



Welcome to Advent at Epworth! This is the beginning of the Christian year and the first of the 4 Sundays that mark the time until Christmas. Our Advent Sermon series is entitled: "There Will Be Signs!" Using the words from the Hebrew Bible where the prophets spoke of signs, we listen for message and meaning about the coming Messiah, Jesus. Today's lessons introduce the concept of signs and how God gives us signs to guide and influence our lives. Join us for the next four Sundays as we look for the signs God sends us in the special Advent season. All are welcome at Epworth, whether a life-long church attendee or someone searching for meaning through a church home. At Epworth, all means all, so plan to celebrate Advent with us and help us to help you prepare the way for Christmas.

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VISION: Exploring Faith, Embracing Community

MISSION: Inviting All, Finding Your Place, Connecting to God, Demonstrating Care

☞ WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY ☞

☞ GATHER ☞

Praise Gathering

WE ARE WAITING

Anxious in expectancy,
Marveling the mystery of Jesus' face appearing here on earth
Waiting for the baby born, God's son taking human form
Being cared for by the ones he'll save. That day is drawing nearer

*We are waiting for Your coming. Hearts are burning, hope is stirring in anticipation.
Waiting for Your coming. Human and divine converging, promising salvation.
We are waiting...*

Watching for our turn to see the glory and the majesty
Of Jesus' face appearing here on earth
Waiting for the trumpet's tone when Christ is here to take us
home to live there among the ones he's saved
That day is drawing nearer (*refrain*)

Bridge: Watching, waiting (*repeat*)
(A child will be born) Watching, waiting (6X) (*Refrain*)¹

Welcome, Announcements **(Passing of the Peace at end of this liturgy)**

Todd

I invite you to take a deep breath. Imagine that what is above you is a star-lit night...

Vicky

[pause for a moment for a few sparse handbells to ring]

...and in this moment, all is calm, all is bright.

Song

Threshold

It was the night when Peace was born (Silent Night)

And just as now the world was torn (Holy Night)

But all was calm and all was bright (Silent Night)

The star above gave out its light (Holy Night)

Dear people all around the world

Let us unite and we will show

How Peace can change us,

How Peace can help us grow.

L: This year is the 200th anniversary of the debut of "Silent Night, Holy Night." This hymn has become the best-loved worship moment of many Christians—even those who only come to church once a year. Something mystical occurs as we light our candles and sing the hope of "all is calm, all is bright"—peace and light for the world. This worship series will celebrate the carol's message over the entire season of Advent and highlight its call for our lives that can guide us all year long. This week we begin with verse one, Let's speak it together, with hushed voices, as if there was a sleeping baby in our midst:

P: **Silent night, holy night**

All is calm, all is bright

Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child

Holy Infant so tender and mild

Sleep in heavenly peace

Sleep in heavenly peace

L: One of the most famous stories about this beloved hymn took place in World War One. British and German soldiers on the front lines called a truce on Christmas Day. So close were the encampments from which they were fighting one another, they could hear each other in the peaceful quiet of the truce singing "Silent Night," each in their own language. This prompted the soldiers to come out and meet on the battlefield, without weapons, and they spent the day playing soccer and exchanging small gifts—whatever they had. Humanity is the holy infant for whom God so desires a heavenly peace. Is it possible to bring calm and bright to our own corners of this world?

[The acolyte / family comes in with the first “light” to light the Advent wreath.]

Song *Threshold (cont.)*
So let your Peace shine in the night (Silent Night)
And let your life burn warm and bright (Holy Night)
This Peace we give the world is balm (Silent Night)
And in this truth we find our calm (Holy Night!) ²

Advent Family Prayer:

Bob McCullough

Reader 1:

We enter this season of waiting, by lighting this first candle, anticipating the light of the star that shone over Bethlehem for all to see.

Reader 2:

Advent God, we open ourselves to hear your call today to become those who not only wait, but also work, for peace in our lives, our families, our communities, and our world.

