



GO AND...

BE PRESENT

**An Adaptable Worship Guide for
Mid-week Worship for Advent 2023
For the Nebraska Synod, ELCA**

*Curated by Deacon Timothy Siburg for the congregations of the Nebraska Synod
for Advent 2023.*

Go and... Be Present

A Worship Guide for Mid-week Worship for Advent 2023

Instructions, Ideas, and Advice:

This worship resource is meant to be a useful starting place for your congregational context to continue to engage the Nebraska Synod's "Go And..." focus for the 2023-2024 ministry year. It is meant to be adapted by your congregation in a way that makes it fit well with your context.

The guide includes worship plans for three mid-week services, and an optional fourth service which could be utilized around the theme as a "Longest Night" and/or "Blue Christmas" worship service. If your congregation chooses to use such a service on the last Wednesday before Christmas, this year being Wednesday December 20th, it may make sense to begin this mid-week series then on Wednesday November 29th (the Wednesday prior to the First Sunday of Advent). As this is an adaptable resource, utilize this in a way that makes most sense for your context.

In terms of the worship order, the three mid-week services are offered with suggested hymn or music ideas and some spoken liturgy. These hymn suggestions are largely from the hymnals *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and *All Creation Sings*, though many of the hymns suggested are also available in either *The Lutheran Book of Worship* or *With One Voice*. An additional amended version of the orders of service are offered on pages 18-23, to incorporate the sung liturgy of Marty Haugen's *Holden Evening Prayer*.

Theme and Suggested Scripture Focus:

The "Go And..." focus for the Nebraska Synod journey for December 2023 is "Go And...Be Present." To dig into this theme, this resource breaks it into three focus areas:

Week 1: Go and Be Present and Pause

Week 2: Go and Be Present with Tradition

Week 3: Go and Be Present while you are on the Go

The idea behind this is to invite disciples and congregations to pause and breathe deeply during what can be a busy time of year. That's particularly the focus of Week 1. Week 2 offers an opportunity to surface some of the meaningful traditions that disciples engage in this time of the year, and to reflect on them intentionally. Not to give up any meaningful ones, but perhaps to lean in with more presence into the practices and traditions that are meaningful and give permission to give up some of the less meaningful ones. Finally, Week 3 names the reality that for many people, this time of the year may be one spent being on the Go. Even so, we're still called to be present. What might this look and feel like?

To wonder about these questions, this resource suggests ONE scripture reading each week. For the three mid-week orders of service preceding a possible Longest Night service, it is suggested that God's people go and be present with the familiar but sometimes rushed through and overlooked stories of Luke 1. So often it might feel like we rush to the Nativity story in Luke 2 on Christmas Eve, without setting the stage because the lectionary for Sundays takes us way ahead in the story (Advent 1) back to John the Baptist (Advent 2 and/or 3), and may or may not leave room to hear the stories of Mary, Elizabeth, and Zechariah which set the stage for the Nativity Story so well. So, this year with this mid-week resource, we invite the congregations of the synod to dig in a bit deeper as we journey together during the weeks of Advent to the stories of Luke 1. The suggested scripture reading flow is as follows:

Week 1: Luke 1:1-25: Dedication to Theophilus & The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

Week 2: Luke 1:26-56: The Birth of Jesus Foretold, Mary's Visit to Elizabeth, & Mary's Song of Praise

Week 3: Luke 1:57-80: The Birth of John the Baptist & Zechariah's Prophecy

By reading all eighty verses over three weeks this would obviously set the stage then for the Christmas Eve gospel reading to begin at Luke 2:1. It would hopefully create some time to be present with the story and to engage it with new ways.

Reflections, Preaching, Story Sharing and Conversation

To accompany the readings and the theme, there are three weekly suggested reflection questions that follow each scripture passage in the worship order. These questions could be printed for reflection or placed on slides for all to see. They could be used as preaching points for the preacher to approach the story for the evening and then invite reflection on the "Go and Be Present" theme amid the progression through the Advent season. They could be used as conversation starters over a meal prior to or after the evening worship. They could simply be questions that are left for discussion within the worship space, or to be contemplated and then shared as story starters during the offering time in worship perhaps. Or they could serve as the starter for a 3-5 minute homily type reflection, which could then be followed up by 3-5 minutes of conversation time in small groups in the worship space. The possibilities are endless. Again, do whatever makes the most sense for your ministry context.

