

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2025

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

SECOND SUNDAY of ADVENT

GATHERING

PRELUDE

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH: The Candle of Peace

One: *“Come, thou long-expected Jesus ... born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king, born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.”*

(“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” GtG#82)

One: Children of God, what are we waiting for?

**All: We wait for peace where conflict rages,
for gentleness where harshness prevails.
We wait for swords to be reshaped into plows,
for walls to crumble and bridges to rise.
We wait...
longing for the Prince of Peace,
who stills our storms and guides our feet.**

One: Today we light two candles,
their light steady and sure against the dark.
Hope burns beside peace,
witnessing to God’s enduring promises.
The glow spreads wider each week,
reminding us that peace is possible,
and God’s kin-dom is drawing near.

**All: We call this candle Hope. *(Light the first candle.)*
We call this candle Peace. *(Light the second candle.)*
Together they shine as signs of God’s faithfulness.**

One: O God of still waters and quiet strength,
we confess how often our lives are restless.
Our hearts race, our hands grasp,
our voices quicken with fear.

(continued...)

Yet you breathe calm into chaos;
you steady our steps on uneven ground.
Grant us your peace, O Christ,
not as the world gives, but as you alone provide.

Hear the song of the angels:
“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom God favors” (Luke 2:14).

**All: We long for your peace to flow like water,
quenching our thirst.
Teach us to live as peacemakers,
agents of your reconciling love.
Come, Lord Jesus, and make peace our way.**

***OPENING HYMN** “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” GtG 88 (*Verses 1, 6, & 7*)

**1. 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.**

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

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**7. O come, Desire of nations, bind
all peoples in one heart and mind;
bid envy, strife, and discord cease;
fill the whole world with heaven's peace.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Words: Latin prose, pre-9th cent.; trans. composite. *Public Domain*.
Tune: VENI EMMANUEL, Plainsong; adapt. Thomas Helmore, 1852.
Music Arr. © 1990 John Weaver, *All rights reserved. Reprinted /
Podcast / Streamed with permission under ONE LICENSE #A-
739819/#A-739796. All rights reserved.*

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of the prophets, we confess
our lack of preparedness and
our tendency to wander away from you and your path.
We do not heed your voice in what we do and say.
We do not see our neighbors, families, and friends
as beloved children whom you have made.
We cling to the known and familiar,
afraid of the transformation your grace will bring.
Yet you are always a step ahead of us,
a voice crying out in the wilderness,
inviting us into bold new ways of being disciples.
In your mercy, forgive us, O God,
for we repent of our ways
and look to your power to heal us and raise us up.
Humble us, O God,
and teach us to do the work of repentance so that,
fully reliant on your grace,
we may know the richness of restored relationship
with you and one another. Amen.

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON *(from Mark 1, John 3, & Matthew 1)*

One: "The right time has come, and the Kingdom of God is near!
Turn away from your sins and believe the Good News!"
All: **The Good News is this: "God loved the world so much
that God gave God's only Son."**
One: Friends, let us believe the Good News of the Child born in Bethlehem:
his name is "Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."
All: **So let us rejoice and be glad! For in Jesus Christ we are forgiven!
Alleluia! Amen!**

THE PEACE

One: The peace of Christ be with you all.
All: **And also with you.**

(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)

THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READINGS Isaiah 11:1–10
Psalm 72:1–7,18–19
Matthew 3:1–12

ISAIAH 11:1-10 (New Revised Standard Version, updated edition+)

- ¹ *A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.*
- ² *The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the reverence of the Lord.*
- ³ *His delight shall be in the reverence of the Lord.*
- He shall not judge by appearances,
or decide by hearsay.*
- ⁴ *He shall judge the needy with righteousness,
and decide with equity for those who suffer in the land.
He shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.*
- ⁵ *Righteousness shall be the belt around his hips,
and faithfulness the belt around his waist.*
- ⁶ *The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
the calf and the young lion will feed together,
and a little child shall lead them.*
- ⁷ *The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.*
- ⁸ *A nursing child will play over the snake's hole;
toddlers will reach right over the serpent's den.*
- ⁹ *They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.*
- ¹⁰ *On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations
shall seek him out, and his dwelling shall be glorious.*

PSALM 72:1-7,18-19 (various)

- ¹ *Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to the king's son.*
- ² *Let him judge your people
with righteousness*

and your poor ones with justice.
³ Let the mountains bring peace
 to the people;
 let the hills bring righteousness.
⁴ Let the king bring justice
 to people who are poor;
 let him save the children
 of those who are needy,
 but let him crush oppressors!
⁵ Let him live as long as the sun and moon endure,
 from one generation to another.
⁶ Let him fall like rain upon fresh-cut grass,
 like showers that water the earth.
⁷ In his days let righteousness flourish
 and let peace prosper
 until the moon is no more.

