

# Spirit of Grace

ELCA UMC



December 17th, 2023

*Advent III*

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Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

Advent III Litany

The Joy of God-With-Us does not come as naive optimism, or surface level feel-good-ness.

**Joy cannot be imposed from on high. Joy cannot be commanded.**

The Joy of God-With-Us is mingled with grief, exists side by side with mourning, knows that pain and death are all too real, but do not have the final word. This joy tends tenderly to beauty, and softness, and the gladness that comes from paying attention to what matters.

**The Joy of God-With-Us is collective, liberating us from deadly despair.**

Joy is gestating in darkness; it comes unexpectedly.

**Joy invites our expectation, and demands our participation.**

Prepare the way, for joy with sorrow.

**May Joy be birthed among, within, and through us, this Advent.**

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel...

Advent Prayer & Candle Lighting

Praise to you, O God, who holds our joy and sorrow. You bring water to parched ground and life out of death. Bless us as this light grows, and send sorrow and sighing to flee away. Give us strength and patience, trusting that you are true to your promises. Transform the lives of all who suffer with your wonders near at hand. **Amen.**

Candle Lighting

Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah

***Light three candles to watch for Messiah: let the light enter our world  
Lift your heads and lift high the gateway for the King of glory.***

Confession & Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,  
who opens the heavens  
and draws near to us with salvation.

**Amen.**

God is patient and merciful, desiring all to come to repentance.  
Trusting this promise of grace, let us confess our sin.  
*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Everlasting God,  
**you love justice and you hate wrongdoing.**  
**We confess the fear, greed, and self-centeredness  
that make us reluctant to work against oppression.**  
**We are complicit in systems of exploitation.**  
**We choose comfort over courage.**  
**We are careless with creation's bounty.**  
**Look upon us with mercy.**  
**Turn our hearts again to you.**  
**Make us glad to do your will and to walk in your ways  
for the sake of our waiting world.**  
**Amen.**

Hear these words of assurance:  
God clothes you with garments of salvation  
and covers you with robes of righteousness.  
In the tender compassion of † Jesus Christ,  
your sins are forgiven.  
God's covenant is eternal,  
and God's blessing rests upon us all.  
**Amen.**

Opening Hymn

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn  
*ELW 240 – verses 1, 2, 3*

## Greeting & Prayer of the Day

The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

Let us pray.

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

“The Spirit of Exalted YHWH is upon me,  
for YHWH has anointed me:  
God has sent me to bring good news to those who are poor;  
to heal broken hearts;  
to proclaim release to those held captive  
and liberation to those in prison;  
to announce a year of favor from YHWH,  
and the day of God’s vindication;  
to comfort all who mourn,  
to provide for those who grieve in Zion –  
to give them a wreath of flowers instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of tears,  
a cloak of praise instead of despair.  
They will be known as trees of integrity,  
planted by YHWH to display God’s glory.  
They will restore the ancient ruins,  
and rebuild sites long devastated;  
they will repair the ruined cities,  
neglected for generations.

‘For I, YHWH, love justice;  
I hate robbery and sin.  
So I will faithfully compensate you,  
and I will make an everlasting covenant with you.  
Your descendants will be renowned among the nations;  
and your offspring among the people;  
all who see you will acknowledge  
that you are a people blessed by YHWH.’  
I will joyfully exult in YHWH,  
who is the joy of my soul!

My God clothed me with a robe of deliverance  
and wrapped me in a mantle of justice,  
the way a bridegroom puts on a turban  
and a bride bedecks herself with jewels.  
For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and a garden brings its seeds to blossom,  
so Exalted YHWH makes justice sprout,  
and praise spring up before all nations.

