



An
AGAPE LITURGY
FOR THE SEASON OF ADVENT

Year B, Week 4
10:30 a.m. Service

Christ Episcopal Church
Cape Girardeau, Missouri

Gathering: Liturgy of the Word

Prelude

“Prepare the Way”

James Mansfield

Opening Hymn

#65 Prepare the Way, O Zion

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Prepare the Way, O Zion



1 Pre - pare the way, O Zi - on, your Christ is draw - ing near!
2 He brings God's rule, O Zi - on; he comes from heaven a - bove.
3 Fling wide your gates, O Zi - on; your Sa - vior's rule em - brace.



Let ev - ery hill and val - ley a lev - el way ap - pear.
His rule is peace and free - dom, and jus - tice, truth, and love.
His tid - ings of sal - va - tion pro - claim in ev - ery place.



Greet One who comes in glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry.
Lift high your praise re - sound - ing, for grace and joy a - bound - ing.
All lands will bow be - fore him, their voic - es will a - dore him.



Oh, blest is Christ that came in God's most ho - ly name.

Words: Frans Mikael Franzen (1772-1847); tr. composite; adapt. Charles P. Price (b. 1920)

Music: *Bereden väg för Herran*, melody from *Then Swenska Psalmboken*, 1697

76. 76. 77 with Refrain

Opening Rite: Lighting of the Advent Wreath

All stand, and the Officiant greets the people with these words:

Officiant: Dear friends in Christ, as we travel towards Bethlehem in this season of Advent, we come together in the midst of a busy season to take a breath; to slow down as we anticipate Jesus' coming into the world. We are invited for a time to breathe in together the life that God gives

us. To listen for the beat of God's heart and the blessings and lessons this season brings to us. Each week we light an Advent candle as a symbol of our journey. With its light comes our prayers and our stories.

Silence may be kept for a time.

Officiant: The candle for this fourth week of Advent is a candle of LOVE. [*The candle is now lit.*] Today the flame of this candle reminds us of the love that came to this world when Jesus was born and his presence with us now. Jesus said "As God has loved me, so I have loved you; remain in my love."

Officiant: O God, we kindle this flame with anticipation. We long for you to come to our world, to break through and reign with compassion, justice, and peace. *Amen.*

The Greeting

Officiant: Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Collect for Purity

Officiant: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open,

People: 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.*

The Confession

As we worship we ask God's forgiveness for things done and things left undone and things done on our behalf so that we are reconciled to God and each other.

Officiant: Jesus the light of the world comes to dispel the shadows of our hearts. Therefore, in the light of Christ let us confess our sins.

Silence is kept for a time.

Officiant: Most Holy God, in the midst of this season of expectation and new life, we confess:

People: We have resisted the light of your love; we have not fully shared the gifts entrusted to us; and we have not treasured the gifts of others around us. Holy Trinity, make us holy. Holy God, make us whole. **Amen.**

We are assured of God's forgiveness and love:

Officiant: May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from our sins, heal and strengthen us by the Holy Spirit, and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn of Praise #265 The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came

265 The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came

1 The an - gel Ga - bri - el from hea - ven came,
2 "For know a bless - ed Mo - ther thou shalt be,
3 Then gen - tle Ma - ry meek - ly bowed her head,
4 Of her, Em - man - u - el, the Christ, was born

his wings as drift - ed snow, his eyes as flame;
all gen - er - a - tions laud and hon - or thee,
"To me be as it pleas - eth God," she said,
in Beth - le - hem, all on a Christ - mas morn,

"All hail," said he, "thou low - ly maid - en Ma - ry,
 thy Son shall be Em - man - u - el, by seers fore - told,
 "my soul shall laud and mag - ni - fy his ho - ly Name."
 and Chris - tian folk through - out the world will ev - er say—
 most high - ly fa - vored la - dy," Glo - ri - a!
 most high - ly fa - vored la - dy," Glo - ri - a!
 Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy," Glo - ri - a!
 "Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy," Glo - ri - a!

The Annunciation (March 25).

Words: Basque carol; para. Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924)
 Music: *Gabriel's Message*, Basque carol; harm. Edgar Pettman (1865-1943)

♩ - 66
 10 10. 12 10

Officiant: Let us glorify the Holy One as we say:

People: O Light of the world, first-born of creation, radiance of glory, light from light begotten; God self-revealing, holy, bright and blessed, you shine upon us. Day's light is fleeting, your light is eternal, and we look to you our light within the shadow. We sing to you O Creator, Christ and Spirit, you shine before us. Light of the world, O Jesus Christ, we bless you; giver of life and Child of God, we praise you. Here with us the universe proclaims your glory, as you shine among us. **Amen.**

The Collect of the Day

Officiant: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Officiant: 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.**

The Readings

The First Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16

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.

Lector: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

The Response: Canticle 15

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; *
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed: *
the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is
his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him *
in every generation.
He has shown the strength of his arm, *
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, *
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things, *
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel, *
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
The promise he made to our fathers, *
to Abraham and his children for ever.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever.
Amen.

