

The Third Sunday of Advent

December 17, 2023



We seek to be instruments of God's peace, bearing witness to the love of God in Jesus Christ for all people.

ST. FRANCIS EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Ministers: Every member of the Congregation



Welcome in the name of the living Christ to St. Francis Church! May you find renewed grace and peace as we worship together today. St. Francis is an Episcopal Church, part of the wider ministry of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts. If you are visiting with us today, please help us get to know you by introducing yourself at the door, and also by signing our guest book or filling out a pew card. *Please be sure to include an email address if you wish to be added to our mailing list.*

Please remember to take your cell phone or electronic device off silent mode at the end of worship.

You are invited to enter in reverence and awe of God's presence in this holy place. Before the liturgy begins we commend the keeping of silence as a time for prayer and reflection. The holy season of Advent is a time of watchfulness and a season of preparation. We are eager to celebrate the feast of the Incarnation – Christmas. But as with all “pregnancies” there is first a time for waiting.

All baptized persons – regardless of denomination or age – are invited to receive the sacrament with us. All are welcome to the Table; even if you choose to not receive, you may wish to receive a blessing. Gluten-free bread is provided for those who request it; please let one of the clergy or ushers know of your request.

ABOUT OUR WORSHIP:

The liturgy that we use for worship is from the red Book of Common Prayer (**BCP**). **Bold** print is to be spoken by the people of God.

The hymnals used for our worship service are indicated by their name, and the specific hymn by its associated number. The blue hymnal book located in your pew book rack is the “1982 Hymnal.”

THE ADVENT WREATH: The Advent wreath, as we know it today, was first used in 16th century Germany. The Advent wreath may have some local differences and meanings, but in general, the wreath has four candles around the wreath, and one candle in the center. The candles can be seen with varying colors: sometimes purple (meaning a season of penitence, much like Lent), or they may be a deep blue (meaning a season of hope and waiting). The candle representing the Third Sunday of Advent is often pink, to represent “Joy” and is called “Gaudete Sunday” (from the Latin, “Gaudete in Domino semper” meaning, “Rejoice in the Lord always”). The candle in the center is nearly always white, to represent the purity of Christ.

HOLY EUCHARIST – RITE II

GATHERING HYMN: 10:00 a.m. *O Come, O Come Emmanuel verses 5-6* **Hymnal 56**

PROCESSIONAL HYMN: 10:00 a.m. *Savior of the nations, come!* **Hymnal 54**

THE WORD OF GOD

ACCLAMATION AND COLLECT FOR PURITY **BCP 355**

Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And Blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.

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: 8:00 a.m. (*spoken*) Lord, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.** Lord, have mercy.
10:00 a.m. (*sung*)

Hymnal S-96

COLLECT OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING: *Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11*

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples;

all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Canticle 15

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,

my spirit rejoices in God my Savior;

for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:

the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him

in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,

he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,

and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,

and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel,

for he has remembered his promise of mercy,

The promise he made to our fathers,

to Abraham and his children for ever.

SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil. May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SEQUENCE HYMN: 10:00 a.m.

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry

Hymnal 76

GOSPEL: John 1:6-8,19-28

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

Glory to you, Lord Christ.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Christ

SERMON:

The Rev. Jane S. Griesbach

THE NICENE CREED

BCP 358

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:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
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.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He 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.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE - FORM IV

BCP 388

Let us pray for the Church and for the world.

Grant, Almighty God, that all who confess your Name may be united in your truth, live together in your love, and reveal your glory in the world.

...for Michael, our Presiding Bishop; Doug, our Bishop; for our own parish of St. Francis, our clergy, staff, wardens and vestry; for the ministry of unCommon Ground; for the mission of Renewal Works
...for The Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea; for the parish of St. Matthew's, Worcester; for the mission of Interfaith Hospitality Network;

Silence

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Guide the people of this land, and of all the nations, in the ways of justice and peace; that we may honor one another and serve the common good.

