

Holy Eucharist

December 18, 2022

Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85887946777?pwd=ei94MEdsMUh6clV6b2dUblFOQ3I2Zz09>

Meeting ID: 858 8794 6777

Passcode: 782611

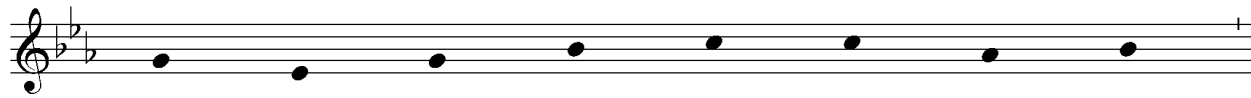
The Fourth Sunday of Advent Year A

Prelude

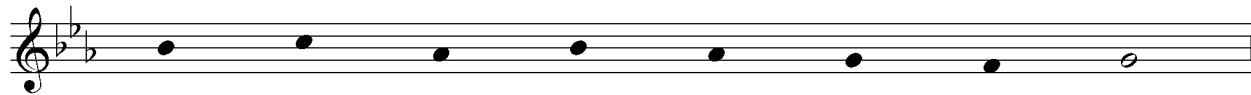
Entrance Hymn

Creator of the stars of night

Hymnal 60



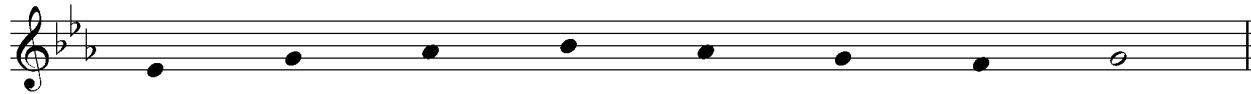
1 Cre - a - tor of the stars of night,
2 In sor - row that the an - cient curse
3 When this old world drew on toward night,
4 At your great Name, O Je - sus, now



1 your peo - ple's ev - er - last - ing light,
2 should doom to death a u - ni - verse,
3 you came; but not in splen - dor bright,
4 all knees must bend, all hearts must bow:



1 O Christ, Re - deem - er of us all,
2 you came, O Sa - vior, to set free
3 not as a mon - arch, but the child
4 all things on earth with one ac - cord,



1 we pray you hear us when we call.
2 your own in glo - rious li - ber - ty.
3 of Ma - ry, blame - less mo - ther mild.
4 like those in heaven, shall call you Lord.

Presider Blessed are you, holy and living One

People **You come to your people and set them free.**

The Presider begins the Collect for Purity

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: **Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Kyrie: *Lord, have mercy upon us*

Hymnal S-91

The musical score is written on five staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are: Lord, have mer - cy up - on us. Lord, have mer - cy up - on us. Lord, have mer - cy up - on us. Christ, have mer - cy up - on us. Christ, have mer - cy up - on us. Christ, have mer - cy up - on us. Lord, have mer - cy up - on us. Lord, have mer - cy up - on us. The melody is simple and hymn-like, with a final cadence on the fifth staff.

Collect of the Day

Presider The Lord be with you.
People **And also with you.**
Presider Let us pray.

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

All sit.

First Reading

Isaiah 7: 10-16

A Reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

¹⁰Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. ¹²But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test. ¹³Then Isaiah said: “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. ¹⁵He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.”

Reader The word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Remain seated.

Psalm 80:1-7,16-18

to be prayed responsively

¹Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; *
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.
²**In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, ***
stir up your strength and come to help us.
³Restore us, O God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.
⁴**O LORD God of hosts, ***
how long will you be angered despite the prayers of your people?
⁵You have fed them with the bread of tears; *
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.
⁶**You have made us the derision of our neighbors, ***
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.
⁷Restore us, O God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.
¹⁶**Let your hand be upon the man of your right hand, ***
the son of man you have made so strong for yourself.
¹⁷And so will we never turn away from you; *
give us life, that we may call upon your Name.
¹⁸**Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; ***
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

Second Reading

Romans 1:1-7

A Reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans.

¹Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,
²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Reader The word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

All stand as they are able.

