

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 love in my heart, God-With-Us.

As you breathe in, pray, "Light your love 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: Emmanuel, God-With-Us, approaches.

Many: Today, in turn, we approach God as well.

One: Emmanuel, God-With-Us, brings hope,

Many: The hope that we seek today.

One: Emmanuel, God-With-Us, brings light

Many: To brighten our darkest moments and fears.

One: Emmanuel, God-With-Us, brings peace

Many: To the places of conflict and grief in our world.

One: Emmanuel, God-With-Us, today.

Many: Emmanuel, God-With-Us, tomorrow.

ALL: Emmanuel, God-With-Us, always.

Lighting the Advent Candles

Reading from *The Redemption of Scrooge* by Matt Rawle

Lighting the 4th candle – the candle of LOVE

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 *Spill the Beans*, iss. 14, © 2014 Spill the Beans Resources):

Loving God, we come this day filled with anticipation and hope for what we prepare to celebrate in the week ahead. We come excited about celebrating the birth of your Son: Jesus Christ, the light of the world; Jesus Christ, the bringer of hope; Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace; Jesus Christ, the embodiment of your love. We come with joy in our hearts. We come with sparkle in our eyes. We come to worship you. In this moment, we ask that you will forgive those things we have said, done, or thought that have upset others. And we ask that you will forgive those things that we have not done at all. Forgiven, may we see where we have gone wrong. Loved, may we learn to love others the way you desire us to. Free, may we turn to bring hope and freedom to those trapped by guilt and fear as we make known the hope, peace, joy, and love of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. (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"

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**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 – Isaiah 35:1-10 (from the *Common English Bible*, © 2011)

¹ The desert and the dry land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom like the crocus. ² They will burst into bloom, and rejoice with joy and singing. They will receive the glory of Lebanon, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the LORD's glory, the splendor of our God. ³ Strengthen the weak hands, and support the unsteady knees. ⁴ Say to those who are panicking: "Be strong! Don't fear! Here's your God, coming with vengeance; with divine retribution God will come to save you." ⁵ Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be cleared. ⁶ Then the lame will leap like the deer, and the tongue of the speechless will sing. Waters will spring up in the desert, and streams in the wilderness. ⁷ The burning sand will become a pool, and the thirsty ground, fountains of water. The jackals' habitat, a pasture; grass will become reeds and rushes. ⁸ A highway will be there. It will be called The Holy Way. The unclean won't travel on it, but it will be for those walking on that way. Even fools won't get lost on it; ⁹ no lion will be there, and no predator will go up on it. None of these will be there; only the redeemed will walk on it. ¹⁰ The LORD's ransomed ones will return and enter Zion with singing, with everlasting joy upon their heads. Happiness and joy will overwhelm them; grief and groaning will flee away.

Sermon: "The Hope of Christmas Future" – 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.

How does God's gift of grace impact your future?

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 #104 – O Lord, How Shall I Meet You

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

O Lord, how shall I meet you, how welcome you a-right?
Your people long to greet you, my hope, my heart's delight!
O kindle, Lord most holy, a lamp within my breast,
To do in spirit lowly all that may please you best.

Love caused your incarnation; love brought you down to me;
Your thirst for my salvation procured my liberty.
O love beyond all telling, that led you to embrace
In love, all loves excelling, our lost and fallen race.

You come, O Lord, with gladness, in mercy and goodwill,
To bring an end to sadness and bid our fears be still.
In patient expectation we live for that great day
When your renewed creation your glory shall display.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Coming Together in Prayer

Pastoral Prayer

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.**

Hymn #110 – Love Has Come

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

Love has come: a light in the darkness!
Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it;
Hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior!
Love! Love! Glory to God on high.

Love is born! Come, share in the wonder.
Love is God now asleep in the hay.
See the glow in the eyes of his mother;
What is the name her heart is saying?
Love! Love! Love is the name she whispers.
Love! Love! Jesus, Emmanuel.

Love has come and never will leave us!
Love is life everlasting and free.
Love is Jesus within and among us.
Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.
Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas.
Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

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*