

Liturgy

The First Sunday of Advent (Hope)



GATHERING

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! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

Setting: Ellen Koehler. Copyright ©2012 Ellen Koehler. All Rights Reserved.
Text: Latin hymn, 12th century; transl. John M. Neale, 1851.
Hymn tune: VENI EMMANUEL, 15th century plainsong.

I was glad when they said unto me,
“Let us go into the house of the LORD!”

Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!
Jerusalem, built like a city that is firmly bound together.
According to Your decree, we gather to give thanks
and lift up the name of the LORD.

O send out Your light and Your truth; let them lead us.
Let them bring us to Your holy hill and to Your dwelling.

Then we will go to the altar of God, to God our exceeding joy;
and we will praise You, O God, our God.

We will watch expectantly for the LORD;
we will wait for the God of our salvation.

The LORD will be our light. — from Psalms 122 and 43; and Micah 7

Sung:
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

INVOCATION

Prayers of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving for God’s presence

O Emmanuel,
God of eternity, **with expectant hearts**
we your people await Christ’s coming.
As once He came in humility,
so now may He come in glory,
that He may make all things perfect
in your everlasting kingdom.
For He is Lord for ever and ever.
Amen.

*LECTIONARY for the first Sunday of
Advent, Year A:*

Isaiah 2:5-11
Psalm 122
Romans 13:11-14
Matthew 24:36-44

Today is the first Sunday of the liturgical year. The theme for this first week of Advent is the hopeful watching and waiting for the coming of Christ, the Lord. As did the ancient church, in this Advent season we joyfully remember the first coming of Jesus to His earth, and at the same time look forward with joyful expectation to His coming again in glory. As we worship, we ponder with great thanksgiving our life now, “in the meantime,” and celebrate that He has called us into His story.

To read more about Advent as a season of watchful waiting, expectation, and anticipation, see Ellen’s blog, “Advent—Happy New (liturgical) Year” in the Reflections section of the Clerestory Notes website:

<https://clerestorynotes.com/live/blog/2018/11/29/advent-happy-new-liturgical-year>

Ellen’s setting of O Come, O Come, Emmanuel is available in the music catalog as a lead sheet. The harmonic arrangement varies from verse to verse. This is especially moving when all four verses are sung at one point in a service. But it also adds interest to the movement of the weeks of Advent season to sing successive verses each week as the Sundays build toward the celebration of Christ’s birth on December 25. We sing the first verse here as our Call to Worship on this Hope Sunday.

<https://clerestorynotes.com/live/sheetmusic/o-come-o-come-emmanuel>

The gathering antiphonal reading, for one reader and the congregation, weaves together Scriptures that speak to our waiting in confident hope because of God’s covenant love and draws from the Psalm of the day.

This prayer of hope and expectation is adapted from The New Handbook of the Christian Year, Hoyt L. Hickman et al (eds.), ©1986, 1992 Abingdom Press, p. 58. Used by permission.

You'll Come

I have decided, I have resolved,
To wait upon You, Lord.
My Rock and Redeemer,
Shield and Reward,
I'll wait upon You, Lord.

As surely as the sun will rise You'll come to us,
Certain as the dawn appears –

Chorus:

You'll come; let Your glory fall
As You respond to us.
Spirit rain, flood into our thirsty hearts again
You'll come, You'll come.

We are not shaken, we are not moved;
We wait upon You, Lord.
Mighty Deliverer, Triumph and Truth,
We wait upon You, Lord.

As surely as the sun will rise You'll come to us,
Certain as Your word endures –

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PROFESSION OF FAITH

Let us together profess the faith of the church of all ages in the words of this hymn of the ancient church:

You are God; we praise You.

You are the Lord; we acclaim You.

You are the Eternal Father; All creation worships You.

To You all angels, all the powers of heaven, sing in endless praise:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,

Heaven and earth are full of Your glory.

The glorious company of apostles praises you.

The noble fellowship of prophets praises you.

The white-robed army of martyrs praises you.

Throughout the world the holy Church acclaim You;

Father of majesty unbounded,

Your true and only Son, worthy of all worship,

and the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide.

