

## *Second Sunday in Advent* December 6, 2020

(If you are home read the prayers and scripture readings and recite the Creed aloud, even if you are by yourself, in order to hear with the ears each one. Sing or read the final hymn aloud. If you are worshipping in person, please follow along silently.)

**Prepare for worship:** Sit in silence or with soft music for a few moments

**Call to Worship:** *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel v.1*

O come, O come, Emanuel, 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.

From *The United Methodist Hymnal* Copyright 1989 The United Methodist Publishing House, 211

**Centering Words:**

A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

From *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. Copyright 1992 The United Methodist Publishing House. (241)

**Lighting the Advent Candle:**

Read Mark 1:4

We light this candle as a symbol of Christ the Way. May the Word sent from God through the prophets lead us to the way of salvation, O come, O come, Emmanuel.

From *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. Copyright 1992 The United Methodist Publishing House. (262)

**Prayer of the Day:**

We pray that someday an arrow will be broken, not in something or someone, but by each of humankind, to indicate peace, not violence. Someday, oneness with creation, rather than dominion over creation, will be the goal to be respected. Someday fearlessness to love and make a difference will be experienced by all people. Then the eagle will carry our prayer for peace and love, and the people of the red, white, yellow, brown and black communities can sit in the same circle together to communicate in love and experience the presence of the Great Mystery in their midst. Someday can be today for you and me. In the name of the Prince of Peace who taught us to pray:

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**The 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass 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.

**Affirmation of Faith:** Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

**Prayer of Illumination:**

Open our ears that we may hear and our hearts and minds that we may receive your word O Lord our rock and redeemer.

(After each reading take two to three minutes to reflect upon the meaning of the passage to you today.)

Psalm 85: 1-2, 8-13

Epistle Reading 2 Peter 3:8-15a

Gospel Reading Mark 1:1-8

Special Music

Old Testament Reading Isaiah 40: 1-11

Sermon *Preparing the Way*

**Hymn:** *Heralds of Christ*

1. Heralds of Christ, who bear the King's commands,  
immortal tidings in your mortal hands,  
pass on and carry swift the news you bring;  
make straight, make straight the highway of the King.
2. Through desert ways, dark fen, and deep morass,  
through jungles, sluggish seas, and mountain pass,  
build now the road, and falter not, nor stay;  
prepare across the earth the King's highway.
3. Lord, give us faith and strength the road to build,  
to see the promise of the day fulfilled,  
when war shall be no more, and strife shall cease  
upon the highway of the Prince of Peace.

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**Benediction:**

Live in such a way that you await and hasten the coming day of God- the day of love and faithfulness, the day of righteousness and peace. Go now in the confidence that all things are possible. Amen.

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**Response:** *God Be with You till We Meet Again*  
 God be with you till we meet again;  
 by his counsels guide, uphold you,  
 with his sheep securely fold you;  
 God be with you till we meet again.

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### *Leading in Worship Today*

Pastor: *John D. Jordan* AV Assistant: *K. C. Warble*  
 Church Musician: *Christopher A. McCroskey*

**“AS MEMBERS OF THIS CONGREGATION, WE WILL FAITHFULLY PARTICIPATE IN ITS MINISTRIES BY OUR PRAYERS...”**

Francis Hipp	Steve Aiello	Patsy Shuler	John Ballentine	Oren Edwards
Jimmy Grahl	Steve White	Esther Carter	Latson Lewis	Ellen Matthews
George Taylor				

**Shut-Ins:** Shirley Butler; Sara Efron; Carolyn Hardee; Francis & Gillett Hipp; June Hutto; Georgeann Pace; Shirley Padgett; Jean Raynor; Grover Shuler; Claudia Sineath; Wayne Tallon; Irvin Wells

