

A SERVICE OF THE WORD

Third Sunday of Advent

December 13, 2020

9:00 a.m.

THE COMING OF GOD by Ann Weems

Our God is the One who comes to us – in a burning bush, in an angel’s song, in a newborn child.

Our God is the One who cannot be found – locked in the church, not even in the sanctuary.

Our God will be where God will be – with no constraints, no predictability.

Our God lives where our God lives, and destruction has no power and even death cannot stop the living.

Our God will be born where God will be born,

But there is no place to look for the One who comes to us.

When God is ready – God will come – even to a godforsaken place like a stable in Bethlehem.

Watch . . . for you know not when God comes.

Watch, that you might be found – whenever – wherever – God comes.

PRE-SERVICE

Grace Notes

“Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning”

“Advent Cry”

“Every Valley”

OUR COMMUNITY TOGETHER

The Christmas Fund

Mark Schmitt

Advent Offering: The What If? Foundation in Haiti

Connie Steffen

PRELUDE

“We Wait for the Coming of Jesus”

SYMBOLIC ENTRY OF GOD’S HOLY SPIRIT

Olivia Duvall, Grace Backus

CALL TO WORSHIP

Greetings to you in the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

In this time of Advent waiting, we long for God’s presence in our lives.

Come, Lord Jesus.

In this time of anxiety and chaos, we long for God’s joy in our lives.

Come, Lord Jesus.

In this time of separation and loneliness, we long for God’s love in our lives.

Come, Lord Jesus.

In this time of fear and suspicion, we long for God’s grace in our lives.

Come, Lord Jesus.

In this time of oppression and judgement, we long for God’s justice in our lives.

Come, Lord Jesus.

In this time of sickness and worry, we long for God’s healing in our lives.

Come, Lord Jesus.

In this time of unknowns and confusion, we long for God’s peace in our lives.

Come, Lord Jesus.

In this time of Advent waiting, we remember God's promises –

Jesus is coming; God is here! Joy, love, grace, justice, healing, and peace, are gifts from God that we need only to reach out and embrace. God is here! As we gather our spirits, our hearts, our bodies, and our minds, to prepare ourselves for worship, let us never forget the promise of God's presence.

HYMN

"Lord, We Long for Words of Comfort"

Text by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

(If you are worshiping in the sanctuary, please do not sing.)

Lord, we long for words of comfort, for a gentle, healing word —
That our suffering is ended, that our penalty is served.
For The sins of generations, have compounded till our day;
God, the hope of all the nations, give us good news now, we pray!

Lord, we long for words of promise, when we suffer for our sins,
When it seems that hate is endless, when it seems that trouble wins.
Can we see, in desert places, that there's hope for your new day?
Will we listen to a prophet, showing us a better way?

May we turn from what divides us, from the ways of hate and fear!
May your peace and justice guide us; may your love direct us here!
God, we pray that, in preparing, we'll find peace and challenge, too.
May we find a new direction, as we wait to welcome you.

LITANY OF CONFESSION

Here we are, Most Patient God, in the third week of our Advent journey.

You alone know how that journey is going. Did we, at the beginning of the season, promise to make this Advent different? Did we promise in our heart of hearts to prepare ourselves spiritually to receive the gift of your Son?

We confess, O God, that we, so easily, have given into the expectations of people and situations around us. We hold expectations within ourselves of needing things to appear a certain way. We allowed the times of quiet we promised for you to slip away. Forgive us in our distractions. Help us renew our preparations for your coming. We look forward to your promise to change things - to bring life, and strength and courage to us: eyes to see, ears to hear, and tongues to speak your word.

So we wait a little longer -Moving..... at..... a..... slower..... pace and with a great deal more patience.

Continue to be with us, O Lord as we learn to wait with you.

Silence

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

I invite you to join your voice with mine in our unison prayer of assurance:

We come to you confessing what is on our hearts and minds. We do so trusting that you want to hear our petitions and that you have already forgiven what needs to be forgiven. We believe that our prayers will be answered in your time and in your almighty wisdom. Amen.

