



Liturgical Service

A Short Service of Reading and Reflection
December 21, 2024

Preparing to Welcome the Child

Preparing

We are invited to reflect before the service begins.

Wear we now our warmest coats
Wear we now our walking shoes
Opened wide the gates of hope
And let us through.¹

Prelude: Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme by J.S. Bach

The pastor leads and we respond by reading the bold type:

We come to glorify God, to rejoice in the One who saves us.

God comes, so we might believe, so we might be blessed.

Our hearts leap for joy! For God is coming to us in a child.

**God comes for those who hunger for hope,
for those who thirst for grace.**

Holy is the One who comes in God's name,
who fulfills every promise of God.

**God comes to walk with those who follow in faith,
to bring peace to a shattered world.²**

The pastor briefly shares announcements.

Inviting

The liturgist continues:

Holy God, scattering the proud, you look with favor on those the world ignores. For you, we wait for the One who will feed us; for you, we wait for the One who stands with us in our loneliness and pain.

For you, we wait.

Jesus Christ, born in a border town: in you, God fills the hunger of our hearts; in you, God lifts us from our hopelessness; in you, all the promises come true.

For you, we wait.

Holy Spirit, Hallower of God's people: from you comes faith, so we might believe; from you comes belief, so we might be blessed; from you come all blessings, so we might give them away.

For you, we wait.³

Amen.

The cantor sings this prayer (tune of Hymnal #116).⁴ The congregation joins on the second stanza.

Of the Parent's Love begotten, ere the worlds were yet to be,
One there was with no beginning, One who is eternally—
Source and Ending of all things that have been,
and all things that are to be, forever and forever.

**Blessed dawning of salvation as the Word is breathed in grace
Into earthly flesh receiving—God incarnate taking place;
Now the light of God revealed
through the Child of human face, forever and forever.**

Praying

The liturgist continues:

You created so we might discover Your ways,
but we chose to walk the paths paved by sin and death.

Prophets came, speaking of Your promises
and calling us back to Your truths,

but we continued to reflect on the teachings of temptation.

You call people to remind us of Your promised mercy,
but we refused to see sin and death as our foes.⁵

After a period of silent reflection on our sin and God's gifts, we continue:

**Almighty God,
to you all hearts are open, all desires known,
and from you no secrets are hidden.
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 liturgist may remind us of special blessings, needs and concerns, and then says:

I invite you to kneel as we pray.

**Our holy Guardian God, 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 debts as we forgive our debtors.
Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and glory are yours now and forever.
Amen.**

O Wisdom, coming forth from the mouth of the Most High, pervading
and permeating all creation, you order all things with strength and
gentleness: Come now and teach us the way to salvation.

Come, Lord Jesus.

We pray silently.

O Adonai, Ruler of the house of Israel, you appeared in the burning bush
to Moses and gave him the law on Sinai: Come with outstretched arm to
save us.

Come, Lord Jesus.

We pray silently.

O Root of Jesse, rising as a sign for all the peoples, before you earthly rulers will keep silent, and nations give you honor: Come quickly to deliver us.

Come, Lord Jesus.

We pray silently.

O Key of David, Scepter over the house of Israel, you open and no one can close, you close and no one can open: Come to set free the prisoners who live in darkness and the shadow of death.

Come, Lord Jesus.

We pray silently.

O Ruler of the nations, Monarch for whom the people long, you are the cornerstone uniting all humanity: Come, save us all, whom you formed out of clay.

Come, Lord Jesus.

We pray silently.

O Immanuel, our Sovereign and Lawgiver, desire of the nations and savior of all: Come and save us, O Lord our God.

Come, Lord Jesus.

We pray silently.

Amen.

The congregation sits.

Listening

During the reading that follows, a candle lighter lights three purple and one pink candle for the fourth week of Advent. The lector says:

We light these candles as a sign of the coming light of Christ. Advent means coming.

Hear what the prophets foretold of his coming in Micah, chapter 5, verses 2-5a.

Lesson from the Hebrew Scriptures

The word of God.

Thanks be to God.

After a period of silent reflection on the reading, the pastor says:

Please join in reading from Luke 1.

46 My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
47 my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
48 for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant.

