Advent 2026 Worship Resources

Year B: 29 November 2026 – 20 December 2026

A quick "first reading" overview of the Scriptures for Advent[1]:

Advent 1 – Hope:

- Old Testament: Isaiah 64
  - Please forgive our sins!
- Psalm: Psalm 80
  - Israel was the vine transplanted from Egypt to the Promised Land, but because of their sins, God had destroyed the vineyard.
  - They are now praying that God would forgive them and restore God's vineyard.
- Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:4-9
  - God will continue to do the work that Jesus started in our lives until we will be blameless when Jesus comes again.
- Gospel: Mark 13:26-31 or Mark 13:32-37
  - Matthew 13:1-31 tells us about the "signs of the times."
    - The "signs of the times" are not more intense now than they were in Biblical times.
    - The purpose of the "signs of the times" is not to tell us "when" Jesus will come again, but to confirm that Jesus WILL come again!
  - Verses 26-31 say that when we see these signs, we should know that Jesus' second coming is close.
  - Verses 32-37 say that we do not know when Jesus is coming and therefore we have to be ready.

The Old Testament Scriptures are crying out for God's forgiveness and restoration. 1 Corinthians say that this has already happened during Jesus first coming. We are forgiven and restored, and God will continue this work until Jesus comes again. Matthew tells us that Jesus will come again.

We are thus living in the end times with the HOPE that Jesus will come again and that the work started in us will be completed. The HOPE expressed in the Old Testament was "ALREADY" fulfilled during Jesus' first coming, but the restoration process is "NOT-YET" complete. That will happen when Jesus comes again, and that is the "HOPE" we are currently living with!

[1] All Scripture Readings are from the NIV and are based on the Revised Common Lectionary. Any variations may be due to the Intertextual Reading of the context of the Scriptures.

Advent 2 – Peace:

- Old Testament: Isaiah 40:1-11
    - A messenger will come to proclaim that the almighty, loving God forgives sins.
- Psalm: Psalm 85
    - Where God forgives sins and restoration happens, the following is the result:
        - Love and faithfulness meet together;
          righteousness and peace kiss each other.
          11Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,
          and righteousness looks down from heaven.
          12The Lord will indeed give what is good,
          and our land will yield its harvest.
          13Righteousness goes before him
          and prepares the way for his steps.
- Epistle: 2 Peter 3:8-13
    - God is patient and wants everyone to repent, but when God comes unexpectedly, God will burn away all injustice, and we will live in a world where righteousness dwells.
- Gospel: Mark 1:1-8
    - John is the messenger of Isaiah 40. He proclaimed forgiveness of sin and that the One who brings this forgiveness will come after him.

Peace is not the absence of violence or conflict. Peace is the presence of healthy relationships: Between God and us, with ourselves, with others, and with God's creation. Because of sin, all these relationships were damaged.

<u>But through the restoration work of the One John said would come after him, we are restored, and our sins are forgiven. This restoration restored the broken relationships and brought peace. We thus "ALREADY" have PEACE, but complete "PEACE" has "NOT-YET" been achieved on earth and will happen only when Jesus comes a second time to establish a world where righteousness, love, and faithfulness dwell!</u>

Advent 3 – Joy:

- Old Testament: Isaiah 61
    - The Servant was sent to proclaim Good News and the Year of the Lord, and to free those held captive.
    - When this happens, God's people and the land will be restored/rebuild and their circumstances changed.
    - But this restoration is not only for God's people, but it is also for all the nations!

- Psalm: Luke 1:46b-55 (The Magnificat) or Psalm 126
    - Magnificat
        - God changes the circumstances, and it brings balance.
    - Psalm 126
        - When God brings about restoration, it brings forth joy!
- Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22
    - In Paul's final instructions to the congregation, one of them was to always rejoice!
- Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28
    - In everything John did, he emphasized that he is only the messenger who prepares the way for the One coming after him.

The central theme in Isaiah 61, the Magnificat, and Psalm 126 is that when God reverses/changes circumstances, it brings about joy.

Restoration brings forth JOY! And Paul's letter emphasizes that we should always be joyful because of what God did for us. But again, although we "ALREADY" have JOY because of what Jesus did during the first coming, as expressed by Isaiah, Mary, the Psalmist and John, we still live in a world where there is sadness and pain. But until Jesus comes again, we wait for the "NOT-YET" to become the Year of the Lord!

Advent 4 – Love:

- Old Testament: 2 Samuel 7:1-17
    - God promises that one in his line will always sit on the throne.
- Psalm: Luke 1:46b-55 (The Magnificat) or Psalm 89
    - Magnificat
        - God changes the circumstances, and it brings balance.
    - Psalm 89
        - Psalm 89 says why God made that promise to David – because of love.
        - Psalm 89 starts out as a praise song about God's promise to David, but it quickly turns to a lament because Israel is not seeing the Kingdom God promised; instead, they are oppressed by others.
        - The Psalm is also a prophecy that Jesus, from the line of David, will be the ultimate King who will fulfill God's will and establish God's Kingdom forever.
- Epistle: Romans 16:25-27
    - The Gospel in a nutshell is that all might come to obedience through faith in Jesus Christ.

- Gospel: Luke 1:26-38
    - The angel proclaimed that the child who will be conceived will be the One who will sit on David's throne forever!

The basis of all four Scriptures is the promise God made to David. 2 Samuel explains the origins of the promise. Psalm 89 explains why God made the promise and also begins to prophesy that One will come to be the ultimate King on the throne. In Luke, the promise is fulfilled, and Romans explains that it is not only for the Jews, but for all people, and all we need to do is believe.

Because of LOVE, Jesus came and became our King in the Kingdom of God. The "ALREADY" and "NOT-YET" aspects lie in the fact that God's Kingdom is "ALREADY" here and Jesus is "ALREADY" our King, but God's Kingdom has "NOT-YET" come on earth as it is in heaven.

Liturgical Suggestions[2]:

Advent Sunday 1: 29 November 2026

1 Corinthians 1:4-9 – A gift of Hope!

Prelude or Hymn Sing:

- Prelude:
    - VU 10 "Prepare the way"

  OR
- Hymn Sing:
    - VU 71 "Twas in the moon of wintertime"
    - VU 62 "Once in royal David's city"

Welcome & Announcements

Joys and Concerns

Lighting Of The Christ Candle:

- Happy New Year!
    - Last week was the last day of the Christian Year!

[2] Disclaimer – The Liturgical elements found in this Order of Service were either originally created or assembled and adapted from the following resources: https://united-church.ca/worship, https://presbyterian.ca/worship/, https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/weekly-worship, https://pres-outlook.org/category/worship-resources/, https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning, https://laughingbird.net/index.php/occasions/, https://calltoworshipjournal.org/lectionary-companion/, https://re-worship.blogspot.com/, https://chat.openai.com/chat, Celebrate God's Presence – A Book of Services.

- Advent is the start of the New Christian Year.
- We thus begin today with the New Christian Year!

- What is Advent?
  - Advent start the 4th Sunday before Christmas.
  - It is our spiritual preparation for the Christmas season.
  - The word 'Advent' means – arrival.
    - We are thus preparing for Jesus's arrival.
      - First coming:
        - Christmas
        - The arrival of the Kingdom of God.
      - Second Coming:
        - God will make everything new.
    - There thus exists a tension, which is the focus of Advent, between the "Already" and the "Not-Yet".
      - For example: We ALREADY have eternal life, but we do NOT-YET live in heaven with God for eternity.
- Symbols:
  - Advent wreath
    - God's eternal love and his existence for eternity.
  - 5 Candles - Light that came into the world:
    - 3 blue/purple:
      - 1 - Hope
      - 2 - Peace
      - 4 - Love
    - 1 light rose:
      - 3 - Joy
    - 1 white:
      - Christmas Day.
- Let us light the candle for Hope during this first Sunday of Advent as we sing: VU 6 "A candle is Burning" v1

<u>Gathering Words:</u>

- Gathering Words:
  - As we gather on this first Sunday of Advent, we come with hope.

We are here with the expectation that You will continue the restoration process in us.
The restoration process You started when Jesus came the first time,
And which will be completed when Jesus comes for the second time.
We are here today to be sustained, as we await Jesus' return.
May our hope be strengthened until Christ comes again and our restoration is complete.
Amen.

- Land Acknowledgment:
  - We acknowledge that this region where we live, work and worship is on lands that are, by law, the unceded territories of the _____ peoples—predominantly the lands of the _____.
  - May we worship with respect on this land, and live in peace and friendship with its people.
  - And may we ultimately acknowledge that everything ultimately belongs to God and we are stewards of God's creation.

