

**Fourth Sunday in Advent  
December 20, 2020  
Living Faith Lutheran Church  
Davis Bay, BC**

*One of the themes of the four Sundays in Advent is “waiting”—waiting with hope and longing for the coming into the world of the Light of the World. Although it has a rather subdued tone (much of Advent music is written in the minor key), it is not a penitential season as is Lent. The colour of Advent, royal blue, is the colour of hope. The use of the Advent wreath and the lighting of one (more) candle each Sunday encourages us as we wait. Advent’s Prayers of the Day all begin with the words: “Stir up. . .” In other words, while we wait in the gathering darkness, we ask God to “stir up” within us the confidence and trust we need to sustain us. That cry for God’s sometimes comforting and sometimes “awe-some” presence to be “stirred up within us” is particularly relevant in these days of the pandemic while we wait—yet not for yesterday, but for tomorrow; not for the return of the “old world/old normal/old ways” but for the promised arrival or coming or “in-breaking” of a “new world/new kingdom/new reign”.*

**Preservice Music/Welcome/Announcements**

***Order for Confession and Forgiveness***

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, Love from the beginning,  
Word made flesh, Breath of heaven. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sinfulness before God and one another,  
trusting in God’s endless mercy and love.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Merciful God, **we confess that we are not perfect.**

**We have said and done things we regret.**

**We have tried to earn your redeeming grace, while denying it to others.**

**We have resisted your call to be your voice in the world.**

**Forgive us, loving God. Give us your righteousness,  
the strength to put aside our failures, and the courage to try again. Amen.**

Dear people of God, hear the good news: Christ the Savior is born!  
You are loved and forgiven in the name of † Jesus, who has come among us.  
You are freed from proving that you deserve to be loved,  
because God’s love is given to you as the most precious gift of all.  
Rejoice in this love and share it with the world. **Amen.**

**GATHERING**

***Gathering Song***      **#257 “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”**      **vv. 1-4**

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

### ***Refrain***

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

- 2 O come, O Wisdom from on high, embracing all things far and nigh:  
in strength and beauty come and stay; teach us your will and guide our way. *Refrain*
- 3 O come, O come, O Lord of might, as to your tribes on Sinai's height  
in ancient times you gave the law in cloud, and majesty, and awe. *Refrain*
- 4 O come, O Branch of Jesse, free your own from Satan's tyranny;  
from depths of hell your people save, and give them vict'ry o'er the grave. *Refrain*

### ***Greeting***

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
and the constant company of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. **And also with you.**

### ***Prayer of the Day***

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that would obstruct your mercy, that willingly we may bear your redeeming love to all the world, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## **WORD**

*The response to the first two lessons is "Thanks be to God"*

### ***First Reading*** 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, <sup>2</sup>the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." <sup>3</sup>Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

<sup>4</sup>But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: <sup>5</sup>Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? <sup>6</sup>I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. <sup>7</sup>Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" <sup>8</sup>Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; <sup>9</sup>and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. <sup>10</sup>And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, <sup>11</sup>from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. <sup>16</sup>Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

### ***Lighting of the Advent wreath***

We praise you, O God, for this wheel of time that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent. As we light the candles on this wreath, open our eyes to see your presence in the lowly ones of this earth. Enlighten us with your grace, that we may sing of your advent among us in the Word made flesh. Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near. **Amen.** *4 Candles are lit*

### ***Second Reading***      **Romans 16:25-27**

<sup>25</sup>Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages  
<sup>26</sup>but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith —  
<sup>27</sup>to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

***Gospel Acclamation***    **Let your steadfast love come to us, O Lord.  
Save us as you promised; we will trust your word.**

*The response to the announcement of the Gospel is **Glory to you, O Lord.**  
The response after the reading of the Gospel is **Praise to you, O Christ.***

### ***Holy Gospel***              **Luke 1:26-38**

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth,  
<sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."  
<sup>29</sup>But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.  
<sup>31</sup>And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.  
<sup>32</sup>He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup>He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." <sup>34</sup>Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup>The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. <sup>36</sup>And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. <sup>37</sup>For nothing will be impossible with God." <sup>38</sup>Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