**Family and Friends:** **Ruby Pennington** (*friend of Laurie Knapp*); **Rick Baldwin** (*nephew of Tommy Johnson*); **Iris Turlington** (*aunt of John Zeigler*); **Billy & Betty Jean Newton** (*brother and sister-in-law of Mary Kamoroff*); **Ellen Smith** (*sister-in-law of Dee Senn*); **Jimmy Brooks** (*Brother-in-law of Boots Morgan*); **Norman Hodges**; **Tonya Spires** (*friend of the Derricks*); **Linda Hargett** (*stepmom of Christopher McCroskey*); **Ollie Shelly** (*friend of the Derricks*); **Brenlee Carnes**; **Danielle Spotts** (*co-worker of Kathy White*); **Vickie Edwards** (*neighbor of Kathy White*); **Vicki Beatty, Connie Mason, Brenda Grier** (*friends of Lynn Martin*); **Allen & Lisa Fort, Brittany Jordan** (*cousins & niece of the Jordans*); **David Price & Family, Angela Forand, Ty Moore, Julie Stroud, Fran Huck, George Dorn** (*friends of Kay Jordan*); **Tammy Simmons** (*niece of John Zeigler*); **Teddy Derrick** (*uncle of Arvan Derrick*); **Haidee Baehr** (*friends of Ruth Frady*); **Dianne Schmotzer** (*sister-in-law of Gale Frady*); **Denise Paul** (*cousin of Gale Frady*); **Billy Johnson, Max Johnson, Beth Branham** (*friends of Gale Frady*); **Chloe Majors** (*grandniece of Jeanette Hornsby*); **Ray Culbreth’s Group House**; **Nellie Gantt** (*mother of friend of Ray Culbreth*); **Amelia Zinski** (*great-niece of Linda Maloch*); **Wayne Blair** (*son of Dot Johnson*); **Xavier Crane** (*grandnephew of John Ballentine*); **Charles & Vera Von Glahn** (*brother & sister-in-law of Jo Ann Heiting*); **Michael Carter** (*son of Esther Carter*); **Adam Lavender** (*son of Phil Lavender*)

**OUR PRESENCE ...**

**In-Person Attendance 11/30 Worship: 16**

**OUR GIFTS ...**

**General Fund 11/30 \$ 1,535.00**

**OUR SERVICE ...**

**OUR WITNESS.”**



<b>Ministers</b>	<b>The Congregation</b>
<b>Pastor</b>	<b>John D. Jordan</b>
<b>Resident Bishop</b>	<b>Jonathan Holston</b>
<b>District Superintendent</b>	<b>Rev. Dr. Cathy Jamieson</b>

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***Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.***

***Our vision is to Connect, Nurture, Inspire and Transform***



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## Isaiah 40: 1-11

Prepare the way of the LORD. We see this phrase from Isaiah quoted in our Gospel reading today. In the Gospel, it is John the Baptizer in the wilderness preaching repentance to prepare the way for the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. This, of course, is Jesus.

We prepare for the coming of Jesus in this season of Advent with special additions to our service, like lighting the Advent candles. In normal times we would have special services. We may use a specific Advent devotional book for our daily devotions. We decorate our homes with symbols of Christmas. We may donate to charities. We buy gifts for others. We prepare for the coming of Jesus.

Though Christians may tend to read the passage from Isaiah as pointing to Jesus, it is actually pointing to God coming to restore Israel. The passage was written during the Babylonian exile and begins the section of the book of Isaiah that scholars refer to as Second Isaiah or Isaiah of the exile. At this point, the tenor of the book changes from prophesying destruction to prophesying restoration.

The Hebrew word translated as way literally means road. A road is to be prepared for the LORD. On this road the glory of the LORD will be revealed to all flesh, all humankind. The LORD will be revealed to all of humanity.

How does this revelation take place? How is this road for the LORD prepared?

The road begins as the passage begins, with comfort. The Hebrew word for comfort, *nacham*, actually has a double meaning. It can mean comfort but can also mean repent. In this case, to repent emphasizes the turning to a positive course of action. With the use of *nacham* meaning comfort, we must think of comfort as being derived from com, meaning with, and fort, meaning strength. To comfort is to give strength. When you comfort someone who is hurting, you give them strength to go through the hurt. So, as we consider the dualistic meaning of *nacham*, it is having the strength to take a different course of action, a positive course of action. So, the road begins with the strength to take a different course of action.

Our road to seeing the glory of the LORD begins as we turn to a different course of action. The LORD gives us the strength to change course, to turn from our negative course to a positive course, which is The LORD's course.

