



# Sunday, December 14, 2025

## Third Sunday of Advent - Joy

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Welcome to The Beloved Community at The Trees, an Episcopal faith community exploring together what a life of faith “outside of a church” may be. Through our faith in Jesus Christ, we believe that all people are God's beloved and all are welcome, regardless of race, gender identity, sexual identity, ability, faith background, or belief.

In our Baptismal Covenant, we affirm that we will strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being. To remember our baptismal promises, that all are God's beloved, and that we are all one in Christ, we begin each worship gathering with the “Blessing of the Water.”

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### Blessing of the Water

*Reader* We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water. Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise. In it your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us, through his death and resurrection, from the bondage of sin into everlasting life. We thank you, Father, for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit.

*Celebrant* Now bless this water, we pray you, that it may be a sign to us of our Baptism, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

### Opening Acclamation

*Celebrant* Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.

*People* **His mercy endures for ever.**

*Celebrant* Lord, have mercy.

*People* **Christ, have mercy.**

*Celebrant* Lord, have mercy.

## Prepare the way, O Zion

*The Hymnal 1982, #65*

1 Pre - pare the way, O Zi - on, your Christ is draw - ing near!  
2 He brings God's rule, O Zi - on; he comes from heaven a - bove.  
3 Fling wide your gates, O Zi - on; your Sa - vior's rule em - brace.

Let ev - ery hill and val - ley a lev - el way ap - pear.  
His rule is peace and free - dom, and jus - tice, truth, and love.  
His tid - ings of sal - va - tion pro - claim in ev - ery place.

Greet One who comes in glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry.  
Lift high your praise re - sound - ing, for grace and joy a - bound - ing.  
All lands will bow be - fore him, their voic - es will a - dore him.

*Refrain*  
Oh, blest is Christ that came in God's most ho - ly name.

The musical score is written on a single staff in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of four systems of music with lyrics. The first system has three verses. The second system has three lines of lyrics. The third system has three lines of lyrics. The fourth system is the refrain, marked 'Refrain'.

Words: Frans Mikael Franzen (1772-1847); tr. composite; adapt. Charles P. Price (1920-1999). Copyright © 1982, Charles P. Price. Music: *Bereden väg för Herran*, melody from *Then Svenska Psalmboken*, 1697; harm. *Koralbok för Svenska Kyrkan*, 1939, alt.

## The Collect for Purity

*Celebrant*

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*

## A Litany of Hope and Promise

*From The Diocese of Southwark, South London & East Surrey*

*Celebrant* In the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us,  
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to  
guide our feet into the way of peace. As we wait in hope for the coming of  
Christ our Emmanuel, let us pray in peace to the Lord.

*Celebrant* Lord Jesus, you are the hope and promise of the world.  
*People* **Come, Lord Jesus.**

*Celebrant* Lord Jesus, you are our light in the midst of darkness and anxiety.  
*People* **Come, Lord Jesus.**

*Celebrant* O Lord, our Emmanuel, save us from our sins.  
*People* **Come, Lord Jesus.**

*Celebrant* O Lord, the wisdom from on high, deepen our faith and love.  
*People* **Come, Lord Jesus.**

*Celebrant* O Lord, the king of kings, renew the joy of salvation in the lives of all your people.  
*People* **Come, Lord Jesus.**

*Celebrant* O Lord, the Root of Jesse, deliver us from our fears and needs.  
*People* **Come, Lord Jesus.**

*Celebrant* O Lord of David's Key, bring unity among all who believe in you.  
*People* **Come, Lord Jesus.**

*Celebrant* O Lord, the bright light of our day, be the strength of all who love you.  
*People* **Come, Lord Jesus.**

*Celebrant* O Lord, the desire of the nations, grant your peace to all who seek you.  
*People* **Come, Lord Jesus.**

*Celebrant* Lord Jesus, bless us as we bring our prayers before you.  
*People* **Come, Lord Jesus.**

*Celebrant* Lord Jesus, remain with us always.

