

The Fourth Sunday of Advent



December 20, 2020
10:30AM

We Gather in the Lord's Name

Instructions for standing, sitting, and kneeling are rubrics from the Book of Common Prayer. Any person who is unable to stand or kneel is welcome to sit for any part of the service regardless of the printed instruction. Please feel comfortable using any posture you wish.

Advent Candle Lighting

Reader 1: The fourth candle on an Advent wreath, usually purple, is often called the candle of love. Christmas happened because of God's great love for all people.

Sharing: As your family gets ready to open Christmas gifts, talk about why we give nice things to people we love. Ask: What are some of the most memorable gifts you've received? How can you tell when much love and thought go into a gift?

Reader 2: A reading from John 16. "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16.

Reader 1: At Christmas, God gave us the best gift ever. He sent his Son, Jesus, to live, die, and rise again so we could live with him forever in heaven. Although this gift required great sacrifice, God knew we needed Jesus.

Light all four candles on the Advent wreath

All: **Four candles, burning bright,
Chasing away the darkness from light.
Four candles, glowing light,
The blessing of God, giving new sight.**

Reader 2: Let us pray. Dear God, we pray that our faith may be renewed once again, and may we relive the wonder of your love in our lives. In the name of Jesus the Christ, we pray. **Amen.**

Processional Anthem:

Prepare the way

Vocalists: Nancy Scott & Lora Sellers

Introduction

Celebrant: Welcome to the fourth Sunday of Advent. Although shopping will tell you otherwise, we have not yet reached Christmas. In fact, the gospel takes us back nine months before Christmas to the time when the angel Gabriel tells Mary she will bear the son of God.

Who doesn't love all these stories of miracles and wonder around Christmas? The stories are so familiar, that we sometimes miss their significance. Today we will have some fun considering the alternative as if someone other than the creator of universe visited Mary and her cousin, Elizabeth.

Opening Acclamation

Celebrant: Blessed be God who forgives all our sins.

People: **God's mercy endures for ever Amen.**

Collect for Purity

Celebrant: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Cantor or Choir *All*

Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son. Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.

Cantor or Choir *All*

Chri - ste e - le - i - son. Chri - ste e - le - i - son.

Cantor or Choir *All*

Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son. Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.

Collect of the Day

Celebrant: God be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Celebrant: Let us Pray. Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

We Hear God's Word

First Lesson: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Please be seated.

Reader: A reading from the second book of Samuel.

When the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

Reader: The word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Canticle 15—The Song of Mary Magnificat

Luke 1:46-55

Reader: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; *

People: **for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.**

Reader: From this day all generations will call me blessed: *

People: **the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.**

Reader: He has mercy on those who fear him *

People: **in every generation.**

Reader: He has shown the strength of his arm, *

People: **he has scattered the proud in their conceit.**

Reader: He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, *

People: **and has lifted up the lowly.**

Reader: He has filled the hungry with good things, *

People: **and the rich he has sent away empty.**

Reader: He has come to the help of his servant Israel, *

People: **for he has remembered his promise of mercy,**

Reader: The promise he made to our fathers, *

People: **to Abraham and his children for ever.**

Reader: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *

People: **as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.**

Second Lesson: Romans 16:25-27

Reader: A reading from Paul's letter to the Romans.

Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! **Amen.**

Reader: The word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Gradual Hymn: #66

Come, thou long-expected Jesus

Please Stand and Sing.

Words: Charles Wesley; Music: William Henry Havergal

1 Come, thou long-ex-pect-ed Je-sus, born to set thy peo-ple free;
2 Is-rael's strength and con-so-la-tion, hope of all the earth thou art:
3 Born thy peo-ple to de-liv-er, born a child, and yet a king,
4 By thine own e-ter-nal Spi-rit rule in all our hearts a-lone;
from our fears and sins re-lease us, let us find our rest in thee.
dear de-sire of ev-ery na-tion, joy of ev-ery long-ing heart.
born to reign in us for ev-er, now thy gra-cious king-dom bring.
by thine all-suf-fi-cient mer-it raise us to thy glo-rious throne.

Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

Please stand.

Reader: The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ according to Luke.

People: **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: **Praise to you, Lord Christ**

Sermon: *What Gives Us Hope*

Please be seated.

