

*Service of Word and Prayer:
Week Four—Darkness Holds God
Wednesday, December 22, 2021
Trinity Lutheran Church*

Greeting:

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, the love of Christ that guards our hearts and minds, and the joy and consolation of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

Advent Litany:

C: By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us.

P: The days are surely coming, says the Lord.

C: Instill in us a yearning to seek your presence in each other and in the rest of creation.

P: The days are surely coming, says the Lord.

C: Quicken us to help all people feel welcomed and supported.

P: The days are surely coming, says the Lord.

C: Rouse us to care for one another, friend and stranger alike.

P: The days are surely coming, says the Lord.

C: Inspire us to be your handiwork in the world.

P: The days are surely coming, says the Lord.

C: Fill us with a holy hunger for a just world where all life is fed.

P: The days are surely coming, says the Lord.

C: The days are surely coming, says the Lord.

P: Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your Son.

C: Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come!

Opening Prayer:

Stir up our hearts, O God, to prepare a pathway for your Christ. By his coming speak peace to your people and turn our hearts toward you, that your saving grace and splendid glory may dwell in all the earth; through Jesus Christ, whose day draws near. Amen.

Silence

Opening Song:

Wait for the Lord ELW 262 (5x thru)

**Wait for the Lord, whose day is near
Wait for the Lord, be strong take heart**

Scripture and Reflection:

Matthew 1:18-24

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

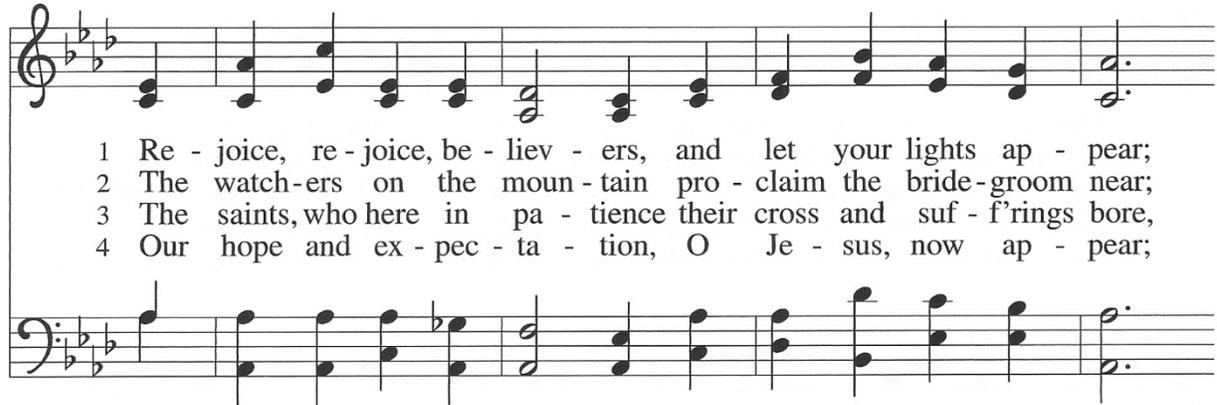
²³"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." ²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife,

The entire story of Jesus' birth is enveloped in darkness. The Sovereign of the universe is conceived, nourished, and protected in the dark safety of Mary's womb. An angel visits Joseph in a nighttime dream, easing his doubts and fears around this unexpected pregnancy. The shepherds receive word from angelic choirs by night that the Savior has been born; the magi are led to him by a bright evening star. And not long after his birth, Joseph and Mary flee under the protection of night to escape King Herod's slaughter of the innocents.

