

Aldersgate United Methodist Church

December 24, 2023
Fourth Sunday of Advent



*“Greetings, favored one!
The Lord is with you!”*

Luke 1:28, NRSV

9:30 a.m.

With Pastor John Goldrich serving
Newman U.M. Church
Song Leaders: Dan & Kara Steward
Videographer: Nancy Taylor
Greeter/Usher: Dave & Colleen Nielsen

Ministers: All of Aldersgate’s Members
Pastor: Joseph Rafique
Director of Music: Julie Clopper-Smith
Keyboardist : Deanna Steward
Digital Media Specialist: Nancy Taylor
Administrative Assistant: Stacey Lienemann
Child Care Attendant: Katie Softley
Custodian: Scott Hoyt
Fellowship Host: Nelda Boswell

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*Worshippers are welcomed to use their own terminology for God.
If you are considering membership, please contact our pastor, 402-489-1510.*



Greeting and Announcements (*Joseph*)

Music for Centering Prayer

“Emmanuel Comes” — arr. Mark Hayes

Lighting the Advent Wreath (*Joseph*)

Uncontainable, irrepressible, bubbling up in an explosion of energy; what the weary long for, what children often embody, what makes the Divine smile — joy. It cannot be paid for but is a priceless treasure. As we hope for your arrival, as we pray for peace, as we look for love, as we wonder how you might reveal yourself to us, God, give us joy in your Advent.

Hymn #2090 (black, vs. 4)

“Light the Advent Candle”

Light the Advent candle, four: Think of joy forever more,
Christ child in a stable born, gift of love that Christmas morn.
Candle, candle, burning bright, shining in the cold winter night;
candle, candle, burning bright, fill our hearts with Christmas light.

WORDS and MUSIC: © 1975 Mary Lu Walker

Call to Worship (*Joseph*)

LEADER: Come apart to this place of rest and renewal. Let your spirits rejoice in the presence of God.

ALL: **We will sing of God’s steadfast love for all people. We will proclaim God’s faithfulness to all generations.**

LEADER: God looks with favor on the humble and lowly. God’s covenant does not focus on rank and position.

ALL: **God strengthens those who are weak. The proud are scattered in the thoughts of their hearts.**

LEADER: Blessed are those who walk in God’s light. Blessed are all who say ‘yes’ to God’s call.

ALL: **Let the heavens proclaim the wonders of God. Let all the earth rejoice in Christ’s coming.**

Opening Prayer (*Joseph*)

LEADER: Like a deer thirsty for running water, we bring our spiritual thirst and hungers to this place, O God, hoping and praying for our thirst to be quenched and hunger satisfied. We bring our weariness, expecting to find rest for our souls. We bring our dullness, asking that we might be alerted to those things that you consider important.

ALL: **We come because we want the scattered fragments of our lives to come together in a meaningful wholeness. You have promised to be with us. Reveal yourself to us here, we pray in the name of Jesus who came to deliver us and be our Savior. Amen.**

Hymn #211 (red, read vs. 5-7, sing refrain)

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emanuel 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.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

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.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

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.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

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.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

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.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

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.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

WORDS: 9th cent. Latin; trans. Henry Sloane Coffin, 1916; *The Hymnal*, 1940; Laurence Hull Stookey, 1986

MUSIC: 15th cent. French; arr. and harm. by Thomas Helmore, 1854

Sts. 1, 3, 5ab, 6cd, 7ab © 1940, 1943, renewed 1981 The Church Pension Fund;
trans. sts. 4, 5cd, 6ab, 7cd; © 1989 The United Methodist Publishing House

Prayer of Confession and Words of Affirmation (*John*)

PASTOR: The promises of God are meant for all to enjoy. Yet we have broken covenant and declared our independence from the Giver of life. Then, when we are brought down from the thrones of our pretension, we wonder why. Let us confess the sin that separates us from God's promises.

ALL: **Gracious God, in whom all things are possible, we confess that we have doubted what we cannot explain. We have sought strength and enjoyment apart from you. We have kept pride in ownership more than giving praise through stewardship. We have neglected to thank you, either in good times or when you have supported us during days of uncertainty. We have resisted the newness you offer. Forgive us, we pray, for installing ourselves as reigning deities. Lead us, rather, in paths of trust and obedience. Amen.**

PASTOR: God does not turn away from steadfast love, even when we are unfaithful. God's mercy is for all who humbly seek it. God fills the hungry with good things, but the rich are sent away empty. If we have chosen to receive forgiveness, we will understand God's pardon and live joyously within it. Amen.