Sequence Hymn

Hymnal 56

O come, O come Emmanuel



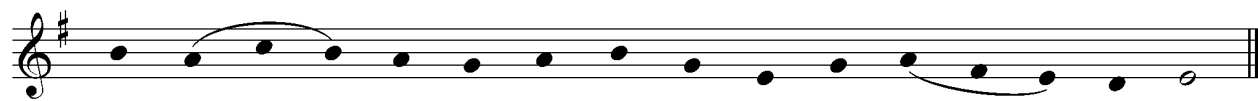
1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som
 7 O come, De - sire of na - tions, bind in one the
 8 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som



1 cap - tive Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile
 7 hearts of all man - kind; bid thou our sad di - vi - sions
 8 cap - tive Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile



1 here un - til the Son of God ap - pear. **Re- joice! Re- joice!**
 7 cease, and be thy - self our King of Peace.
 8 here un - til the Son of God ap - pear.



Em - man - u - el shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!

All remain standing as they are able.

Holy Gospel

Matthew 1:18-25

Gospeller The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

People **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

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, ²⁵but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Gospeller The Gospel of the Lord.

People **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

All sit.

Sermon

All stand as they are able.

Nicene Creed

Presider Let us affirm the faith of the Church using the words of the Nicene Creed.

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary**

**and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father [and the Son],
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

All remain standing as they are able.

Prayers of the People

Presider Sisters and brothers, from the depths of our interior mansions, and in heightened expectancy of the coming of the Messiah, let us offer our prayers, responding, “O come, O come, Emmanuel.”

Intercessor O come, Emmanuel and purify our conscience, that we may be an empty vessel prepared for the coming of your Word. Let us pray; **O come, O come, Emmanuel.**

Silence is kept.

Intercessor O Desire of Nations, free us from the division that separates nations and peoples, and fill the leaders of the world with a passion for peace. Let us pray; **O come, O come, Emmanuel.**

Silence is kept.

Intercessor O Come, Emmanuel, lift up those who are lowly, and raise from the dead those who have fallen asleep. Let us pray; **O come, O come, Emmanuel.**

Silence is kept.

Intercessor In the communion of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Joseph, St Barnabas, and all your saints, let us continue our prayers. We pray today for our Bishops Bonnie,

Michael, Justin, Elizabeth, Donald and Craig. Bless all ministers, priests, deacons, ministry teams, those in formation; and our brothers and sisters worshipping at Christ Church, Pleasant Lake, and St Andrew's, Livonia; those in The Anglican Church of Korea; and for all the members of Christ's body.

Silence is kept.

We give you praise and thanks today for [_____] and the blessings of this life. All that we are, and all that we have, is a gift from you.

Silence is kept.

We pray for the sick, and for those in any need or trouble [especially_____]. May the weary sleep in your heavenly peace; may the distressed feel your healing arms around them.

Silence is kept.

We pray for those who have died [especially_____]. May those who mourn for them be comforted; may their souls rest in peace.

Silence is kept.

Presider O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, hope of the nations and their savior: come and save us! Make us watchful and keep us faithful, O Lord our God, as we await the coming of your Son our Lord; that, when he shall appear, he may not find us sleeping in sin but active in his service and joyful in his praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

All then kneel as they are able

Confession of Sin

The Presider says

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. *1 John 1:8, 9*

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Silence may be kept.

Minister and People

**Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
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.
For the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.**

A Priest stands and says

Almighty God have mercy on you, + forgive you all your sins through the grace of Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

All stand as they are able

Peace

Priest The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People **And also with you.**

The Ministers and the People may greet one another in the name of the Lord.

The People then are seated.

Announcements

Holy Communion

Presider Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. For everything in heaven and on earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom, and you are exalted as head over all. *1 Chronicles 29:11*

Representatives of the congregation bring the people's offerings of bread and wine, and money or other gifts, to the Presider.

The people stand as they are able when the offerings are presented and placed on the Altar.

Offertory Hymn

Doxology

**Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, you heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**

The people remain standing as they are able

Great Thanksgiving

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

The Presider proceeds

Bountiful God, we give our thanks to you,
for you brought into being your glorious creation, and
crafted human life in your image.

Your prophets promised that a virgin would conceive a son,
the One in whom your truth would live, God with us.

Through the voice of Mary, your Holy Spirit rejoiced
in the wonder of the child eternally begotten of the Father.

Through the lips of Joseph you spoke the long-awaited name Emmanuel.
A sword pierced their hearts when your Son Jesus was crucified at the hands of sinners,
but in his resurrection you make a new family of the redeemed,
the restored, and the renewed.

And so with angels and archangels and all the company of earth and heaven,
we lift our voices in joyful celebration as we proclaim your unending praise.

