic cancer
- Mark H, who is recovering from anticipated surgery on 12/12
- Ken, brother-in-law of Linda M, who remains hospitalized following surgery on 12/6
- Olivia, granddaughter of Kathy S's best friend who is recovering from brain surgery on 11/25
- Jim C, who has moved to the Friendly Home

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

Silence for individual prayer.

Lord in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Savior of the nations, come, and receive these prayers and the pleas of our hearts,
in the name of Jesus Christ.

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

*Thank you for your offerings that support the ongoing ministry that we share.
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 or scan the QR (quick
response) code on the right and you'll be brought to BLC's mobile
giving page.*



OFFERING OF MUSIC

Comfort, Comfort Ye My People
(FREU DICH SEHR)

text, J. Olearius / tr. C. Winkworth, alt.
tune, *Genevan Psalter*, 1551
setting, Paul G. Bunjes

The Chancel Choir

OFFERTORY



Not as we ought but as we are a - ble, we
of - fer our thanks as we come to your ta - ble. Through
Word and Spir - it bless us; through bread and wine re - fresh us that
we may be filled, that we may be filled with love.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray. God of new beginnings,
as we prepare to come to this Table, pour out your spirit in this room. Bless our offerings. Make this meal a new beginning of faith, hope, and love. Allow us to experience welcome here. Allow for all to be fed here. Allow for all to sense your presence here. With hope we gather. With hope we begin again. Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION

Loving God, we come to this Table today with our longings.

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 of our hurting world and start again,

rooted in your good news.

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.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

So in this spirit of beginnings,

we come to your Table and 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.

Meet us here with a taste of your new beginning. Allow this joyful feast to be the start of something new. Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

With joy and hope, we weave our voices together to pray the words your son 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

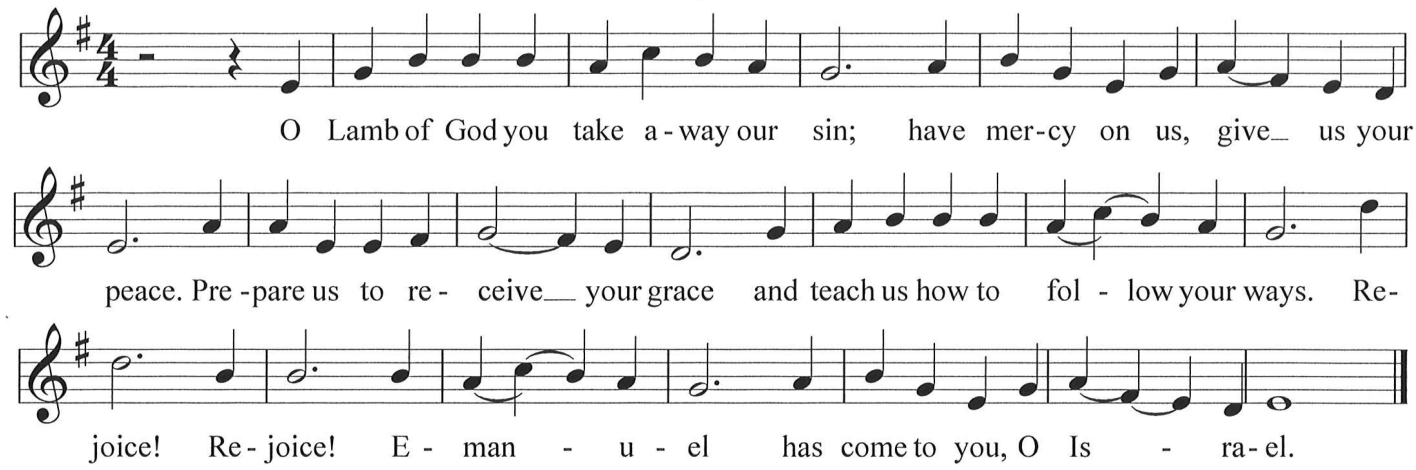
Come. This good news is for you. All are welcome here.

Thanks be to God.

DISTRIBUTION

Our communion bread is gluten-free, unless noted by the pastor. Grape juice is available; indicate your need to the communion assistant.


