

GATHERING IN GOD'S WORD

Prelude

Sharing Our Lives in Prayer

Prayer Requests

Silent Prayer

Pastoral Prayer

Welcome

Letting God In

During this time, we invite you to prepare your heart and your mind for worship. We want you to be able to use this quiet time to settle your thoughts, set aside any distractions that may be troubling you, and focus your whole self on God. Open your heart, your mind, and your spirit, and let God into your life.

*Centering Prayer: **Light your peace in my heart, God-With-Us.***

As you breathe in, pray, "Light your peace in my heart."

As you breathe out, pray, "God-With-Us."

* Opening Praise (based on *Spill the Beans*, iss. 14 © 2014 Spill the Beans Resources):

One: For such a time as this,

Many: God's call is to call.

One: For such a time as this,

Many: God's call is to speak out.

One: For such a time as this,

Many: God's call is to act justly.

One: For such a time as this,

Many: God's call is to bring change.

One: For such a time as this,

Many: God's call is to seek peace.

One: For such a time as this,

Many: God's call is to me.

Lighting the Advent Candles

Reading from *The Redemption of Scrooge* by Matt Rawle

Lighting the 2nd candle – the candle of PEACE

Hymn #91 – Come, Come Emmanuel (sing through three times, last time as a round)

(from *Glory to God*, © 2013 Westminster John Knox Press)

Come, come Emmanuel.

Come, Emmanuel.

* Invitation to Confession

* Joining in Prayer (based on the *Book of Common Worship*, © 2018 Westminster John Knox Press and *Spill the Beans*, iss. 14, © 2014 Spill the Beans Resources):

God, in our Advent waiting, help us to view time as the gift that it is. May we find ways to sit with you, to acknowledge your presence with us. When days seem endless and lonely and also when hours seem to race by, help us to carve out space to check in with you as time rushes on. And, as we learn to recognize you in every moment, may we take time to reveal your presence to others. Merciful God, you sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for salvation. Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our redeemer, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (Please take a moment for silent reflection and confession.)

In the name of Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, God-With-Us, we pray.

Amen.

* God's Promise of Grace

* Sharing the Peace of Christ

* Song of Peace: "Let There Be Peace on Earth"

(reprinted with permission, © Jan-Lee Music, copyright-protected alternate lyrics)

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.

Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.

With God our Creator, we are family.

Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now.

With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow.

To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.

HEARING GOD'S WORD

Prayer to Open Minds and Hearts

Scripture reading – Esther 4:1-17 (from the *Common English Bible*, © 2011)

¹ When Mordecai learned what had been done, he tore his clothes, dressed in mourning clothes, and put ashes on his head. Then he went out into the heart of the city and cried out loudly and bitterly. ² He went only as far as the King's Gate because it was against the law for anyone to pass through it wearing mourning clothes. ³ At the same time, in every province and place where the king's order and his new law arrived, a very great sadness came over the Jews. They gave up eating and spent whole days weeping and crying out loudly in pain. Many Jews lay on the ground in mourning clothes and ashes. ⁴ When Esther's female servants and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, the queen's whole body showed how upset she was. She sent everyday clothes for Mordecai to wear instead of mourning clothes, but he rejected them. ⁵ Esther then sent for Hathach, one of the royal eunuchs whose job it was to wait on her. She ordered him to go to Mordecai and find out what was going on and why he was acting this way. ⁶ Hathach went out to Mordecai, to the city square in front of the King's Gate. ⁷ Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him. He spelled out the exact amount of silver that Haman promised to pay into the royal treasury. It was in exchange for the destruction of the Jews. ⁸ He also gave Hathach a copy of the law made public in Susa concerning the Jews' destruction so that Hathach could show it to Esther and report it to her. Through him Mordecai ordered her to go to the king to seek his kindness and his help for her people. ⁹ Hathach came back and told Esther what Mordecai had said. ¹⁰ In reply Esther ordered Hathach to tell Mordecai: ¹¹ "All the king's officials and the people in his provinces know that there's a single law in a case like this. Any man or woman who comes to the king in the inner courtyard without being called is to be put to death. Only the person to whom the king holds out the gold scepter may live. In my case, I haven't been called to come to the king for the past thirty days." ¹² When they told Mordecai Esther's words, ¹³ he had them respond to Esther: "Don't think for one minute that, unlike all the other Jews, you'll come out of this alive simply because you are in the palace. ¹⁴ In fact, if you don't speak up at this very important time, relief and rescue will appear for the Jews from another place, but you and your family will die. But who knows? Maybe it was for a moment like this that you came to be part of the royal family." ¹⁵ Esther sent back this word to Mordecai: ¹⁶ "Go, gather all the Jews who are in Susa and tell them to give up eating to help me be brave. They aren't to eat or drink anything for three whole days, and I myself will do the same, along with my female servants. Then, even though it's against the law, I will go to the king; and if I am to die, then die I will." ¹⁷ So Mordecai left where he was and did exactly what Esther had ordered him.