Additional Notes:

The Advent Wreath litany comes from the text of the hymn, "As the Dark Awaits the Dawn," (ELW 261) by Susan Palo Cherwien. The text invites one to be grounded and present, while also focusing on the light of Christ to come. This litany than would lead into the lighting of the wreath and the beginning of the singing of a hymn or the *Holden Evening Prayer* liturgy. There are additional prayers throughout this guide built around the theme, including spoken prayers of the people which can be utilized as desired. (Note that among those prayers, the third petition is tweaked slightly from week to week to better acknowledge to particular theme focus for the evening.)

Let us know how you plan to use this resource by tagging the Nebraska Synod on social media or emailing goand@nebraskasynod.org. The Nebraska Synod's "Go And..." Team- Morgan Tranmer, Deacon Sunni Richardson, and Deacon Timothy Siburg would be grateful to hear from you! If you have questions or more ideas about this resource, please reach out to Deacon Timothy Siburg at timothy@nebraskasynod.org.

This resource is offered with great hope for a meaningful Advent season for the congregations of the Nebraska Synod and for all who might utilize this. May we all "Go and... Be Present" together.

*In the hope, promise and presence of the Incarnation and the Resurrection,
Deacon Timothy Siburg*

Go and... Be Present
A Worship Guide for Mid-week Worship for Advent 2023

Week 1: Go and Be Present and Pause

A musical prelude may be offered, or all may gather in silence, breathing deeply to be more fully present.

Gathering

P: We gather this evening in the name of † Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Announcements

If there are any announcements for the good of the community or instructions needed to be shared for worship, this is a good time to share them.

P: As we await and celebrate Christ's birth, we remember that God is present and shows up. The babe who was in the manger, God Incarnate, is God's gift of deep love for us. We are invited now to pause, be still, and be fully present in this holy season. The world around us and society at large may call us to a different place- where busyness, spending, and rushing all about are marks of success. But God, in Christ, offers another way: Emmanuel- God with us.

Pause for Silence and Reflection

Advent Wreath Litany

P: As the dark awaits the dawn,

C: so we await your light.

P: O Star of promise,

C: scatter night,

P: loving bright,

C: loving bright, till shades of fear are gone.

The first Advent candle may be lit as the congregation begins to sing the opening hymn.

Suggested Opening Hymn: "Unexpected and Mysterious" ELW 258 or "Comfort, Comfort, Now My People" ELW 256

Prayer of the Season

P: Let us pray.

C: Emmanuel, you are present with us. Help us to be present with one another. In your name, we pray.

Amen.

The Word

Gospel Acclamation: "Wait for the Lord" ELW 262

P: The Gospel according to St. Luke, the 1st Chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

Gospel Lesson: Luke 1:1-25

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Meditation and Reflection:

- Gabriel effectively invited Zechariah to pause, by making him unable to speak. Have you ever had an experience where something in life (or health) forced you to pause and slow down, and/or perhaps caused you awe, fear, confusion, gratitude, etc.?
- As we begin our journey toward Luke 2, what do you hear in this familiar beginning of the story? Does anything surprise you or give you pause?
- What can you add or change to this season that would truly allow you to pause?

Silence for reflection

Hymn of Response: "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

ELW 257 (v. 1 & 2)

Being Present with and in The Community

Prayers- The prayers may be sung using "There is a Longing in Our Hearts" ACS 1078; "Watch, O Lord" ACS 996; or the prayers from Holden Evening Prayer. If spoken prayers are preferred the following may be used.

P: As we gather and pause this evening, we do so in the presence of our ever-present and abiding loving God. Let us lift the prayers of hearts to the One who hears them and is with us always. Let us pray.

P: Omnipresent God, we give you thanks for the day that has been. For all the moments of hope and joy, for safe travels and daily work, for peace among the busyness. Lord, in your love,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Present God, you know that we can find it hard to slow down. Help us to breathe and be. Help us to sit and be present, to pause and be mindful of You. Lord, in your love,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Merciful God, you are present with all your beloved Children. Be present with those who are ailing, weary, joyless, sick, suffering, grieving, and dying. Especially this night we pray for ___ (names may be offered aloud or silently in one's heart) _____. Lord, in your love,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Loving God, as you are present, help us to be present with you and our neighbors. Make us ever mindful of our siblings in Christ. Help us to walk together as Your people- to uplift the lowly, to care for all those in need, and to share deeply in the joy and peace that we find in You. Lord, in your love,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Everlasting God, we give you thanks for all those who have gone before us. Thank you for being present with those saints who have claimed their promises in baptism, and for welcoming them as only You can do. Help us to rest assured knowing that you are with us always, and that at the last, you will be right there with us too. Lord, in your love,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Into your hands, ever-present God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your abundant love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior. **C: Amen.**

The Peace

P: The peace and presence of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

P: Please share the peace with those around you.