THE COMMUNION




O Lamb of God you take a-way our sin; have mer-cy on us, give_ us your
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
Now the Heavens Start to Whisper
ACS 901


Now the Heavens Start to Whisper




1 Now the heav - ens start to whis - per, as the veil is grow - ing thin.
2 Heav - y clouds that block the moon - light now be - gin to drift a - way.
3 Christ, e - ter - nal Sun of jus - tice, Christ, the rose of wis - dom's seed,



Earth from slum - ber wakes to lis - ten to the stir - ring, faint with - in:
Dia - mond bril - liance through the dark - ness shines the hope of com - ing day.
come to bless with fire and fra - grance hours of yearn - ing, hurt, and need.



seed of prom - ise, deep - ly plant - ed, child to spring from Jes - se's stem!
Christ, the morn - ing star of splen - dor, gleams with - in a world grown dim.
In the lone - ly, in the strang - er, in the out - cast, hid from view;



Like the soil be - neath the frost - line, hearts grow soft to wel - come him.
Heav - en's em - ber fans to full - ness; hearts grow warm to wel - come him.
Child who comes to grace the man - ger, teach our hearts to wel - come you.

COMMUNION HYMN

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus
(JEFFERSON)

Southern Harmony, 1835
setting, Edwin T. Childs

TABLE BLESSING**POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

Let us pray. Generous God, we thank you for the gift of life, for the bread of salvation. We thank you for coming among us, for leading us into peace. We thank you for showering us with mercy, for sending us into the world. Come, Lord Jesus, and go with us as we feed the hungry in your name.

Amen.

LEAVING TO SERVE**BENEDICTION**

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

Amen.

SENDING HYMN

On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry

ELW 249

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Prepare the way for Emmanuel.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Lift Up Your Heads, You Mighty Gates
(TRURO)

tune, *Psalmodia Evangelica*, 1789
setting, Wilbur Held

BLC Pastors

The Rev. Abigail Zang Hoffman and The Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson, co-Pastors

BLC Musicians

Raelynn Clare, Music Director and Organist

Chrisanne Gates, Chancel Choir Director

Rich Towsley, Director of The Folk Group and BLC Dulcimers

Additional musical leadership provided by:

Cantors: The Sauer Family

Flutist: Sue Cardinal

Synthesizer: Michael Koncilja

Ukulele: Olivia Koncilja

Trumpet: Ryan Koncilja

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 Alli O'Malley or one of the pastors following worship or contact Alli 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.

PROPERTY **COMMITTEE**



**New members are always welcome to help
maintain our church building and grounds!**

**No major time commitment required, help as you are able!
Contact the church office or Bob Stolze to get involved!**

**Check out
BLC's ONLINE
DIRECTORY!**



Find full details and
instructions to get
started here!

breeze

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Introduction to the season, Call to Worship, Prayer of the Day, Lighting Advent Candle, Offertory Prayer, Communion Liturgy and Benediction Adapted
from a prayer by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org.
"O Tannenbaum" Tune: German traditional; Arranger: Michael Koncilja
"We Light the Advent Candles" Words: Gracia Grindal; Music: German folk tune; Words © 1999 Hope Publishing Company
"Do the Good That's Yours to Do" Words: Anna Strickland, 2024; Music: *Piae Cantiones*, 1582 / arr. Ernest Macmillan © Anna Strickland, 2024
(Commissioned by A Sanctified Art, LLC)
"Comfort, Comfort Ye My People" Text: J. Olearius / tr. C. Winkworth, alt.; Tune: *Genevan Psalter*, 1551;
Arranger: Paul G. Bunjes © 1956 Concordia Publishing House
"Now the Heavens Start to Whisper" Text : Mary Louise Bringle; Music: Welsh melody; arr. hymnal version
Text © 2006 GIA Publications, Inc.; Arr. © 2020 Augsburg Fortress
"Lift Up Your Heads, You Mighty Gates" Tune: from *Psalmodia Evangelica*, 1789 – T. Williams; Arranger: Wilbur Held
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"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" Tune: W. Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1835; Arranger: Edwin T. Childs © 2014 Augsburg Fortress

Harvest

Maybe none of it matters.

Maybe you can't make a difference.

Or maybe that watermelon seed you spit out over the summer will grow into a green orb, full of sticky sweet fruit. Maybe the rain will nourish it. Maybe your mother's hands will pull it from the vine, slice it into wedges, and place it on the dining room table. Maybe the neighbors will come over and chomp into that soft pink fruit, juicy water running down their chins. Maybe you will laugh at the shared experience, at this garden-grown communion, and maybe the stars will shine brighter that night.

People say the problems of the world are too big to make a difference, but surely those people have forgotten the fruit that grows from one little seed.