### ***Sermon***

***Hymn of the Day***      **#265    "The Angel Gabriel From Heaven Came"**

*The melody for this hymn is on the following page for those at home who wish to sing along (and can read music)*

## The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came



1 The an - gel Ga - bri - el from heav - en came,  
 2 "For know a bless - ed moth - er thou shalt be,  
 3 Then gen - tle Mar - y meek - ly bowed her head;  
 4 Of her, Em - man - u - el, the Christ, was born



with wings as drift - ed snow, with eyes as flame:  
 all gen - er - a - tions laud and hon - or thee;  
 "To me be as it pleas - eth God," she said.  
 in Beth - le - hem all on a Christ - mas morn,



"All hail to thee, O low - ly maid - en Mar - y,  
 thy son shall be Em - man - u - el, by seers fore - told,  
 "My soul shall laud and mag - ni - fy God's ho - ly name."  
 and Chris - tian folk through - out the world will ev - er say:



most high - ly fa - vored la - dy."  
 most high - ly fa - vored la - dy." Glo - ri - a!  
 Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy,  
 "Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy."

Text: Basque carol: para. Sabine Baring-Gould, 1834–1924  
 Music: GABRIEL'S MESSAGE, Basque carol

### *Affirmation of Faith*

We are called to proclaim the truth and let us believe:  
 It is not true that this world and its people  
 are doomed to die and to be lost.

**This is true: I have come that they may have life in all its abundance.**

It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and destruction.

**This is true: The deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, the poor are hearing the good news.**

It is not true that violence and hatred should have the last word and that war and destruction have come to stay forever.

**This is true: Death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more.**

It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of evil who seek to rule the world.

**This is true: The Lord whom we seek will suddenly come to the temple; the Lord is like a refining fire.**

It is not true that our dreams of liberation, of human dignity, are not meant for this earth and for this history.

**This is true: It is already time for us to wake from sleep. For the night is far gone; and the day is at hand.**

*Affirmation of Faith: Alan Boesak as quoted by Janet Morley, ed. "Bread for Tomorrow"*

### ***Prayers of Intercession***

Keeping awake as we watch for Christ, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence.*

Hear your church, O God, as we pray for all who belong to Jesus Christ. Where the church is scorned, preserve it; where it is privileged, grant it humility; where it is separated, bind it together; where it feels lost or weary, comfort and uphold it.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Hear your earth, O God, as we pray for its healing and care. Protect the grapevine and the mighty cedar, the mountains and seas and all that is in them. Give life, that all life may call on your name. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Hear the nations, O God, as we pray for those who hold power and authority over people and lands. Help those who create and uphold good laws and those working to reform what is unjust, that the world might better reflect your grace. We especially pray for our Indigenous peoples across this country and around the world whose contributions are often forgotten, whose needs are neglected, whose welfare is overlooked, whose cries for justice go unheard, and whose gifts of the stewardship of the land are rejected.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Hear those in need, O God, as we pray for all who face uncertainty: refugees and immigrants, those who are imprisoned, and those without work, housing, food, or health care. Bring good news to all in need of hope. Particularly do we bring to your mercy-seat these sisters and brothers: Randi, who mourns her husband; Kathy, who grieves the loss of her father; for Bishop Greg and his extended family who mourn a brother, husband, father and son; for Helen and Maggie who are dying; for Bud and Brenda, Erika and Rikki, Walter and Tory, Al and Linda, Sharon and Steinar, Merv and Marlene, Marianne and Inez, Gwen and Ed, Pam and Dorothy, Ingrid and Albert, Evelyn and Elisabeth, Phil and Brett, Lanny and Karen, and those we name now aloud or in the silence of our hearts. . . Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Hear this community of faith, O God, as we pray for families and friends who gather this season, and at this time, not as in the past but as they and we are able, and for those who will work or serve others this Christmas and not able to be with those they love. Let the peace of Emmanuel, God-with-us, shine in every heart. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Hear all who mourn, O God, as we remember the lives of our beloved dead: Karsten, Bob, Jonathan. . .and those we remember and cherish whose names we speak now in silence or aloud. *(Pause for a time of silence)* Encourage the living to learn from our ancestors in faith as we follow your call. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You hear the cries of our hearts, O Lord. Fill us with hopeful expectation, that in each day and hour we may love and serve our neighbors, in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

### ***Sharing of the Peace***

*A musical reflection will be played while the table is set*

### ***Offering Prayer***

Gracious God, you came to us as one unknown, bringing joy and salvation to the earth. Nourish us at your banquet table, that with all who welcome your birth we may proclaim your peace, revealed in Jesus Christ, our Saviour. **Amen.**

## **MEAL**

### ***The Opening Dialogue***

The Lord is with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to our God.**

Let us give thanks to the God of grace. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

### ***A Prayer of Thanksgiving over the gifts***

Holy God, Creator of all and Source of life,

at the birth of time your word brought light into the world.