*People* **Come, Lord Jesus.**

*Celebrant* Lord Jesus Christ, hope of the nations,  
and the strength of all who trust in you;  
grant us the gifts of your hope and joy,  
that we may shine as lights in your world.  
For all peace and glory are yours,  
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

*People* **Amen.**

### Lighting of the Advent Candle - The Candle of Joy

*Reader* We have lit the first two candles, one for **HOPE** and one for **PEACE**. Today we light the third candle, the candle of **JOY**. This should be the easy one, because **JOY** is all around us--in the children, the lights, the music, the gathering together. But how often do we let our preparations--or our memories--push **JOY** to the side? **JOY** is like an underground spring that wells up within us, but **JOY** is also a choice, an attitude. Like a muscle, it needs to be exercised. So today we open ourselves to **JOY**, trusting that God has already planted it in us...all we need to do is give it care and offer to share.

Loving God, we open ourselves to you, trusting that this is how you made up: you created us for joy-filled hearts and lives. Show us the creative power of **hope**. Teach us the **peace** that comes from justice. Fill us with the kind of **joy** that cannot be contained, but must be shared. Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you that we may walk in the light of Christ.

Rejoice in God always, rejoice. For God has created you with the capacity for joy. Trust in God's good will for all of creation and open yourself to God's gentle, transforming love. Go forth in hope, peace, and joy.

### The Collect

*Celebrant* God be with you.

*People* **And within you.**

*Celebrant* 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.**

# Narrative Lectionary Theme ~ Word Accomplishes God's Purpose

*Introduction by Devin McGinnis*

## The First Lesson

***Isaiah 55:1-13***

*Reader*        A reading from Isaiah.

Hear, everyone who thirsts;  
    come to the waters;  
and you who have no money,  
    come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk  
    without money and without price.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread  
    and your earnings for that which does not satisfy?  
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,  
    and delight yourselves in rich food.

Incline your ear, and come to me;  
    listen, so that you may live.  
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,  
    my steadfast, sure love for David.

See, I made him a witness to the peoples,  
    a leader and commander for the peoples.

Now you shall call nations that you do not know,  
    and nations that do not know you shall run to you,  
because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel,  
    for he has glorified you.

Seek the LORD while he may be found;  
    call upon him while he is near;

let the wicked forsake their way  
    and the unrighteous their thoughts;  
let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them,  
    and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven  
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,  
making it bring forth and sprout,  
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,  
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;  
it shall not return to me empty,  
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose  
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

For you shall go out in joy  
and be led back in peace;  
the mountains and the hills before you  
shall burst into song,  
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;  
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle,  
and it shall be to the LORD for a memorial,  
for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

*Reader* Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

*People* **Thanks be to God.**

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*Quiet Reflection on the Reading*

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## The Gospel

***John 4:13-14***

*Deacon* The holy gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John.

*People* **Praise and Glory to God.**

Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

*Deacon*            The good news of our Savior.  
*People*            **Praise be to Christ the Word.**

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*Quiet Reflection on the Reading*

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## Lectionary Discussion

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*What did the Holy Spirit bring to your attention? What good news did you hear?*  
*During this time you are invited to share your thoughts, questions, or insights about our readings.*

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## The Nicene Creed

*People*            **We believe –**  
                      **In the One God:**  
                      **Source of all,**  
                      **ruler of all,**  
                      **maker of heaven and earth:**  
                      **of all things seen or unseen.**  
                      **And in one Lord:**  
                      **Jesus of Nazareth,**  
                      **Christ the Messiah,**  
                      **the only-born Word of God;**  
                      **eternally issued of that of the One:**  
                      **God of God, light of light, true God of true God;**  
                      **issued, not made:**  
                      **the same being as the One;**  
                      **and through whom all things are made;**  
                      **That for us mortals**  
                      **and for our salvation**  
                      **came down from heaven;**