The Offering- *an offering may be gathered for the mission of the church, including for the care of those in need. Gentle music of the season may be played, or if an offering hymn is desired, "Filled With Hope and Gratitude" ACS 907 might be timely. You may also consider another Advent hymn such as those suggested under "Other hymns" at the end of the worship order.*

Alternatively, with the "Go and..." theme, this could be a time where if not included in the meditation earlier, the assembly be invited to share some responses as a larger gathered body, to the question(s) pondered this evening.

Offertory Prayer

P: Let us pray. Abiding God,

C: under the cover of darkness, you bring forth life. Nourish us with all that you provide, so that we may freely share the gifts that you have first given us, through the One who is with us always and who gives his life for the world, Jesus Christ, our risen Savior. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us...

C: Our Father...

Sending

Benediction

P: The God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may be present in this season, and abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ Jesus for whom we wait.

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: "As the Dark Awaits the Dawn" ELW 261

Other hymns that might be powerful for the theme and could be used in place of those offered above:

Each Winter as the Year Grows Older	ELW 252
Comfort, Comfort O My People	ELW 256
Unexpected and Mysterious	ELW 258
Soli, Deo Gloria	ELW 878
Come Now, O God	ACS 902
Filled with Hope and Gratitude	ACS 907

Week 2: Go and Be Present with Tradition

A musical prelude may be offered, or all may gather in silence, breathing deeply to be more fully present.

Gathering

P: We gather this evening in the name of † Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Announcements

If there are any announcements for the good of the community or instructions needed to be shared for worship, this is a good time to share them.

P: As we await and celebrate Christ's birth, we remember that God is present and shows up. The babe who was in the manger, God Incarnate, is God's gift of deep love for us. We are invited now to pause, be still, and be fully present in this holy season. The world around us and society large may call us to a different place- where busyness, spending, and rushing all about are marks of success. But God, in Christ, offers another way: Emmanuel- God with us.

Pause for Silence and Reflection

Advent Wreath Litany

P: As the blue expectant hour

C: before the silvering skies,

P: we long to see

C: your day arise,

P: whole and wise,

C: whole and wise, O lucent Morning Star.

The first two Advent candles may be lit as the congregation begins to sing the opening hymn.

Suggested Opening Hymn: "Unexpected and Mysterious" ELW 258 or "Comfort, Comfort, Now My People" ELW 256

Prayer of the Season

P: Let us pray.

C: Emmanuel, you are present with us. Help us to be present with one another. In your name, we pray. Amen.

The Word

Gospel Acclamation: "Wait for the Lord" ELW 262

P: The Gospel according to St. Luke, the 1st Chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

Gospel Lesson: Luke 1:26-56

P: The Gospel of the Lord. **C: Praise to you, O Christ.**

Meditation and Reflection:

- What (if anything) might this story about Mary and Elizabeth offer related to wisdom about being present and living in the moment?
- As we continue our journey through Luke 1, what do you or what have you noticed this week that surprises you or gives you pause and causes you to slow down and take some time to be present and reflect? Perhaps something you might miss otherwise because of being familiar with this story.
- What tradition do you have that nurtures being present at this time of year?

Silence for reflection

Hymn of Response: “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

ELW 257 (v. 3, 4, 5)

Being Present with and in The Community

Prayers- The prayers may be sung using “There is a Longing in Our Hearts” ACS 1078; “Watch, O Lord” ACS 996; or the prayers from Holden Evening Prayer. If spoken prayers are preferred the following may be used.

P: As we gather and pause this evening, we do so in the presence of our ever-present and abiding loving God. Let us lift the prayers of hearts to the One who hears them and is with us always. Let us pray.

P: Omnipresent God, we give you thanks for the day that has been. For all the moments of hope and joy, for safe travels and daily work, for peace among the busyness. Lord, in your love,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Present God, you know that we can find it hard to slow down. Help us to breathe and be. Help us to sit and be present, to lean into our meaningful traditions this time of year and be fully present as we go and... Lord, in your love,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Merciful God, you are present with all your beloved Children. Be present with those who are ailing, weary, joyless, sick, suffering, grieving, and dying. Especially this night we pray for ___ (names may be offered aloud or silently in one’s heart)____. Lord, in your love,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Loving God, as you are present, help us to be present with you and our neighbors. Make us ever mindful of our siblings in Christ. Help us to walk together as Your people- to uplift the lowly, to care for all those in need, and to share deeply in the joy and peace that we all find in You. Lord, in your love,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Everlasting God, we give you thanks for all those who have gone before us. Thank you for being present with those saints who have claimed their promises in baptism, and for welcoming them as only You can do. Help us to rest assured that you are with us always, and that at the last, You will be right there with us too. Lord, in your love,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Into your hands, ever-present God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your abundant love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior. **C: Amen.**

The Peace

P: The peace and presence of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

P: Please share the peace with those around you.

