



# Johnsville United Methodist Church

Union Bridge, MD

Our mission is to nurture the members of the congregation in developing a personal relationship with God and to share His word and His love with the larger community.

PRAISE, WORSHIP AND CELEBRATION

First Sunday in Advent

November 28, 2021

PRELUDE

“My Lord, What a Morning”

WELCOME

Opening Hymn

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

UMH 211

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

**Refrain**

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

2. O come, thou wisdom from on high,  
and order all things far and nigh;  
to us the path of knowledge show  
and cause us in her ways to go.

**Refrain**

3. O come, O come, great Lord of might,  
who to thy tribes on Sinai's height  
in ancient times once gave the law  
In cloud and majesty and awe.

**Refrain**

4. O come, thou Root of Jesse's tree,  
an ensign of thy people be;  
before thee rulers silent fall;  
all peoples on thy mercy call.

**Refrain**

5. O come, thou Key of David, come,  
and open wide our heavenly home.  
The captives from their prison free,  
And conquer death's deep misery.

**Refrain**

6. O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer  
our spirits by thy justice here;  
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
and death's dark shadows put to flight.

**Refrain**

7. O come, Desire of nations bind  
all peoples in one heart and mind.  
From dust thou brought us forth to life;  
Deliver us from earthly strife.

**Refrain**

Call to Worship (Jeremiah 33, 1 Thessalonians 3, Luke 21)

Leader: People of faith, prepare for the coming reign of Christ!

**People: As we gather to pray and sing and listen, a spirit of anticipation and hope fills us.**

Leader: The days are surely coming, says Our God, when justice and righteousness will prevail.

**People: May our worship illuminate our hearts and minds, freeing us to respond joyfully to God's call in the days to come.**

Opening Prayer (Psalm 25, 1 Thessalonians 3, Luke 21)

**Holy Source of life and hope, as we come together this day, open our ears to hear, open our eyes to see, and open our hearts to love, that we may come to know your ways and follow your paths. Help us grow in love for one another, and for all creation, as we prepare for the coming of the one who calls us to turn from our false gods to you, Holy One, the true source of our salvation. Amen.**

### **Lighting of the Advent Candle**

Expectation of Hope

Scripture: Jeremiah 33:14-16 "The days are coming, 'declares the LORD, 'when I will fulfill the good promise I made to the people of Israel and Judah. In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior."

Candle Lighting: Today, we light the candle of expectation and hope. May it remind each and everyone one of us of God's great promise to us. He is our hope, He is our Redeemer, and He is Savior.

**Prayer: Father, during the Advent season may we be reminded of your promises to us and your fulfillment of them. Help us to prepare our lives for His Advent within us. In the precious name of Jesus we pray. Amen**

Special Music

### **PRAYER OF INTERCESSION**

Your season comes, Lord. Come once again, and feed your flock like a shepherd. Come once again, and gather up the children, the oppressed, the sick, the lonely, the humble, and the rejected of the earth. Turn our hearts to the least of your children. For if we lose, we become lost. Reconcile us to you and to those we have hurt. At this advent, join us together with neighbors, with strangers, and especially with our own household. Bring us to your light in our time of darkness, through your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **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.

1. 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.
2. 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.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle Lesson: 1Thessalonians 3:9-13

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? <sup>10</sup>Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. <sup>12</sup>And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. <sup>13</sup>And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Gospel Lesson: Luke 21:25-36

'There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. <sup>26</sup>People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>27</sup>Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in a cloud" with power and great glory. <sup>28</sup>Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.'

29 Then he told them a parable: 'Look at the fig tree and all the trees; <sup>30</sup>as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. <sup>31</sup>So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. <sup>32</sup>Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. <sup>33</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

34 'Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, <sup>35</sup>like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. <sup>36</sup>Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.'

Leader: This is the word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God!**

Today is first Sunday in Advent. And it begins a new liturgical calendar year. This next year the majority of the gospel lessons will come from the Book of Luke. This will give a more radical view of Jesus’ ministry.

This year for the season of Advent, and the season of Christmas, I will be using a book called, *Stories behind the Great Traditions of Christmas*, by Ace Collins, in addition to our scripture lessons to assist us with deeper meanings for the seasons. This week will look at various traditions of Advent. (Chapter 1, Advent; *Stories behind the Great Traditions of Christmas*, by Ace Collins.)

Advent was officially established as a season, by church leaders, in the sixth century. Advent means “coming” or “arrival.” Because Advent comes before Christmas, there is a common misunderstanding that Advent is a time to look forward the birth of the Christ child. Advent is a time that we look forward to Christ’s second coming. Our focus is looking forward to Christ coming again as unexpectedly as Christ came the first time as a tiny infant child. It was originally a time when converts to the faith prepared for baptism. It is still a time that every soul looks forward to the rebirth of Jesus within their hearts. This is a season of celebration of the hope that God will bring an end to the ways of the world that are contrary to God’s will, and God’s ways.