...for Joe, our President and Maura, our Governor;

...for the men and women of the Armed Forces and their families, especially J. Pigsley, Gregory Smith, Adam Heppe, Jason Haynes, Mark Williams, Jacob Pezzini, Tyler Jeck, Daniel Roy, David Lane, Riley Smith, Andy Kimball;

...for peace throughout the world; for the victims of war and terrorism, for the people of Ukraine and Afghanistan, for peace in Sudan, Yemen, and the region of the Middle East; and for those facing famine and drought in Somalia and the Horn of Africa;

Silence

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Give us all a reverence for the earth as your own creation, that we may use its resources rightly in the service of others and to your honor and glory.

Silence

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours, and grant that we may serve Christ in them, and love one another as he loves us.

...for those in our Parish Cycle of Prayer: Will and Carol Ames; Sudy Asaiante; David and Shirley Asmus; Susan and Michael Bastardo;

Silence

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit; give them courage and hope in their troubles, and bring them the joy of your salvation.

...for those in need of healing: Rich, Eric Warner, Kathleen Lloyd Jones, Isabel, Jack, Jonathan Seale, Al, Ann Murphy, Bill, Elizabeth Heath;

...those suffering from homelessness and all types of addiction and mental illness; the residents and staff of Holden Nursing Home; and those who mourn; and those we name at this time, either silently or aloud;

Silence

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We commend to your mercy all who have died, that your will for them may be fulfilled; and that they may share with Francis, Clare and all your saints in your eternal kingdom.

Silence

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Celebrant adds a final collect.

CONFESSION OF SIN

BCP 360

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

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 your Son 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.

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

THE PEACE

BCP 360

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE HOLY COMMUNION

OFFERTORY HYMN: 10:00 a.m.

Prepare the way, O Zion

Hymnal 65

OFFERTORY PRESENTATION AND DOXOLOGY

8:00 a.m. *All things come of thee, O Lord. **And of Thine own have we given thee.***

10:00 a.m.

Tune: Hymnal 380

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heavenly host: praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.***

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING: *Eucharistic Prayer A*

BCP 361

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People ***And also with you.***

Celebrant Lift up your hearts.

People ***We lift them to the Lord.***

Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People ***It is right to give God thanks and praise.***

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and every where to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

Here a Proper Preface is sung or said on all Sundays, and on other occasions as appointed.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

SANCTUS

8:00 a.m. (spoken)

S-130

10:00 a.m. (sung)

Hymnal S130

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

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

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "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. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. **AMEN.**

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray,

THE LORD'S PRAYER

BCP 364

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 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.

FRACTION ANTHEM:

8:00 a.m. Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. **Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.**

10:00 a.m. Agnus Dei **Hymnal S-164**

Jesus, Lamb of God: have mercy on us. Jesus, bearer of our sins: have mercy on us.

Jesus, redeemer, redeemer of the world, give us your peace, give us your peace.

COMMUNION HYMN: 10:00 a.m.

Humbly I adore thee

Hymnal 314

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

BCP 366

Let us pray.

Almighty and everliving God, we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and for assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the Body of your Son, and heirs of your eternal kingdom. And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

ADVENT BLESSING

RECESSIONAL HYMN: 10:00 a.m.

Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord

Hymnal 437

THE DISMISSAL

Go in peace and walk in the way of Love.

Thanks be to God.

SERVERS THIS WEEKEND:

Altar Guild: Dave Lucas, Mike Reno, Carolyn Schmidt

Nursing Home: Chris Berglund

8:00 a.m.

Reader: Jeremy Sanders

LEM: Dick Delorme

10:00 a.m.

Ushers: Cindy Foley and Sara Studley

Reader/LEM: Linda Shelton

Coffee Hour: Mike Reno

St. Francis Episcopal Church



Bearing Witness
to
Christ's Love

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