The Offering- *an offering may be gathered for the mission of the church, including for the care of those in need. Gentle music of the season may be played, or if an offering hymn is desired, "Filled With Hope and Gratitude" ACS 907 might be timely. You may also consider another Advent hymn such as those suggested under "Other hymns" at the end of the worship order.*

Alternatively, with the "Go and..." theme, this could be a time where if not included in the meditation earlier, the assembly is invited to share some responses as a larger gathered body, to the question(s) pondered this evening.

Offertory Prayer

P: Let us pray. Abiding God,

C: under the cover of darkness, you bring forth life. Nourish us with all that you provide, so that we may freely share the gifts that you have first given us, through the One who is with us always and who gives his life for the world, Jesus Christ, our risen Savior. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us...

C: Our Father...

Sending

Benediction

P: The God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may be present in this season, and abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ Jesus for whom we wait.

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: "As the Dark Awaits the Dawn" ELW 261

Other hymns that might be powerful for the theme and could be used in place of those offered above:

Each Winter as the Year Grows Older	ELW 252
Comfort, Comfort O My People	ELW 256
Unexpected and Mysterious	ELW 258
Soli, Deo Gloria	ELW 878
Come Now, O God	ACS 902
Filled with Hope and Gratitude	ACS 907

Week 3: Go and Be Present while you are on the Go

A musical prelude may be offered, or all may gather in silence, breathing deeply to be more fully present.

Gathering

P: We gather this evening in the name of † Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Announcements

If there are any announcements for the good of the community or instructions needed to be shared for worship, this is a good time to share them.

P: As we await and celebrate Christ's birth, we remember that God is present and shows up. The babe who was in the manger, God Incarnate, is God's gift of deep love for us. We are invited now to pause, be still, and be fully present in this holy season. The world around us and society large may call us to a different place- where busyness, spending, and rushing all about are marks of success. But God, in Christ, offers another way: Emmanuel- God with us.

Pause for Silence and Reflection

Advent Wreath Litany

P: As the moon reflects the sun

C: until the night's decrease,

P: may we

C: your healing light release,

P: living peace,

C: living peace, until your holy dawn.

The first three Advent candles may be lit as the congregation begins to sing the opening hymn.

Suggested Opening Hymn: "Unexpected and Mysterious" ELW 258 or "Comfort, Comfort, Now My People" ELW 256

Prayer of the Season

P: Let us pray.

C: Emmanuel, you are present with us. Help us to be present with one another. In your name, we pray. Amen.

The Word

Gospel Acclamation: "Wait for the Lord" ELW 262

P: The Gospel according to St. Luke, the 1st Chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

Gospel Lesson: Luke 1:57-80

P: The Gospel of the Lord. **C: Praise to you, O Christ.**

Meditation and Reflection:

- Imagine you are Elizabeth or Zechariah. What might you be feeling in the experience of this story and what you have gone through?
- As we journey through Luke 1, what do you notice this week that surprises you or causes you to slow down and take some time to be present and reflect? Perhaps something you might miss otherwise because of being familiar with this story.
- As you are on the GO this season, how are you going to practice being present?

Silence for reflection

Hymn of Response: "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

ELW 257 (v. 6, 7, 8)

Being Present with and in The Community

Prayers- The prayers may be sung using "There is a Longing in Our Hearts" ACS 1078; "Watch, O Lord" ACS 996; or the prayers from Holden Evening Prayer. If spoken prayers are preferred the following may be used.

P: As we gather and pause this evening, we do so in the presence of our ever-present and abiding loving God. Let us lift the prayers of hearts to the One who hears them and is with us always. Let us pray.

P: Omnipresent God, we give you thanks for the day that has been. For all the moments of hope and joy, for safe travels and daily work, for peace among the busyness. Lord, in your love,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Present God, you know that we can find it hard to slow down. Help us to breathe and be. Help us to sit and be present when we can, and all the while be present as we are on the go. Lord, in your love,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Merciful God, you are present with all your beloved Children. Be present with those who are ailing, weary, joyless, sick, suffering, grieving, and dying. Especially this night we pray for ____ (names may be offered aloud or silently in one's heart)____. Lord, in your love,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Loving God, as you are present, help us to be present with you and our neighbors. Make us ever mindful of our siblings in Christ. Help us to walk together as Your people- to uplift the lowly, to care for all those in need, and to share deeply in the joy and peace that we all find in You. Lord, in your love,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Everlasting God, we give you thanks for all those who have gone before us. Thank you for being present with those saints who have claimed their promises in baptism, and for welcoming them as only You can do. Help us to rest assured that you are with us always, and that at the last, you will be right there with us too. Lord, in your love,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Into your hands, ever-present God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your abundant love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

C: Amen.