I couldn't sleep Friday night. Images and thoughts hounded me until I got out of bed, made some tea and began to write a completely different sermon for today.

Sometimes seemingly small, life events speak to us like that "still, small voice" of God to Elijah. What to some people might seem like random occurrences and unrelated data can connect us in a pattern if you have eyes to see, an ear to hear, and a heart to put it all together. So today, I leave to your later reading, a humorous notion of a very different kind of annunciation. Instead, I would like to stitch together some things about hope.

If you go in the rivers and fields of the Midwest, hunting and fishing for 60 years, you may notice how things change. For example, we rarely see quail in the countryside, and they were once plentiful. Migratory patterns of birds have been changing. Bullfrogs in the summertime have become a rare thing to hear instead of a summer symphony. Insect populations worldwide are way down. I have a steadily growing fear and concern about these things as harbingers of even worse calamities.

And the other day, after another night's fitful sleep, I literally went down to the river to pray. It's a difficult, half-mile walk through dense brush. I arrived at the riverbank sweating and I sat down. The sight took my breath away. We have walked and hunted that stretch of river for ten years. After the floods of 2019, the river is totally changed. The main channel has moved to the south side. The river seemed to say, "This is the new normal. Guess who's in charge now?"

I often listen to a radio program called "Science Friday" while running errands. This week, I heard a young woman physicist who wrote a book for non-scientists titled, "The Black Hole Survival Guide." My graduate physics class of 13 had one female student. Today, the ratio is 35-40%.

What impressed me and gave me lots of hope was her bright, optimistic, and hopeful outlook in the most difficult area of physics. A field where the global physics community has been stuck for 60 years. It will take the right attitude and deep minds like hers to develop a completely new understanding of the universe.

I am finally back to working out in the pool on Friday afternoons. This week the Muskogee High School swim team was in for the final workout of the semester and a party. As I did my laps, I could hear the cheerfulness, the confidence and the strength of the young people socializing in their swim lanes. It was wonderful to hear that kind of banter when the adult world is chock full of bad information, deception, and manipulation. I felt hopeful that these young people could take the world we give them and make it better. I was reminded of the 14th century mystic, Julian of Norwich's saying that "all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."

Our new bishop, The Rt. Rev. Poulson Reed, has been a breath of fresh air. Consecrated bishop in the middle of this pandemic, he has been open to new ways of doing things and will lead the 70 churches in this diocese into the next century. I know, we are already 20 years in, but the church never does things on time.

And as church leaders, many of us have been able to use this unplanned disruption to pray and discern what we are called to be and do as a church. The same old rules and patterns of the past two centuries are no longer going to serve us in the next. In the post-pandemic world, Grace Episcopal Church in Muskogee will have new options and a new future in front of it. Connection to the wider community and a compelling mission of care for others will define Grace. I am proud and thankful to lead this church to the doorstep of the future. The pandemic is a challenge for sure. But it also offers opportunity. And I am hopeful for that opportunity.

Hope is not some kind of Hallmark greeting card moment where the cheeks get rosy and the future is painted like a Norman Rockwell scene. Hope is sometimes framed with terror and confusion the way Mary first encountered Gabriel who came to her and said "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." Her initial response was total fear. As the angel told her what was going to happen, she still couldn't quite accept it. "How can this be?" she asked. Adding more credence to his story, Gabriel tells Mary that her relative, Elizabeth is also pregnant in her old age. Confusion and even denial can be preliminaries to hope.

Hope arises when things seem to be headed down. When the forty-five martyrs of Uganda were sentenced to death by the king in 1885, they sang popular hymns while being marched to the gallows on the main streets of Kampala. Their hope and optimism in the face of their impending execution, galvanized the people of that country. Today, there are more Anglican Christians in Uganda than in the rest of the world. Hope is singing hymns on your way to the gallows. Hope inspires. Hope transcends adversity. Hope creates a new future.

And perhaps that is the key to it all. Hope enables us to build a new future, a radical departure from the past. Hope gives the courage to try new things, explore new roles, permission to fail, to succeed, to get back up and try again. If we do not allow hope to build the future, then we dwell in the past in despair. Hope is the anticipation of something better that is not quite here yet, but we know we're on the way.