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

The Presider continues

Living God, as your Son was nourished by Mary's body,
feed and nourish us, your body, with this holy meal, your very self,
that we may grow into fullness of life, dwelling in you
as your Spirit breathes through us.

Send your Holy Spirit + on us now, that we may be your one, holy, catholic,
and apostolic body, to nourish the life of your world.

Send your Spirit upon this bread and this cup, that they may be for us
the body and blood of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord;
who, at supper with his disciples, took bread,
gave you thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to them, saying,
"Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup.

Again he gave you thanks, and gave it to his disciples, saying,
"Drink this, all of you: this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Presider and People

Great is the mystery of faith.
Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

*The Presider continues; the People pray the text in **Bold Font**.*

Fearless God, who came in a dream to Joseph, dream anew through us today.

Speak into our places of fear.

Transcend and transform all that keeps us from living your dream.

Cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today.

Dream into life in this very place a church renewed

by the leading of your Spirit.

Dream through our hands and feet your kingdom,

where the hungry are filled with good things, the lowly lifted up,

and the oppressed set free, until that day

when the life of heaven and earth shall be made one,

and all your children gather in glory around you,

everlasting God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

The Presider then continues

As our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray:

**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.
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, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

A period of silence is kept.

The Presider says

Community of saints, beloved of God,
we are invited to come and gather at the table of love and liberation,
to feast on the dreams of God,
to be nourished by a taste of what God desires to do among us.

Come, and love relentlessly; following Christ on paths of uncertainty,
taking risks for one another,
calling down unjust power from its throne
and lifting up the lowly, the impoverished, the burdened.

**Blessed are those, Jesus said, who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.**

The Presider then says

And so let us come to the table, expectant, eager, open.
**May we taste the rich blessings of heaven
born from unexpected places, and people, and experiences.**

Give us the grace to remember that we are all one body, because we all share in Christ's love and life. For all of us who cannot gather at this altar today, may we remember that we are fully beloved, that God dwells in each of our hearts.

For those of us who are present at this altar, may we remember that we are connected far beyond this time and place with all those who pray.

God's holy gifts, for God's holy people.

All are welcome to receive Holy Communion.

Remaining seated, the following is sung after all have received, and the table is being cleared.

Post-Communion Hymn

Hymnal 339

Deck thyself, my soul, with gladness

I Deck thy - self, my soul, with glad - ness, leave the
gloom - y haunts of sad - ness, come in - to the day - light's
splen - dor, there with joy thy prais - es ren - der

un - to him whose grace un - bound - ed hath this

won-drous ban-quet found - ed— high o'er all the heavens he

reign - eth, yet to dwell with thee he deign - eth.

The Presider then says

Let us pray.

Presider and People

**God of abundance,
 you have fed us
 with the bread of life and cup of salvation;
 you have united us
 with Christ and one another;
 and you have made us one
 with all your people in heaven and on earth.
 Now send us forth
 in the power of your Spirit,
 that we may proclaim your redeeming love to the world
 and continue for ever
 in the risen life of Christ our Savior. Amen.**

Dismissal and Blessing

A priest blesses the people, saying

May our hearts be filled by our long-awaited Savior. May our community be graced with patient expectation. May Christ be with us in all the chaos. **Amen.**

May we learn to live in the Way of Emmanuel. May we have listening hearts, open minds, and generous spirits. **Amen.**

And may the blessing of God Almighty, † the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you for ever. **Amen.**

Closing Hymn

LEVAS 14

Soon and very soon



1. Soon and ver - y soon_____ we are goin' to see the King, _____
2. No more cry - in' there_____ we are goin' to see the King, _____
3. No more dy - in' there_____ we are goin' to see the King, _____
4. Soon and ver - y soon_____ we are goin' to see the King; _____



1. Soon and ver - y soon_____ we are goin' to see the King, _____
2. No more cry - in' there_____ we are goin' to see the King, _____
3. No more dy - in' there_____ we are goin' to see the King, _____
4. Soon and ver - y soon_____ we are goin' to see the King; _____

1. Soon and ver - y soon_____ we are goin' to see the King,
 2. No more cry - in' there_____ we are goin' to see the King,
 3. No more dy - in' there_____ we are goin' to see the King,
 4. Soon and ver - y soon_____ we are goin' to see the King;

Hal - le - lu - jah, Hal - le - lu - jah,_____ we're goin' to see the King!