Word of God, Word of Life  
**Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 126 (from Nan C. Merrill's *Psalms for Praying*)

When the Divine Lover enters the human heart,  
all yearnings are fulfilled!  
**Then will our mouths ring forth with laughter,  
and our tongues with shouts of joy;**  
Then will we sing our songs of praise,  
to You, O Beloved of all hearts.  
**For gladness will radiate out for all to see;  
so great is your Presence among us.**

Restore us to wholeness, O Healer,  
like newborn babes who have never strayed from you!  
**May all who sow in tears  
reap with shouts of joy!**  
May all who go forth weeping tears of repentance,  
bearing seeds of Love,  
come home to You with shouts of joy,  
leaving sorrows behind.

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

The Holy Gospel according to John the 1st chapter.

Then came one named John, sent as an envoy from God, who came as a witness to testify about the Light, so that through his testimony everyone might believe. He himself was not the Light; he only came to testify about the Light – the true Light that illumines all humankind.

Now the Temple authorities sent emissaries from Jerusalem – priests and Levites – to talk to John. “Who are you?” they asked.

This is John’s testimony: he didn’t refuse to answer, but freely admitted, “I am not the Messiah.”

“Who are you, then?” they asked. “Elijah?”

“No, I am not,” he answered.

“Are you the Prophet?”

“No,” he replied.

Finally they said to him, “Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you have to say for yourself?”

John said, “I am, as Isaiah prophesied, the voice of someone crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight our God’s road!’”

The emissaries were members of the Pharisee sect. They questioned him further: “If you’re not the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet, then why are you baptizing people?”

John said, “I baptize with water because among you stands someone whom you don’t recognize – the One who is to come after me – the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to even untie.”

This occurred in Bethany, across the Jordan River, where John was baptizing.

Word of God for the people of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

Rev. Miranda Bermes-Goller

Hymn of the Day

Comfort, Comfort, Now My People  
*ELW 256 – verses 1-3*

Affirmation of Faith: A New Creed

*Please stand as you are able as we confess our faith in God together:*

**We are not alone  
we live in God's world.  
We believe in God:  
who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus,  
the Word made flesh,  
to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others  
by the Spirit.  
We trust in God.  
We are called to be the Church:  
to celebrate God's presence,  
to live with respect in Creation,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
our redeemer and our hope.  
In life, in death, in life beyond death,  
God is with us.  
We are not alone.  
Thanks be to God. Amen.**

Joys & Concerns

*If you have any joys, concerns, or prayer requests to share, please type them into the comment section of the livestream so that we may lift them up together as a community.*

Prayers of the People

Let us turn our hearts to God, our breath and life, as we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

*A brief silence.*

God of Joy, fill our mouths with laughter and our tongues with shouts of joy as we bear witness to the great things you have done. Give your church a spirit of gladness as we gather and as we are sent.

Merciful God,

**Receive our prayer.**

God of Joy, let the trees of the field sing your praise. Protect forests, orchards, rainforests, and all wooded areas from disease and deforestation. Keep us grateful for their gifts of oxygen, food, shade, and shelter.

Merciful God,

**Receive our prayer.**

God of Joy, you love justice and promise your favor to those who are oppressed, brokenhearted, and incarcerated. Grant wisdom and compassion to those who work for public safety and all who work within prisons, jails, and courts, that mercy may increase and violence wither away.

Merciful God,

**Receive our prayer.**

God of Joy, open our hearts to those who serve as truth-tellers in our church and in our society. Bless leaders in church and society in their task of proclamation. Amplify voices of peacemakers, advocates, and especially those whose voices are ignored or marginalized.

*We pray to you especially in this time of war, oppression, and persecution in the Holy Land. Help us in our confusion, and guide us in our actions and responses. Lead us in the way of solidarity with the oppressed and peace for all people – give us the strength we need to not stay silent in situations of injustice. Heal the hurt and harm, console the bereaved and afflicted, protect the innocent and helpless, and deliver all who remain in peril.*

Merciful God,

**Receive our prayer.**

God of Joy, give us strength to pray for our world without ceasing and provoke us toward love and good deeds for all who are in need. Provide for all without adequate housing, food, employment, or access to health care. Empower us as helpers and advocates.