The Peace

P: The peace and presence of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

P: Please share the peace with those around you.

The Offering- *an offering may be gathered for the mission of the church, including for the care of those in need. Gentle music of the season may be played, or if an offering hymn is desired, "Filled With Hope and Gratitude" ACS 907 might be timely. You may also consider another Advent hymn such as those suggested under "Other hymns" at the end of the worship order.*

Alternatively, with the "Go and..." theme, this could be a time where if not included in the meditation earlier, the assembly is invited to share some responses as a larger gathered body, to the question(s) pondered this evening.

Offertory Prayer

P: Let us pray. Abiding God,

C: under the cover of darkness, you bring forth life. Nourish us with all that you provide, so that we may freely share the gifts that you have first given us, through the One who is with us always and who gives his life for the world, Jesus Christ, our risen Savior. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us...

C: Our Father...

Sending

Benediction

P: The God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may be present in this season, and abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ Jesus for whom we wait.

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: "As the Dark Awaits the Dawn" ELW 261

Other hymns that might be powerful for the theme and could be used in place of those offered above:

Each Winter as the Year Grows Older	ELW 252
Comfort, Comfort O My People	ELW 256
Unexpected and Mysterious	ELW 258
Soli, Deo Gloria	ELW 878
Come Now, O God	ACS 902
Filled with Hope and Gratitude	ACS 907

Week 4: Go and Be Present... A Longest Night/Blue Christmas Liturgy

A musical prelude may be offered, or all may gather in silence, breathing deeply to be more fully present.

Gathering and Preparation

P: We gather this evening in the name of † Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Announcements and Instructions

If there are any announcements for the good of the community or instructions needed to be shared for worship, this is a good time to share them.

P: As we await Christ's birth, we remember that God is present and shows up. The babe who was in the manger, God Incarnate, is God's gift of deep love for us. We are invited now to pause, be still, and be fully present in this holy season. The world around us and society at large may call us to a different place- where busyness, spending, and rushing all about are marks of success. But God, in Christ, offers another way: Emmanuel- God with us.

Call to Worship – based on John 1

P: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

C: The Word became flesh and lived among us, full of grace and truth, and we have seen his glory.

P: In him was life, and that life was the light of all.

C: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never been able to extinguish it.

Opening Hymn: O Little Town of Bethlehem

ELW 279 (v. 1 & 3)

Welcome and Opening Litany

P: Christmas always seems to be accompanied by jolly songs, ringing bells, and the expectation that you will have a good time. But that's not how it feels for many people. Maybe your year has been hard, and Christmas seems to highlight the difficulties. Or maybe in an overly busy life, you just want space to pause and be present- to reflect, recall, and regroup. Wherever you find yourself, we meet in the name of a loving God,

All: Who knows our needs, hears our cries, and heals our wounds.

P: The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.

We light the Christ candle as a sign that when all seems dark, there is still light.

Candle is lit

P: Come God-for-us: Who whispers in our ears that each of us are beloved children.

Come God-under-us: Who cradles us in arms that never grow weary; whose lap has room for all.

Come, God-with-us: Who braves our rejection and hurt, who holds us in acceptance and love.

Come, God-over-us: Who watches in the long silence of the night, that we might rest in peace.

Come, God-beside-us: Who steadies us when we falter, who lifts us up when we fall.

Come, God behind us: Who picks up all the faded dreams we drop along the way, and patchworks them into hope.

O come, O come, Immanuel:

C: And help us again rejoice.

Carol of Response: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

ELW 257 (v. 1, 4, 7)

Assurance of God's Love and Acceptance

P: God, who is full of love and rich in mercy, loves us even when we feel lost, missing, alone and hurt. You are made alive through Christ and by Christ's love and grace, you are not alone. May the Christ child be for you a sign of ever-present love and hope. In Jesus' name we pray.

C: Amen.

Carol of Response and Acclamation: In the Bleak Midwinter

ELW 294 (v. 1 & 2)

Hearing the Word of God for our time, our place

P: As we listen to the Word, we'll pause and light one of the Advent Wreath candles after each reading, and then share a short prayer before proceeding to the next reading.

First Reading: The Gospel of Luke 6:17-23

P: This familiar passage reveals that Jesus was well aware of people's sorrows, yearnings, and suffering, and offered a promise of something different.