Passing the Peace:

- Formal Greeting:
  - Peace be with you.
    And also with you.
- Greet each other in the pews.
- Response:
  - VU 34 "Come now, O, God of HOPE"

Call To Worship:

- We gather again at the end of the year to wait for the Christ child anew.
  We wait in the incredible hope of the coming of the Messiah.
  We wait and remember the astounding things God has done to restore God's people.
  We wait in the incredible hope of the coming of the Messiah.
  We wait and pay attention for signs of God's justice and mercy turning the world upside down.
  We wait in the incredible hope of the coming of the Messiah.
  We wait, and in our waiting, we learn to live as people of God's promise.
  Let us worship in the incredible hope of Jesus Christ, the coming Messiah.

Prayer of Approach:

- **In the middle of worldwide turmoil,**

darkness descends, and the people cry out, "Save us, Lord."
Our cries have been heard,
and in Jesus Christ, You brought hope into a world full of fear and despair.
Now, we wait in anxious times for the world to be made new.
Move in us and in all your creation to bring forth restoration
while we wait with hope in your grace and goodness.
Lord, hear our pleas and continue the process of restoration in us.
Help us to be ready for the coming of Jesus.
Amen.

Hymn:

- VU 2 "Come, Thou long-expected Jesus"

Opening prayer

Confession:

- **O Lord, though You have given us great hope, we sometimes doubt.**
  We know challenging events in our lives weaken our faith.
  Sadness and despair drown all hope as the tears fall,
  and we are washed away in the floods and torrents of regret and fear.
  Forgive us, Lord, we pray and give us renewed strength for our weakness.
  We are truly sorry that, at times, we lack faith,
  we lose hope,
  and we do not hold onto Your way.
  We stumble on our journey towards the stable.
  May the star of Christmas Hope light our way to You during Advent.
  And may we realize that You are always busy restoring us to Your Will.
  Amen

Assurance of Pardon:

- God rent the heavens and came down.
  God did awesome things and brought hope.
  God restored us;
  God shone God's face on us;
  and we are saved.

Thanks be to God!

Praise Hymn:

- VU 64 (O Little town of Bethlehem) v1,3

Prayer for illumination

Service of the Word

Old Testament Reading:

- Isaiah 64 – 1Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down,
  that the mountains would tremble before you!
  2As when fire sets twigs ablaze
  and causes water to boil,
  come down to make your name known to your enemies
  and cause the nations to quake before you!
  3For when you did awesome things that we did not expect,
  you came down, and the mountains trembled before you.
  4Since ancient times no one has heard,
  no ear has perceived,
  no eye has seen any God besides you,
  who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.
  5You come to the help of those who gladly do right,
  who remember your ways.
  But when we continued to sin against them,
  you were angry.
  How then can we be saved?
  6All of us have become like one who is unclean,
  and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;
  we all shrivel up like a leaf,
  and like the wind our sins sweep us away.
  7No one calls on your name
  or strives to lay hold of you;
  for you have hidden your face from us
  and have given us over to our sins.

8Yet you, Lord, are our Father.
We are the clay, you are the potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
9Do not be angry beyond measure, Lord;
do not remember our sins forever.
Oh, look on us, we pray,
for we are all your people.
10Your sacred cities have become a wasteland;
even Zion is a wasteland, Jerusalem a desolation.
11Our holy and glorious temple, where our ancestors praised you,
has been burned with fire,
and all that we treasured lies in ruins.
12After all this, Lord, will you hold yourself back?
Will you keep silent and punish us beyond measure?

Psalm Reading:

- Psalm 80 (VU p794)

New Testament Reading:

- 1 Corinthians 1:4-9 – 4I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. 5For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— 6God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. 7Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. 8He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading:

- Mark 13:26-31 – 26 “At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.27And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.
  28 “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.29Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door.30Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.31Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Or/And:

Mark 13:32-37 – 32 “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. 34It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

35 “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. 36If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. 37What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’ ”

A Response may be said after this, for example:

Offered as wisdom for the journey.

May we walk in its light.

Hymn:

- VU 516 “Come ye thankful people”

Sermon:

Introduction:

- Today we are talking about Hope.
- What is hope?
    - If the congregation is open to discussion, give time for them to discuss it either with each other or with the wider group.
    - Or give them time to think by themselves about what they think hope is.
- Can today’s Scriptures teach us what hope is, especially in today's world?

Body:

- The two Old Testament Scriptures are all about hope for salvation:
    - Isaiah 64:
        - Isaiah 56-66 summarizes all God’s promises in the book of Isaiah with the theme that God’s servants will inherit God’s Kingdom.
        - Isaiah 60-62 contains three poems that describe how God’s Ultimate Servant (Jesus Christ) will announce the coming of the Kingdom of God.
        - Bracketing these three poems are prayers of repentance in Isaiah 59, 63 and 64.
            - God’s servants are praying for the forgiveness of Israel’s sins and grieving for all the evil they see in the world.
                - Isaiah describes it as:

- 6All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags…
    - It is prayers of forgiveness and a call of hope that God's Kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven!
- This hope on forgiveness and the coming of God's Kingdom was written in the time after the exile:
    - It was a tough time for the Jews.
    - They were not an autonomous nation but a part of the Persian Empire.
    - They were rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple – they were thus still surrounded by the destruction wrought by the Babylonians.
    - Enemies and challenging social and economic circumstances surrounded them.
    - It thus makes sense in these circumstances that they would pray that God would forgive their and their forebears' sins.
        - They are hoping that God will cleanse them.
        - That God's forgiveness will wash away their sin as soap and water do to dirt on our hands.
    - It makes sense that they would hope that God's Kingdom would come.

- Psalm 80:
    - The Psalm was written in more or less the same circumstances.
    - It describes, in the metaphor of a vine, how God brought Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land and made them flourish.
    - But also how the surrounding nations, especially the Babylonians, came and destroyed the vine.
    - All that was left was a burned-down vine that insects and animals were feeding on.
    - And thus they pray for restoration:
        - They ask that God will forgive their sins – cleanse them, as the prayer in Isaiah states.
        - They ask that God would restore the vine – They are asking that God's Kingdom will come, as mentioned by Isaiah.

➢ From the New Testament, we know that this hope was fulfilled!

- The hope on forgiveness and the coming of God's Kingdom was fulfilled in Christ Jesus.
- And that is what Paul is thanking God for in 1 Corinthians 1.

- Our Scripture is part of the Thanksgiving section of Paul's letter:
    - The Thanksgiving section was a traditional part of the letter structure of ancient letters.
    - Paul had the habit of including themes, which he would address later in his letter, in the thanksgiving.
- He clearly starts his thanksgiving for God's grace that we received in Jesus Christ.
    - He is thanking God that God's promises, as given in Isaiah and hoped for in Psalm 80, have been fulfilled!
    - The hope was not in vain.
- Paul then continues to thank God for everything that God did for the congregation, thanking God for the things that Paul will address later in the letter.
    - They have been enriched in Christ.
    - The testimony of Christ has been strengthened among them.
    - They are not lacking in spiritual gifts.
- In verses 8-9, Paul is addressing the congregation's hope:
    - Their hope on the return of Jesus Christ.
    - The Corinthian Christians had their strong points and their weak points.
    - Paul praises God for the strong points and expresses confidence that God will help them with their weak points.
        - As seen further in the letter, there were a lot of weak points that Paul had to address:
            - Division
            - Spiritual hubris.
            - Conflict.
    - But here comes the promise, and in this promise lies the hope:
        - God will keep us believing until the end so that we will be blameless when Jesus comes again.
        - How can Paul be confident of this when the congregation has so many problems?
            - He can be confident because God is faithful.
            - God is the One who fulfilled the promises of hope we saw in Isaiah and Psalm 80.
            - God is the one who forgives our sins and makes us a part of the Kingdom of God.

- And thus, God is the one who will keep us believing up to the end so that we will be blameless when Jesus comes again.
- According to Jesus, in Mark, we do not know when that will happen, but God will make sure that we keep believing and that we will watch, be alert and be on guard until that time.

Conclusion:

- Advent is a time of waiting.
  - An in-between time.
  - A time when we celebrate that Jesus brought hope, but also a time when we live in hope of God's promises.
- Today, we are celebrating the fact that, in Jesus Christ, the hope found in the Old Testament was fulfilled.
  - Jesus brought the Kingdom of God, and through his death, we were cleansed from the uncleanness of sin in our lives.
- But we are also contemplating the hope that we have today:
  - That God will keep us believing so that we will be clean from the dirtiness of sin in our lives when Jesus comes again.
  - Hope is a gift brought by Jesus.
  - A hope that God will fulfil, as God did with the hope of the Old Testament.