At the personal level, hope contradicts despair. Many people spend far too much of our sacred personal energy crying about the things we have lost. But if you understand that everything belongs to God in the first place, then you have lost nothing. We should be grateful for what we have whether it is one ear, poor eyesight, poor health, cancer, debilitating pain, or other limitations. At least God has brought us to this moment, and we have been given the precious gift of time. Hope is not future-oriented. It does not dwell on the past. Hope invites us to live right now at this moment.

Finally, hope is always about yes. When the angel comes to you in the middle of the night and you vacillate between terror and confusion whether it is a dream, God is going to make you an offer. The proper response is always "Yes Lord." Or you can respond like Mary did, "Here am I. Let's do it."

Silence for reflection after the sermon.

The Nicene Creed

All in unison; Please stand.

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life who proceeds from the Father. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Please kneel, sit or stand.

Reader: As we have offered gratitude for God's grace upon this community, let us now offer our gifts to the Lord, trusting that by the power of the Holy Spirit, we will be led to ever more faithful fellowship and service.

Reader: For peace from things that separate us from one another and for our salvation.

People: **Lord, have mercy.**

Reader: For the peace of the whole world, for the welfare of the holy churches of God, especially...

People: **St. Paul's, Clinton; St. Andrew's, Lawton; Church of the Holy Trinity, Fray Bentos, Uruguay.**

Reader: For this holy gathering and for those who enter with faith, reverence, and fear of God.

People: **Lord, have mercy.**

Reader: For...

People: **Michael, our Presiding Bishop; Poulson, our Bishop; Bob & Tom, our clergy; Tim & Jennifer, our wardens; vestry, delegates, all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God. Lord, have mercy.**

Reader: For the world and its leaders, our nation and its people. We pray for our leaders, especially...

People: **Donald, our President; Mike, our Vice-president; Markwayne, our Congressman; James & Jim, our Senators; Kevin, our Governor; and Marlon, our Mayor. Lord, have mercy.**

Reader: For prisoners, the oppressed, all those in need or suffering, especially...

People: **Barbara & Family, Blackwell Family, Brad, Brewer Family, James & Shirley, Judy, Sherri, Bea, Eathen, Linda, John, Angie, Brian, Glen, Dante, Marilyn, Gary, Ann, Connie, Jan, Thomas, Cedric, Mary-Margaret, Jean, Barry, Cliff, Gabriella, Esther, Yee Se Ong, Ann, all those affected by the pandemic, all the front line workers involved with patient care, and those whose suffering is known only to God.**

Reader: We pray for those in the armed services. We pray for those who have died (*especially...*)

People: **Lord, have mercy.**

Reader: For ourselves, our families, and those we love. We pray for those in our parish, especially ...

People: **Blake, Gabriel, London.**

Reader: Also those who are traveling, (*especially...*)

People: **Lord, have mercy.**

Reader: Bless all those everywhere who give themselves to the service of others; that with wisdom, patience, and courage, they may minister to the suffering, the friendless, and the needy for love of him who laid down his life for us.

People: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Reader: Remembering our most blessed Mary and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

People: **To you, O Lord.**

Reader: Heavenly Father, you have promised to hear what we ask in the Name of your Son: accept and fulfill our petitions, we pray, not as we ask in our ignorance, nor as we deserve in our sinfulness, but as you know and love us in your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

People: **Amen.**

Confession and Absolution

Please kneel, sit or stand.

Celebrant: Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Silence may be kept.

Celebrant and People:

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Celebrant: Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through the grace of Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life.
Amen.

Peace

Please stand as you are able.

Celebrant: The peace of Christ be always with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Announcements, Birthdays & Anniversary Blessings

Please be seated.

Offertory

During this time we make an offering to the church to help maintain its mission in the world, and we fully offer ourselves to be Christ in the world around us at this time. The offering of bread and wine are brought to the altar.

Offertory Sentence:

Celebrant: But do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.
Hebrews 13:15, 16

Offertory Anthem:

Breath of Heaven

Vocalist: Nancy Scott

Doxology:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow

Please stand as you are able.

The musical score is written for a three-part setting (Soprano, Alto, and Tenor/Bass) in G major, 3/4 time. It consists of three systems of staves. The lyrics are: "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here be-low; praise him a-bove, ye heaven-ly host: praise Fa-ther, Son, and Ho-ly Ghost." The score includes a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature of 3/4. The lyrics are written below the staves, with some words hyphenated across lines.