and was made flesh  
of the Holy Spirit  
and the Virgin Mary;  
and became human;  
Was also crucified, for our sake,  
under the reign of Pontius Pilate:  
and suffered, and was buried;  
and arose on the third day,  
in accordance with the scriptures,  
and went back up into heaven;  
and sits in power beside the One:  
and shall come again, in glory,  
to judge those living and dead;  
and whose presence shall have no end.  
And we believe in the Spirit:  
the Holy,  
the Lord,  
and the lifegiving;  
that pours forth of that of the One:  
that with One and Word together  
we worship and glorify as God;  
that speaks in the prophets.  
In one holy, universal, and missionary church:  
we accept one baptism for the forgiveness of sins;  
we await the raising of the dead,  
and the life of the age soon to come.  
Amen.

## Prayers of the People

*Celebrant* In peace and in faith, let us offer our prayers to God. We remember those among us and those we love in our prayers; especially Anthony, Gregory, Kerry, Maureen, Nikki, and Patty.

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*You are invited to share your prayers aloud or silently in your heart. After each prayer is shared aloud, the following response is said. You are also invited to share your prayers on a prayer card and place it in the offering basket next to the baptismal font. Someone from The Beloved Community will take your card home and pray for you over the coming week.*

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This is my prayer.

**This is our prayer.**

*After all prayers have been shared.*

*Celebrant* God of peace, let us your people know, that at the heart of turbulence there is an inner calm that comes from faith in you. Keep us from being content with things as they are, that from this central peace there may come a creative compassion, a thirst for justice, and a willingness to give of ourselves in the spirit of Christ.

*People* **Amen.**

## Confession of Sin

*Celebrant* Therefore let us confess our sins to almighty God.

*A moment of silence for private prayer.*

*People* **Almighty and most merciful God;  
maker of all, judge of all:  
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 neighbor as ourselves.  
We are deeply sorry and we earnestly repent.  
Have mercy upon us, most merciful Lord,  
for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ:  
Forgive us our sins.  
And grant that we may ever hereafter  
serve and please you in newness of life;  
to delight in your will, and walk in your ways,  
to the honor and glory of your name.  
Amen.**

## Absolution

*Celebrant* May almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you

in all goodness, and keep you in eternal life, through Christ  
our Savior. *Amen.*

## The Peace

*Celebrant* May the peace of God be ever with you!

*People* **And within you.**

## Announcements

*During this time we will share announcements for The Beloved Community at The Trees and others.*

## The Offering

*Celebrant* Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God.

*You are invited to share your gifts, financial or other, with the gathered community. During this time of preparation for the Holy Community, you are also invited to remember your baptism.*

## Music for Preparation

*Verses 5-8*

# O come, O come, Emmanuel

*The Hymnal 1982, #56*



(Dec. 23) 1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som  
(Dec. 17) 2 O come, thou Wis - dom from on high, who or - derest  
(Dec. 18) 3 O come, O come, thou Lord of might, who to thy  
(Dec. 19) 4 O come, thou Branch of Jes - se's tree, free them from  
(Dec. 20) 5 O come, thou Key of Da - vid, come, and o - pen  
(Dec. 21) 6 O come, thou Day - spring from on high, and cheer us  
(Dec. 22) 7 O come, De - sire of na - tions, bind in one the  
(Dec. 23) 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  
2 all things might - i - ly; to us the path of know - ledge  
3 tribes on Si - nai's height in an - cient times didst give the  
4 Sa - tan's ty - ran - ny that trust thy might - y power to  
5 wide our heaven - ly home; make safe the way that leads on  
6 by thy draw - ing nigh; dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of  
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.  
 2 show, and teach us in her ways to go.  
 3 law, in cloud, and ma - jes - ty, and awe.  
 4 save, and give them vic - tory o'er the grave. Re - joice! Re - joice!  
 5 high, and close the path to mis - er - y.  
 6 night, and death's dark shad - ow put to flight.  
 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!

