

First Sunday of Advent



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF PETALUMA | DECEMBER 3, 2023

PRELUDE

Gabriel's Message

Jenny Smith & Jane Shelly

WELCOME

Jane Shelly

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to the Lord.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Jane Shelly

In this season of Advent,
we are here to watch and wait
and pray for the coming of light into the world.
We long for the day when the things of darkness –
selfishness and greed, suffering and oppression –
shall be no more.

**Light of the World,
by your presence,
light up the past,
that we might learn from it with thankfulness.
Light up the present,
that we might live in it with love.
Light up the future,
that we might prepare for it in hope.
As we watch and wait and pray,
may we be always ready to encounter the Lord
who is already and always with us.**

PRAYER AND SILENT LISTENING TO GOD

Unslumbering God, at an unexpected hour you sent an unlikely liberator to an undeserving world. Keep us faithful in unguarded moments and alert in uncertain times, so that we may seek your unmeasured mercy, serve you with undivided hearts, live together in unbroken community, and greet you with unending praise; for the sake of Jesus Christ, our undying Life, in whom we know your unfailing justice, unfathomable grace, and unlimited love. In this time of silence, prepare our hearts for worship.

HYMN

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king,
born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit raise us to thy glorious throne.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Jane Shelly

Every year, we light the Advent candles, praying that our preparation for Christmas may help us to look outward in love, and to look forward in hope.

**Living Christ, light of the world,
give us the warmth of your love.**

There are five candles.
We shall light a new candle each Sunday from now until Christmas.
Candles are useful.
They give light and warmth when electricity fails.
Candles are simple, yet ingenious.
They show us the inventiveness of people in the past
and connect us with generations before us.
Candles are special.
In the dark, they give bright light and warm shadows.
Candlelight brings us together
as we talk and laugh and listen.

**Living Christ, light of the world,
give us the warmth of your love.**

In Isaiah, chapter 64, a prophet cries out to God:
O that you would tear open the heavens,
and come down,...
to make your name known....
You have hidden your face from us....
Yet...we are the clay, and you are the potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
We light our first candle
as a prayer for our suffering world,
that God, who is often hidden,
may be revealed to us and to all.

(The first candle is lit.)

Living God, come to our world.

**When you hide your face, help us,
to trust your promises and wait in hope.**

CONFESSION AND PARDON

Jane Shelly

Let us confess our sins to the One whose mercy endures
from generation to generation.

**God-with-us,
even in Advent,
we confess that you can seem far away.
You are hidden when we need you near.
In our hurt, doubt, and fear,
we do not try to draw closer to you;
instead, we lash out—
against you, our neighbor, even those we love.
Forgive us, we pray, and come to save us!
Let your face shine until our tears are dried,
our sins are faded, and our hope is restored.
After all, we belong to you,
and in your hands, we can be made new.**

Silence, a time for personal confession.

Sisters and brothers, by the faith of Christ, your sins are forgiven.
Blessed be the God of our salvation, whose mercy is everlasting.

Thanks be to God.

CHOIR ANTHEM *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence*

DISCOVERY TIME Grete Hansen

THE OFFERING Jane Shelly

***DOXOLOGY** *(or in your preferred version)*

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise him, all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT Isaiah 64:1-9 Jane Shelly

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence— as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed.

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

GOSPEL

Mark 13:24-37

“But in those days, after that suffering,
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds ’with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Rev. Dr. Joanne Whitt

HYMN*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, thou Key of David, come, and open wide our heavenly home;
make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine Advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and earth's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee O, Israel.

O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;
bid envy, strife, and discord cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

Rev. Whitt

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

**May we be as living loaves,
Kneaded and shaped by the hands of God.
May we be as wine of the Spirit,
poured out that others might know joy.
Love be the leaven within.
Love be the flavor of thought and word and deed.
Peace be among us. Amen.**

OUR PRAYERS TO GOD

Holy and loving God,
your will is that no-one shall hurt or destroy,
yet your world is filled with violence and strife;
we cry out to you in longing and hope:
That we may pray humbly,
longing to see as you see, and love as you love,
God of mercy, God of peace,

hear our prayer.

For all whom we currently name
as defenders, allies, and enemies—
and for all who name us as their enemies,
God of mercy, God of peace,

hear our prayer.

For children, women, and men
whose bodies become statistics,
or who are regarded as not worth counting,
God of mercy, God of peace,

hear our prayer.

For all whose lives are torn apart
by death, destruction,
and wounds of body and mind,
God of mercy, God of peace,

hear our prayer.

For all who are scarred by the trauma of battle,
who carry unbearable knowledge
and memories they cannot share,
God of mercy, God of peace,

hear our prayer.

For all, including ourselves,
who are swayed, excited, or ruled
by the drumbeats of anger,
the thirst for revenge,
and the seductive appeal of force,
God of mercy, God of peace,

hear our prayer.

In the name of Jesus Christ who refused to hurt or destroy,
God of mercy, God of peace,

hear our prayer. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER *(or in your preferred version)*

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

CHARGE

CLOSING RESPONSE

In our watching and our waiting
Come, Lord Jesus.

In our hopes and in our fears
Come, Lord Jesus.

In our homes and in our world
Come, Lord Jesus.
Come, Bless us and surprise us.
Amen.

BLESSING

CLOSING SONG *Christ Be Our Light* (chorus)

Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church
gathered today.

Worship Leaders: Rev. Dr. Joanne Whitt, Jane Shelly, Music Director Jane Shelly,
Accompanist Jenny Smith, Student Ministries and Events Coordinator Grete Hansen, Bob
Heyman (handpan)

Credits

Call to Worship adapted from Josie Smith, in *Candles and Conifers: Resources for All Saints' and Advent*, ed. Ruth Burgess, Wild Goose Publications, 92.

Opening Prayer from PC(USA) Prayers for Advent (<https://www.pcusa.org/resource/prayers-advent/>)

Advent Wreath liturgy adapted from Brian Wren, *Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany: Liturgies and Prayers for Public Worship*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, 2008, p. 49-50.

Confession and Pardon adapted from *Feasting on the Word Worship Companion: Year B, Vol 1*, p. 1-2.

Our Prayers to God adapted from Brian Wren, *Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany: Liturgies and Prayers for Public Worship*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, 2008, p. 37-38.

Closing Response Adapted from Ruth Burgess, in *Candles and Conifers: Resources for All Saints' and Advent*, Wild Goose Publications, 111.

Music: *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*, TEXT: Latin hymn, 9th cent.; trans. John Mason Neale, 1851; as in *The Hymnal 1940*, alt., MUSIC Sarum plainsong, Mode IV, 9th cent.; harm. Alfred V. Fedak, 2011, *Text Alt.* ©1940 Church Pension Fund, *Music Harm.* ©2011 Alfred V. Fedak.

Music: *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*, TEXT: Latin prose, pre-9th cent.; trans. composite, MUSIC: Plainsong; adapt. Thomas Helmore, 1852; arr. John Weaver, 1988, *Music Arr.*, ©1990 John Weaver.

Music: *Christ Be Our Light (chorus)*, TEXT and MUSIC: Bernadette Farrell, 1993, Text and Music © 1993 Bernadette Farrell (Publishing by OCP).