HYMN

"All Earth is Hopeful"

(If you are worshiping in the sanctuary, please do not sing.)

All earth is hopeful, the Savior comes at last! Furrows lie open for God's creative task:
this, the labor of people who struggle to see,
how God's truth and justice set everybody free.

People of Israel, you heard the prophet tell: "A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel";
she conceived him "God with us," our brother, whose birth
restores hope and courage to children of this earth.

Mountains and valleys will have to be prepared; new highways opened new protocols declared.
Almost here! God is nearing, in beauty and grace!
All clear every gateway, in haste, come out in haste!

We first saw Jesus a baby in a crib. This same Lord Jesus today has come to live
in our world; he is present, in neighbors we see
our Jesus is with us, and ever sets us free.

LIGHTING OF THE SECOND ADVENT CANDLE

Heidi and Kelsey Meyer

RESPONSE

"Light Shines in the Darkness"

Olson & Peterson

(refrain)

Oh the light shines in the darkness, and the light will not be overcome
In this world broken and scattered, the light will not be overcome

As our lives are turning – and our hearts are yearning
through the days of hurting – deep in the night, still the flame burns bright. (refrain)

Tears throughout creation – torn apart relations
wounds across the nations – hope may seem gone, but the flame burns on. (refrain)

Leviticus 25:8-14, 17-18

Max Loomis

Our scripture readings today talk about "the year of the Lord's favor." This was meant to reference the "Year of Jubilee" as described in the Old Testament – God commanded that every 50 years, the Israelites have a year of freedom and celebration: the land would rest, debts would be forgiven, land that had been sold off would be restored to its former inhabitants, and slaves would be set free. This

Year of Jubilee was to be a special, holy land for the people of Israel. Here is a small section of the guidelines given in the book of Leviticus:

Count off seven weeks of years—that is, seven times seven—so that the seven weeks of years totals forty-nine years.

Then have the trumpet blown on the tenth day of the seventh month. Have the trumpet blown throughout your land on the Day of Reconciliation.

You will make the fiftieth year holy, proclaiming freedom throughout the land to all its inhabitants.

It will be a Jubilee year for you: each of you must return to your family property and to your extended family.

The fiftieth year will be a Jubilee year for you. Do not plant, do not harvest the secondary growth, and do not gather from the freely growing vines because it is a Jubilee:

it will be holy to you. You can eat only the produce directly out of the field.

Each of you must return to your family property in this year of Jubilee.

When you sell something to or buy something from your fellow citizen, you must not cheat each other.

You must not cheat each other but fear your God because I am the Lord your God.

You will observe my rules, and you will keep my regulations and do them so that you can live securely on the land.

A READING FROM THE GOSPEL

Luke 4:14-30

(In a few moments, we will hear a reading from the book of Isaiah. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus goes to his hometown of Nazareth and, during a worship service in the synagogue, reads from the Bible. The scripture Jesus reads is the same passage that we will hear from Isaiah. Listen....)

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the

time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

SERMON ON THE STEPS

SPECIAL MUSIC

“A Promise is Near”

THE PROPHETIC WORD

Isaiah 61:1-11

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion— to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.

They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, foreigners shall till your land and dress your vines; but you shall be called priests of the Lord, you shall be named ministers of our God; you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory. Because their shame was double, and dishonor was proclaimed as their lot, therefore they shall possess a double portion; everlasting joy shall be theirs.

For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

SERMON

RETURN, DESIGN, AND REBUILD

PASTORAL PRAYER AND 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

THE OFFERING

The year of the Lord's favor is coming, the prophet says, and we await it together – a time when debts and hurts will be forgiven, when God will turn our mourning into praise. Our gifts today in this season of waiting and hope help us to strengthen one another and to offer hope to the world as we look forward to that great day of everlasting joy.