The Epistle: Romans 16:25-27

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.

Lector: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

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O Come, O Come, Emmanuel



(Dec. 22) 7 O come, De - sire of na - tions, bind in one the
 (Dec. 23) 8 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som



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



7 cease, and be thy - self our King of Peace. Re - joice! Re - joice!
 8 here un - til the Son of God ap - pear.



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

The stanzas may be used as antiphons with "The Song of Mary" on the dates given.

Words: Latin, ca. 9th cent.; ver. *Hymnal 1940*, alt.

Music: *Veni, veni, Emmanuel*, plainsong, Mode 1, *Processionale*, 15th cent.;
 adapt. Thomas Helmore (1811-1890)

LM with Refrain

Luke 1:26-38a



Officiant: The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ according to St. 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.

Officiant: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to you, Lord Christ.

Sermon

Rev. Annette Joseph

Affirmation of Faith

Originally the entire service was viewed as our confession of faith. Since the sixth century, however, the church has recited either the Nicene Creed or the Apostle’s Creed at the Eucharist. In more recent times, revised affirmations, retellings of the original creeds, have been used as part of the pattern for worship in the Episcopal Church. The Advent Affirmation of Faith draws from the scriptural depictions of God’s action in the world and the life and ministry of Jesus our Savior.

Officiant: Let us affirm our hope in Christ our Light.

People: We believe in God,
whose love is the source of all life and the desire of our lives, whose love was given a human face in Jesus of Nazareth, whose love was crucified by the evil that seeks to enslave us all, and whose love, defeating even death, is our glorious promise of freedom.

Therefore,
though we are sometimes fearful and doubting, we trust in God; and, in the Name of Jesus Christ, we commit ourselves, in the service of others, to seek justice and to live in peace, to care for the earth and to

share in the commonwealth of God's goodness, to live
in the freedom of forgiveness and the power of the
Spirit of love;
And in company of the faithful, to be the Church,
for the glory of God. *Amen.*

The Prayers of the People

Officiant: O God whose Messiah's coming we await, keep us awake and alert to watch for the signs of your coming. As the fig tree puts forth its leaves and the portents of the new day dawns, keep us awake and alert for the second advent of Christ our Savior.

A member of the community leads the Prayers of the People.

Leader: Keep us awake and alert to our humble calling to be the church of Christ in the world. Empower all bishops, priests, and deacons to proclaim justice and truth as they care for your holy people, especially for Deon, Annette, and the people of Christ Church and St. Paul's. Christ our hope,

People: Shine in our hearts.

Leader: Keep us awake and alert to the needs and wants of the nations of the world. Enlighten the leaders of the nations to attend to the needs of the lowest and the least, the last and the left-out, that justice and peace may be our strength, and equity our common good. Christ our hope,

People: Shine in our hearts.

Leader: Keep us awake and alert to the needs of the sick and suffering. Embolden our love, that we may care with compassion for those in need [especially for...]. Are there others?

Silence is kept for a time.

Leader: Give them comfort so that they may know the healing care of Jesus. Christ our hope,

People: Shine in our hearts.

Leader: Keep us awake and alert to the needs of friends and strangers. Energize this community of faith to reach out with compassion to transform our neighborhoods and communities to reflect the beloved community of peace. Christ our hope,

People: Shine in our hearts.

Leader: Keep us awake and alert to those who mourn, those who grieve, and those who are despondent or depressed. Enable us to be Christ's hands of healing and wholeness, that we may be agents of comfort and hope. Christ our hope,

People: Shine in our hearts.

Leader: Keep us awake and alert to the shortness of our time. Enfold those who have ended their course on earth and have joined the martyrs and saints in the region of light [especially *N. ...*]. May we, in our own time, come to the joys of your eternal reign. Christ our hope,

People: Shine in our hearts.

Leader: Keep us awake and alert to ... [*Petitions for thanksgivings, creation, stewardship, local concerns, etc., may be added here.*]. Christ our hope,

People: Shine in our hearts.

The Officiant offers a concluding prayer:

Officiant: O God, encourage, embolden, and energize your people to keep awake and alert to the coming of Jesus the Christ, that he, at his second Advent, may find us ready to greet him and eager to serve those in need; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer

Officiant: Let us pray in the way that Christ taught us:

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,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Agape

While sharing a common Eucharistic celebration is not possible at this time, this liturgy expresses our longing for a time when we can once more share and gather together at the Eucharistic table. This practice of giving thanks for bread, wine and food is ancient, going back to the hospitality our ancestor Abraham showed to his visitors. While not the full celebration of the Holy Eucharist, there is a relationship, in much the same way that giving thanks over water is a reminder of our Baptism.

The Officiant and people give thanks for the gift of wine.

Officiant: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe.

People: You create the fruit of the vine; we long for the day when you will once again refresh us with the cup of salvation in the Blood of your Son Jesus Christ. Glory to you for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Officiant and people give thanks for the gift of our daily bread.

Officiant: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe.