He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them. Then he looked up at his disciples and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

The first candle may be lit

P: Lord Jesus,

C: like this candle, bring warmth and light to those who mourn, who hunger and thirst, and who weep.

Second Reading: Psalm 22:1-11

P: Even Jesus knew the feeling of being abandoned by God, the God whom he had believed in, and of being left alone in his darkness.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest. Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried, and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame. But I am a worm, and not human; scorned by others, and despised by the people. All who see me mock at me; they make mouths at me, they shake their heads; "Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver — let him rescue the one in

whom he delights!" Yet it was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother's breast. On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God. Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

The second candle may be lit

P: Spirit of God,

C: shine like this candle in the darkness, lighting the way for all who feel abandoned, hurt, forsaken, and forgotten.

Third Reading: The Gospel of Matthew 11:28-29

P: When burdens get piled on top of other burdens, or the rush of the seasons seems too great and gets in the way of our ability to be present, the load can seem too much. In his promise, Jesus offers us help to carry our burdens and responsibilities.

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

The third candle may be lit

P: Friend Jesus,

C: we don't ask you to shoulder our burdens for us, just help us carry a corner of them, and we can carry on.

Fourth Reading: Revelation 7:15-17

P: Our present world is not how God wants things to be. Those who weep now will not weep later. In the new heaven and new earth, there will be no more need for tears.

For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

The fourth candle may be lit

P: Lord God,

C: your vision seems a long way in the future. Bring your promise closer to us, we pray. Amen.

Meditation or Reflection

Carol of the Day *"Your Little Ones, Dear Lord"* *ELW 286 (v. 1, 3, 4)*

The Body of Christ Together

P: Now, to help support the work of the people of God, let us receive an offering- of our time, selves, and gifts.

Offering

Hymn During Offering

"In the Bleak Midwinter" (Vs. 3)

ELW 294

Gifts Prayer

P: God our giver and our gift,

C: You give yourself to us. In seeds and in harvest, in words and in water, in the prophet's voice and the baby's cry, You give yourself to us. We come to you with empty hands, empty hearts, empty lives. Open our hands to receive and to give. Fill us with the joy of your Son. We give ourselves to you. Amen.

Laying of Hands and Anointing

Those who wish to receive the laying on of hands (and anointing of oil) may come forward to the altar rail kneeling if you so choose. While the laying on of hands occurs, quiet music of the season will be played in the background. When being anointed the pastoral leader may say:

P: Through this holy anointing may God's love and mercy uphold you by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer After Anointing

P: Let us pray. As you are anointed with this oil, may God bless you with the healing power of the Holy Spirit. May God forgive you your sins, release you from suffering, and restore to you wholeness and strength. May God deliver you from all evil, preserve you in all goodness, and bring you to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **C: Amen.**

Great Thanksgiving (*congregation may remain seated*)

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: On this longest night of the year, a night of longing, hope, worries; of busyness and stress; calm our hearts. Gracious God, ground us in your presence. And welcome us as You do at your holy feast of welcome, reconciliation, healing, and grace.

Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life: blessed are you for the birth of creation. Blessed are you in the darkness that is long on nights like this, and in the light of the day to come. Blessed are you for the memories we have, and the days ahead which you walk with us through. Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams. Blessed are you for your Son Jesus, the Word made flesh.

In the night in which he was handed over, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.

C: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

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

C: Come, Holy Spirit.

P: All praise and glory are yours, Holy One of Israel, Word of God incarnate, God with us.

C: Amen.

Lord's Prayer

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

**C: 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 and ever. Amen.**

Communion

P: These are the gifts of God for the people of God. Come, those of you who have great faith and those of you who wish you had more. Come, those of you who are filled with joy, and those of you who find joy to be hard to come by. Come, those of you who depend on this meal for your very life and those of you for whom it is a strange thing. Come, for everything is ready and all are welcome.

Distribution Instructions:

Distribution will be on the main floor of the sanctuary. Those desiring more time in prayer and reflection are welcome to kneel at the altar rail.

Suggested Hymns During Communion

- Once in Royal David's City ELW 269
- Love Has Come ELW 292

Announcements

Invitation for individual prayer and or conversation and fellowship is available after the service...

Benediction (based on Luke 1: 78-79)

P: A new day will dawn. Despite what we see and hear in the world around us, the sunrise is coming. When it comes, it will break through the darkness of our world—darkness caused by violence and death and hunger and despair. And all those who now sit huddled in the shadows will be able to rise and walk with confidence in the light. So go from here with courage and hope, to love and serve the Lord.

C: Amen.

Closing Carol *Silent Night, Holy Night* *ELW 281*

Dismissal

P: Go now in peace, and know you are loved.