P: Fill us with your peace and light, make the world so calm and bright.

***Passing the Peace**

*As the children come forward, you are invited to greet those around you with a sign of God’s peace, saying,
“The peace of Christ be with you.”*

✠ PROCLAIM ✠

Children’s Celebration

Rev. Todd Shultz

Advent Introit

Prepare Ye... Stephen Schwartz

Prepare ye the way of the Lord.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord! {Repeat 3X}

Old Testament Lesson

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Marilyn Smith

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety.

And this is the name by which it will be called: “The LORD is our righteousness.”

***Gospel Lesson**

Luke 21:25-36

“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves.

People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory.

Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. “Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Brothers and Sisters

This is the Word of God for the People of God.

§ Thanks be to God

Prepare Ye ... Stephen Schwartz

Prepare ye the way of the Lord.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord! {Repeat 3X}

Sermon

Signs of Change

Rev. Vicky Starnes

☞ RESPOND ☞

Invitation to Offering

Please sign the blue Connections Pad and pass it down the row.

Todd

Offerings are given through cash and check, electronic giving and by using our Giving Kiosk in the main lobby.

There are Giving Cards in the pews to place in the plate, if you give electronically or through the Kiosk.

Bless your heart for supporting our ministries!

Offertory:

NOEL

Love incarnate, love divine. Star and angels gave the sign.

Bow to Babe on bended knee, the Savior of humanity.

Unto us a Child is born. He shall reign forevermore.

Noel, noel. Come and see what God has done.

Noel, noel. The story of amazing love, the light of the world given for us, Noel.

Son of God and Son of man, there before the world began.

Born to suffer, born to save, born to raise us from the grave.

Christ, the everlasting Lord, He shall reign forevermore. {Refrain}

Instrumental – Repeat Refrain – TAG: Noel. ³

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Todd

Prayer of Confession

As we prepare to pray our prayer of Great Thanks, let us take a moment of silence, of calm, in order to center our hearts, let go of those things in our lives that we regret, asking God for the peace of forgiveness.

Silence

Words of Assurance

Know this, already your world is a little bit calmer and brighter having offered to God the bits of chaos clouding your life. Now the dark skies give way to beams of light illuminating your way. Move forward into God's future, forgiven and free. Let the people say, "Amen!"

*The Great Thanksgiving Prayer

The Lord be with you.

Vicky

§ And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

§ We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

§ It is right to give our thanks and praise.

[musical underscoring begins softly]

Holy God, in the beginning you called out, "Let there be light!"

Just as your light of creation spread in response,

so too does your light rise each day,

offering us a new chance to make today a little brighter than yesterday.

When we feel overcome or succumb to the dark night of our souls,

you offer us a way back into the light of hope.

And so we praise you, singing...

[sung to the tune of "Christ be our Light" refrain]

§ You are the Light. You are our God,

piercing the dark night.

Bless'd are the ones,

shining their lights, now in your name!

[underscoring may continue]

A star appeared on a silent and holy night

and brought with it your peace, joy, love and hope in the form of a baby.

This holy infant, tender and mild, was a sign of new life,

a sign of holy vulnerability,

a sign of your presence enfleshed in our human form.

This would be the light that showed forth the truth that all humanity IS beloved

and called us to care for each one AS beloved.

Todd

[lifting the bread and cup]

Jesus gathered people around tables and showed them their radiance.

Jesus gathers us around this table and says,

"This bread and this cup are my life and light for you.

And because I shine in you, let your light shine for the world."

Vicky

Spoken:

L: And so we offer ourselves in union with Christ's offering of salvation:

§ Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Pour out your Spirit on us and on these gifts.

Transform us into the Light of your Love for all

and make us one in you.

Thanks and praise be to

the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer! § Amen!

Todd

Song of Invitation

Christ Be Our Light (vs. 3)

Longing for food, many are hungry.

longing for water, many still thirst.