Advent is a time of spiritual preparation, self-examination and spiritual growth. We are called to get ourselves ready for Christ’s second coming. We use Advent calendars, Advent candles, and various family symbols to mark the days up to Christmas. Collins attributes the Vikings with beginning the Advent wreath. The days were short, cold, and winter is a long season, lighting candles for each week in Advent, marked the time of celebrating when the light of Christ came into the world. In northern Europe, the winters are so harsh that they are bare of living vegetation with the exception of fir trees, or evergreens. Evergreen became a symbol of faith as faith lives on in challenging times. In those areas the evergreen was added to the Advent candle to represent faith in the midst of candles lit for HOPE, PEACE, JOY, and LOVE.

The tradition spread across Europe, and then the Christ candle was added for Christmas Eve. The colors of the candles have varied through time. The most common colors have been purple, red, and white for the Christ candle. The candles were commonly burned or used up to mark a week at a time. Many traditions include prayers for each day when the candles are lit. Many churches placed other meanings for the candles. Collins shared:

“Usually the first candle represented the prophets who predicted the coming of Jesus. The second candle represented the Bible and its message. The third candle came to stand for Jesus’ mother Mary and her acceptance of her mission. On the final Sunday of Advent, a candle was lit for John the Baptist, the man who told the world that a Savior would be coming soon. Most churches that participated in this practice had a candle that stood in the middle of the other four. This candle was lit on Christmas Day and stood for Jesus.”

Using our lectionary readings, the prophets prophesy is shared weekly. We share the biblical message of Christ, and Mary’s acceptance of mission.

One of the newest Advent traditions of marking time is the Advent calendars. It is believed that they started with German roots. Germany is the first country attributed as celebrating Christmas a children's holiday, before the rest of the world made this shift. The Advent wreath, without candles was hung on the wall. Bags of treats were hidden inside the wreath marking time until the gift giving of Christmas. We can find Advent calendars today that contain scripture readings leading up to Christmas, shifting the focus back to a time of spiritual preparation.

This is a good year to examine why we do what we do during the season of preparation of waiting for Christ to come again. We do not know the hour time or the place when Christ will return to judge the quick and the dead. The gospel text from Luke 21 says, "There will be signs in the sun, the moon and the stars . . ." This text warns that the signs are apart in the natural disasters from the roaring seas, waves, and the earth will be shaken. It is so easy for us to hear the gospel message each year and say, "Yeah, I hear that every year and the end has not come. So what?"

This is the time of the year when we come to the end of our calendar year. And it is a time that we come to visit the possibility of the end of time as we know it. Ace Collins shared in his book:

"To the early Christians, three different meanings were to be found in the days of Advent, or the days of coming. The first was the coming of the Son of God to earth in human form as the babe in the manger. The second was the coming of Jesus into the lives, hearts, and actions of those who accepted him as their Savior. The third was the future coming when Jesus will return to earth as a king. As times changed and the world came to view Christmas in terms of the baby Jesus and not the role he will play in his future kingdom, the meaning of Advent changed as well." (Page 2)

During this time of preparation, it is also a time of discernment for getting our souls in an upright, and blameless position before the Lord. We are to be about the work of our Lord and Savior. This is a time of giving to help those who are in need, as that is the work of the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13 says, "11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. 12And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. 13And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints." May the symbols of the season help us to grow in our faith, and actions of our faith in Jesus Christ that we will be instruments of Christ's peace, hope, love, and joy to a world in need of his grace. Amen.

## OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS TO GOD

DOXOLOGY

"Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow"

UMH 94

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below:  
Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Praise God, the source of all our gifts!  
Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!  
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit!  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

**Offering Prayer (Luke 21)**

**Giver of all good things, as we offer these gifts to you, open our eyes to see more clearly all that we have been given and all that we have to give. Stretch our capacity to give of ourselves: our love, our companionship, and our material resources, wherever they are needed. Amen.**

Closing Hymn

“Soon and Very Soon”

UMH 706

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| <p>1. Soon and very soon,<br/>we are going to see the King; (Hallelujah!)<br/>soon and very soon,<br/>we are going to see the King; (Hallelujah!)<br/>soon and very soon,<br/>we are going to see the King.<br/>Hallelujah! Hallelujah!<br/>We're going to see the King.</p> | <p>2. No more dying there,<br/>we are going to see the King; (Hallelujah!)<br/>No more dying there,<br/>we are going to see the King. (Hallelujah!)<br/>no more dying there,<br/>We are going to see the King.<br/>Hallelujah! Hallelujah!<br/>We're going to see the King.</p> |
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3. No more crying there,  
we are going to see the King; (Hallelujah!)  
no more crying there,  
we are going to see the King; (Hallelujah!)  
no more crying there,  
we are going to see the King.  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!  
We're going to see the King.

**BENEDICTION**

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. GO in grace, to walk in the light. Amen.

**POSTLUDE**

“Near to the Heart of God”