Amen!

<u>Response to the Word – Jesse Tree/Mitten Tree:</u>

- Introduction:
  - We brought a gift of warm woollies – socks, gloves, scarves, hats, etc.… for children; after Christmas, these will be donated to the school for distribution as needed.
  - With these gifts, we bring Hope to those who have to face the harsh reality of a winter without warmth.
- Prayer:
  - May these gifts indeed bring restoration to those who need it,
    Hope to those in despair, and to those who are oppressed,
    as we give these gifts to You as an act of sharing Your love with the world.
    God of Hope, draw near to all.
    In this season of hope, we ask that You would redirect everyone to the hope that is found in You, Gracious God.
    Lead us all not into despair, but lead everyone to Your Light and Your Hope.

God of Hope, draw near to all.

- Hymn:
  - VU 30 (Hail to God's own anointed) v1-2

Minute for … Mission/Affirm/Ecojustice/First-Third-Ministry

Resources for these may soon be found on the FSLDW website.

Prayers of the people:

- Christ is coming. He is coming to make all things new.
  Eternal God, during this season of Advent,
  help us prepare Christ's way,
  help us centre our hearts, minds and prayers on your holy presence in
  our midst.
  God of our hope, hear our prayers.
  As the days grow short and the nights loom long,
  we pray for those who are unhoused
  or those whose home is unsafe or financially insecure.
  May all your children get the rest they need to thrive.
  God of our hope, hear our prayers.
  As divisiveness and conflict plague us
  and wars rage across the world,
  may this season of Advent bring hope to those who despair in those circumstances.
  God of our hope, hear our prayers.
  As a people of faith, we lift these prayers to You,
  trusting You hear us and complete the restoration work You started.
  Finally, hear us now as we pray the prayer Christ taught us by saying together,
  "Our Father …."

Offertory:

- Invitation to Offering
- Musical Offering by the organist and/or choir.
- Offertory Hymn:
  - VU 55 "In the bleak midwinter" v4
    OR
  - 1. Lead us, O Lord, as thou didst lead the Wise Men in the days of old

That we, like them, may bring our gifts of frankincense and myrrh and gold

2. For us, illumine now the night and show us where thy glories are

Until we find incarnate Love revealed beneath the Christmas Star

- Prayer of Dedication

Final Hymn:

- VU 7 (Hope is a star) v1

Commissioning:

- Go in hope this day, and keep awake!

  We do not leave this sanctuary and leave God behind.

  Go from this place blessed to be bowled over by hope

  to watch and wait and join in the work of bringing hope to the world.

  We will look for opportunities to serve others in Jesus' name.

  God's call to prepare our hearts, our minds, our communities and our

  world for the coming Christ is clear.

  May this call be ever before us:

  Guiding us, inspiring us, enabling us to be Christ's hope in God's world.

  May the God of hope be with us all as we wait and prepare for the birth of Christ.

  O Lord, be our hope in the days to come,

  be the flickering flame in our hearts.

Blessing:

- May the hope, peace, joy, and love of God, our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, be with us all, now and forever. Amen.

  A Response may be said after this, for example:

  May it be so.

Postlude/Recessional Hymn:

- Go now in peace

  OR

- VU 882 "Prepare the way – Isaiah 40" v2

Advent Sunday 2: 06 December 2026

Isaiah 40:1-11 – A Gift of Peace!

Prelude or Hymn Sing:

- Prelude:
  - VU 10 “Prepare the way”

  OR
- Hymn Sing:
  - VU 05 “All the earth is waiting”
  - VU 56 “Jesus, our Brother”

Welcome & Announcements

Joys and Concerns

Lighting Of The Christ Candle:

- What is Advent?
  - Advent start the 4th Sunday before Christmas.
  - It is our spiritual preparation for the Christmas season.
  - The word ‘Advent’ means – arrival.
    - We are thus preparing for Jesus’s arrival.
      - First coming:
        - Christmas
        - The arrival of the Kingdom of God.
      - Second Coming:
        - God will make everything new.
    - There thus exists a tension, which is the focus of Advent, between the “Already” and the “Not-Yet”.
      - For example: We ALREADY have eternal life, but we do NOT-YET live in heaven with God for eternity.
- Symbols:
  - Advent wreath
    - God's eternal love and his existence for eternity.
  - 5 Candles - Light that came into the world:

        - 3 blue/purple:
            - 1 - Hope
            - 2 - Peace
            - 4 - Love
        - 1 light rose:
            - 3 - Joy
        - 1 white:
            - Christmas Day.
- Let us light the candle for Hope during this first Sunday of Advent as we sing: VU 6 “A candle is Burning” v2

Gathering Words:

- Gathering Words:
    - As we gather on this second Sunday of Advent, we long for peace
      We gather to hear Your voice speaking comfort to our hearts.
      Through Jesus, our sins were forgiven
      and the relationships between God and us, ourselves,
      one another, and creation were restored.
      We are here so love and faithfulness may meet among us;
      And so righteousness and peace may embrace in this gathering.
      We gather for You to prepare Your way within us
      to restore the peace already given,
      and encourage us to await its fullness,
      until Christ comes again!
      Amen.
- Land Acknowledgment:
    - We acknowledge that this region where we live, work and worship is on lands that are, by law, the unceded territories of the _____ peoples—predominantly the lands of the _____.
    - May we worship with respect on this land, and live in peace and friendship with its people.
    - And may we ultimately acknowledge that everything ultimately belongs to God and we are stewards of God’s creation.

Passing the Peace:

- Formal Greeting:
    - Peace be with you.

      And also with you.
- Greet each other in the pews.
- Response:
    - VU 34 “Come now, O, God of PEACE”

Call To Worship:

- In Advent, heaven came to earth.

  Now let us come and worship the New King in all His majesty.

  The voice of God summons us to worship.

  We come to receive Your forgiveness and peace.

  Prepare the way for Christ, the One John proclaimed!

  Restore our relationships with You, ourselves, one another, and creation.

  The paths before us may be rocky and dangerous, but God goes before us.

  God promises that love and faithfulness will meet;

  righteousness and peace will embrace.

  Wherever the path may lead us, God is always there – and here among us today.

  We journey, watch and wait in the just peace of the coming Messiah.

Prayer of Approach:

- **God of peace,**

  we rejoice in Your presence this day,

  You set pathways for us to follow,

  clearing the way in the wilderness of the world.

  You bring peace in conflict and turn weeping into laughter.

  You restore all that appears broken,

  giving each one a path and purpose.

  And so we come to You,

  trusting You to bring peace into these uncertain times.

  Receive our worship this day

  that our hearts will ponder the profound truth

  of the peace that Advent brings.

  Get us ready to become pathways of peace in Your Name.

Amen.

Hymn:

- VU 46 “Gentle Mary laid her child”

Opening prayer

Confession:

- **God of peace,**
  we confess the times Your peace was absent in our lives.
  The times we have turned from You,
  been harsh with ourselves,
  wounded others,
  and neglected Your creation.
  Forgive us for our inaction and indifference
  while we are surrounded by broken relationships.
  Prepare Your way within us;
  restore us, and may we find and stay in the peace that is found in You.
  Amen.

Assurance of Pardon:

- Through Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven,
  and God is restoring what sin has broken.
  God has given us peace in all our relationships,
  Bringing about past, present and future restoration.
  Live in the peace Jesus, the Prince of Peace, gave you,
  trusting that when He comes again,
  God’s restoration work will be complete.
  Thanks be to God!

Praise Hymn:

- VU 44 “It came upon a midnight clear”

Prayer for illumination

Service of the Word

Old Testament Reading:

- Isaiah 40:1-11 – 1Comfort, comfort my people,
  says your God.
  2Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
  and proclaim to her
  that her hard service has been completed,
  that her sin has been paid for,
  that she has received from the Lord's hand
  double for all her sins.
  3A voice of one calling:
  "In the wilderness prepare
  the way for the Lord;
  make straight in the desert
  a highway for our God.
  4Every valley shall be raised up,
  every mountain and hill made low;
  the rough ground shall become level,
  the rugged places a plain.
  5And the glory of the Lord will be revealed,
  and all people will see it together.
  For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."
  6A voice says, "Cry out."
  And I said, "What shall I cry?"
  "All people are like grass,
  and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field.
  7The grass withers and the flowers fall,
  because the breath of the Lord blows on them.
  Surely the people are grass.
  8The grass withers and the flowers fall,
  but the word of our God endures forever."
  9You who bring good news to Zion,
  go up on a high mountain.
  You who bring good news to Jerusalem,

lift up your voice with a shout,
lift it up, do not be afraid;
say to the towns of Judah,
“Here is your God!”
10See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power,
and he rules with a mighty arm.
See, his reward is with him,
and his recompense accompanies him.
11He tends his flock like a shepherd:
He gathers the lambs in his arms
and carries them close to his heart;
he gently leads those that have young.

