



Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 24, 2023

WELCOME

to St. Mary's Episcopal Church

a member of the Central Michigan Episcopal Covenant

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church

Big Rapids, MI

Seeking every day to love God
with our whole heart, mind, and soul, and
to love our neighbors as ourselves.

St. Mary's Episcopal Church

Cadillac, MI

We strive to live out the Great
Commandment: To love the Lord with all
our heart, soul, and mind and to love our
neighbors as ourselves.

If you have a faith or are seeking one, you are always welcome here.

If you are visiting or looking for a spiritual home,
we'd love to get to know you.

MORNING PRAYER, ENRICHING OUR WORSHIP

Opening Sentence

Officiant Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the skies rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation may spring up, and let it cause righteousness to sprout up also. *Isaiah 45:8*

Lighting the Advent Wreath

Illustrated Ministry

Leader In our most desperate times, by day or by night, the hope of Christ may be found. We watch and we wait to witness the hope of heaven making a place here on earth.

Today we light the candle of hope, because hope has come to us.

Light the first candle.

Leader When we are overwhelmed with conflict without or within, the peace of Christ may be found. We welcome the peace of Christ, present among us and available to all.

We light the candle of peace, because peace has come to us.

Light the second candle.

Leader Whether we find ourselves in the dark, cozy realm of nighttime or the blazing brightness of day, God's good message of joy has come to us to cheer our hearts. We light the candle of joy, celebrating the good news of a baby to be born in Bethlehem.

Light the third candle.

Leader Love, the mightiest force in all the world, was also gentle enough to inhabit a tiny baby. And this mighty force compelled Jesus to demonstrate his love in his transformative message and sacrificial life. Today we light the candle of love, which reminds us that when all else fails, when hope seems lost, when the night seems eternal, love remains. And love wins.

Light the fourth candle.

All Welcome, love of Christ, which shows us how to care for each other, sacrifice for one another, and fully embrace ourselves. Expand our capacity to love more like Jesus loved. Amen.

Confession and Absolution

Officiant Let us confess our sins to God. *All kneel as able. Silence may be kept.*

All God of all mercy, we confess that we have sinned against you, opposing your will in our lives. We have denied your goodness in each other, in ourselves, and in the world you have created. We repent of the evil that enslaves us, the evil we have done, and the evil done on our behalf. Forgive, restore, and strengthen us through our Savior Jesus Christ, that we may abide in your love and serve only your will. Amen.

Officiant Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through the grace of Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. Amen.

The Invitatory and Psalter

All stand as able.

Officiant O God, let our mouth proclaim your praise.

People And your glory all the day long.

All Praise to the holy and undivided Trinity, one God: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen. Alleluia.

Invitatory Psalm: Psalm 67:1-5

All Our God and Savior now draws near: O come let us worship.

O God, be merciful to us and bless us,
show us the light of your countenance and come to us.

Let your ways be known upon earth,
your saving health among all nations.

Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide all the nations upon earth.

Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

The Psalm: 89:1-4, 19-26

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After the Psalm:

All Praise to the holy and undivided Trinity, one God: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen. Alleluia.

The Lessons

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After the reading: Reader Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.
 People Thanks be to God.

Canticle C: The Song of Hannah, *1 Samuel 2:1-8*

Said in unison

All My heart exults in you, O God; *
 my triumph song is lifted in you.
 My mouth derides my enemies, *
 for I rejoice in your salvation.
 There is none holy like you, *
 nor any rock to be compared to you, our God.
 Do not heap up prideful words or speak in arrogance; *
 Only God is knowing and weighs all actions.
 The bows of the mighty are broken, *
 but the weak are clothed in strength.
 Those once full now labor for bread, *
 those who hungered now are well fed.
 The childless woman has borne sevenfold, *
 while the mother of many is forlorn.
 God destroys and brings to life, casts down and raises up; *
 gives wealth or takes it away, humbles and dignifies.
 God raises the poor from the dust; *
 and lifts the needy from the ash heap
 To make them sit with the rulers *
 and inherit a place of honor.
 For the pillars of the earth are God's *
 on which the whole earth is founded.