1.2. 3.4.
 Hal - le - lu - jah, Hal - le - lu -

jah, Hal - le - lu - jah, Hal - le - lu - jah.

Dismissal

Minister Go in peace to love and serve Jesus Christ our Savior.
People **Thanks be to God.**

Postlude

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Our Christmas Eve worship service will begin at 7:30 pm

Christmas Day (Sunday) worship service will be at 10:00 am.
Both services will use the Sunday Zoom link.

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Faith in Action provides leadership in collecting donations of food to support households in need in the Chelsea and Dexter areas. **If you bring food directly to FIA**, please let [Nancy](#) know, so she can continue to keep our records of donation. If you write a check, please make it to *Faith In Action*, with “St Barnabas” on the memo line. The **next Food In-Gathering is January 22, 2023**. Please contribute as generously as you can.

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Compline for Advent 4 will be held via Zoom on **Weds. Dec.21 at 7:00 pm**. Zoom link: <https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/86179980160?pwd=YVhPR2FWMDhsOEpsUkhBZ3RuYXV1Zz09> or use 861 7998 0160 passcode 046006

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Upcoming Commemorations

- Dec. 19 Lillian Trasher: Missionary in Egypt, 1961
- 20 Katharina von Bora, Church Reformer, 1552
- 21 Thomas the Apostle
- 22 Henry Budd: Priest, 1875; and, Charlotte Digges Moon: Missionary in China, 1912
- 24 The Eve of the Nativity of Our Lord, Jesus Christ

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December 18, 2022 Advent 4A Fourth Week of Advent: Journeying in the World

As we come closer to the joy and promise of the Incarnation, we invite you to continue journeying the Way of Love. Consider this week: which of the seven practices captured your imagination this Advent? Which challenged you or brought the most joy? Where did you find blessings or cross boundaries? Where is God calling you to witness to salvation being birthed into the world today?



Sunday, December 18 WORSHIP

Linger before leaving your worship time today. How is God calling you to hear and sing along with Mary's Song? Read Luke 1:39-55.

Monday, December 19

GO

out into your neighborhood today. Where is God at work? Ask God to show you how you can celebrate that good work and name God's presence in your community.

Tuesday, December 20

LEARN

Read Habakkuk 2:1-4. Does this reading remind you of Thomas the disciple? Why do you think the folks who organized the lectionary picked this reading from the Old Testament for this friend of Jesus?

Wednesday, December 21

PRAY

Pray along with the Collect for Advent 4, found on page 212 in The Book of Common Prayer. Pick three or four of your beloveds to focus your prayers on today. Make sure to leave some silent space for God to offer you some wisdom about what they may need right now.

Thursday, December 22

BLESS

Make sure to pick up an extra present or two — a nice candy sampler or a warm pair of slippers or pajama pants, just in case you have extra friends or guests drop by. Ask God to bless those who travel and those who may be alone in the coming days. Take some bottled water and sports drinks over to your local community cold weather shelter. They will be extra glad to have that during the winter months.

Friday, December 23

TURN

If you are gathering with friends and family today, consider taking time during the meal to turn to the folks on your right, and then on your left, to thank them for their love in your life. See how this might spread some joy and comfort around the table — or maybe even ease some potentially prickly guests.

Saturday, December 24

REST

The conventional wisdom is that new parents should rest when the baby is resting. Make sure you take some time out to rest with Baby Jesus — and marvel in the wonder of a fresh, new, clean, shiny, tiny, precious start. Take a nap and thank God for the gift of Jesus and for peace at Christmas.

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December 18, 2022 Advent 4A

Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25

Participating in God's Plan

by the Rt. Rev. Frank Logue, 11th Episcopal Bishop of Georgia

God breaks into human history bringing divine plans to fruition through ordinary people. We see this pattern all through scripture, from the patriarch Abraham to the persecutor of Christians, Saul, who becomes the Apostle Paul. And from Deborah and Esther, who bring hope

to their people, to Mary Magdalene, who was a witness to the Resurrection sent as the “apostle to the apostles” with the Good News.

This pattern of God working through people is no less true in the most important divine plan in history, as the Word became flesh in Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us. God used Mary and Joseph in a plan to turn the world upside-down, which was really setting everything right once more, in Jesus. Knowing them as St. Mary and St. Joseph can hide the fact that, though this couple was amazing, unique in all history even, they were also very much human.