Psalm Reading:

- Psalm 85 (VU p802)

New Testament Reading:

- 2 Peter 3:8-13 – 8But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.
  10But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.
  11Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

Gospel Reading:

- Mark 1:1-8 – 1The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, 2as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:
  “I will send my messenger ahead of you,
  who will prepare your way”—
  3“a voice of one calling in the wilderness,

‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.’ ”
4And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. 6John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

A Response may be said after this, for example:

Offered as wisdom for the journey.

May we walk in its light.

Hymn:

- VU 18 “There’s a voice in the wilderness”

Sermon:

Introduction:

- Today we are talking about Peace.
- What is peace?
    - If the congregation is open to discussion, give time for them to discuss it either with each other or with the wider group.
    - Or give them time to think by themselves about what they think peace is.
- Can today’s Scriptures teach us what peace is, especially in today's world?

Body:

- Background
    - This poem opens the second part of the book of Isaiah, written after the Babylonian exile.
        - The first part of Isaiah is an announcement that the Jews’ sin will lead to the exile:
            - The prophets made it unmistakably clear that the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile to Babylon were not due to Babylonian strength; they were a well-deserved punishment from God.
        - But the destruction of Jerusalem is never described in Isaiah.
            - The exile is anticipated in Chapter 39 and only assumed in Isaiah 40.

        - Thus, the second part of Isaiah was written to the Jews after they were allowed to return to the Promised Land.
    - Isaiah 40 begins describing this unexpected reversal of fortunes.
- Verses 1-2 announce this reversal of the Jews' situation, or in other words, God's restoration process.
    - The restoration is described in one word: "Comfort."
        - The fact that the Jews had to be comforted can be seen in the emphasis placed on the command through:
            - The repetition of the command.
            - And the next one that said that the Jews had to be addressed tenderly.
        - But were the Jews deserving of the comfort?
            - Chapter after chapter in the first part of Isaiah describes how the people of Jerusalem prospered through wickedness, oppression, lies and injustice, refusing to heed the prophets' calls to repent, reform and be reconciled to God.
        - They may not have been in our eyes.
            - But God's grace can be seen in the proclamation that the Jews' time of suffering was over.
- Verses 3-5:
    - That the LORD's coming is comfort will be heard through a messenger in the wilderness crying that the path for God must be prepared.
    - There are different ways to interpret this pathway:
        - It may be understood as a reference to the Jews' return from Babylon and the Promised Land:
            - The most direct route between Babylon and Judea is through the Syrian Desert.
            - It is unlikely that any exiles returning from Babylon would have made the dangerous trek through the waterless wilderness.
            - Rather, they would have followed water sources, arcing through northern Syria and then back south to Jerusalem.
        - In this sense, it also functions as a metaphor for the journey of their ancestor from Egypt to the Promised Land:
            - But this journey will not be forty years trudging through the desert.
            - It will be an easier journey with flat ground and trouble-free travel.

        - Or it could be a metaphor for the desolation and despair of the Jews in Babylon.
        - Another way to understand the metaphor of the pathway is to see it as meant for God:
            - This interpretation implies that God had abandoned the Jews.
            - But Isaiah wants to assure the Jews that God's long absence from Jerusalem has ended.
            - God will return to Jerusalem, and they will have access to God again.
    - However you interpret it, the fundamental truth is still the same:
        - God will bring about a complete turnaround in the state of affairs.
        - God will restore a broken pathway into an easy-travelling highway with the destination of a restored relationship with God.
            - Or, in other words, peace will be restored between God and us.
    - And the Gospel writers identified this messenger calling for the preparation of the pathway as John the Baptist, as we read in Mark 1:1-8.
        - John brought the message of comfort to a new generation of Jews and us today.
        - John announced the coming of the Messiah, who will bring about this reversal of the state of affairs:
            - It will be done through the gift of peace!
            - We received peace through our restored relationship with God, and this flows over to all other relationships we have:
                - The relationship with ourselves, others and creation.
- Verses 6-9:
    - The contrasting images in verses 6-9 highlight the chasm between God and the Jews.
        - They have sinned, but God has stayed true.
        - They are fragile, but God is powerful.
    - The steadfastness and power of God function as comfort for us.
        - No matter what happens to us, God will always be true to us and have the power to save us.
    - The comfort is seen when the words are heard in verse 9: "Here is your God!"
        - John had the same message as Isaiah: "Here is your God!"
        - He who comes after me is the one who will bring restoration.
        - John announced the coming of the One who gave us the gifts of peace and joy.
- Verses 10-11:
    - Verses 10-11 announce how God is here through the use of two metaphors:

        - A conquering warrior
        - A shepherd.
    - But the imagery takes a startling turn:
        - The conquering warrior, Jesus Christ, with arm outstretched to slay an enemy, instead bends down and scoops up the little lambs to bring them comfort.
        - Psalm 85 explains the effect of God's presence in our lives:
            - Love and faithfulness meet together;
              righteousness and peace kiss each other.
              11Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,
              and righteousness looks down from heaven.
              12The Lord will indeed give what is good,
              and our land will yield its harvest.
              13Righteousness goes before him
              and prepares the way for his steps.
        - And 2 Peter 3:13 says that in the new heaven and a new earth, righteousness will dwell.

Conclusion:

- What wonderful words of comfort!
    - This Scripture ultimately reminds us that the unexpected can happen: God still sends comfort into our short and frail lives.
    - God brought about a complete restoration.
    - Through Jesus' death and resurrection, the broken pathway was cleared and corrected.
        - We have been restored in our relationship with God.
        - Jesus' coming gave us the gift of peace.
- But the pathway doesn't end there:
    - We should live in peace.
        - Peace is not just the absence of conflict.
        - But the presence of healthy relationships.
        - And God started that process by restoring our relationship with God.
- But the restoration process will only be completed when Jesus comes again.
    - And until that time, we have to pass on the gift of peace to others so that they might also hear the message of comfort: "God is here!"

Amen!

Response to the Word – Food bank Tree:

- Introduction:
  - In 19 days, we are going to celebrate Christmas.
    - We will be sitting around a table with friends and/or family sharing a meal.
      - Probably a turkey, with stuffing, vegetables, dessert, drinks and snacks.
    - But there are those in our community for whom this is just a dream.
      - People who don't have the resources to have even just a regular meal on Christmas.
      - People going hungry.
  - At Christmas, we remember God's gift of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.
    - We respond by sharing food with our neighbours through the food bank.
    - These gifts help ease hunger and worry, honour others' dignity, make this special day special for someone for whom it wasn't possible, and thus make Christ's peace tangible.
  - May our generosity continue throughout the year.
- Prayer:
  - God of peace, You come among us in Jesus, the Prince of Peace,
    bringing restoration in relationships.
    We offer these gifts of food.
    Receive our gifts and use them for restoration in our neighbours' circumstances.
    May it ease hunger, lighten worry,
    and bring peace to those who receive it.
    Let Your peace grow in our community.
    Bless those who offer their time to gather, sort, and distribute this food.
    Strengthen them with hope, peace, joy and love.
    As we prepare the way for Christ,
    help us to work for a world where everyone has enough.
    Make us instruments of Your peace.
    Amen.
- Hymn:
  - VU 684 "Make me a channel of Your peace"
  - VU 48 "Hark! The herald angels sing"

Minute for … Mission/Affirm/Ecojustice/First-Third-Ministry

Resources for these may soon be found on the FSLDW website.