Though physically distant, we come together in one Spirit to offer our gifts of praise and commitment to God and to the work of Christ's Church.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

I invite you to pray with me:

With our gifts, dear God, accept the praise and thanksgiving of our hearts, which rejoice in your goodness and love. Let all our gifts and all our lives point to your presence in the world, and further your hope for the world through Jesus, Emmanuel, God-with-us. Amen.

*CLOSING HYMN

"God, You Alone Know What You've Planned"

Tune: CAROL 8.6.8.6 D ("It Came Upon the Midnight Clear")Text by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette
(If you are worshiping in the sanctuary, please do not sing.)

God, you alone know what you've planned, For earth and sky and sea.
Creation waits your loving hand, To bring in what will be.
When things we trust in shift and shake, And sorrows multiply,
We hear you calling, "Keep awake! Redemption is close by!"

O Christ, you taught us, "Watch the trees, As seasons change each year,
For when they bud and grow new leaves, You know that summer's near."
May we look round this changing earth, And see with faith-filled eyes
Your signs of newness, life and birth, That witness to the wise.

Though heav'n and earth will pass away, Your word will still be true.
O Son of Man, on that great day, We'll be secure in you.
For at the close of history, When all that's past shall end,
The one who judges us will be, No stranger, but a friend.

So by your Spirit may we share, The life you're bringing forth:
May we seek justice, end despair, And work to heal the earth.
For there's a new day coming near, With no more death or pain;
Till then, we'll seek to serve you here, And welcome in your reign.

***COMMISSION AND BENEDICTION**

***POSTLUDE**

Confession, Assurance, Offering, and Offertory prayer adapted from writings in Worship Ways, a worship resource from the United Church of Christ.

GRACE CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

"We are a Christian Community Committed to Love, Service and Growth."

2801 Garfield Street, Two Rivers, Wisconsin 54241 (920) 553-1222

Website <http://www.graceucc.org>

Missionaries: Mark Knowles and Danielle Murry-Knowles, Serving in Lesotho, Africa

Ministers: *All the People of the Congregation*

Pastor: *Kim M. Henning*

Associate Pastor: *Colie Bettivia*

Moderator: *Betty Becker*

Administrative Assistants: *Debbie Augustine and Jean Schwalbe*

Organist/Choir Director: *Andrea Allington*

Organist: *Beverly Barnes Mark*

Maintenance: *Michael Timm*

Sound Board: *Bruce Suettinger*

Worship Technology: *Bill Heinsohn, Bob Randerson, Cal MacAuley*

Song Leader: *Don Lewellen*

Liturgist: *Larry Peterson*

HOSPITALIZED

Jean Machut had surgery this week and is recovering at home.

Florence Luecker is now residing at Magnolia Meadows, 1480 North 7th Street, Manitowoc.

A WEDDING TO CELEBRATE

David and Laurean Weber Meissner exchanged their marriage vows in a service of worship in Barron, WI on Saturday, December 12. We offer our best wishes to David and Laurean as they begin their life together.

TODAY – DRIVE-IN CHRISTMAS CAROL SING ALONG

Like so many things this year, our Christmas caroling will be a little different. **Sunday, December 13 at 4:00pm** we will gather in the church parking lot. Remaining in your vehicles, you will tune your radio to listen to the music and sing along to Christmas carol favorites. There will be goodie bags and special treats for children. Please join us.

NEXT SUNDAY – CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT!

Our church’s children have been preparing a Christmas Pageant for our worship! Next Sunday, Dec 20, the worship service will be all pre-recorded and feature the children’s pageant. Having a fully-pre-recorded worship service (meaning: we will not be in church on Sunday morning) means that we will have the highest quality video to show the pageant. It also means that the members who receive DVDs at home will be able to watch the service at the “regular” time on Sunday morning along with us! We will still send out the emails with the service links and you can click on the button in the email between 8:30 and 9am next Sunday to hear the pre-service music.