People: You bring forth bread from the earth; we long for the day when we may once again partake of the bread of life the Body of your Son Jesus Christ. As grain scattered upon the earth is gathered into one loaf, so gather your Church in every place into the kingdom of your Son. To

you be glory and power forever and ever. *Amen.*

The Officiant and people give thanks for the gift of food.

Officiant: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe.

People: You have blessed the earth to bring forth food to satisfy our hunger. Let this food strengthen us in the Eucharistic fast that is before us, that following our Savior in the way of the cross, we may come to the joy of his resurrection. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The Thanksgiving

Officiant: God of all creation, we gather on this first day of the week made holy by the resurrection of Christ, your Son. In the waters of baptism we were buried with him so that we might also rise with him and so share his victory over sin and death.

People: You have transformed our lives into the living stones that form your Church with Christ as the foundation stone. Strengthen our community's bond of communion and peace and deepen our solidarity with your Church throughout the world.

Officiant: Rekindle within us this Sabbath day the vision of your kingdom so that our daily concerns and labor may find their proper perspective.

People: Fill our homes with the spirit of the Gospel and give us the grace to see the face of Christ in the people with whom we live. We raise our voices in praise and thanksgiving to you, O God; that we who have celebrated Christ's resurrection this day share in his eternal glory where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The Peace

The Peace is exchanged.

Officiant: The peace of Christ be always with you.

People: And also with you.

We greet each other in the name of the risen Christ.

Here at Christ Church, we consider gratitude and generosity to be spiritual disciplines. While we can't be together to pass the collection plate to one another in church at this time, we encourage you to offer your gifts and service in any way that makes the most sense to you.

[Click here](#) to contribute to our ongoing ministry by donating online.

Final Hymn

#66 Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

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Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

1 Come, thou long - ex - spect-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.

Words: Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Music: Stuttgart, melody from *Psalmodia Sacra, oder Andächtige und Schöne Gesänge*, 1715;
adapt. and harm. William Henry Havergal (1793-1870), alt.

87. 87

The Sending

Officiant: We have lit these candles as symbols of our faith in the coming of Christ among us. Faith that God sees us and meets us even in the messiness of life. We now embody Christ's living flame. Let us be the light to a world in need of light, that we may be guided to Emmanuel, God with us, once more. *Amen.*

The Advent candles are now extinguished.

Officiant: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all ever more. *Amen.*

Officiant: Let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Postlude "Stuttgart" Peter Pindar Stearns

A simple meal may now be shared.

Servers

Priest-in-Charge

Rev. Annette Joseph

Lector

Sheila Thiele

Organist

Mary Mims

Choir Director

Randyn Heisserer-Miller

Ministry Intern

Joshua Smith

Bulletin Cover Image

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Notes on the Service

Fourth Sunday of Advent (Year B)

2 Sam. 7:4, 8-16 • Ps. 132 • Rom. 16:25-27 • Luke 1:26-38

Anticipating Christmas, the readings' theme is the Annunciation to Mary, and through her to all, that a **new son of David is on the way**.

The collect, from Charlemagne's mass book, prays that God will purify us, as he purified Mary. "Mansions prepared" alludes to Jesus' promise that he has prepared mansions for disciples (John 14:2), so we are to be prepared to be his mansion. "Visitation" alludes to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, whose residents did not "know the time of [their city's] visitation" (Lk 19:44.) Purified, may we know our visitation time.

The first reading and psalm glorify the dynasty of David. An excerpt from "The Prophecy of Nathan" promises that David's family (his "house") will be established over Israel permanently, and his son Solomon will build a temple (a "house") for God. The pro-monarchy parts of the Books of Samuel and of the Kings, as well as many psalms, promoted the belief that God the cosmic King anointed Judah's kings to be his agents on earth. Centuries later, European theorists of the divine right of kings could appeal to this Biblical precedent.

The royal Ps. 132 salutes God's having chosen Mt Zion and David and his heirs. The Anointed One in vv 10 & 12 would have been the then-reigning king. Christians would appropriate that royal title for Jesus: "anointed one" translated into Greek and Latin is *Christos/Christus*.

Romans closes with a hymn of praise wherein Paul asserts that prophetic writings [of what we call the Old Testament] held a secret which was unveiled to the Gentiles when Christ appeared. This claim matches his mention at the beginning of Romans of "the gospel ...which [God] promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, [i.e., the Old Testament] the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh...." This indicates that although no extant writing of Paul has details about Jesus' birth, Paul must have considered it significant that Jesus was of Davidic blood.

When the sun's light is lowest, we hear the tender story of Gabriel the archangel's telling the frightened virgin that the Spirit will conceive in her the Son of the Highest. This dramatic representation of the Incarnation has been the subject of countless works of art, and the source of the *Ave Maria*. Mary's conscience was pure, so that, at her visitation, the Son could find a mansion prepared for him in her. As Ps. 132 said of Zion, the Lord "has desired her for his habitation; 'This shall be my resting place forever; here will I dwell, for I delight in her.'"

Rev. Stephen Weissman
Saint Louis, Missouri