Prayers of the people:

- How things will change on the day of the Lord's coming!
  Every valley will be lifted, and all the mountains will be made into a plain.
  Equality will exist for all of God's people.
  O God, we long for that day of peace.
  We strain our ears to hear the voices of those crying in the wilderness of their lives;
  the wilderness of despair and discouragement;
  the wilderness of anger and fear;
  the wilderness of alienation and selfishness;
  the wilderness of violence, war, death and destruction.
  Their voice cries to us to make ready the pathway for our God,
  to remove the obstacles placed in their way.
  Holy Spirit, make us the voice calling them from their wilderness to Your peace.
  Please remind us that peace is a gift You gave us in Your restoration work.
  May your peace become a reality here on earth, as we pray in the prayer You taught us: Our Father…

Offertory:

- Invitation to Offering
- Musical Offering by the organist and/or choir.
- Offertory Hymn:
  - VU 55 "In the bleak midwinter" v4
    OR
  - 1. Lead us, O Lord, as thou didst lead the Wise Men in the days of old
    That we, like them, may bring our gifts of frankincense and myrrh and gold
    2. For us, illumine now the night and show us where thy glories are
    Until we find incarnate Love revealed beneath the Christmas Star
- Prayer of Dedication

Final Hymn:

- VU 7 (Hope is a star) v2

Commissioning:

- Shalom (peace be with you)!

  And with you as well!

  God sends us into the world,

  forgiven and restored through Christ,

  to prepare the way of peace.

  We know the way may not be smooth,

  but God is already there.

  In the wild places, prepare a straight path for the Lord.

  We will bring peace in the wilderness of people's lives.

  God will nurture peace in God's relationship with you,

  yourself, one another, and creation.

  We will trust in God's restorative peace!

Blessing:

- May the hope, peace, joy, and love of God, our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, be with us all, now and forever. Amen.

  A Response may be said after this, for example:

  May it be so.

Postlude/Recessional Hymn:

- Go now in peace

  OR
- VU 882 "Prepare the way – Isaiah 40" v2

Advent Sunday 3: 13 December 2026

Luke 1:46b-55 (The Magnificat) – A Gift of Joy!

Prelude or Hymn Sing:

- Prelude:
  - VU 10 "Prepare the way"

  OR
- Hymn Sing:
  - VU 87 "I am the light"
  - VU 75 "While shepherds watched"

Welcome & Announcements

Joys and Concerns

Lighting Of The Christ Candle:

- What is Advent?
  - Advent start the 4th Sunday before Christmas.
  - It is our spiritual preparation for the Christmas season.
  - The word 'Advent' means – arrival.
    - We are thus preparing for Jesus's arrival.
      - First coming:
        - Christmas
        - The arrival of the Kingdom of God.
      - Second Coming:
        - God will make everything new.
    - There thus exists a tension, which is the focus of Advent, between the "Already" and the "Not-Yet".
      - For example: We ALREADY have eternal life, but we do NOT-YET live in heaven with God for eternity.
- Symbols:
  - Advent wreath
    - God's eternal love and his existence for eternity.
  - 5 Candles - Light that came into the world:
    - 3 blue/purple:
      - 1 - Hope
      - 2 - Peace
      - 4 - Love
    - 1 light rose:
      - 3 - Joy
    - 1 white:
      - Christmas Day.
- Let us light the candle for Hope during this first Sunday of Advent as we sing: VU 6 "A candle is Burning" v3

Gathering Words:

- Gathering Words:
  - We gather in this place of worship so our souls may glorify You, O God,
    and our spirits rejoice in our Saviour.
    You brought us here to hear the Good News proclaimed,
    to hear how You set captives free,
    and turn tears into songs of joy.
    We are here to rejoice in the restoration already begun,
    And to learn how to hold fast to what is good as we await the second coming of Jesus,
    when Your promised restoration will be complete,
    and our joy will be full.
    Amen.
- Land Acknowledgment:
  - We acknowledge that this region where we live, work and worship is on lands that are, by law, the unceded territories of the _____ peoples—predominantly the lands of the _____.
  - May we worship with respect on this land, and live in peace and friendship with its people.
  - And may we ultimately acknowledge that everything ultimately belongs to God and we are stewards of God's creation.

Passing the Peace:

- Formal Greeting:
  - Peace be with you.
    And also with you.
- Greet each other in the pews.
- Response:
  - VU 34 "Come now, O God of JOY"

Call To Worship:

- God calls us to worship,
  With joy we answer Your call!
  Our souls glorify You!
  Our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour.

Jesus is the Good News which turns tears into songs of joy.
You have done great things for us, and we are glad!
Come, praise and rejoice in the restoration Jesus has begun,
in the world filled with sorrow and pain.
May we rejoice, pray, and be thankful
as we prepare for Christ's second coming
and the full realization of Your promised restoration.

Prayer of Approach:

- **God of joy,**
  we rejoice in Your presence this day as Mary did,
  because Your restoration work turns weeping into laughter.
  And so we come to You in joy,
  praising You for the renewal already begun in Jesus.
  Please guide this worship service
  So we may rejoice, pray continually, and give thanks.
  May joy be our strength until You come again.
  Amen.

Hymn:

- VU 35 "Good Christian friends, rejoice"

Opening prayer

Confession:

- **God of restoration,**
  please forgive us the times when our sorrows
  and concerns overwhelmed the joy You gave us when Jesus came for the first time.
  We forgot Your great deeds, and neglected prayer and thanksgiving.
  And because we were not shining Your joy from inside us,
  the poor, captives and brokenhearted couldn't see the Good News.
  Please forgive those times.
  Help us hold fast to what is good as we await Christ's return.
  Amen.

Assurance of Pardon:

- When the Lord forgives and restores our fortunes,
  we are like those who dream.
  Our mouths are filled with laughter,
  our tongues with songs of joy.
  Those who sowed with tears
  now reap songs of joy.
  Those who went out weeping,
  carrying seed to sow,
  now return with songs of joy,
  carrying sheaves with them.
  Thanks be to God!

Praise Hymn:

- VU 59 “Joy to the world”

Prayer for illumination

Service of the Word

Old Testament Reading:

- Isaiah 61 – 1The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,
  because the Lord has anointed me
  to proclaim good news to the poor.
  He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
  to proclaim freedom for the captives
  and release from darkness for the prisoners,
  2to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor
  and the day of vengeance of our God,
  to comfort all who mourn,
  3and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
  to bestow on them a crown of beauty
  instead of ashes,
  the oil of joy
  instead of mourning,

and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the Lord
for the display of his splendor.
4They will rebuild the ancient ruins
and restore the places long devastated;
they will renew the ruined cities
that have been devastated for generations.
5Strangers will shepherd your flocks;
foreigners will work your fields and vineyards.
6And you will be called priests of the Lord,
you will be named ministers of our God.
You will feed on the wealth of nations,
and in their riches you will boast.
7Instead of your shame
you will receive a double portion,
and instead of disgrace
you will rejoice in your inheritance.
And so you will inherit a double portion in your land,
and everlasting joy will be yours.
8“For I, the Lord, love justice;
I hate robbery and wrongdoing.
In my faithfulness I will reward my people
and make an everlasting covenant with them.
9Their descendants will be known among the nations
and their offspring among the peoples.
All who see them will acknowledge
that they are a people the Lord has blessed.”
10I delight greatly in the Lord;
my soul rejoices in my God.
For he has clothed me with garments of salvation
and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,
as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

11For as the soil makes the sprout come up
and a garden causes seeds to grow,
so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness
and praise spring up before all nations.

Psalm Reading:

- Psalm 126 (VU p850) &
- Luke 1:46b-55 (The Magnificat) – “My soul glorifies the Lord
  47and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
  48for he has been mindful
  of the humble state of his servant.
  From now on all generations will call me blessed,
  49for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
  holy is his name.
  50His mercy extends to those who fear him,
  from generation to generation.
  51He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
  he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.
  52He has brought down rulers from their thrones
  but has lifted up the humble.
  53He has filled the hungry with good things
  but has sent the rich away empty.
  54He has helped his servant Israel,
  remembering to be merciful
  55to Abraham and his descendants forever,
  just as he promised our ancestors.”

New Testament Reading:

- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22 – 16Rejoice always, 17pray continually, 18give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.
  19Do not quench the Spirit. 20Do not treat prophecies with contempt 21but test them all; hold on to what is good, 22reject every kind of evil.

Gospel Reading:

- John 1:6-8,19-28 – 6There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

  19Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. 20He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah."

  21They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?"

  He said, "I am not."

  "Are you the Prophet?"

  He answered, "No."

  22Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

  23John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.' "

  24Now the Pharisees who had been sent 25questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

  26"I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. 27He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

  28This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

  A Response may be said after this, for example:

  Offered as wisdom for the journey.

  May we walk in its light.