In the context of Isaiah it is not the Israelites who are repenting, it is the LORD who is repenting. Now we tend to think of repenting a something we should do. We turn away from sin and to God. In Hebrew that meaning of repent, as turning around, is a different word, *shub*. *Nacham* is the LORD changing direction. Israel has been punished for its sin of turning from the LORD. Their cities and temple have been destroyed and they have been taken into exile. She has paid her penalty. She has served her time and her sin has been atoned. Now the LORD is going to bring Israel back to the holy mountain, Zion.

Why would the LORD change course of action? Why would the LORD lead Israel, which turned from the LORD and began worshipping other gods, back to the holy mountain? Why would the LORD reveal divine glory to them? The answer is simple, "the word of our God will stand forever."

The LORD's promises are everlasting. The LORD always keeps the promises. The Lord promised the land to Israel. The LORD promised that the redeemed would return to Zion. Even though Israel was punished, she was restored. She was freed from exiled and the redeemed Israel returned to Zion. The LORD made that promise and the LORD's promise stands forever. Israel has paid the penalty for turning away from the LORD and now the LORD is going to bring Israel back to Zion according to the LORD's promise.

Preparing the way of the LORD, the road to the revelation of the LORD's glory, consists of repentance and comfort, atonement, and restoration. We begin to prepare the way of the LORD by repenting, *shub*. We confess our sin and turn from our sinful life toward the LORD. As we turn to the LORD, the LORD repents, *nacham*, and the course of our lives changes. The LORD provides us with the strength to change from a negative course to a positive course. The LORD provides strength to let go of all negativity: all negative thoughts, attitudes, speech, and actions that might harm others or ourselves. The LORD provides strength to be positive in our thoughts, attitudes, speech and actions in the face of the world's negativity.

This change doesn't usually happen all at once. Even after we repent, we may fall back into old patterns but the LORD continues to provide strength for us to continue to change. It may take a lifetime, and some therapy, to completely let go of all negativity, but the LORD always provides the strength to do so.

As we repent and receive the comfort and strength the LORD provides, we receive atonement. The LORD lets us know that the punishment for our sin has been paid. For Israel this was the exile in Babylon. For us, our atonement is paid by the birth of a baby in a small village outside Jerusalem. A baby who will, as a man, be hung on a cross. The LORD provides the payment for the penalty for our sins through the death of Jesus. The LORD pays the penalty for our sins and redeems us from the state of sin.

We are then restored into the LORD's presence. We become able to see the LORD's glory in ways we had not before. We can see the beauty of a dandelion, the butter yellow flower, the puff ball of the seed, and how it provides for pollinators. We still may not want it in our lawn but we can appreciate its beauty. We can see how the LORD is working even in the most horrific situations. We see the LORD working through the doctors and nurses in the ICU that are overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients but still giving the best care and comfort they can. We can see the LORD's glory in everything and we are drawn closer to the glory of the LORD.

We repent. We are strengthened. Our punishment is paid. We are restored. This is how we prepare the way of the LORD. This is how we prepare the road that leads us to the glory of the LORD.

But we do not prepare this road to the glory of the LORD just for ourselves. Isaiah says that the glory of the LORD shall be revealed and seen by all people. For Isaiah this would mean that all people would see the LORD restoring Israel, with the holy city and temple rebuilt. For us today this means that all people throughout the world will see the glory of the LORD and all people will turn to the LORD. Then creation will be restored to the LORD.

We prepare the way for the LORD to be revealed to others as we live out our relationship with the LORD in our relationship with others. As we eliminate negative thoughts, attitudes, speech and behaviors, we create an atmosphere of positivity around ourselves. We tend to be attracted to people that are positive.

Thus, as we remain on the path to the glory of the LORD, we attract others to follow that same path. We prepare the way of the LORD to be revealed to others through us.

We prepare the way of the LORD. We prepare by repenting, then receiving strength to change from the negative course of the world to the positive course of the LORD. The punishment for our sins has been paid by Jesus. We are restored to the glory of the LORD. We prepare the way for others to see the glory of the LORD until the day when the glory of the LORD is seen by all humanity.