You, Christ, are the King of glory,

the eternal Son of the Father.

When You became man to set us free

You did not shun the Virgin's womb.

You overcame the sting of death,

and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

You are seated at God's right hand in glory.

We believe that you will come and be our judge.

Leader:

Come then, Lord, and help Your people,

bought with the price of Your own blood,

and bring us with Your saints to glory everlasting.

– from *Te Deum laudamus* (“Thee, O God, we praise”).

A hymn of the early church, fourth century.

Attributed to church fathers Ambrose and Augustine.

To give this song even more resonance with the season of Advent, to conclude the time of Invocation in prayer (or sung prayer) you may want to extend the words of the chorus in address to Emmanuel—for example: “... let Your glory fall as You're revealed to us; Emmanuel, free our captive, waiting hearts anew. ...”

I have crafted this antiphonal Profession of Faith from the ancient hymn Te Deum laudamus, attributed to the fourth-century church fathers Ambrose and Augustine. From its acclamation of praise from all creation to the triune God of the universe, to its declaration of the victory and exaltation of Christ, this ancient text leads powerfully and lovingly into a time of confession, repentance and forgiveness. During Advent, the classic hymn Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus is a fitting and beautiful sung response to the concluding words of Te Deum laudamus, “Come then, Lord, and help Your people....”

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

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.

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.

Setting: Ellen Koehler. Copyright ©2004 Ellen Koehler. All Rights Reserved.
Words: Charles Wesley, 1745. Hymn tune: HYFRYDOL; Rowland H. Prichard, 1830.

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

Call to Confession:

If You kept a record of sins, O LORD, who could stand?
But with You there is forgiveness;
so that we can, with reverence, serve You.
*Put your hope in the LORD,
for with the LORD is steadfast love,
and with Him is abundant redemption.
He redeems His people from all their sins.*

– Psalm 130:3-4, 7-8

[Silence]

Most merciful God, always with us, always coming:

**We confess with sadness
that we have not always kept watch for You.
We have occupied ourselves with our own concerns.
We have not loved You with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.**

[Silent confessions]

Forgive us for our lack of watchfulness.

**For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ,
grant that we may walk in Your ways,
in hopeful expectation of His coming,
to the glory of Your name.**

Music for this setting of Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus is available in the sheet music catalog as a lead sheet and arranged for 3-part vocal harmony. (See the Sheet Music Catalog in the Music Room, "Season of Light.")

Here's a link to the commentary in the Music Room:

<https://clerestorynotes.com/live/sheetmusic/come-thou-long-expected-jesus>

You may hear this beloved Christmas hymn in the Audio Media Studio section of the Music Room. (This live recording, from 2017, is from our annual Advent Lessons and Carols service.)

https://clerestorynotes.com/live/content/music_library/come-thou-long-expected-jesus-live-clip

Psalm 130 is not part of the lectionary for the first Sunday of Advent. But it speaks movingly and powerfully to the theme of hope and expectation with particular reference to the blessings of forgiveness.

O Lord, Hear My Prayer

O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer,
When I call answer me.
O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer,
Come and listen to me.

The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise;
All my hope comes from God.
The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise;
God, the well-spring of life.

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ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Who is like You, O LORD God?
*You pardon sin and forgive
the transgressions of your inheritance.*
You do not stay angry forever,
but delight to show mercy.
*In Your compassion for us,
You cast our sins into the depths of the sea,
as You promised to our fathers from days of old.*

– from Micah 7:18-20

How blessed are all those who wait for Him!

– Isaiah 30:18

TIME OF OFFERING

Words and prayers of praise and gratitude

Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending

Lo, He comes with clouds descending,
Once for favored sinners slain;
Thousand thousand saints attending
Swell the triumph of His train.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
God appears on earth to reign.

Every eye shall now behold Him,
Robed in dreadful majesty!
Those who set at naught and sold Him,
Pierced and nailed Him to the tree,
Deeply wailing, deeply wailing,
Shall the true Messiah see.

Now the Savior, long-expected,
See in solemn pomp appear.
All His saints, by man rejected,
Now shall meet Him in the air.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
See the day of God appear.