C: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Tonight's service was adapted from "The Longest Night Service or Blue Christmas" by Jim Taylor, with suggestions and contributions from David Shearman & Ecunet Listserv; as well as from *Moments of Grace: Hymns, Worship Services & Meditations for Caring and Healing Ministries* and "Longest Night Service" from St. Mary with St. Alban, Teddington.

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Go and... Be Present
A Worship Guide for Mid-week Worship for Advent 2023
Suggested for use and adaptation with Marty Haugen's "Holden Evening Prayer"

Week 1: Go and Be Present and Pause

A musical prelude may be offered, or all may gather in silence, breathing deeply to be more fully present.

Gathering

Announcements

If there are any announcements for the good of the community or instructions needed to be shared for worship, this is a good time to share them.

P: As we await and celebrate Christ's birth, we remember that God is present and shows up. The babe who was in the manger, God Incarnate, is God's gift of deep love for us. We are invited now to pause, be still, and be fully present in this holy season. The world around us and society large may call us to a different place- where busyness, spending, and rushing all about are marks of success. But God, in Christ, offers another way: Emmanuel- God with us.

Pause for Silence and Reflection

Advent Wreath Litany

P: As the dark awaits the dawn,

C: so we await your light.

P: O Star of promise,

C: scatter night,

P: loving bright,

C: loving bright, till shades of fear are gone.

The first Advent candle may be lit as the congregation begins to sing together as follows.

Holden Evening Prayer: *Procession, Evening Hymn, Evening Thanksgiving* (The sung round of Psalm 141 could follow the Evening Thanksgiving or be omitted given time constraints).

Prayer of the Season

P: Let us pray.

C: Emmanuel, you are present with us. Help us to be present with one another. In your name, we pray. Amen.

The Word

Gospel Acclamation: "Wait for the Lord" ELW 262

P: The Gospel according to St. Luke, the 1st Chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

Gospel Lesson: Luke 1:1-25

P: The Gospel of the Lord. **C: Praise to you, O Christ.**

Meditation and Reflection:

- Gabriel effectively invited Zechariah to pause, by making him unable to speak. Have you ever had an experience where something in life (or health) forced you to pause and slow down, and/or perhaps caused you awe, fear, confusion, gratitude, etc.?
- As we begin our journey toward Luke 2, what do you hear in this familiar beginning of the story? Does anything surprise you or give you pause?
- What can you add or change to this season that would truly allow you to pause?

Silence for reflection

L: The Light shines in the darkness.

C: and the darkness has not overcome it.

Hymn of Response: "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

ELW 257 (v. 1 & 2)

Being Present with and in The Community

Holden Evening Prayer: *The Annunciation and The Magnificat,*

Note: During the singing of the Magnificat the Offering may be received, depending on your congregation's offering practices.

Holden Evening Prayer: *Litany and Prayers. (Note: if spoken prayers are desired, the version found earlier in this resource for weeks 1-3 could be used here)*

P: Great and merciful God, Source and Ground of all goodness and life, give to your people the peace that passes all understanding, and the will to live your Gospel of mercy and justice through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

The Peace

P: The peace and presence of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

P: Please share the peace with those around you.

The Lord's Prayer

P: God, remember us in your love, and teach us to pray as we gather together as your people,

C: Our Father...

Sending

Holden Evening Prayer: *Final Blessing*

Postlude or depart in peace.

Week 2: Go and Be Present with Tradition

A musical prelude may be offered, or all may gather in silence, breathing deeply to be more fully present.

Gathering

P: We gather this evening in the name of † Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Announcements

If there are any announcements for the good of the community or instructions needed to be shared for worship, this is a good time to share them.

P: As we await and celebrate Christ's birth, we remember that God is present and shows up. The babe who was in the manger, God Incarnate, is God's gift of deep love for us. We are invited now to pause, be still, and be fully present in this holy season. The world around us and society large may call us to a different place- where busyness, spending, and rushing all about are marks of success. But God, in Christ, offers another way: Emmanuel- God with us.

Pause for Silence and Reflection

Advent Wreath Litany

P: As the blue expectant hour

C: before the silvering skies,

P: we long to see

C: your day arise,

P: whole and wise,

C: whole and wise, O lucent Morning Star.

The first two Advent candles may be lit as the congregation begins to sing together as follows.

Holden Evening Prayer: Procession, Evening Hymn, Evening Thanksgiving (The sung round of Psalm 141 could follow the Evening Thanksgiving or be omitted given time constraints).

Prayer of the Season

P: Let us pray.

C: Emmanuel, you are present with us. Help us to be present with one another. In your name, we pray. Amen.