ASCEND REQUESTS OUR HELP

Our congregation has supported Ascend over the past six years. They need your continued support this Christmas. In past years, we put out request cards or bulbs in church with names and ages of those in need. Because of Covid, Ascend is unable to predict how many they will be serving at Christmas time, but ask for twenty gift cards. I’m requesting from you a check for \$25 by Friday, December 18. Mission and Outreach will purchase gift cards and deliver them to Ascend. Here is one of Mr. Rogers’ (PBS) quotes: *When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping."*

Let's be helpers. Make your checks payable to Grace Congregational Church and place "Ascend" in the memo section. Nancy & I will be supporting this effort along with you. (Doug Charles)

EQUAL EXCHANGE

Equal Exchange is still open for Business. We have gone through all the items and have donated to The Haven all items that were close to, or past, the “Best By” dates. While our inventory is low on some varieties, everything we currently in stock have dates into the future. If you would like to indulge in some great tasting items and support small farmers around the world please get in touch with me and your order will be put together as soon as possible. In stock items are:

Ground Coffee, \$7– Mind Body & Soul, and Love Buzz

Tea, \$3.25 – Green, Green w/Ginger, Earl Grey, Chia Black, Peppermint, Rooibos, English Breakfast

Cocoa, \$5.25 – Baking Cocoa, Dark Hot Chocolate

Chocolate Bars, \$3 – Dark Choco w/Almonds, Dark Choco w/Orange, Dark Choco w/Lemon Ginger, Milk Choco Caramel Crunch

Nuts, \$7 – Plain and Tamari Roasted Almonds, \$6 – Salted Cashews

If you request items that are not currently in stock, they can be ordered when there is enough to place an order. Please get in touch with me if you want to place an order or have questions.

anij.kleman@gmail.com . Thank you, Annie Kleman, and Mission & Outreach

CHURCH KEYS

In order to get better oversight on who has access to the building and to what extent, we are asking that anyone who has a key to the church in their possession to please contact the church office (920) 553-1222 and let them know if you have a key and whether or not it has the letter “M” stamped on it. If you had and misplaced a key, also please let the office know so we can be sure to remove you from the list. Also, if your roll in which key was required is no longer active, we ask that you please

return the key to the church office at your earliest convenience. Any questions can also be directed to Todd Moolenaar, Board of Trustees chairperson at (920) 374-0597 or tmooly@att.net

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL SERIES - "EXPECTATION"

Pastor Colie is making another video devotional series for advent! Sign up to receive a daily email with a video devotional of about 3 minutes. The theme this year is "Expectation", and will begin on Nov 29. To sign up, go to <http://eepurl.com/hgTTjr> or email Pastor Colie (pastorcolie@gmail.com)

"INSPIRED" BY RACHEL HELD EVANS

On Monday, December 14, we will host our next class using the book, "Inspired." We are studying chapter two of her book (pp.29-57) and pages 12-15 from her study guide. Contact Pastor Kim khenning1956@gmail.com if you would need a study book or if you would like to receive a Zoom link.

CALLING ALL CHRISTMAS HYMN LOVERS

You are invited to be part of our Christmas Eve virtual choir hymns. We are looking for people to record themselves (or family groups) singing Joy to the World, O Come All Ye Faithful, Silent Night, and/or O Little Town of Bethlehem at home. Andrea will collect the videos to compile a video to be used on Christmas Eve. If you're interested please contact Andrea romsosa96@gmail.com. If you're interested but hesitant about the process/technology please let Andrea know. Our choir members have become experts and are willing to help!

SUNDAY SCHOOL KIDS' "MINI LESSON"

Pastor Colie (with the help of Lincoln!) are recording a video each week reading the week's Bible story from the children's Bible. These videos can be played for children as an introduction to the worship service, or as a stand-alone story. Look for the videos included in the worship service emails every weekend.

QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTIONS – IS IT RIGHT FOR YOU?

A qualified charitable distribution allows you to make a tax free donation from an IRA owned by an individual who is age 70 ½ or over. The distribution would need to be paid directly from the IRA to a qualified charity such as the church. SO....

