

"Making Room (Hope)"

First Sunday of Advent

Prelude

Greetings and Announcements

We Open the Door

(Threshold Moment)

"Hope Waits for Us at Advent"

Original song by Amanda Udis-Kessler, scores and recordings in downloads.

[music begins to underscore the following words]

Leader: The pandemic has laid bare, and widened, economic disparity locally and globally. As we enter the Advent season, how can our church become a house where the Holy will be born anew–offering respite, sustenance and care, opening the doors ever wider to those seeking shelter from the onslaught of life? No one church can do it all, but each can do something. As we study the biblical prophets that call us to care for our neighbors and "make room in the inn," the lonely and frightened spaces within us are filled with the light of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

[choir/ensemble or soloist sings once; you may want to forego the descant this first time so the people hear and learn the melody;
if you are processing a light (see the Visual document for ideas),
it comes forward during the singing]

Hope waits for us at Advent
Hope waits for us to trust.
Hope waits for our commitment
to a land that's kind and just.

In this time of preparation
for the work of co-creation,
for the birthing of a world
that heals the ones in pain.
Hope is born in us again!

Reader(s):

Today we offer the Light of Hope to illumine the Door of Welcome.
May this light shine in our hearts, in our lives, and in our church.
May Hope 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]

Hope waits for us at Advent
Hope waits for us to trust.
Hope waits for our commitment
to a land that's kind and just.
In this time of preparation
for the work of co-creation,
for the birthing of a world
that heals the ones in pain.
Hope is born in us again!

The Peace

The Hope 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 a "wave" of peace to the people around you (and the people worshiping at home)!

Opening Hymn/Song

"Unsettled World"
FWS/STF 2283
or
"Hail to the Lord's Anointed"
Chalice 140; GTG 149; LW 82; NCH 104; UMH 203; VU 30
or
"Living Hope"
Songselect 7106807

Children's Time

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

First Reading

Jeremiah 33: 14-16 (CEB)

The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill my gracious promise with the people of Israel and Judah. In those days and at that time, I will raise up a righteous branch from David's line, who will do what is just and right in the land. In those days, Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is what he will be called: The Lord Is Our Righteousness.

Anthem

"The Manger is Stranger"
[choral arrangement included in downloads]
or
"The Yearning"
[more advanced choir]
or
"Hope"
[soloist/band]

Second Reading

Psalm 25: 4-5 (CEB)

Make your ways known to me, Lord;
teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth—teach it to me—
because you are the God who saves me.
I put my hope in you all day long.

Sermon

See downloads for Sermon Fodder document to get jumpstarted.

Prayers of the People

"Make of My Heart a Stable"

Original song by Amanda Udis-Kessler, scores and recordings in downloads.

[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 [hope] 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 hope 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 breath 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 [hope] 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 breath 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 [hope] 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: The Bible doesn't actually mention an Innkeeper in the story of Jesus' birth. But this popular notion is alive in our imaginations. Sometimes the Innkeeper gets a bad rap, as if providing substandard accommodations for a family about to go through the birthing process. But what if we saw the innkeeper as someone who, with a full house, thought literally "outside the box" to solve a problem? What if we endeavored to do the same to provide ministry, to "house the Holy" in ways we have not yet imagined? This Advent season we will offer some stories to stir our imagination and stoke the possibilities for our own hospitality.

[Communion]

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

Closing Carol

Leader: Each week of this series we will close out with a Christmas Carol. Yes, Advent is not yet the birth of Christ. However, as we prepare our homes and this house for the Holy, we live in the "already and not yet." We already know "the rest of the story" AND YET we have not seen the fulfillment of a time when suffering ends. Today we sing "O Little Town of Bethlehem," a carol written by Phillips Brooks in 1865 after a horseback ride between Jerusalem and Bethlehem on Christmas Eve *[see more about this history HERE].*
An original verse not included in our hymnals is especially poignant for our theme:

"Where children pure and happy
Pray to the blessed Child,
Where misery cries out to thee,
Son of the Mother mild;
Where charity stands watching
And faith holds wide the door,
The dark night wakes, the glory breaks,
And Christmas comes once more."

Let us remember that it was in a little and unassuming town where the Holy was housed. We too can offer light and hope and a place where "faith holds wide the door," even and especially in our little town.

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"
Chalice 144; GTG 121; LW 59; NCH 133; UMH 230; VU 64

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