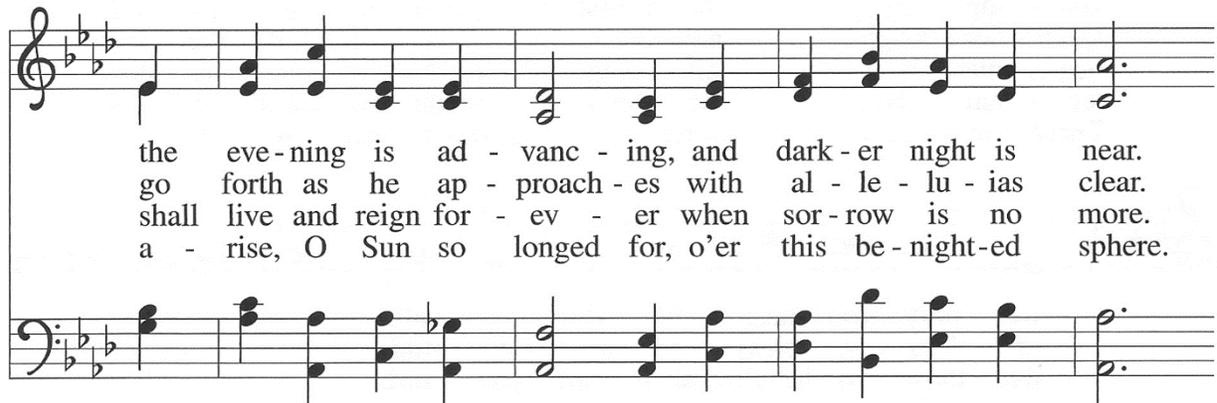
Hymn: Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers ELW 244 vs 1, 3, & 4

Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers

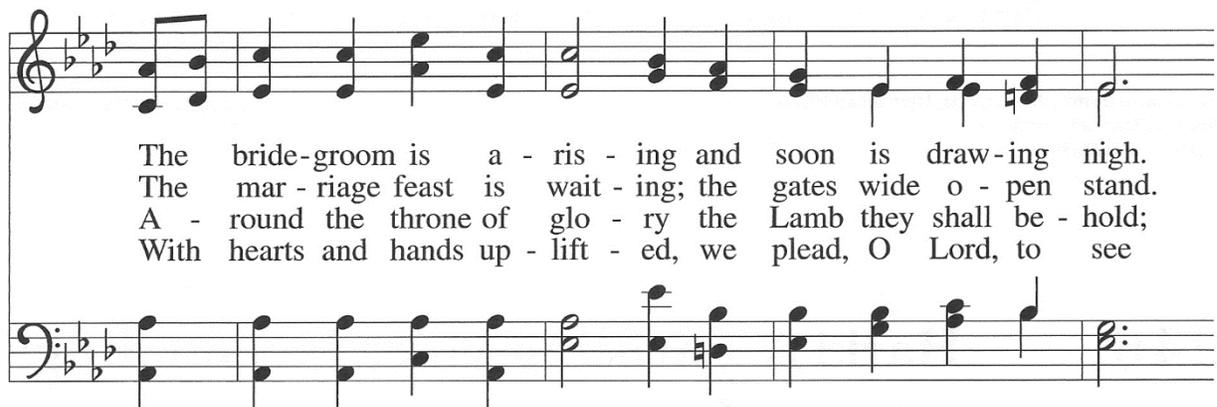
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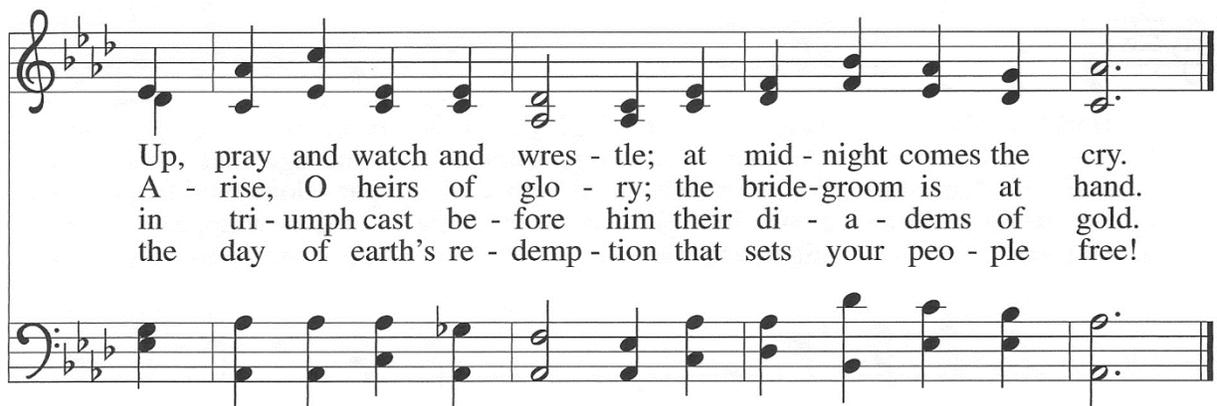
1 Re - joice, re - joice, be - liev - ers, and let your lights ap - pear;
 2 The watch - ers on the moun - tain pro - claim the bride - groom near;
 3 The saints, who here in pa - tience their cross and suf - f'ings bore,
 4 Our hope and ex - pec - ta - tion, O Je - sus, now ap - pear;