- If you are 70 ½ year or older
- If you have an IRA which you typically withdraw from to pay your pledge or personal expenses
- Talk with your financial advisor and they will provide you the form to withdraw from your IRA to pay your pledge or church donation directly to the church.
- It is Tax Free for both Federal and State Income Taxes.

LAKELAND UNIVERSITY OFFERS SCHOLARSHIPS

Are you looking for ways to get involved in a religious studies community during your time at college? Do you have a passion to speak out for justice? Lakeland University offers a full-tuition scholarship competition opportunity to students with these interests; it's called our **Ulrich Scholars Scholarship Program**.

Each year nine Ulrich Scholars earn a **\$20,000** per year scholarship to attend Lakeland University. Students who receive these awards major or minor in Religion, participate in Ulrich Scholars events

throughout the year (including lectures, retreats, community service, and visits to various religious communities), and lead a social justice initiative on or off campus in their junior or senior years. If this sounds interesting, we would love to have you learn more about the Ulrich Scholars Program. You may apply for the opportunity at lakeland.edu/portal. Applicants must submit their materials by **January 22, 2021**. If you have any questions contact Dr. Karl Kuhn at kuhnka@lakeland.edu or admissions@lakeland.edu.

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SERVICES

Christmas Eve will be different this year. But we will strive to do our very best to offer a worship experience that will honor our Lord Jesus Christ and our practice of faith.

4:00 pm Christmas Eve Worship Service: Live-Stream

5:15-6:30 pm Drive-through Distribution of Holy Communion and Gifts of Brown Bags for Children

9:30 pm Christmas Eve Worship Service: Live Stream

PEOPLE WE WANT TO HOLD IN PRAYER...

Gene Krueger and Bob Stephens are residents at Hamilton Home/Northland Lodge. Ruth Hauboldt is a resident at River House Apartments. Lesley Huffer is at Rivers Bend, & Bruce Huffer is at his home. Marian Duescher is a resident at Harbor View. Florence Luecker is a resident at Magnolia Meadows. Jean Sutter is with her daughter, Heidi Bender: 880 S. Madison Ave. Pasadena, CA 91106. Nicole Kellner is at Arborview Manor at 1520 Arboretum Drive, Apt. 1120, Oshkosh, WI 54901. Bill Monka is a resident at Tender Reflections. Bonnie Burmeister is living at 2790 Elm Tree Hill, Room 301, Howard, WI; Ginny Posny is a resident at Felician Village.

OUR SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN

Bracken Tadych (PFC4 107-1 Lilac Lane, Minot AFB, ND 58704); Jacob Hearley (5350 Berger Street, Stop 1330, Moody AFB GA 31699); MSgt Kevin Allie (PSC37, 19 Naomi Street Magnolie, DE 19962); Gavin and Emily LeGreve (1344 N Lafayette Avenue; Bremerton WA 98312); Hunter Hayes (Air Force, Tucson AZ); Kaity Pietenpol (Pietenpol-Prueter, Kaitlynn, 4540 Carswell Ave Unit C-9 Nellis AFB NV 89191); Alec Dewane (PVT Dewane, Alec J. B Btry 2-6 ADA BN 2750 Miner Rd. Fort Sill OK 73503); Jimmi & Alex Anderson, 164B Lower Brick Rd., Fort Riley, KS 66442

Please notify the office of additions, changes or corrections to the above lists.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY today to Donna Fehrman, Sophia Grumann, Owen Heuer, Chris Lewis, Jim Reif and Tabitha Seefeldt and this week to Vicky Swoboda, Jax Coenen, Todd Tome, Marcia Robbins, Jon Backus, Bill Hampton-Gregory, Joyce Tome and Randy Meissner.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY this week to John & Gail Schanilec.

	<u>This Week at Grace</u>	
Monday	Handbell Choir practice Adult Study	11:00am 6:00pm
Tuesday	Trustees	4:30pm
Wednesday	Confirmation class Adult choir Generation G Party	6:00pm 7:00pm 6:30pm