Hymn:

- VU 249 "Rejoice in the Lord always"

Sermon:

Introduction:

- Today we are talking about Joy.
- What is joy?
  - If the congregation is open to discussion, give time for them to discuss it either with each other or with the wider group.
  - Or give them time to think by themselves about what they think joy is.
- Can today's Scriptures teach us what joy is, especially in today's world?

Body:

- Background:
  - The Magnificat gets its name from the first words in the Latin translation of the Bible:
    - Latin for "[My soul] glorifies [the Lord]"
  - It is sung by Mary upon visiting her cousin Elizabeth – John the Baptist's mother.
  - It is one of the most well-known songs in the Bible, because of the following:
    - It's just such an incredible poetic work.
    - Reminiscent of the song of Hannah – mother of Samuel – as well as many Psalms.
      - Thus, Mary sang her praise after hearing what Elizabeth told her, using her knowledge of the praise songs in the Old Testament.
- Verses 46-47 – Mary's exclamation of praise:
  - She emphasizes twice that her whole being cannot help but sing God's praises.
  - Mary, in her whole being, cannot stop praising God through the Holy Spirit.
- Verses 48-50 – Mary gives 2 reasons why she praises God:
  - In verse 48 we find the first reason:
    - Mary uses the same words as Hannah – God saw her and helped her.
      - He did not notice her because she was special.
      - No. He spotted her while she was a little slave girl. In other words, when she had no value!
    - God then turned her situation around, and from now on, everyone will call the worthless slave girl happy.
      - So God gave value to someone who had no value.
  - Verses 49-50 give us the 2nd reason:
    - Because the Mighty One did great things for her
      - The word Mighty immediately reminds us of the mighty God who created the Universe.
      - The Creator of the whole universe, who has unlimited power, chose to do great things for this servant.
    - Therefore:
      - Holy is God's name – according to Mary
        - Holy – means to be set apart. To be different.
          - Thus, Mary says that there is no one like God!
        - Name – who God is:

            - When Moses asked God God's name, God answered with: "I am…"
            - God is… love
            - God is… peace
            - God is… hope
            - God is… joy
            - God is… etc.
                - God is incomparable because of who God is and what God does!
    - God's mercy endures forever for those who fear God.
        - Mercy – to show kindness and concern for someone in serious need.
            - God's mercy will never end!
- Verses 51-53 – Mary describes the reversal/restoration that God brought:
    - This section emphasizes the fact that God is the one who acts, and describes what God does:
        - God made the proud and mighty small.
        - Those who had no value, God bestowed value on.
            - God hates injustice – the prophets repeatedly told the people of God.
        - God brings about the reversal of social order
            - That is how God's love works:
                - Those who are enemies of God become family of God.
                - Those who are outcasts are brought into God's circle.
                - Those who are discriminated against are given value.
            - God's love isn't just a warm fuzzy feeling!
                - It isn't only just treating people as you would like to be treated.
                - It is more than that.
                - It is the restoration of that which sin broke.
                - It is the reversal of the social order sin brought to the world.
                - It is recognizing the damage sin did in someone's life and then restoring it.
- Verses 54-55 – Mary describes God's faithfulness:
    - God decided to help God's people:
        - As God always does!

        - God did it by reversing their situation and bringing restoration:
            - God's people:
                - Not the church, not even the whole nation of Israel
                - The true people of God. Those who fear God. In other words, those who accept God's salvation.
        - God keeps God's promises
            - Not any promise, but the promise that goes back all the way to Abraham – the covenant:
                - God will be our God, and we must be God's people.
                - And the One that was promised by God, who will forever sit on David's throne, is the baby in Mary's womb.
            - Salvation through Jesus has been coming for years and is finally here – as God promised.
                - That is exactly what John the Baptist said in our Gospel Scripture for today:
                    - In everything John did, he emphasized that he is only the messenger who prepares the way for the One coming after him.
            - God's love became flesh!
- We see the same theme of reversal/restoration and the joy it produced in Mary in our Psalm and Epistle Readings for today:
    - Psalm 126 in a nutshell can be summarized by saying that when God brings about restoration, it brings forth joy!
        - This can explicitly be seen in verses 4-6:
            - 4Restore our fortunes, Lord,
              like streams in the Negev.
              5Those who sow with tears
              will reap with songs of joy.
              6Those who go out weeping,
              carrying seed to sow,
              will return with songs of joy,
              carrying sheaves with them.
    - Paul's letters can usually be divided into two parts:
        - The first part of the letter focuses on who we are:

        - Who are we because of what God did for us.
    - And then the second part is on what we do:
        - Because God made us who we are, we have to do the following…
    - In Paul's final instructions to the congregation in Thessalonica, he tells them to always rejoice, because of what God did for them as explained in the first part of the letter!

Conclusion:

- Sin broke the perfect world that God created.
    - Because of sin, we live in a world where there is sorrow, pain, concerns, etc.
    - All these things steal our joy, our enjoyment of the life that God gave us.
- But God remembers God's promises, and God came to earth through the Virgin Mary.
- And just like God reversed Mary's situation and brought restoration in her life, which filled her with joy, so God is doing the same in our lives!
- God restores our fortunes
  Those who sow with tears
  will reap with songs of joy.
  Those who go out weeping,
  carrying seed to sow,
  will return with songs of joy,
  carrying sheaves with them.

Amen!

<u>Response to the Word – White Gifts Tree:</u>

- Introduction:
    - The story of White Gift Sunday began in 1903 in Painesville, Ohio, where a woman was troubled by her children arguing over the value of different gifts.
    - She suggested that they, along with other Sunday school children bringing gifts to church for those in need, wrap the gifts in white paper.
    - The uniformity of decoration would obscure the gifts' value.
    - The idea allowed everyone to participate in the joy of giving without regard to economic status.
- Offering Refrain (sung or said):
    - **What can I give him, poor as I am?**
      If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
      if I were a wise man, I would do my part;

yet, what I can, I give him—give my heart.

- Prayer of Dedication
  - All things come from you, Creating God; by your grace, we offer our gifts in return.
    Bless us, and what we do here,
    that all your people might experience the renewal of life you reveal in Christ Jesus.
    May all experience the joy caused by Your restoration work in us.
    Amen.
- Hymn:
  - VU 60 “O come, all ye faithful”

Minute for … Mission/Affirm/Ecojustice/First-Third-Ministry

Resources for these may soon be found on the FSLDW website.

Prayers of the people:

- We pray with Mary:
  may your name be holy,
  may the hungry be filled,
  may the proud be scattered,
  may the oppressed be lifted up,
  may your love be ever with us all.
  We pray like you taught us to pray in Your prayer: Our Farther…

Offertory:

- Invitation to Offering
- Musical Offering by the organist and/or choir.
- Offertory Hymn:
  - VU 55 “In the bleak midwinter” v4
    OR
  - 1. Lead us, O Lord, as thou didst lead the Wise Men in the days of old
    That we, like them, may bring our gifts of frankincense and myrrh and gold
    2. For us, illumine now the night and show us where thy glories are
    Until we find incarnate Love revealed beneath the Christmas Star
- Prayer of Dedication

Final Hymn:

- VU 7 (Hope is a star) v3

Commissioning:

- Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!
  Our mouths will be filled with laughter,
  our tongues with songs of joy.
  God sends us into the world filled with joy.
  Because Jesus Christ has begun our restoration,
  And our joy will be our strength until Jesus comes again.

Blessing:

- May the hope, peace, joy, and love of God, our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, be with us all, now and forever. Amen.
  A Response may be said after this, for example:
  May it be so.

Postlude/Recessional Hymn:

- Go now in peace
  OR
- VU 882 “Prepare the way – Isaiah 40” v2

Advent Sunday 4: 20 December 2026

Psalm 89 – A Gift of Love!