*The stanzas may be used as antiphons with "The Song of Mary" on the dates given.*

Words: Latin, ca. 9th cent.; ver. *Hymnal* 1940, alt. Copyright © The Church Pension Fund. Music: *Veni, veni, Emmanuel*, plainsong, Mode 1, Processionale, 15th cent.; adapt. Thomas Helmore (1811-1890); acc. Richard Proulx (b. 1937).

## The Presentation of Our Offerings to God

*Celebrant* All things come of Thee O Lord,  
*People* **And of Thine own have we given Thee.**

## The Holy Communion

*Eucharistic Prayer H*

*Celebrant* God be with you.  
*People* **And within you.**

*Celebrant* Lift up your hearts.  
*People* **We lift them up to the Lord!**

*Celebrant* Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
*People* **It is good and right that we do so.**

*Celebrant* It is very good, right, and our joyful task, always and everywhere  
 to lift thanks up to you, O Lord, our holy Creator, almighty, everlasting God.

For you alone are the one God, the font of all being and the form of all good,

resting beyond time and forever.

That through Christ your eternal Word brings all things into being: sun, moon and stars; earth, wind and waters; and every living thing. That makes all that is made, and breathes life into the earth.

And so raising our voices with angels and archangels and all the chorus of heaven who forever exalt your glory, we praise you rejoicing as we say:

*Celebrant and People*

**Holy, holy, holy,**

**Lord God of all power and might:**

**Heaven and earth are full of your glory;**

**Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed the one who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest!**

*Celebrant*

Most holy and gracious God, in your infinite love you made us in your own image.

And when we fell into sin and met with evil and death, you did not abandon us. For you are the Lord our God. You called your people as a light to the nations. You led them out of bondage and into a new land. You handed down the law, and spoke in the prophets.

And then, in the fullness of time, you in your mercy sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Word, to be born for our sake: to live and die as one of us; to reconcile us to you. Born of a woman, of our very nature, Jesus taught the law, healed the sick, and fed the poor.

And when the time had come, Jesus stretched out arms upon the cross, and died for our salvation. Almighty God, in Christ you bring us out of error into truth, out of sin into grace, out of death into life.

For in the night before God died for us, Jesus took bread; and after giving thanks, our Lord broke it, and gave it to the disciples, saying, "Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

Likewise after supper, Jesus took the cup, and after giving thanks, the Lord gave it to them, saying, "Drink of this, all of you: for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and the many for the forgiveness of sins. As often as you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore O God our heavenly Maker, offering to you your own from your own, we here celebrate the sacrament of faith:

*Celebrant and People*

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

*Celebrant* And we beg you, most merciful God, to hear us, and of your almighty goodness to pour out your Holy Spirit upon us, to bless and sanctify these your creations of bread and wine: that they may be to us the body and blood of your only-born Word, our Saviour Jesus Christ; and that we receiving them may share in that most blessed presence; so that we, and all those who share in your holy communion, may be filled with your grace and heavenly blessing, and in pure love and charity be made one body with Christ our Savior: that Christ may live in us, and we in Christ.

By whom, and with whom, and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is yours, our almighty Creator, time without end.

**Amen!**

*Celebrant* And now as our Savior has taught us, let us pray:

*Celebrant and People*

**Our Lord that is in heaven:**

**blessed be your name.**

**Your dominion come:**

**your will be done**

**on earth, as it is in heaven.**

**Give us today our next day's bread:**

**and forgive us our sins,**

**as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**And leave us not prey to temptation:**

**but deliver us from evil.**

**For yours is the dominion: the power and the glory,**

**for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Breaking of the Bread

*A period of silence is kept.*

*Celebrant*      The Bread of Life!  
*People*          **Let us keep the feast.**

*Celebrant*      The gifts of God for the people of God!  
Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and  
feed on God in your heart by faith, with thanksgiving.