**From this day all generations will call me blessed:
49 you, the Almighty have done great things for me
and holy is your name.**

50 You have mercy on those who fear you,
from generation to generation.

**51 You have shown strength with your arm,
and scattered the proud in their conceit,**

52 casting down the mighty from their thrones
and lifting up the lowly.

**53 You have filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.**

54 You have come to the aid of your servant Israel,
to remember the promise of mercy,

**55 the promise made to our forebears,
to Abraham and Abraham's children for ever.**

After a period of silent reflection on the psalm, the lector says:

Listen to the word of God from Hebrews, chapter 10, verses 5-10.

Lesson from the New Testament

The word of God.

Thanks be to God.

After a period of silent reflection on the reading, the cantor says:

Please stand and join me in singing ___ stanzas of hymn 27, "Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart!"

The people continue standing as the liturgist continues:

Listen to the gospel according to Luke, chapter 1, verses 39-45.

Lesson from the Gospel

The word of God.

Thanks be to God.

We reflect silently on the Gospel.

Offering

The liturgist continues:

Please be seated.

Loving God, we offer our hopes, our hearts, and our treasures to you, trusting that you will use them to bring life, joy, grace, and peace to all around us. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

You can give at the doors to the sanctuary after the service, or you can visit lasierra.church and click on “Give.”

Offertory: Voluntary in F by Eric H. Thiman

Considering

After a moment of grateful reflection, the homilist prays:

O Holy God, may your Spirit descend upon us and speak to us and through us.

Amen.

Homily

Affirming

The liturgist invites us:

As we prepare to celebrate Christ’s birth, as we remember the gift of his resurrection, we would tell of that mystery we call faith:

**Christ was born, that we might see hope in the flesh;
Christ lived, that we might hear grace spoken aloud;
Christ died, that we might feel the breaking of God’s heart;
Christ is risen, that we might know that the promises are true;
Christ will come again, that we might be blessed as God’s children.⁶
Amen.**

We join the cantor in singing this prayer (tune of Hymnal #116).

**Now behold the One who prophets have foretold for ages long
On the faithful page of scripture, seers and sages in their song,
Now the Promised One shines forth!
Let all earth its praise prolong forever and forever.**

**Depths and heights break forth in singing, angels, saints make melody,
all dominions, every power sing, make new psalms of ecstasy,
Let no heart refrain from praising God,
celebrate in harmony forever and forever.⁷**

Responding

The pastor says:

God of mystery and might, we praise and worship you, for you come in silence, while all lay sleeping, to enter our world as a child of humble birth.

We thank you for the hope of the prophets, the song of the angels, and the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Now we pray that Christ may be born anew in us. In his face we behold your glory, for in his life as in his death is your gift of salvation.

Angelus (organ chimes)

Blessing

Postlude: March of the Noble by Frederick Keats

The pastor says:

O come, Child of the covenant,

to lead us to the heirs of the promises made long ago. We will go with you to those who have been forgotten, to lift all those knocked down by life to their feet.

O Come, Salvation's servant,

to show us the way to the joy of this season. We will go with you to welcome the outsider, and to throw our arms around those whose hearts are broken.

O Come, Lover of the lowly,

to fill our hands with the shawls of grace and peace. We will go to wrap them around those who grieve, to place them on the shoulders of those damaged by violence.⁸

Amen.

Upcoming Texts

December 28: 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; and Luke 2:41-52.

January 4: Jeremiah 31:7-14; Psalm 147:12-20; Ephesians 1:3-14; and John 1:1-18.

Visit <https://lasierra.church/liturgical-service/> to view upcoming texts and participants, download this liturgy, watch online, or sign up for our email newsletter.

¹ From *Song of the Magi* by Anaïs Mitchell (2018).

² From Thom M. Schuman's Lectionary Liturgies, lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com.

³ Adapted from Thom M. Schuman's Lectionary Liturgies, lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com.

⁴ Marcus Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, translation *The New Century Hymnal* (1993).

⁵ Adapted from Thom M. Schuman's Lectionary Liturgies, lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com.

⁶ From Thom M. Schuman's Lectionary Liturgies, lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com.

⁷ Marcus Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, translation *The New Century Hymnal* (1993).

⁸ Adapted from Thom M. Schuman's Lectionary Liturgies, lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com.