In our Gospel reading, we see that Joseph is a person with hopes and dreams for his own life, who found himself taking this critical role in history. When we meet Joseph, he is engaged to Mary and learns that she is pregnant. God uses a dream to get Joseph’s attention. Joseph hearing from an angel in his sleep is not so different from what you and I can experience. Sure, we can sometimes have dreams that get our attention, but we can also find the Holy Spirit breaking into our imagination. More often, God uses messengers to get our attention, like Mary’s relative Elizabeth, who confirmed what Mary had already heard from the angel. God often uses other people to assist us in seeing what God is doing in our lives. A godly friend can be very important as we test out whether our great idea is something the Holy Spirit is prompting us to do.

God does not make anyone act but rather invites us to take part in what God is doing in the world. In Luke’s Gospel, we read of how the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, with Mary later responding, “Let it be with me according to your word.”

Here in Matthew’s Gospel, we find Joseph wanting to do the right thing. Breaking an engagement took a divorce decree, and divorce had to be requested by either party and witnessed by three others to be legal, so it was not as easy a matter as it might be today to end an engagement. Joseph wants to handle this in a way that would not harm Mary. Then an angel comes to Joseph in a dream, saying, “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. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

Joseph believes the dream, and Matthew tells us, “When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife.” Joseph accepted the invitation to participate in God’s plan of salvation, just as Mary had already done.

So, Joseph marries Mary. She has a child whom Joseph names Jesus, which means “God saves.” God will save and God will do it through Jesus, but Mary and Joseph were essential to the plan. Mary had to consent to the pregnancy and Joseph to the marriage.

God rarely acts in history with this sort of intervention. Jesus will anger a hometown crowd with this assertion years later, saying, “The truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for 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.”

Through the Incarnation, we see how God acts, even in the extraordinary case of the birth of Jesus. While God becoming human in Jesus is a once-in-all-history event, God does regularly prompt people like you and me to take part in God’s hopes and dreams for our world. We are invited to participate in what God is doing through serving others, as though we are serving Jesus.

Jesus describes this in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, describing the actions of the faithful: “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick

and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Those who cared for others will be surprised, not knowing that they cared for Jesus, who will then explain, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

This parable is all the more poignant when we see Jesus’ humble origins. The King of Creation was not born in a palace to a life of luxury. After Jesus is born, Mary and Joseph will take him to the Temple to offer two turtledoves; the Torah required a lamb together with either a turtledove or a pigeon to be offered for the birth of a son or daughter. However, Leviticus 12:8 noted that poor families could offer two birds instead, as a lamb would present a financial hardship. The Holy Family qualifies for what amounts to a hardship discount. Jesus will later serve others on the road where he is frequently a guest who relies on the hospitality of others, as a stranger welcomed by others. Jesus sees the needs around him everywhere among the members of his human family.

God will find a way to care for those in need, using someone else if we fail to respond. God will work out God’s purposes through whoever is willing to listen to the promptings of their hearts. While you and I will not be invited to such a momentous task as Joseph, we no less can take part in what God is doing. Jesus makes it clear that small acts of providing food for the hungry and drink for the thirsty are of eternal significance. In these small yet meaningful ways, we get to participate in the coming Reign of God by being God’s hands and feet in the world. This is part of how God breaks into human history, bringing divine plans to fruition through ordinary people.

As we journey these last days to our celebration of Jesus’ birth, our eyes should be open anew to how God is giving us the opportunity to respond to a divine invitation. For in caring for those in need, we are serving the Emmanuel, the God who is with us, in Jesus. When we show care for those who would otherwise be lost and left out, we are doing so for the one whose First Advent we celebrate, even as we await Jesus’ coming again in glory.

1. Share a story about a time you felt that God was using you and your talents to accomplish something in the world.

2. What are some ministries your congregation undertakes to serve the hungry, thirsty, naked, incarcerated, or strangers in your midst? Can you articulate the connection between your faith and that work?

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Eucharistic Prayer from Wells, Samuel and Abigail Kocher, *Eucharistic prayers*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016, pp.54-55.
Invitation to the Table from <https://enfleshed.com/pages/communion-liturgies> Accessed 14 November 2019
Dismissal prayer adapted from “Our Advent Prayer,” The Academy for Vocational Leadership, 2018.

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Our Mission:

We seek to grow as diverse disciples of Jesus Christ, and to serve Jesus by serving others in the world, guided by the values of Ancient Rites, Open Minds, and Affirming Hearts.



St Barnabas Episcopal Church

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