Prelude or Hymn Sing:

- Prelude:
  - VU 10 “Prepare the way”

  OR
- Hymn Sing:
  - VU 91 “The first Nowell”
  - VU 73 “The Virgin Mary”

Welcome & Announcements

Joys and Concerns

Lighting Of The Christ Candle:

- What is Advent?
  - Advent start the 4th Sunday before Christmas.
  - It is our spiritual preparation for the Christmas season.
  - The word ‘Advent’ means – arrival.
    - We are thus preparing for Jesus’s arrival.
      - First coming:
        - Christmas
        - The arrival of the Kingdom of God.
      - Second Coming:
        - God will make everything new.
    - There thus exists a tension, which is the focus of Advent, between the “Already” and the “Not-Yet”.
      - For example: We ALREADY have eternal life, but we do NOT-YET live in heaven with God for eternity.
- Symbols:
  - Advent wreath
    - God's eternal love and his existence for eternity.
  - 5 Candles - Light that came into the world:
    - 3 blue/purple:
      - 1 - Hope
      - 2 - Peace
      - 4 - Love
    - 1 light rose:
      - 3 - Joy
    - 1 white:
      - Christmas Day.
- Let us light the candle for Hope during this first Sunday of Advent as we sing: VU 6 “A candle is Burning” v4

Gathering Words:

- Gathering Words:
  - We gather to rejoice in God's steadfast love,
    and to be reminded that God keeps God's promises because God loves us.
    God kept God's promise to David:
    Jesus has come, and His Kingdom will never end.
    May we today, like Mary, receive God's message of love
    and offer ourselves to God's purpose.
- Land Acknowledgment:
  - We acknowledge that this region where we live, work and worship is on lands that are, by law, the unceded territories of the _____ peoples—predominantly the lands of the _____.
  - May we worship with respect on this land, and live in peace and friendship with its people.
  - And may we ultimately acknowledge that everything ultimately belongs to God and we are stewards of God's creation.

Passing the Peace:

- Formal Greeting:
  - Peace be with you.
    And also with you.
- Greet each other in the pews.
- Response:
  - VU 34 "Come now, O, God of LOVE"

Call To Worship:

- Stop. Listen. Pay attention. Love is coming near.
  We wait in the love of the coming Messiah that transforms and restores us.
  Our loving God calls us to worship and experience God's love.
  We wait in the love of the coming Messiah that transforms and restores us.
  You have kept Your promise to David through Jesus, whose Kingdom will never end.
  With people of every nation, we wait in the love of the coming Messiah
  who transforms and restores us.
  Like Mary, we receive Your word and offer ourselves to Your purpose.
  We wait in the love of the coming Messiah who transforms and restores us

until God's Kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven.

Prayer of Approach:

- ***Loving God,***
  through all ages, You have desired to be in a close relationship with us,
  draw us into closeness with You today.
  In the busyness of the world, let us remember today
  that Yours has always been a story of connection.
  That is why You fulfilled Your promise to David through Jesus,
  whose Kingdom will never end and whose love reaches every nation.
  Through restoring us into a relationship with You,
  You reached out to embrace us in love.
  In this service, we offer our love for all You have done.
  Amen.

Hymn:

- VU 38 "Angels we have heard on high"

Opening prayer

Service of the Word

Old Testament Reading:

- 2 Samuel 7:1-17 – 1After the king was settled in his palace and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, 2he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent."
  3Nathan replied to the king, "Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you."
  4But that night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying:
  5"Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the Lord says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? 6I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling.
  7Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" '

8“Now then, tell my servant David, ‘This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. 9I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. 10And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning 11and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.

“ ‘The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: 12When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. 13He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. 15But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.’ ”

17Nathan reported to David all the words of this entire revelation.

Psalm Reading:

- Psalm 89 – 1I will sing of the Lord’s great love forever;
  with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known
  through all generations.
  2I will declare that your love stands firm forever,
  that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.
  3You said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
  I have sworn to David my servant,
  4‘I will establish your line forever
  and make your throne firm through all generations.’ ”
  5The heavens praise your wonders, Lord,
  your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones.
  6For who in the skies above can compare with the Lord?
  Who is like the Lord among the heavenly beings?
  7In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared;
  he is more awesome than all who surround him.
  8Who is like you, Lord God Almighty?

You, Lord, are mighty, and your faithfulness surrounds you.
9You rule over the surging sea;
when its waves mount up, you still them.
10You crushed Rahab like one of the slain;
with your strong arm you scattered your enemies.
11The heavens are yours, and yours also the earth;
you founded the world and all that is in it.
12You created the north and the south;
Tabor and Hermon sing for joy at your name.
13Your arm is endowed with power;
your hand is strong, your right hand exalted.
14Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
love and faithfulness go before you.
15Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you,
who walk in the light of your presence, Lord.
16They rejoice in your name all day long;
they celebrate your righteousness.
17For you are their glory and strength,
and by your favor you exalt our horn.
18Indeed, our shield belongs to the Lord,
our king to the Holy One of Israel.
19Once you spoke in a vision,
to your faithful people you said:
“I have bestowed strength on a warrior;
I have raised up a young man from among the people.
20I have found David my servant;
with my sacred oil I have anointed him.
21My hand will sustain him;
surely my arm will strengthen him.
22The enemy will not get the better of him;
the wicked will not oppress him.
23I will crush his foes before him
and strike down his adversaries.
24My faithful love will be with him,
and through my name his horn will be exalted.

25I will set his hand over the sea,
his right hand over the rivers.
26He will call out to me, ‘You are my Father,
my God, the Rock my Savior.’
27And I will appoint him to be my firstborn,
the most exalted of the kings of the earth.
28I will maintain my love to him forever,
and my covenant with him will never fail.
29I will establish his line forever,
his throne as long as the heavens endure.
30“If his sons forsake my law
and do not follow my statutes,
31if they violate my decrees
and fail to keep my commands,
32I will punish their sin with the rod,
their iniquity with flogging;
33but I will not take my love from him,
nor will I ever betray my faithfulness.
34I will not violate my covenant
or alter what my lips have uttered.
35Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness—
and I will not lie to David—
36that his line will continue forever
and his throne endure before me like the sun;
37it will be established forever like the moon,
the faithful witness in the sky.”
38But you have rejected, you have spurned,
you have been very angry with your anointed one.
39You have renounced the covenant with your servant
and have defiled his crown in the dust.
40You have broken through all his walls
and reduced his strongholds to ruins.
41All who pass by have plundered him;
he has become the scorn of his neighbors.
42You have exalted the right hand of his foes;

you have made all his enemies rejoice.
43Indeed, you have turned back the edge of his sword
and have not supported him in battle.
44You have put an end to his splendor
and cast his throne to the ground.
45You have cut short the days of his youth;
you have covered him with a mantle of shame.
46How long, Lord? Will you hide yourself forever?
How long will your wrath burn like fire?
47Remember how fleeting is my life.
For what futility you have created all humanity!
48Who can live and not see death,
or who can escape the power of the grave?
49Lord, where is your former great love,
which in your faithfulness you swore to David?
50Remember, Lord, how your servant has been mocked,
how I bear in my heart the taunts of all the nations,
51the taunts with which your enemies, Lord, have mocked,
with which they have mocked every step of your anointed one.
52Praise be to the Lord forever!
Amen and Amen.

New Testament Reading:

- Romans 16:25-27 – 25Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, 26but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith— 27to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Gospel Reading:

- Luke 1:26-38 – 26In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.
30But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”
34“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”
35The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37For no word from God will ever fail.”
38“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

A Response may be said after this, for example:

Offered as wisdom for the journey.

May we walk in its light.

Hymn:

- VU 61 “Of the Father’s love begotten”

Sermon:

Introduction:

- Today we are talking about Love.
- What is love?
    - If the congregation is open to discussion, give time for them to discuss it either with each other or with the wider group.
    - Or give them time to think by themselves about what they think love is.
- Can today’s Scriptures teach us what love is, especially in today's world?

Body:

- There are two questions that we need to start with:
    - What is love?
    - Why did God create the universe?
- Let’s start with the second question:
    - God created the universe for us to have a place to stand on.
    - Because God is love:
        - And that starts to answer the first question.

        - But we will have to answer the rest of the first question a bit later.
    - Because God is love, God needed someone to give that love to.
    - And that is why God created the universe.
        - So that God could love us and so that we could love God back.
        - But God did not want robots that automatically love God back – that is not real love.
        - God gave us free will so we could choose to love God back.
- But what did our free will lead to?
    - It started with Adam and Eve choosing the wrong tree.
    - And that broke God's perfect creation:
        - Where everything was "good" after creation, everything was broken afterwards:
            - Instead of living a life of luxury in the Garden of Eden, people have to work extremely hard to provide for their basic needs.
            - Instead of a perfect, beautiful creation, the world is now filled with thorns and thistles.
            - It is a world that knows danger, death, destruction, disease, and disrespect.
    - Where is God's love in a world filled with wars?
    - Where is God's love when people are discriminated against because of their skin colour, beliefs, orientations, etc.?
    - Where is God's love in a world broken by pollution and misuse?
- It looks as if sin, which broke God's perfect creation, is obscuring the love God has for us.
    - People question the reality of a loving God when they have experienced abuse their whole lives.
    - People question if God is love in the genocide of nature, peoples and cultures.
- Where is God's love?
- If we look at the Bible as a whole, as a story of a God who, throughout history, keeps coming to humans and inviting us into a relationship with God, we can see a golden thread of love woven into the story of a God who just wants to love us!
- Our four Scriptures of this morning are four small parts of this much bigger golden thread of love.
- Psalm 89 is the last psalm of the third book in the Psalter and was written by Ethan.
    - It is unclear who Ethan is, but from verses 38-52, it is a strong possibility that the Psalm was written after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.
    - A time when there was no king in David's line on the throne.