¹⁸ Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel,
 who alone does wondrous deeds!
¹⁹ And blessed be God's glorious name for ever!
 And may all the earth be filled with the glory of the Lord.
 Amen. Amen.

MATTHEW 3:1-12 (various)

¹ In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming,
² "Repent, for here comes the kingdom of heaven!" ³ This is the one of whom the prophet
 Isaiah spoke when he said,
 "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
 'Prepare the way of the Lord,
 make straight the paths of the Lord.'"
⁴ Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his
 food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ People from Jerusalem, throughout Judea, and all
 around the Jordan River came to him; ⁶ and they were baptized by him in the River
 Jordan, confessing their sins.
⁷ But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to
 them, "You children of snakes! Who warned you to escape from the angry judgment that
 is coming soon? ⁸ Bear fruit worthy of repentance. ⁹ And do not even think about saying
 to yourselves, 'Abraham is our father'. For I tell you that God is able to raise up
 Abraham's children from these stones. ¹⁰ The ax is already at the root of the trees.
 Therefore, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown
 into the fire.
¹¹ "I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I
 is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the
 Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹² The shovel he uses to sift the wheat from the chaff is in his

hands, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON “Peace...and Pieces” by Pastor Bill Vincent

I have a confession to make: I have gotten hooked (somewhat) by some of those pop-ups that appear on my computer screen when I go online. “You should be interested in this!” My curiosity has been piqued.

-“Fisherman was looking for the best place to find a catch. You’ll never guess what he really found!”

-“They couldn’t believe the door they found in the side of the cliff. Even more amazing is what they found when they went inside.”

It is interesting that both of these hooks have ended up as stories of people hidden from view by most of the world: a ‘lost’ island in the midst of a foggy sea, a hidden valley tucked away in some forested mountains; and people who have found an idyllic spot and carved for themselves, or their group of people, an idyllic life. And they simply yearn to be left alone to the peaceful way of life they have found.

We might yearn for the same thing: a peaceful life far away from “the maddening crowd.” We DO yearn for the same thing, in the midst of the lack of peace that screams around us.

But upon further reflection, I have noticed that both stories seem to be missing something: they presume that the people involved in these idyllic communities – whether a community of one or a community of many – that these people are themselves idyllic, and peaceful. So, it seems to me – not to be a Scrooge about it all – what is missing is a realistic ‘take’ on human life.

In other words, they paint a picture of a peaceful utopia filled with perfect people.

And that is their fallacy. For we are anything but perfect. (Sorry to burst your bubble on this.)

And that is why I don’t believe these stories...though I may still get hooked by another. (A person can dream, can’t they?)

It is so tempting to think – to believe – that if only other people would just leave us alone – you know, the troublemakers, the rabble rousers. Or if we could just convince them to see things my way, to do things my way, to see that (of course) I am right. If we could just... If we could just... If we could just....

If we could what? If we could wave a magic wand and make us perfect?

But of course, perfect would be defined differently by different people. Just like peace is defined differently by different people. Volodymyr Zelensky’s definition of peace is far different than Vladimir Putin’s definition of peace.

So we try one approach – “If we could just...” – then we try another tack – “If we could just....” And then something else happens, and turns out to be truer about human nature than what we hoped for. And our vision of peace lies shattered on the floor, in so many pieces.

But if we look again, and look carefully and closely and honestly, we find it is we ourselves who lie shattered on the floor, in so many pieces.

We are broken.

That’s the root of our experience of un-peace – a lack of *shalom*, a lack of wholeness – and there is no healing on our parts, and no restoration...and no peace.

Because we are broken.

And it turns out we are the wolf looking for a tasty lamb to devour for our own personal hunger.

We are the leopard who has changed its spots several times over to suit the situation for our own benefit and advantage...and by the way, snacking on a tender young goat would not be objectionable.

We are the young lion smacking our lips and eyeing suspiciously the calf who seems all-too-innocent...and who is taking up the space we lust after.

We are broken: in our understanding of peace, in our way of living only for ourselves, in our treatment of others, in our manner of caring (even for ourselves), in our priorities for our time and resources and life.

We are broken, and in pieces.

Which is precisely why our Advent focus on peace starts with repentance – sounds the alarm of repentance – honestly facing: this is who we are. We are not who we think we are, or want to be. We are not all put together. We are not oh-so kind and gracious.

Our Isaiah passage starts with a stump: a stump of “**despair and resignation**,” as someone notes (*Texts for Preaching, Year A*, p.11).

