

"A Place at the Table (Peace)"

Second Sunday of Advent

Prelude

Greetings and Announcements

We Open the Door
(Threshold Moment)

[music begins to underscore the following words]

Leader: Like the childhood game of "musical chairs," we are convinced that there are not enough places at the table. And so we shrink the guest list just in case there is not enough, and we scramble to occupy the chairs first. And yet our sacred texts invite us to imagine and make real the gathering of all people to the table, robed in the garments of a Peace that comes with justice. This is what really matters–this is the fruit of what is right and good.

[choir/ensemble or soloist sings once; if you are processing a light (see the Visual document for ideas), it comes forward during the singing]

Peace waits for us at Advent.
Peace waits for us to rest.
Peace waits for our acceptance
of the truth that we are blessed.

In this time of preparation
for the work of co-creation,
for the birthing of a world
of gentleness and play,
Peace is born in us each day!

Reader(s):

Today we offer the Light of Peace to illumine the Door of Welcome.
May this light shine in our hearts, in our lives, and in our church.
May Peace awaken us to possibilities and lead us to greater hospitality.
There *IS* room in this Inn, a House for the Holy.

[Repeat the theme song with the congregation as the Readers return to their seats]

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The Peace

The Peace of Christ be with you!
And also with you!

As we rise in body or spirit for our opening hymn, I invite you to pass the peace of Christ with those around you (and the people worshiping at home)!

Opening Hymn/Song

"People Look East"
Chalice 142, GTG 105, ELW 248, UMH 202, VU 9, W&R 161
or
"Prepare the Way"

Children's Time

See Children's Time Document in downloads for scripts by Mark Burrows.

First Reading

Baruch 5: 1-5 (CEB)

Take off your mourning clothes
and oppression, Jerusalem!
Dress yourself in the dignity
of God's glory forever.
Wrap the justice that comes from God around yourself like a robe.
Place the eternal one's glory
on your head like a crown.
God will show your brilliance everywhere under heaven.
God will give you this name
by which to be called forever:
The Peace That Comes from Justice,
The Honor That Comes
from Reverence for God!
Get up, Jerusalem!
Stand on the high place,
and look around to the east!
See your children gathered
from the west to the east
by the holy one's word,
as they rejoice that God has remembered them.

Anthem

"For Everyone Born"
or
"More Than Welcome Here"

Second Reading

Philippians 1: 3-11 (CEB)

I thank my God every time I mention you in my prayers. I'm thankful for all of you every time I pray, and it's always a prayer full of joy. I'm glad because of the way you have been my partners in the ministry of the gospel from the time you first believed it until now. I'm sure about this: the one who started a good work in you will stay with you to complete the job by the day of Christ Jesus. I have good reason to think this way about all of you because I keep you in my heart. You are all my partners in God's grace, both during my time in prison and in the defense and support of the gospel. God is my witness that I feel affection for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus.

This is my prayer: that your love might become even more and more rich with knowledge and all kinds of insight. I pray this so that you will be able to decide what really matters and so you will be sincere and blameless on the day of Christ. I pray that you will then be filled with the fruit of righteousness, which comes from Jesus Christ, in order to give glory and praise to God.

Sermon

See downloads for Sermon Fodder document to get jumpstarted.

Prayers of the People

[the refrain is played through once, then the people sing]

[Sung]
Make of my heart a stable,
a house for the holy,
a warm and sturdy place
for [peace] to live and grow.
[sparse musical underscoring may continue under the Leader's words]

In this moment we open the doors of our hearts to honesty before God
about what we've done and left undone that created less peace in a hurting world.
Let us breathe out this regret… *[pause to breathe out]*
and breathe in the life-giving, for-giving Spirit of God… *[pause to breathe in]*
and out again with the Peace of Christ… *[another breath out].*

[Sung]
Make of my life a stable,
a house for the holy,
a warm and sturdy place
for [peace] to live and grow.
[sparse musical underscoring may continue under the Leader's words]

In this moment we open the doors of our lives to the call of the Spirit,
inviting us to become more than we can ask or imagine.
Let us breathe out our fear… *[pause to breathe out]*
and breathe in the courage of the Spirit of God… *[pause to breathe in]*
and out again, with the Peace of Christ… *[another breath out].*

[Sung]
Make of our church a stable,
a house for the holy,
a warm and sturdy place
for [peace] to live and grow.
[music concludes]

In this moment we open the doors of this church, filling it with
the compassion of Christ for all those who are struggling.
We remember and pray for…
[continue with prayers in the manner that best suits your community or use the following intercessions with silent pauses between]

… those who are suffering economic hardship, and insecurity in basic needs;
may abundance be shared.

… those who are suffering mentally, finding it difficult to cope;
may paths open and hope return.

… those who are suffering illness or injury;
may healing abound.

…. those who are suffering loneliness and isolation;
may companionship and solace arrive.

… those who are suffering discrimination, fear and violence;
may they know respect, respite, and safety.

May the Advent of Compassion be born in us,
reside within us,
move outward from us,
to meet the needs of the world,
making a house for the Holy that is each and every child of God.

We pray this in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray:
[The Prayer of Jesus]

A Story of Innkeeping: Offering

This is a moment of inspiration, either a story of your own church opening its doors in a special way or one of our stories in the downloads. It is a moment to affirm and to challenge… what can WE do with what we have? You could begin the story with something like this:

Leader: Some scholars have wondered if "The Inn" and its "Keeper" were part of Joseph's family–after all, he went back to his hometown for the census. Or perhaps Joseph's own family did not or could not make room for them and they had to look elsewhere for a place to lay their head. As many of us know, family can be complicated. We'll never know the real circumstances of Joseph's family relations but the story can help us gain deeper compassion for what we DO know–too many people experience rejection, even from family. What if we endeavored to BE family to those who need it most, to "house the Holy" in ways we have not yet imagined?

[Communion]

Insert Holy Communion here (see separate download for liturgy) if your community will practice it on this week.

Closing Carol

Leader: For today's closing carol we sing "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear," a carol written by Edmund Sears and one of the earliest social gospel hymns written. Sears was writing from Boston in the years just before the Civil War began and this hymn emphasizes the message of the angels, "peace on earth, goodwill to all." You can hear this clearly in a stanza missing from some hymnals: *[see more about this history HERE].*

"But with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song, which they bring:
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing!"

Let us remember that in true peace, all can hear the love-song of the angels. Let us offer our own love-song now.

"It Came Upon the Midnight Clear"
AAHH 215, Chalice 153, GTG 123, ELW 282, NCH 131, UMH 218, VT 248, VU 44, W&R 191

Benediction

May God's Door of Welcome
swing open in your heart and in your life.

May Christ's humble first dwelling
remind you of the plenty you already know.

And may the Spirit lead you into
more possibility and hospitality than you can imagine,
making room in The Inn for all.

May it be so for you.
May it be so for us.
May it be so for this church.
Amen.

Postlude