In the fullness of time, you sent your Word, born of Mary,

to shine in our darkness and to make us your daughters and sons.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;  
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:  
This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people  
for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his birth and life among us, his death and resurrection,  
we await his coming again when all things will be restored in him.

By your Spirit bless us and this bread and cup, that, held and nourished by you,  
we may live as your children, shining with the light of your Son.

Through him all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,  
in your holy Church, both now and forever. **Amen**

Fraction (*Breaking of the Bread*)

The gifts of God for you, the beloved people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

*Invitation to share in this foretaste of the feast to come*

Love has come: God's love for all people. Come and eat, for Christ invites you.

*A Song during the Meal* #258 "*Unexpected and Mysterious*" (Tune: #254)

- 1 Unexpected and mysterious is the gentle word of grace.  
Ever-loving and sustaining is the peace of God's embrace.  
If we falter in our courage and we doubt what we have known,  
God is faithful to console us as a mother tends her own.
- 2 In a momentary meeting of eternity and time,  
Mary learned that she would carry both the mortal and divine.  
Then she learned of God's compassion, of Elizabeth's great joy,  
and she ran to greet the woman who would recognize her boy.
- 3 We are called to ponder myst'ry and await the coming Christ,  
to embody God's compassion for each fragile human life.  
God is with us in our longing to bring healing to the earth,  
while we watch with joy and wonder for the promised Savior's birth.

*Prayer after the Meal*

We give you thanks, gracious God, that you have once again fed us from your very self  
with the body and blood of Christ. Through this mystery, send us forth to proclaim your promise  
to a world in need, through the same Jesus Christ, our Saviour. **Amen.**

## **Blessing**

Almighty God, who sent the Holy Spirit to Mary, proclaimed joy through the angels, sent the shepherds with good news, and led the magi by a star, bless you now, this day, ✠ through the Word made flesh. **Amen.**

## **Sending Hymn. “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” vv. 5-8**

5. O come, O Key of David, come, and open wide our heav'nly home;  
make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery. *Refrain*
- 6 O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer; O Sun of justice, now draw near.  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadow put to flight. *Refrain*
- 7 O come, O King of nations, come, O Cornerstone that binds in one:  
refresh the hearts that long for you; restore the broken, make us new. *Refrain*
- 8 O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,  
that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear. *Refrain*

## **Postlude**

### **Dismissal**

Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus. **Thanks be to God.**

*In Luke's first words about Mary, she sounds unflappable. In most scripture stories, a visit from an angel provokes terror, but when the angel Gabriel appears to Mary, she isn't scared. She's curious. Even when the angel delivers the astonishing news that she will become pregnant with the Son of the Most High God whose glorious kingdom will never end, her response is a simple question: "How can this be?"*

*The angel reminds her that God's powerful Spirit works in mysterious ways. Anything is possible with God! That's all the explanation Mary needs. "Here I am," she declares. She is God's servant, and she is up for the task. What courage it must have taken to say yes!*

*Mary found strength in the knowledge that she was not alone. The first thing the angel said to her was: "The Lord is with you" (Luke 1:28). Mary knew that she was held in God's presence even before she understood what lay ahead of her. She was "favoured" by God, seen and known and loved. Whatever future she was called into, she could trust the one who led her. That faith is the foundation for Mary's "Yes."*

*Like Mary, we, too, are servants of the Most High God, who calls us into "ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, pp. 304, 317). Even when we don't feel quite as composed as Mary, we can trust in the same promise she did: we are loved by the God who makes impossible things possible and goes with us into whatever our futures hold. From sundaysandseasons.com*