ALL: **Amen.**

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer #895 (red, *John*)

PASTOR: Do you see the moon and the stars and say: What a marvel they are? And how their light sweeps across the sky and the earth? This should remind us that God is always here — even when we experience darkness in and around us. With this in mind, we pray.

God of comfort and promise, we pray for the brokenness of the world. For the hungry and the homeless, the disappointed and the angry. Bring them your healing and restoration. Help us be involved in creating communities that actively care for the broken. For this we say,

ALL: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

PASTOR: We pray for those who mourn and live with grief. We lift to you those discouragements your children have experienced this week. Discouragements in families, friendships, jobs, even discouragement in ourselves. May your word of hope be a calming presence and solace to your children. For this we say,

ALL: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

PASTOR: We pray of ourselves and for those with different hurts, worries, fears. We name them in our hearts now. (pause) Help us to trust you with them. May the Lord bring us comfort.
For this we say,

ALL: **Lord, hear our prayer**

PASTOR: We lift to you, O God, for relief, those who are on our prayer list and for joy, those who celebrate their birthday or wedding anniversary in the week to come. For this we say,

ALL: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

PASTOR: What prayer needs would you like to lift up? (pause)
For these and all our needs hidden in our hearts, we pray to the Lord.

ALL: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

PASTOR: Knowing and believing that the One who calls us is faithful, now and always, we trust these and all our prayers and say the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples:

ALL: **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.**

Hymn #214 (red)

“Savior of the Nations, Come”

Savior of the nations, come; Virgin's son, here make thy home!
Marvel now, O heaven and earth, that the Lord chose such a birth.

2. Not by human flesh and blood; by the Spirit of our God
was the Word of God made flesh, woman's offspring, pure and fresh.

3. Wondrous birth! O wondrous Child of the Virgin undefiled!
Human and divine in one, eager now his race to run!

4. God the Father is his source, back to God he runs his course;
down to death and hell descends, God's high throne he re-ascends.

5. Now thy manger's halo bright hallows night with newborn light;
let no night this light subdue, let our faith shine ever new.

WORDS: Sts. 1, 2 Martin Luther, 1523; Sts. 3-5 Martin L. Seltz, 1969; © 1969 Concordia Publishing House

MUSIC: *Enchiridion Oder Handbüchlein*, 1524

Word of God Proclaimed (*Joseph*)

II Samuel 7:1-11, 16

(Men — Angel, Women — Mary)

Luke 1:26-38 The Annunciation to Mary

JOSEPH: In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said,

MEN: *“Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.”*

JOSEPH: But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her,

MEN: *“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,*

ALL: **and you will name him Jesus.**

MEN: *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. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”*

JOSEPH: Mary said to the angel,
 WOMEN: How can this be, since I am a virgin?
 JOSEPH: The angel said to her,
 MEN: *“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.*
 JOSEPH: And now, Elizabeth in her old age, has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren.
 ALL: **For nothing will be impossible with God.”**
 JOSEPH: Then Mary said,
 ALL: **“Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”**
 JOSEPH: Then the angel departed from her. (written by Sunil Chandy)

Sermon (*John*)

“Nothing Is Impossible for God”

Offertory (*John*)

God gives us responsibilities in the church and the world to carry good news, to build and not destroy, to feed the hungry and house the homeless, to be faithful in all things. Our offerings are one sign of faithfulness and obedience.

“Christmas Lullaby” — John Turner

Doxology (to the tune of #95 red)

“Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow”

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise God, all creatures here below;
 praise God for all that love has done; Creator, Christ and Spirit, One. Amen.

MUSIC: attr. Louis Bourgeois, 1551

Prayer of Dedication of Gifts and Self (*John*)

PASTOR: Let us pray: Our best we give to you, loving God, for you have given your best to us in the mystery of the incarnation. May our offerings proclaim Jesus in ways that will be received with joy.