Make us your bread, broken for others,

shared until all are fed.

Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts,

Shine through the darkness.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in your church gathered today.

Sharing the Cup

Prayer after Communion as Jesus Taught Us:

The Lord's Prayer

UMH 895

§ 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, forever. Amen.

✠ GO ✠

Benediction

Benediction Response

WE NEED A SILENT NIGHT IN HERE

We need a silent night in here. We need your presence to be near.

Give us the hope we need and the peace we seek.

We need a silent night in here.

Give us the hope we need and the peace we seek.

We need a silent night, we need a silent night,

we need a silent night in here. ⁴

**Please stand as you are able; § congregational response.*

Bulletins for the month of December are sponsored in honor of her husband, Dennis' birthday, December 14, by Laurel St. Germain.

Chancel Flowers are given to the glory of God and:

- in loving memory of their daughter, Pamela Nicole D'Aloisio, by Linda & Andy D'Aloisio;
- in memory of Bob Palko by Bill Richardson.

Stephen Ministers wearing blue name badges will be at each service if anyone in the Epworth family wants to talk about any life challenges.

Our Advent liturgy and special music comes from the Marcia McFee 2018 Advent Series.

The special Peace Candle on the Chancel shines to remind us of God's desire for peace throughout our world and our call to be God's peacemakers.

DVD and Broadcast Ministries: All Church Service at Epworth are presented using multimedia technology. The screens above the Chancel area are used for text, videos, photographs and live cameras. Each service is digitally recorded for archive purposes as well as for distribution to our homebound members on DVD. These recordings may also be broadcast or archived on our web page. Therefore; you may, at any time, be seen and recorded on camera - anywhere throughout the Sanctuary.

Assisting with today's Service

Praise Team Praise Team

Acolyte Bianca Camiolo

Sight & Sound Ken Mahan, Sharon Wert, Josh Megee, Arne Jerfsten, Karen Kaufman

Ushers Head Usher: Jim Blakeslee

Usher Coordinator – Worship Pathway:

9:30: Stu & Linda Bruce, Nancy Almacy, Maureen Ewadinger, Tom Curry, Ken Backer

Worship Resources

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¹ *We Are Waiting*: W. Zachary Taylor / Chris Kline © 2012 Greater Plan Publishing, LLC ©1999 Brad Kilman Publishing.

² *Calm & Bright*: Marcia McFee & Chuck Bell ©2018 Marcia McFee and Chuck Bell

³ *Noel*: Chris Tomlin, Matt Redman & Ed Cash ©2015 THANKYOU MUSIC

⁴ *We Need a Silent Night in Here*: Marsha Jean Moors-Charles & Chuck Bell ©2018 Chuck Bell (ASCAP)

Ministers: The Church Family... *Lay Leader:* Gwen Osborne

Senior Pastor: Rev. Vicky Starnes ... *Associate Pastor:* Rev. Todd Shultz

Director of Music Ministries: Doug Yetter ... *Accompanist:* Linda Jo Hess ... *Coordinator of Caring Ministries:* Mickie McManamon

Communications & Technologies Manager: Kenneth Mahan ... *Office Manager:* Darlene Ford

Special Projects: Debbie Hunt ... *Administrative Assistant:* Diana Young ... *Sound Tech:* Josh Megee

Preschool Director: Betsy Plowman ... *Nursery:* Cathy Crawford ... *Interim Cemetery Superintendent:* Jay Stevenson

Custodian: Wanda Hudson...*Maintenance:* Mike Harrigan



EPWORTH
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Open Hearts Open Minds Open Doors
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Large-Print Bulletins & Hearing Assist Devices are Available
Please see an Usher for assistance



American Sign Language
at 9:15 Service



Affiliated with other United Methodists for greater inclusiveness through the Reconciling Ministries Network
www.RMNnetwork.org

worship@epworth
7:45 & 11:15 - Traditional 9:15 - Contemporary