Merciful God,

**Receive our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Since we have such great hope in your promises, O God, we lift these and all of our prayers to you in confidence and faith; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

## Offering

*At this time, if you are willing and able, please consider giving to Spirit of Grace Church to support our ongoing ministry. Checks can be mailed to 1140 Tucker Road, Hood River OR, 97031. Online Donations can be made through the link below:*  
[Spirit of Grace Church](#)

## Offertory Prayer

God our provider,  
by your merciful hand  
abundance springs up from the earth.  
Receive and bless these gifts of your own bounty.  
Let them be a sign of your steadfast love  
and faithfulness for all people,  
through Jesus Christ our Savior.  
**Amen.**

## ***-The Meal-***

Preface – sung to the tune of “Adeste Fideles”

*The Lord be with you.*  
***And with you, God’s servant.***  
*Oh come, let us lift our hearts unto the Lord.*  
***With hearts uplifted thanks to God we render:***  
***with joy we come before God,***  
***in gratefulness implore God,***  
***with thankful hearts adore God evermore!***

## Great Thanksgiving

Thanks and praise be to you, almighty Creator, God of promise and fulfillment. Of old, your faithful people waited for the day of your visitation, manifest at last when the time had fully come and you sent forth Jesus Christ, your Son. You comfort your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness.. And so, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Sanctus – sung to the tune of “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing”

*Holy, holy, holy Lord! God of hosts, by all adored! Heav'n and earth cannot contain all the glory of Your name! Hail, hosanna, God most high! Blest is He who now draws nigh in the name of God the King! Hallelujahs glad we sing: hail, hosanna! Praises due be forever, Lord, to You!*

The Consecration

Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:  
Blessed are you for the birth of Creation.  
Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.  
Blessed are you for your promise to your people.  
Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams.  
Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will.  
Blessed are you for your Son Jesus, the Word made flesh.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Together, we proclaim the mystery of faith:  
**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

With this bread and cup, we remember your Word dwelling among us, full of grace and truth. We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection. We look with hope for his coming.  
**Come, Lord Jesus.**

Holy God, we long for your Spirit. Come among us. Bless this meal. May your Word take flesh in us. Awaken your people. Fill us with your light. Bring the gift of peace on earth.  
**Come, Holy Spirit.**

All praise and glory are yours, Holy One of Israel, Word of God incarnate, Power of the Most High, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

The Disciples' Prayer – *sung to the tune of "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"*

***Our Father, Lord on heav'n's high throne, most holy be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth – in heav'n the same. Give us this day the food we need; forgiven may we be; into temptation do not lead; from evil set us free.***

***Yours is the kingdom; unto You in grateful love we bow; and Yours the pow'r; Lord, let us view your mighty presence now. The glory Yours; Your praise be sung by angel hosts and all in ev'ry land, by ev'ry tongue forevermore! Amen.***

*Instructions for Communion*

This table of bread and wine has now been made ready.

So come to this table,

You who have much faith

and you who would like to have more;

you who have been here often

and you who have not been here long

you who have tried to follow Jesus,

and you who have failed;

Come and eat. It is Christ who invites us all to meet him here.

*Communion Distribution*

Prayer after Communion

Generous God,

in bread and cup you have revealed your glory

for all people to see together.

Nourished by this meal, send us out to proclaim

your good news of liberation and release,

brought to birth in Jesus Christ our Savior.

**Amen.**

Sending Song:

I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

*UMH 206 – verses 1-3*

Blessing

The God of peace bless you,  
the love of Christ sustain you in hope,  
and the anointing of the Spirit ☩ remain upon you  
now and forever.

**Amen.**

Dismissal

Go in peace. The Spirit of God is alive in you!

**Thanks be to God!**



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[www.hoodriverchurch.org](http://www.hoodriverchurch.org)

**Church Office Hours**

**Closed on Fridays**

**Pastor Miranda Bermes-Goller**

M-Th 9-1, or by appointment

[spiritofgracepastor@gmail.com](mailto:spiritofgracepastor@gmail.com)

**Linda Boris, Pastoral Assistant**

Tuesday 10-1

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