ALL: **Send your Word to the world in this season through our caring service. May we share it with one another in ways that help us all to grow. We are your servants like Mary and Joseph. The gifts we dedicate are always yours. Thank you for all the ways you have provided for us. Amen.**

Hymn #400 (red)

“Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing”

Come, thou Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace;
 streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise.
 Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above.
 Praise the mount! I’m fixed upon it, mount of thy redeeming love.

2. Here I raise mine Ebenezer; hither by thy help I’m come;
 and I hope, by thy good pleasure, safely to arrive at home.
 Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God;
 he, to rescue me from danger, interposed his precious blood.

3. O to grace how great a debtor daily I’m constrained to be!
 Let thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to thee.
 Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;
 here’s my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above.

WORDS: Robert Robinson, 1758

MUSIC: Wyeth’s *Repository of Sacred Music, Part Second*, 1813

Commissioning and Blessing (*Joseph*)

PASTOR: Inspired by God's presence, spread Advent good news. Strengthened by the gospel, go out to serve.

ALL: **Our spirits rejoice in the Savior's coming. Our lives are blessed by a merciful God.**

PASTOR: God has granted a beautiful earth for our home. God appoints us as caregivers of the land and its people.

ALL: **We are a covenant people, shaped by love. Wherever God sends us, we will go.**

PASTOR: God's steadfast love will go with us every day. We will know the strength of God's mighty hand.

ALL: **We will work with God to lift up the lowly. We will share good things with those who are hungry.**

PASTOR: Amen.

ALL: **Amen.**

(Thank you to those who have participated in today's worship. You are invited to stay and listen or leave as you wish.)

Postlude

"The Birthday of a King" — arr. Mark Hayes

(Parts of this liturgy have been taken from *Taught by Love* by Lavon Bayler)

Announcements

Today, December 24

Christmas Eve

- 9:30 a.m. Worship — Worship Center and online
<https://www.youtube.com/@aldersgateunitedmethodistc8463> or at your convenience at www.aldersgatelinc.org. You may also search YouTube for Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Lincoln, Nebraska
- 1-4:30 p.m. Living Nativity drive-through tour — 3B Homestead, 7603 298th St., Murdock. Stay in your car and listen to a podcast while viewing the animals
- 1:30 p.m. Virtual Fellowship — zoom
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/812243946?pwd=c1RSQUlOZjYrQjlyZHk0aTZvQzFMQT09>
Meeting ID: 812 243 946
Password: 021075
One tap mobile +12532158782,,812243946#,,1#,021075# US (Tacoma)
Dial by your location +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kcFkfw3laD>
- 7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Service — Worship Center and online



Thursday, December 28

National Card Playing Day

- 12:30 p.m. Worship & Prayer Service — Theater, Legacy Estates, 7200 Van Dorn

Friday, December 29

Still Need to Do Day

- 8:45 a.m. Take Off Pounds Sensibly — Room 4

Next Sunday, December 31

New Year's Eve

- 8:30 a.m. Hymn Sing — Worship Center and online
- 11:00 a.m. Hymn Sing — Worship Center
- 1:30 p.m. Virtual Fellowship — zoom
- 7:00 p.m. Abendmusik “New Year’s Eve Last Blast” — First Plymouth Church or Abendmusik.org/livestream. Celebrate with the entertaining and engaging Plymouth Brass and internationally-acclaimed guest organist Alcee Chriss. The freewill offering benefits the People’s City Mission.

Tuesday, January 2

- 11:30 a.m. Grand Generation — Stauffer’s Café, 5600 S. 48th St. Seniors fellowship over lunch ordered off the menu.
- 7:00 p.m. Earth Steward Ministry — Room 4

Wednesday, January 3

- 7:00 p.m. Book Club *The Other Mother* by Rachel M. Harper — Room 4

Friday, January 12

- 6:30 p.m. Friday Fling — Fellowship Hall. Bring a snack to share and enjoy the fellowship of playing cards, usually 10-Point Pitch.

Tuesday, January 16

- 7:00 p.m. Book Club *The Other Mother* by Rachel M. Harper — Room 4

Wednesday, January 17

- 1:30 p.m. Stitcheroos — Room 4. Tie quilts for mission.

Thursday, January 18

- 2:30 p.m. Care Ministry — Zoom. Share prayer concerns.

