

# ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

## Second Sunday of Advent

December 10, 2023



Ministers

Rector

Deacon

Senior Warden

Junior Warden

Minister of Music

Cantor

Administrative Assistant

The People of the Parish

The Rev. Christy Laborda Harris

The Rev. Kate Sefton

Jean Farmer

Meg Nalley

Miles McKenzie

Kristina Ibarra

Jun Kim

*Advent is a season of expectation and preparation, as the Church prepares to celebrate the coming (adventus) of Christ in his incarnation, and also looks ahead to his final advent as judge at the end of time. The readings and liturgies not only direct us towards Christ's birth, they also challenge the modern reluctance to confront the theme of divine judgement. Church decorations are simple and spare. Purple or blue are the traditional liturgical colors. In the northern hemisphere, the Advent season falls at the darkest time of the year, and the natural symbols of darkness and light are powerfully at work throughout Advent and Christmas. The lighting of candles on an Advent wreath was imported into Britain from northern Europe in the nineteenth century and is now a common practice. (Taken from the Church of England's "Common Worship")*

## The Gathering of the Community

PROCESSIONAL HYMN

Let All the Hills be Leveled

*please stand*

Let all the hills be lev - eled, the high - ways be made straight!

6  
See, our God comes; make read - y ev - 'ry heart. Read - y your

10  
heart! The glo - ry of our God shall be re - vealed.

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In the tender mercy of our God, the dayspring from on high shall break upon us, to give light to those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

**Thanks be to God.**

Blessed are you, holy and living One.

**You come to your people and set them free.**

Loving Jesus: Protect and sustain us with your hand. Open the door of your love that, sealed with your wisdom, we may be free to serve you with joy. **Amen.** (*A prayer of St. Gertrude*)

## KYRIE

Lord, have mer-cy, Lord, have mer-cy, Christ, have  
mer - cy, Christ, have\_ mer - cy, Lord, have\_  
mer - cy, Lord, have\_ mer - cy,

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## The Liturgy of the Word

### THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us pray.

Wild God of the wastes, whose gospel begins with a cry and a summons: take us to a pathless place where we can start again to taste creation's gifts anew and await the Spirit's touch; through Jesus Christ, the one who is to come. **Amen.**

A READING FROM THE PROPHET ISAIAH (40:1-11)

*please be seated*

Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God.  
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her  
that she has served her term,  
that her penalty is paid,  
that she has received from the Lord's hand  
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.

Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

A voice says, “Cry out!”

And I said, “What shall I cry?”

All people are grass,  
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

The grass withers, the flower fades,  
when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;  
surely the people are grass.

The grass withers, the flower fades;  
but the word of our God will stand for ever.

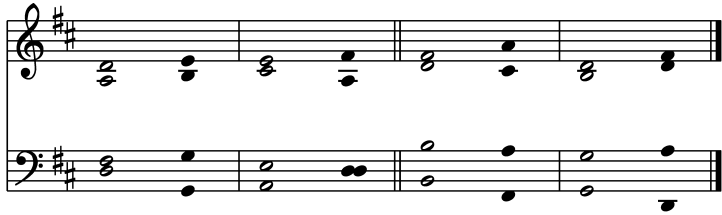
Get you up to a high mountain,  
O herald of good tidings to Zion;  
lift up your voice with strength,  
O herald of good tidings to Jerusalem,  
lift it up, do not fear;  
say to the cities of Judah,  
“Here is your God!”

See, the Lord God comes with might,  
and his arm rules for him;  
his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.  
He will feed his flock like a shepherd;  
he will gather the lambs in his arms,  
and carry them in his bosom,  
and gently lead the mother sheep.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God’s people.

People **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM 85:1-2, 8-13



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- 1 **You have been gracious to your land, O God; \*  
you have restored the good fortune of *Jacob*.**
- 2 **You have forgiven the iniquity of your *people* \*  
and blotted out all their *sins*.**
- 8 **I will listen to what you are *saying*, \*  
for you are speaking peace to your faithful people  
and to those who turn their hearts to *you*.**
- 9 **Truly, your salvation is very near to those who *fear you*, \*  
that your glory may dwell in our *land*.**
- 10 **Mercy and truth have met *to-gether*; \*  
righteousness and peace have kissed each *other*.**
- 11 **Truth shall spring up from the *earth*, \*  
and righteousness shall look down from *heaven*.**
- 12 **You, O God, will indeed grant *pros-perity*, \*  
and our land will yield its *in-crease*.**
- 13 **Righteousness shall go *be-fore you*, \*  
and peace shall be a pathway for your *feet*.**

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A READING FROM THE SECOND LETTER OF PETER (3:8-15a)

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud

noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

People **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL READING

Mark 1:1-8

*please stand*

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.

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

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way;  
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight,’”

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

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

*A period of silent reflection follows the sermon*

HYMN

Come, Lord Jesus

*please stand*

Come, Lord Je - sus, come, Lord Je - sus, come, and do not de - lay.

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PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE—Common Worship from the Church of England

\* *“Marantha” [ mar-uh-nath-uh ]—Aramaic for “come, our lord”*

In joyful expectation of his coming to our aid we pray to Jesus.