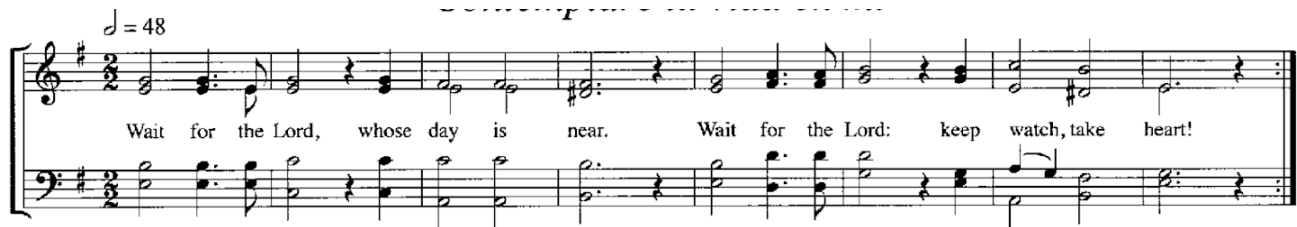
## Time for Prayer and Reflection

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*We will observe a few moments of quiet for personal prayer and reflection following the Eucharist. You are invited to pray where you are or move about the space. Deacon Dan is available for healing prayers and anointing during this time.*

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## Taize & Contemplation



## Post Communion Prayer

*People*          **Almighty and everliving God, we earnestly thank you for feeding us, in this holy sacrament, with the spiritual food of the most blessed presence of our Saviour Jesus Christ; and for assuring us thereby of your favor and goodness towards us; and that we are living members of the body of Christ, the blessed assembly of all faithful people; and may also share, through hope, in your everlasting reign. And we humbly ask you, our heavenly Maker, so to assist us with your grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as you have prepared for us to walk in; through Christ our Savior, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, time without end. Amen.**

## Welcoming and Preparing for Christ Jesus

*All*            **We invite you to take Jesus into your home over this coming week. Welcome him, care for him, hold him, pray with him, and love him, just as he has done for you. And, as you do, know that you also take us, The Beloved Community, with you. We will be praying for you and for a blessed Advent for you and your loved ones. And, we welcome you and the baby Jesus back with us next Sunday when you will have the opportunity to share him with another member of our community as he continues his journey towards his blessed incarnation.**

## The Blessing

*Celebrant*    You are one in whom Christ delights and dwells.  
You live in the strong and unshakeable kingdom of God.  
The kingdom is not in trouble, and neither are you.

And the blessing of God almighty,  
our most holy, glorious and undivided Trinity,  
be among you this day, and remain with you always. **Amen.**

## Prayer for Our Shared Meal

*Blessing over Food at Easter from The Book of Occasional Services 2022*

*Deacon*        Blessed are you, O Lord our God; you have given us the risen Savior to be the Shepherd of your people:  
Lead us, by him, to springs of living waters, and feed us with the food that endures to eternal life;  
where with you, O Father, and with the Holy Spirit, he lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

## Dismissal

*Deacon*        Let us go forth in peace to love and serve the Lord!  
*People*        **Thanks be to God.**

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*You are invited to join our community for a shared meal of soup/salad and bread immediately following our worship service.*

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We are grateful for our sending parish, The Church of the Nativity, Raleigh, who supported The Beloved Community with their presence, prayer, and resources for our first year.

We are grateful for the use of The Trees, graciously provided to us at no cost by St. Philip's Episcopal Church, Durham. We also give thanks to St. Philip's for the gift of flowers and printing. Each Sunday, St. Philip's shares their flowers with The Beloved Community so that we too may enjoy the beauty of God's creation.

We acknowledge that we are gathering on the ancestral territory of the Eno, the Tuscarora, the Occaneechi, and others.

We are grateful that you are with us. Your presence is a gift to The Beloved Community at the Trees, and that is enough. If you would like to support our community financially, you can do so by leaving your offering in the basket.

**The Beloved Community at The Trees**

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