The Great Thanksgiving

Sursum Corda

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you**

Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them to the Lord**

Celebrant: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

Sanctus: #S-125**Holy, holy, holy Lord***Please stand, sit, or kneel.*

Holy God, Ho-ly Might-y One, Ho-ly Im-mor-tal One Have mer-cy on us and on the whole world.

Ho-ly God, Ho-ly Might-y One, Ho-ly Im-mor-tal One Have mer-cy on us and on the whole world.

Ho-ly God, Ho-ly Might-y One, Ho-ly Im-mor-tal One Have mer-cy on us and on the whole world.

Lord's Prayer:*Celebrant:* And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray:

Celebrant and People: **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, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Fraction Anthem: #S-157**Lamb of God***Please remain seated.*

Lamb of God, you take a-way the sins of the world: have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sins of the world: have mer-cy, grant us grant us your peace. Have peace.

Breaking of the Bread*A period of silence is kept.*

Celebrant: The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

Communion Hymn:**He shall feed His Flock***Vocalist: Lora Sellers*

By: John Ness Beck

We Go Out To Do Our Work

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Celebrant: Let us pray.

Celebrant and People: **Eternal God, you have graciously accepted us as living members of our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Savior. Amen.**

Closing Benediction:

Celebrant: Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! **Amen.** *Ephesians 3:20–21*

And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you now and for ever more.
Amen

Sending

Celebrant: Let us go forth in the name of Christ..

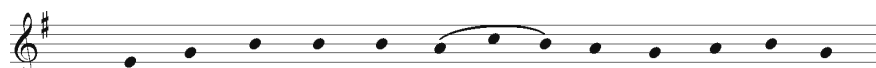
People: **Thanks be to God**

Recessional Hymn:# 56


O come, O come, Emanuel v. 1, 6, 7

Please stand and sing


Words: Latin ca, 9th cent; Music: Thomas Helmore



1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som
2 O come, thou Wis - dom from on high, who or - derest
3 O come, O come, thou Lord of might, who to thy
4 O come, thou Branch of Jes - se's tree, free them from
5 O come, thou Key of Da - vid, come, and o - pen
6 O come, thou Day - spring from on high, and cheer us
7 O come, De - sire of na - tions, bind in one the
8 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som



1 cap - tive Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile
2 all things might - i - ly; to us the path of know - ledge
3 tribes on Si - nai's height in an - cient times didst give the
4 Sa - tan's ty - ran - ny that trust thy might - y power to
5 wide our heaven - ly home; make safe the way that leads on
6 by thy draw - ing nigh; dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of
7 hearts of all man - kind; bid thou our sad di - vi - sions
8 cap - tive Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile



1 here un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
2 show, and teach us in her ways to go.
3 law, in cloud, and ma - jes - ty, and awe.
4 save, and give them vic - tory o'er the grave. Re - joice! Re - joice!
5 high, and close the path to mis - er - y.
6 night, and death's dark shad - ow put to flight.
7 cease, and be thy - self our King of Peace.
8 here un - til the Son of God ap - pear.



Em - man - u - el shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!



CHRISTMAS SERVICE TIMES:

December 24, 2020

Christmas Carols - 5:30 PM

Christmas Eve Mass - 6:00 PM

&

Christmas Carols - 10:30 PM

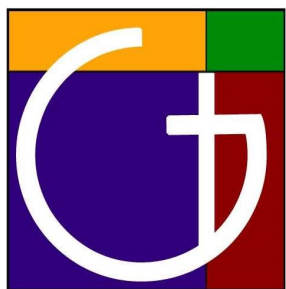
Christmas Eve Mass - 11:00 PM

December 25, 2020

Christmas Day Organ Concert

From National Cathedral

11:00 AM



Grace Episcopal

218 N. 6th Street Muskogee, OK 74401

Phone/Fax: (918) 687-5416

Email: Office@GraceMuskogee.org;

Website: www.GraceMuskogee.org

Ministers: All the People of God (BCP p. 855)

Rector: The Rev. Bob Wickizer

Deacon: The Rev. Thomas A. Harrington

Music Director: Ken Yadon

Rector's Email: bob@gracemuskogee.org

Youth/Children's Director: Nancy Scott