Setting: Ellen Koehler. Copyright ©2011 Ellen Koehler. All Rights Reserved.
Words: Charles Wesley and Martin Madan; based on John Cennick, 1752.
Hymn tune: REGENT SQUARE Henry T. Smart, 1867. .

This hymn is not often thought of as an Advent hymn, but it should be. It powerfully highlights our understanding of Advent as one of those points in God's story where He "folds time," bringing together the transcendent reality and redemptive work of the past and future. We sing the first three verses here, and close the service with the fourth verse.

Music for Ellen's setting of Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending is available in the music catalog as a lead sheet. (It is available as piano accompaniment on request.)

Here's a link:

<https://clerestorynotes.com/live/sheetmusic/lo-he-comes-clouds-descending>

LIGHTING OF THE FIRST ADVENT CANDLE: HOPE

Reading: Isaiah 2:1-5

Lighting of the candle

We light this candle as a symbol of expectation and hope of the coming of our Savior, Jesus.

Response:

**O Wisdom, proceeding from the mouth of the Most High,
reaching from eternity to eternity
and disposing all things with strength and sweetness:
Come, teach us the way of knowledge.**

THE WORD

Isaiah 2:1-5

Psalm 25

Romans 13:11-14

Matthew 24:36-44

THE TABLE

Remembering the Body of Christ

Passing of the Peace

The Lord be with you!

And also with you!

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again!

The Lord's Prayer (sung)

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your Name.

Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,

On earth as in heav'n.
Give us today our daily bread;

Forgive us our sins

As we forgive those who sin against us;
Save us from the time of trial,

And deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
And the glory are Yours.

Now and forever, Amen.

Setting by Eric Wyse; ©2000 Wildgrove Music (BMI)

Lighting of the Advent Candles can be done by individuals or small groups of people. The readings from week to week are taken from the texts of the lectionary.

The congregational responses for this Year A each week are drawn from the traditional O Antiphons.

Eric Wyse's setting of the Lord's Prayer, Our Father in Heaven, is available at Score Exchange (<http://www.scoreexchange.com/scores/19379.html>)

Prepare a Place

Prepare a place while you're waiting.
Prepare a place for the coming One.
Prepare a place and be patient
While you wait for the coming One.
Wait for the coming One; while you wait for the coming One.

Prepare your heart while you're waiting.
Prepare your heart for the coming One.
Set time aside and be quiet
While you wait for the coming One.
Wait for the coming One; while you wait for the coming One.

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Christine Dente and Michael W. Smith

SENDING FORTH

The Life of the Body

Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending (verse 4)

Yes, amen! Let all adore Thee,
High on Thine eternal throne.
Savior, take the pow'r and glory;
Claim the kingdom for Thine own.
O come quickly! O come quickly! Everlasting God, come down!

O come quickly! O come quickly! Everlasting God, come down!

Setting: Ellen Koehler. Copyright ©2011 Ellen Koehler. All Rights Reserved.
Words: Charles Wesley and Martin Madan; based on John Cennick, 1752.
Hymn tune: REGENT SQUARE Henry T. Smart, 1867. .

Benediction:

Beloved, hear and take these words of blessing into your hearts,
as you go forth into the world to love and serve the Lord –
watching and waiting with eager anticipation the coming of Christ:

May the God of hope continually fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

– from 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

Thanks be to God!

Come quickly, Lord Jesus. Maranatha!

A thought about worship...– “The spirituality of Advent calls us to start our journey in expectation of the second coming of Christ. . . . The hope of a world restored under God proclaims that evil is not the final word. . . . The second coming says that the ultimate word in history is the triumph of God, the reign of God’s kingdom, the eternal and lasting rule of the good. Here is where our Advent meditation rests.” (Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Time: Forming Spirituality through the Christian Year* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004], 50).

Lectionary for next week: Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
Romans 15:4-13
Matthew 3:1-12

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We sang the first three verses of Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending, at Offering (above). The reprise of the hymn, verse 4, is a powerful statement that rings in our hearts, setting the tone of Advent for the weeks to come.

Music for this setting of Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending is available in the music catalog as a lead sheet. (It is available as piano accompaniment on request.)