the eve - ning is ad - vanc - ing, and dark - er night is near.
 go forth as he ap - proach - es with al - le - lu - ias clear.
 shall live and reign for - ev - er when sor - row is no more.
 a - rise, O Sun so longed for, o'er this be - night - ed sphere.



The bride - groom is a - ris - ing and soon is draw - ing nigh.
 The mar - riage feast is wait - ing; the gates wide o - pen stand.
 A - round the throne of glo - ry the Lamb they shall be - hold;
 With hearts and hands up - lift - ed, we plead, O Lord, to see



Up, pray and watch and wres - tle; at mid - night comes the cry.
 A - rise, O heirs of glo - ry; the bride - groom is at hand.
 in tri - umph cast be - fore him their di - a - dems of gold.
 the day of earth's re - demp - tion that sets your peo - ple free!

Prayer: *Just as Advent beckons us to slow down and wait with hope and expectation, our prayer on these Advent nights calls for something more than a quick recitation of intercessions. The contemplative nature of this service expects the Holy Spirit to pray with us and through us, often with those “sighs too deep for words” (Rom 8:26).*

L: In Christ Jesus we meet the God who knows our weakness and bears the wounds of the world. Therefore, let us be bold as we pray, trusting that God draws near to those in any kind of need. ***This week we invite you to imagine the story of Jesus' birth taking place in our own time and place. Where might he be borne? How might he be received? Where might his parents have come from? (A brief silence) And now let us remember before God all who are frightened...***

...all who have received unexpected news...

...all who are with child...

...all who dream...

...all whose relationships are strained...

...all who must make difficult decisions...

...all who must leave their homeland...

...all for whom the world has no room...

this week we invite you to consider how you are a cocreator with God. How do you, in your daily work, play and worship, help the Lord bring about life?

Gathering our many prayers into one, we pray:
stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. In your mercy receive our prayers, and by your power hasten the day when peace and justice kiss and steadfast love and faithfulness meet for the sake of the world you love. 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 and ever. Amen.**

SENDING SONG

Take, Oh, Take Me As I Am ELW 814 (5x thru)

**Take, oh, take me as I am; summon out what I shall be;
Set your seal upon my heart and live in me.**

BENEDICTION

"A blessing for traveling in the dark" by Jan Richardson

Go slow if you can.
Slower. More slowly still.
Friendly dark or fearsome,
this is no place to break your neck
by rushing, by running,
by crashing into what you cannot see.

Then again, it is true:
different darks have different tasks,
and if you have arrived here unawares,
if you have come in peril or in pain,
this might be no place you should dawdle.
I do not know what these shadows
ask of you, what they might hold
that means you good or ill.
It is not for me to reckon
whether you should linger or you should leave.

But this is what I can ask for you:

That in the darkness there be a blessing.
That in the shadows there be a welcome.
That in the night you be encompassed
by the Love that knows your name.

The God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ Jesus for whom we wait.

Amen.

Sharing of God's Peace