- A time when Jerusalem and all the Jews' cities were reduced to ruin.
- A time when other nations plundered what God gave them.
- A time when they sat next to the rivers of Babylon and wept.

- The Psalm has a fascinating structure that may help us to understand what the Psalm is all about:
  - Verses 1-4 (Introduction) – The mercy and faithfulness of the Lord
  - Verses 5-18 – The glory and greatness of God:
    - Verses 5-7 – God's greatness in the heavens
    - Verses 8-13 – God's greatness on the earth
    - Verses 14-18 – God's people are praising God for God's greatness.
  - Verses 19-37 – God's covenant to David:
    - 19-29 – God's side of the covenant.
      - These verses refer to Nathan's vision about God's covenant with David that one of his descendants will always sit on the throne, which we read in 2 Samuel 7:1-17.
      - This prophecy finally came to fruition when the angel appeared to Mary and said:
        - "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. 31You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."
      - But Jesus wasn't only the Messiah for the Jews.
        - Paul says in Romans 16 that everyone may become a part of the loving relationship God wants with us through faith.
      - The golden thread of love broke through the murkiness of sin into this broken world through Jesus Christ as David's descendant.
        - Jesus came out of love for us, and this started to restore what sin broke in God's creation!
      - And this is finally the answer to the first question:
        - God is love.
        - And this love was shown through the fact that Jesus put our needs above his own!

- 30-32 – David's descendants' responsibility:
    - The covenant states that God will be our God; we should be God's people.
    - Thus, God will always love us; we must love God back.
- 33-37 – God's faithfulness to the covenant:
    - The structure of verses 28-37 shows God's faithfulness:
        - A. 28 My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him.
            - B. 29 His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.
                - C. 30 If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments;
                    - D. 31 If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments;
                        - E. 32 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.
                        - E. 33 Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.
                    - D. 34 My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.
                - C. 35 Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.
            - B. 36 His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.
        - A. 37 It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.
    - This structure emphasizes that God will always be faithful no matter what humans do.
        - God will always love us.
        - That golden thread of love can be seen in God's faithfulness in God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Israel, David and now us.
            - God will always love us and restore what sin broke.

- Verses 38-52 – According to the Jews, God forsake the covenant.
    - All the Psalmist wrote led up to this moment.
    - He is saying:
        - God, this is what you have promised us:
            - Your presence in our midst through a King in David's line on the throne.
        - But our reality is totally different:
            - Jerusalem and the temple are destroyed, and we are in exile.
    - And then the plea comes: Please remember us.
    - The whole Psalm thus leads up to a cry for restoration:
        - May God forgive their sins and restore the relationship between God and God's people.
        - May God return them to the Promised Land.
        - May God restore Jerusalem and the temple.
        - May someone from David's line rule over God's people again.
            - And the angel gave the Good News that Jesus is that King!

Conclusion:

- God loves us a lot.
- This love can be seen in the golden thread of love that runs throughout the Bible.
- We see it in God's interactions with people.
- But we see it most clearly in the covenant.
    - God came to humans and said that God wants a special relationship with us.
    - And God was always faithful to that promise of love.
    - It was best seen in the fact that Love came to earth to break through the murkiness of sin that is obscuring God's love in the world.
        - Love came to restore what sin broke.
- But just like the Psalmist, we know that God loves us and that we have the gift of love.
    - But the world around us is still broken.
    - And that is why, like the Psalmist, we end today with:
        - Remember us, Lord!
        - Remember us and please come again soon!

Amen!

Response to the Word – Angel Tree:

- Angel monologue written by Colin Peterson in 1998:
  - Tonight's a pretty exciting night for me.
    After all, I'm one of the angels who have been given the
    responsibility of telling the good news of the
    Saviour's birth.
    Just saying those beautiful, magical words of hope and new life
    are enough to send shivers down my spine:
    "Behold, I bring you good news of a great joy
    which will come to all the people,
    for unto you is born this day in the city of
    David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord!"
    You know, some people don't believe in angels.
    Some people don't believe that God could really come among us
    in the birth of a little child.
    What a dark and dreary world it must be for those who don't believe.
    Hey, guess what! You people are angels!
    That's right.
    The word "angel" really just means messenger.
    And all of you can join me in sharing the good news
    that Jesus Christ has come!
    You can go to all those people who are sad and lonely
    and tell them about the Saviour's birth.
    You can join me and all the heavenly host
    in singing praise and glory to God!
    You know, it's strange,
    but that's one of the ways that Jesus comes into the lives of other people-
    through you and me.
    Even when people are filled with doubt and uncertainty
    we can help them to see the reality of Christ
    through the things that we say and do.
    Being an angel, a messenger, is a pretty exciting job.
    Imagine!
    God has entrusted us with a very important message!
    And that's what really matters in the end.

People can argue all they like about whether angels
have wings or halos or fly around in the sky.
But the sign of a true angel is the message he or she has to tell.
You folks have a message to tell, don't you?
So, halo or not, why not be an angel and help me
share the good news that our Saviour has come!

- VU 36 (Angels, from the Realms of Glory) v1-2
- Present angels and hang them on the Angel Tree.
- Angels offering Prayer:
    - As the angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, may Your glory shine through us.

      We won't be afraid. We know the good news that brings great joy to all people.

      In the town of David, a Saviour was born to us; He is the Messiah, the Lord.

      Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth, and peace to those on whom his favour rests.

      Though we have hung these angels in memory of those we loved and lost, we do not mourn like the other people who have no hope.

      We know that through Jesus' saving work, we will see our loved ones again.

      With great joy, along with all people, we sing: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth joy to those on whom his favour rests!"
- A litany of the angels and the lord's prayer
    - All you angels of God, standing before the eternal light,

      Pray for us.

      Archangel Michael, who overthrew the devil, the deceiver and accuser,

      Pray for us.

      Archangel Michael, who restored peace to heaven and defends the people on earth,

      Pray for us.

      Archangel Gabriel, sent to announce the birth of John the Baptist,

      Pray for us.

      Archangel Gabriel, greeting the Blessed Virgin Mary,

      Pray for us.

      Angel of the Lord, who directed Joseph to defend and protect the Christ child and his mother,

      Pray for us.

      Angels of God, announcing Jesus' birth to shepherds,

Pray for us.

Angels of God, ministering to Jesus in the wilderness,

Pray for us.

Angels of God, strengthening Jesus during his prayer in the garden,

Pray for us.

Angels of God, waiting at the tomb to greet the women with good news,

Pray for us.

Angels of God, comforting the disciples at the Ascension,

Pray for us.

Angels of God, who rejoice over the sinner who repents,

Pray for us.

Angels of God, joining our praises with your perfect worship,

Pray for us.

Angels of God, leading home the child of God,

Pray for us as we pray the prayer taught by our Lord and your Lord Jesus Christ, the Emmanuel, the Good News, Love with us:

Our Father…

Minute for … Mission/Affirm/Ecojustice/First-Third-Ministry

Resources for these may soon be found on the FSLDW website.

Prayers of the people

Offertory:

- Invitation to Offering
- Musical Offering by the organist and/or choir.
- Offertory Hymn:
    - VU 55 “In the bleak midwinter” v4

      OR
    - 1. Lead us, O Lord, as thou didst lead the Wise Men in the days of old

      That we, like them, may bring our gifts of frankincense and myrrh and gold

      2. For us, illumine now the night and show us where thy glories are

      Until we find incarnate Love revealed beneath the Christmas Star
- Prayer of Dedication

Final Hymn:

- VU 7 (Hope is a star) v4

Commissioning:

- Go now, and celebrate God's love all your days.

  We go in love this day to show others that God loves them.

  Go in the gift of love

  May God's love live in us and through us to others

  so they may know God and be restored by God's love.

Blessing:

- May the hope, peace, joy, and love of God, our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, be with us all, now and forever. Amen.

  A Response may be said after this, for example:

  May it be so.

Postlude/Recessional Hymn:

- Go now in peace

  OR

- VU 882 "Prepare the way – Isaiah 40" v2