The Word

Gospel Acclamation: "Wait for the Lord" ELW 262

P: The Gospel according to St. Luke, the 1st Chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

Gospel Lesson: Luke 1:26-56

P: The Gospel of the Lord. **C: Praise to you, O Christ.**

Meditation and Reflection:

- What (if anything) might this story about Mary and Elizabeth offer related to wisdom about being present and living in the moment?
- As we continue our journey through Luke 1, what do you or what have you noticed this week that surprises you or gives you pause and causes you to slow down and take some time to be present and reflect? Perhaps something you might miss otherwise because of being familiar with this story.
- What tradition do you have that nurtures being present at this time of year?

Silence for reflection

L: The Light shines in the darkness.

C: and the darkness has not overcome it.

Hymn of Response: "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

ELW 257 (v. 3, 4, 5)

Being Present with and in The Community

Holden Evening Prayer: *The Annunciation and The Magnificat,*

Note: During the singing of the Magnificat the Offering may be received, depending on your congregation's offering practices.

Holden Evening Prayer: *Litany and Prayers. (Note: if spoken prayers are desired, the version found earlier in this resource for weeks 1-3 could be used here)*

P: Great and merciful God, Source and Ground of all goodness and life, give to your people the peace that passes all understanding, and the will to live your Gospel of mercy and justice through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

The Peace

P: The peace and presence of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

P: Please share the peace with those around you.

The Lord's Prayer

P: God, remember us in your love, and teach us to pray as we gather together as your people,

C: Our Father...

Sending

Holden Evening Prayer: *Final Blessing*

Postlude or depart in peace.

Week 3: Go and Be Present while you are on the Go

A musical prelude may be offered, or all may gather in silence, breathing deeply to be more fully present.

Gathering

P: We gather this evening in the name of † Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Announcements

If there are any announcements for the good of the community or instructions needed to be shared for worship, this is a good time to share them.

P: As we await and celebrate Christ's birth, we remember that God is present and shows up. The babe who will be in the manger, God Incarnate, is God's gift of deep love for us. We are invited now to pause, be still, and be fully present in this holy season. The world around us and society large may call us to a different place- where busyness, spending, and rushing all about are marks of success. But God, in Christ, offers another way: Emmanuel- God with us.

Pause for Silence and Reflection

Advent Wreath Litany

P: As the moon reflects the sun

C: until the night's decrease,

P: may we

C: your healing light release,

P: living peace,

C: living peace, until your holy dawn.

Holden Evening Prayer: *Procession, Evening Hymn, Evening Thanksgiving* (The sung round of Psalm 141 could follow the Evening Thanksgiving or be omitted given time constraints).

Prayer of the Season

P: Let us pray.

C: Emmanuel, you are present with us. Help us to be present with one another. In your name, we pray.

Amen.

The Word

Gospel Acclamation: "Wait for the Lord" ELW 262

P: The Gospel according to St. Luke, the 1st Chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

Gospel Lesson: Luke 1:56-80

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Meditation and Reflection:

- Imagine you are Elizabeth or Zechariah. What might you be feeling in the experience of this story and what you have gone through?
- As we journey through Luke 1, what do you notice this week that surprises you or causes you to slow down and take some time to be present and reflect? Perhaps something you might miss otherwise because of being familiar with this story.
- As you are on the GO this season, how are you going to practice being present?

Silence for reflection

Hymn of Response: "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

ELW 257 (v. 6, 7, 8)

Being Present with and in The Community

Holden Evening Prayer: *The Annunciation and The Magnificat,*

Note: During the singing of the Magnificat the Offering may be received, depending on your congregation's offering practices.

Holden Evening Prayer: *Litany and Prayers. (Note: if spoken prayers are desired, the version found earlier in this resource for weeks 1-3 could be used here)*

P: Great and merciful God, Source and Ground of all goodness and life, give to your people the peace that passes all understanding, and the will to live your Gospel of mercy and justice through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

The Peace

P: The peace and presence of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

P: Please share the peace with those around you.

The Lord's Prayer

P: God, remember us in your love, and teach us to pray as we gather together as your people,

C: Our Father...

Sending

Holden Evening Prayer: *Final Blessing*

Postlude or depart in peace.

Copyrights and Acknowledgments:

For the Advent Wreath Liturgy:

Susan Palo Cherwien, "As the Dark Awaits the Dawn," (1996), as found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 261.

Additional Liturgy and Prayers:

Select liturgy and prayers were created by Timothy Siburg, and some have been included and/or adapted from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), and *All Creation Sings*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2020).

For the Blue Christmas/Longest Night Order of Service:

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For Holden Evening Prayer:

Marty Haugen, *Holden Evening Prayer*, (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc., 1990).