A stump indicates a tree has fallen, whether by natural means – a storm or bug infestation – or not-natural means – as in a saw...or ax.

A stump indicates a tree has fallen.

Much like we have fallen. Fallen by the wayside in our quest for peace. Fallen away from God’s way and God’s will. Fallen as in ‘the Fall’ – the sinful ‘Fall’. Fallen off the pedestal on which we so unwisely placed ourselves. Fallen behind in our life of ‘perfection’.

Fallen.

And yet, somehow, a shoot of grace and possibility, a shoot of goodness and potential, a shoot for peace arises from this stump of fallenness and failure and fallible-ness.

A shoot that arises, not by our doing, not by our pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps, not through our determined will-power – but a shoot that arises by the grace of God, for the goodness of God, empowered by the spirit of God.

And this shoot will work for justice and live by righteousness: God's righteousness, God's rightness, God's way and will. And this shoot will tend to the needy and care for the vulnerable and lift up the weak.

And this shoot will not cry out for itself – according to another one of Isaiah's passages (see Isaiah 42:2). And by this shoot's stripes (see Isaiah 53:5) we will be healed, and put back together, and restored...and given peace, having been made for peace, now knowing what peace really is and what it's for and who it is for, which is everyone, including the stranger and foreigner in our midst.

And we can participate in this peace, in this life, in this way of life, in this vision and in seeking to bring it to fruition for ourselves and for everyone – we can participate in this life by starting with repentance: acknowledging that our typical way is not the way of peace, confessing that our lives do not seek peace but only seek (look out) for ourselves, admitting that our words and our vision and our perception is broken; that we are broken and that we cannot put ourselves back together again no matter how hard we try or how focused our efforts or how determined we are. For we are broken. We have fallen. And we need help: help to be mended, help to be healed, help to be forgiven; help to be turned around, to be re-trained, to be re-minded that we do not have all the answers, that we do not see all the picture, that we do not have it all figured out; and that maybe – just maybe – we need to shut our mouths and open our ears – and our hearts and minds and lives – to the word of God and the voice of the Lord and the leading of the Spirit that we might know and claim and embrace and live the peace we both yearn for and yet all-too-often resist with every fiber of our being.

And that's a tall order.

Yet that's the real call to peace. That's the real vision for peace. For it means that we have to change our ways – or have them changed for us, by the grace of God. It means we have to be more like the lamb and less like the ravenous lion. We have to be more like the calf and less like the voracious wolf. We have to be more like the young goat and less like the deceptive leopard. For note, in those images, who adapts to whose way of life!

We need to have our lives transformed more into calves, who give of themselves and give from themselves. We need to have our lives transformed more into oxen, who work to serve others. We need to have our lives transformed more into lambs...like the very Lamb of God who leads us in the child-like way of generosity and trust and serving others.

Remember: this one we call the Prince of Peace met an un-peaceful end – because of us.

Yet still, with light from an empty tomb, he yearns for peace for us...and offers peace to us, even with nail-scarred hands and spear-pierced side.

He offers peace to us.

Will we accept it? Will we embrace it? Will we live it?

All it takes is turning around – repentance: changing your heart and mind; changing your life, your ways.

All it costs...is your very life.

And all you gain is...everything.

For this peace – his way – gives you back your very life: transformed, abundant, real.
God's life – in you. That's the "*peace that passes understanding*" of which Paul speaks
(Philippians 4:7).

And isn't that worth some sincere repentance?

***HYMN** "On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry" GtG 96

1. **On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
announces that the Lord is nigh;
awake and hearken, for he brings
glad tidings of the King of kings!**
2. **Then cleansed be every life from sin;
make straight the way for God within,
and let us all our hearts prepare
for Christ to come and enter there.**
3. **We hail you as our Savior, Lord,
our refuge and our great reward;
without your grace we waste away
like flowers that wither and decay.**
4. **Stretch forth your hand; our health restore,
and make us rise to fall no more.
O let your face upon us shine
and fill the world with love divine.**

Words: Charles Coffin, 1736; trans. John Chandler, 1837, alt.
Music: WINCHESTER NEW, *Musikalisches Handbuch*, 1690;
harm. William Henry Monk, 1847, alt.
Public Domain.

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** (from *The Confession of 1967*)

**To be reconciled to God
is to be sent into the world as God's reconciling community.
This community, the church universal,
is entrusted with God's message of reconciliation
and shares God's labor of healing the enmities
which separate people from God and from each other.**

**God's redeeming work in Jesus Christ embraces the whole of human life:
social and cultural, economic and political,
scientific and technological, individual and corporate.
It includes the natural environment as exploited and despoiled by sin.**

(continued...)