Come to your Church as Lord and judge.  
Help us to live in the light of your coming  
and give us a longing for your kingdom.  
Maranatha: **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come to your world as King of the nations.  
Before you rulers will stand in silence.  
Maranatha: **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

We pray especially for the people of Israel and Palestine.  
May the killing cease and peace be known in the land called holy by three faiths.  
Maranatha: **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come to the suffering as Saviour and comforter.  
We pray especially for those we now name...  
Break into our lives,  
where we struggle with sickness and distress,  
and set us free to serve you for ever.  
Maranatha: **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come to us as shepherd and guardian of our souls.  
We especially remember those we now name...  
Give us with all the faithful departed  
a share in your victory over evil and death.  
Maranatha: **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come from heaven, Lord Jesus, with power and great glory.  
Lift us up to meet you,  
that with Stephen and all your saints and angels  
we may live and reign with you in your new creation.  
Maranatha: **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

Come, Lord Jesus, do not delay;  
give new courage to your people,  
who trust in your love.  
By your coming, raise us to share in the joy of your kingdom  
on earth as in heaven,  
where you live and reign with the Father and the Spirit,  
one God for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

#### CONFESSION

A voice cries out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.' So let us listen and turn to the Lord in penitence and faith.

**O promised Christ:  
We are a world at war.  
Our peace depends on your coming.  
We are a sinful people.  
Our pardon depends on your coming.  
We are full of good intentions but weak at keeping promises;  
our only hope of doing God's will is that you should come and help us do it.  
Lord Christ, Word made flesh,  
our world waits for your peace, for your pardon, and for your grace.  
Even so: Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.**



## ABSOLUTION

Almighty God,  
who in Jesus Christ has given us  
a kingdom that cannot be destroyed,  
forgive you your sins,  
open your eyes to God's truth,  
strengthen you to do God's will  
and give you the joy of God's kingdom,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## PEACE

His judgment is not vengeance, an eye for an eye; his peace is not false, a veil for injustice; he comes to break the spear, to silence the guns and still our warring souls. May the peace of Christ rule our world and heal our hearts. The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**And also with you.**

*You are invited to pass the peace  
distanced and respectfully.*

## The Holy Communion

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord  
*Jame E. Moore, Jr.*

*please be seated*

OFFERTORY RESPONSE

If in Your Heart

*please stand*

**If in your heart you make a manger for his birth,  
Then God will once again become a child on earth.**

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EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER—Steven Shakespeare

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give thanks and praise.**

Mystery of winter skies, we thank you in the darkening hour for opening our eyes to see your starlit beauty; for parting the wide heavens to send your gentle light; for offering your word to take our mortal flesh.

He was promised by those who shared your dream of peace; John the Baptist cleared his way with words of desert fire; Mary and Joseph accepted his coming with tenderness and faith; we know that he draws near again, to show us who we really are with honesty and love.

Now we take up the song of hope that we might awaken to his coming among us and the world be touched by the footfall of his glory:



Ho-ly, ho-ly, ho-ly God, God of pow'r and might,

9



hea-ven and earth are full of your glo-ry, Ho - san-na in the high-est.

16



Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san -

21



-na, Ho - san - na, Ho - san - na in the high - est.

We ask that your Holy Spirit will fall upon us and upon these gifts that these fragile, earthly things may be to us the body and blood of our lord and brother, Jesus Christ; who, on the night that he was betrayed, gathered with his faltering friends for a meal that tasted of freedom.

Calling them to his table, he took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and said: 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this to remember me.' In the same way after supper, he took the cup, saying: 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, to remember me.' As on that night, so here and now he offers himself in touch and taste beyond all words can hold.

Great is the mystery of faith

**Christ has died**

**Christ is risen**

**Christ will come again.**

Therefore we come in memory and hope, responding to your call and the promise that echoes from the dawn of all time. May mind and heart be held by your self-giving love as we stand before the cross, approach the empty tomb, and praise the one whose name is lifted in your love.

Through him who was emptied to bear your fullness we make our prayer with all created life to the glory of the God who fills all in all now and forever. **Amen.**

As Jesus taught, we now pray.

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those  
who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen.**

## BREAKING OF THE BREAD

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

**Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.**

The Gifts of God for the People of God.

Wherever you are on your journey of faith,

**You are welcome at this table.**

*All are welcome at the Lord's table. You are invited to come forward when the ushers indicate. Please extend your hands together to receive the bread. If you are gluten free, please let us know. If you prefer a blessing, please cross your arms across your chest. If you would like your bread intincted (dipped in the chalice) please let the clergy person with the bread know before the bread is handed to you. It will be intincted for you and handed to you. We are no longer able to allow you to intinct the bread yourself nor are we able to place it in your mouth. Alternately, you may sip directly from the chalice or choose to receive the bread only.*

COMMUNION HYMN            75 There's a Voice in the Wilderness Crying

COMMUNION HYMN            56 O come, O come Emmanuel (3-4)

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

*please stand*

**Eternal God,**

**we thank you that in Christ**

**you give yourself**

**into our hands:**

**may we who have tasted life proclaim the coming feast when many will come**

**from east and west, from north and south**

**to greet the Lord of all;**

**we ask this in his name.**

**Amen.**

BLESSING

May the God who brings heaven close to earth

give truth to our judgment

and flame to our longing

that our hearts might be ready

to be born again in love;  
and the blessing of God Almighty:  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
be upon you and remain with you forever. **Amen.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CLOSING HYMN

Wait for the Lord

*please stand*

The musical score is written for a soprano voice and piano accompaniment. It consists of two systems of music. The first system has a vocal line and a piano line. The vocal line begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The lyrics are: "Wait for the Lord, whose day is near." The piano line begins with a bass clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The second system also has a vocal line and a piano line. The vocal line begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The lyrics are: "Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart!" The piano line begins with a bass clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). Both systems end with a double bar line and repeat dots.

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DISMISSAL

As we await our coming Savior, go in the peace of Christ.  
**Thanks be to God.**