Sermon: "The Remembrance of Christmas Past" – Rev. Lisa Johnson

Exploring the Word Together

This is a time for us to process our faith and our hearing of God's word together – a time to be the word of God for one another. It's also a time to build community with one another – a time to share elements of our faith and our

understanding of that faith with each other. Feel free to participate in conversation with those around you or sit and ponder this question on your own.

What are some chains that hold us back from sensing and sharing Christ's peace?

One: May the words of my mouth,

Many: And the meditations of all of our hearts

ALL: Be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Hymn #87 – Comfort, Comfort Now My People

(from *Glory to God*, © 2013 Westminster John Knox Press)

“Comfort, comfort now my people; tell of peace!” So says our God.

“Comfort those who sit in darkness mourning under sorrow’s load.

To my people now proclaim that my pardon waits for them!

Tell them that their sins I cover, and their warfare now is over.”

For the herald’s voice is crying in the desert far and near,

Calling us to true repentance, since the reign of God is here.

O, that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way.

Let the valleys rise in meeting and the hills bow down in greeting.

Straight shall be what long was crooked, and the rougher places plain.

Let your hearts be true and humble, as befits God’s holy reign.

For the glory of the Lord now on earth is shed abroad,

And all flesh shall see the token that God’s word is never broken.

RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD

Coming Together in Prayer

Pastoral Prayer

Celebrating the Lord’s Supper

Our tradition in this congregation is to partake of the bread whenever you feel prepared to do so and to hold the wine/juice until all have been served so that we can all partake together. This gives us the chance to participate in this holy mystery as we participate in our faith – both as individuals and as a community.

Invitation to the Table

Great Thanksgiving

One: The Lord be with you.

Many: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts.

Many: We lift them up to God.

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

Many: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Prayer for the Feast

Lord’s Prayer: **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 sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

Words of Institution

Sharing the Bread and the Cup

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Hymn #525 – Let Us Break Bread Together

(from *Glory to God*, © 2013 Westminster John Knox Press)

Let us break bread together on our knees;

Let us break bread together on our knees.

When I fall on my knees
With my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.

Let us drink wine together on our knees;
Let us drink wine together on our knees.
When I fall on my knees
With my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.

Let us praise God together on our knees;
Let us praise God together on our knees.
When I fall on my knees
With my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.

Prayer of Gratitude and Blessing

Our offering plates are located at the entrance to the sanctuary. This offering allows us to continue our outreach and mission both here in the community of Oronoco and beyond – in the greater Rochester area, in Minnesota, and even around the world. We are grateful for your willingness to join us in this mission and thank you for your generosity.

Announcements

BEING SENT OUT IN GOD'S WORD

* Blessing

* Claiming Our Faith Identity

This is a chance for us to remind one another of both who we are and whose we are before we head back out in the world. The hope is that, as we grow more and more familiar with the words and the claim and call that they place on our hearts, we'll be able to recall them throughout the week in those moments when we need to tap into our faith. The words and phrases are also aimed at helping us connect with our congregation's own mission statement: "We are a community of believers whose mission is to share God's Word, show God's Love, serve God's World, and strive for God's Peace."

One: We are the Church –

ALL: God's beloved children today, tomorrow, and always.

One: Here, in this worship, through prayer, word, and fellowship,

ALL: God has embraced us yet again, and our spirits have been made new.

One: Suffused with God's grace,

ALL: We claim new strength, new purpose, and new hope in our call.

One: With spirits reaffirmed and renewed,

ALL: We are called to SHARE God's Word. We are called to SHOW God's Love. We are called to SERVE God's World. We are called to STRIVE for God's Peace.

One: We are the Church

ALL: Because God binds us together in sacred companionship and blessed connectedness.

One: And now, as the Church, God calls us out

ALL: To do and be God's extravagant love in the world.

One: This service has ended.

ALL: Now our service can begin.

Postlude

** indicates please rise in body or spirit as you feel led*