**It is the will of God
that the divine purpose for human life shall be fulfilled
under the rule of Christ
and all evil be banished from creation.**

**With an urgency born of this hope,
the church applies itself to present tasks
and strives for a better world.**

**It does not identify limited progress with the kingdom of God on earth,
nor does it despair in the face of disappointment and defeat.**

**In steadfast hope,
the church looks beyond all partial achievement
to the final triumph of God.**

*(The Confession of 1967—Inclusive Language Version © 2002
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation on behalf of the
Office of Theology and Worship. All rights reserved.)*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

**One: Come, Lord Jesus, come.
All: Come to us with peace.**

THE EUCHARIST

OFFERING

Invitation

Reflection

**Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**We give you thanks, Holy God, for all good things:
for this universe and for Earth itself,
for creatures and plants, for water and food, for day and night;
for Jesus Christ,
who set himself before us as the bread and wine of abundant life;
and for the Holy Spirit,
who moves in our midst with the power to lead us to you.
Turn our offerings to your good will,
and turn us always to you in gratitude.
Amen.**

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Invitation to the Lord's Table

Prayer of Thanksgiving

One: The Lord be with you.
All: And also with you.
One: Lift up your hearts.
All: We lift them to the Lord.
One: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
All: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

(The prayer continues...)

The Lord's Prayer (Traditional)

**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.**

Breaking of the Bread

Communion of the People

(With the passing of the bread, please wait until all have been served so that all may partake together, reflecting our unity in Christ.)

Sing "In Remembrance of Me" GtG 521

**1. In remembrance of me, eat this bread.
In remembrance of me, drink this wine.
In remembrance of me, pray for the time
when God's own will is done.**

**2. In remembrance of me, heal the sick.
In remembrance of me, feed the poor.
In remembrance of me, open the door
and let your neighbors in,
let them in.**

**Take, eat, and be comforted;
drink and remember, too,
that this is my body and
precious blood shed for you,
shed for you.**

(continued...)

**3. In remembrance of me, search for truth.
In remembrance of me, always love.
In remembrance of me, don't look above,
but in your heart, look for God.**

Do this in remembrance of me.

Words: Ragan Courtney, 1972
Music: RED, Buryl Red, 1972
© 1972 Broadman Press (admin. Music Services). Renewed
2000 Van Ness Press, Inc. *Used by permission through CCLI
License #11178434 & #20702248 / #2457662 & #20854354.*

(With the passing of the cup, please partake as soon as received as an
expression of our personal relationship with Christ.)

Prayer

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN “O God of Every Nation” GtG 756**

- 1. O God of every nation,
of every race and land,
redeem the whole creation
with your almighty hand.
Where hate and fear divide us
and bitter threats are hurled,
in love and mercy guide us
and heal our strife-torn world.**
- 2. From search for wealth and power
and scorn of truth and right,
from trust in bombs that shower
destruction through the night,
from pride of race and station
and blindness to your way,
deliver every nation,
eternal God, we pray.**
- 3. Lord, strengthen those who labor
that all may find release
from fear of rattling saber,
from dread of war's increase;**

(continued...)

**when hope and courage falter,
your still small voice be heard;
with faith that none can alter,
your servants undergird.**

**4. Keep bright in us the vision
of days when war shall cease,
when hatred and division
give way to love and peace,
till dawns the morning glorious
when truth and justice reign
and Christ shall rule victorious
o'er all the world's domain.**

Words: William W. Reid, Jr., 1958, alt. © 1958, ren. 1986 The Hymn Society
(admin. Hope Publishing Company). *Used by permission through CCLI License
#11178434 & #20702248 / #2457662 & #20854354.*

Music: LLANGLOFFAN, Welsh folk melody; *Llwybrau Moliant*, 1872; harm.
The English Hymnal, 1906. *Public Domain.*

***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

One: ...And let the gathered people of God say...
All: ...**Amen.**

POSTLUDE

The Advent Candle Liturgy is written by Shardaé Henry and Shea Watts and used by permission. ©
Presbyterian Outlook, 2025.

The Prayer of Confession, Prayers of the People (adapted), and Prayer of Dedication are used by
permission of Westminster John Knox Press from *Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion*. Copyright
2013.

The Prayer of Confession and Prayer for Illumination are written by Teri McDowell Ott and Ginna
Bairby, and used by permission. © Presbyterian Outlook, 2025.

The Prayers of the People (adapted) are used, with permission, from *Fresh Winds of the Spirit, Book 2* by
Lavon Bayler. Copyright 1992 by The Pilgrim Press.

The Prayer of Thanksgiving is used by permission from *Book of Common Worship*, © 1993
Westminster/John Knox Press.