Second Reading

Romans 16:25-27

After the reading: Reader Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.
 People Thanks be to God.

Canticle R: A Song of God's Love, 1 John 4:7-11

Said in unison

All Beloved, let us love one another, *
for love is of God.
Whoever does not love does not know God, *
for God is Love.
In this the love of God was revealed among us, *
that God sent his only Son into the world,
so that we might live through Jesus Christ.
In this is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us *
and sent his Son that sins might be forgiven.
Beloved, since God loved us so much, *
we ought also to love one another.
For if we love one another, God abides in us, *
and God's love will be perfected in us.

Third Reading

Luke 1:26-38

After the reading: Reader Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.
 People Thanks be to God.

Reflection *The reflection may be a time of silence, a homily, or reading of a text.*

The Apostles' Creed

Said by all, standing as able.

All **I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was
conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered
under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he
descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended
into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will
come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion
of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the
life everlasting. Amen.**

The Prayers

The people stand or kneel as able.

Officiant **Hear our cry, O God.**

People **And listen to our prayer.**

Officiant **Let us pray.**

The Lord's Prayer

Said in unison

**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, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Suffrages A

Officiant Help us, O God our Savior;
People Deliver us and forgive us our sins.

Officiant Look upon your congregation;
People Give to your people the blessing of peace.

Officiant Declare your glory among the nations;
People And your wonders among all peoples.

Officiant Do not let the oppressed be shamed and turned away;
People Never forget the lives of your poor.

Officiant Continue your loving-kindness to those who know you;
People And your favor to those who are true of heart.

Officiant Satisfy us by your loving-kindness in the morning;
People So shall we rejoice and be glad all the days of our life.

The Collect of the Day

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The Prayers of the People

Praying the Scriptures

Intercessor Sisters and brothers, the Lord is with you! Let us pray to the Almighty, saying, “My soul proclaims your greatness, O Lord; **our spirits rejoice in you!**”

God our Savior, give to your Church the humble heart of Mary. In our lives and ministries, let it be with us according to your word. We pray for Michael, our Presiding Bishop; Skip, our Assisting Bishop, Radha, our Rector; our Central Michigan Episcopal Covenant; Transfiguration, Indian River; the Diocesan Staff of Eastern and Western Michigan. We pray for all those in our diocese discerning calls to ministry, both lay and ordained.

In particular, we pray for those in our dioceses preparing for the Sacred Order of Priests, including Barrett, Alex, Matt, Anne Marie, Abraham, John, Stephanie, Thon, Jessica, Julianne, Rachel, Cathy, Kathryn, Kris, Johnathan, Theresa. We pray also for those in our dioceses preparing for the Sacred Order of Deacons, including: Mary, Deb, Laura, Jennifer, Christi, Paige. We remember with gratitude the retired clergy of the diocese. *Silence*

My soul proclaims your greatness, O Lord;

People **Our spirits rejoice in you!**

Intercessor God our Savior, give grace to your bishops, priests, and deacons. Strengthen all your ministries according to the proclamations of Jesus Christ. *Silence* My soul proclaims your greatness, O Lord;

People **Our spirits rejoice in you!**

Intercessor God our Savior, you cast down the mighty from their thrones and lift up the lowly. May both the mighty and the lowly, and all those in-between, experience the amazing depth of your great mercy. *Silence* My soul proclaims your greatness, O Lord;

People **Our spirits rejoice in you!**

Intercessor God our Savior, you long for the hungry to be filled with good things. Bless us to work with you to bring forth good food and drink from your precious earth. *Silence* My soul proclaims your greatness, O Lord;

People **Our spirits rejoice in you!**

Intercessor God our Savior we ask you to do great things in our city, in our neighborhoods, in our region. *Silence*

My soul proclaims your greatness, O Lord;

People **Our spirits rejoice in you!**

Intercessor We pray for those in positions of authority in our country and in the world, especially Joe, our president; Gretchen our governor; Carla, our mayor. *Silence*

My soul proclaims your greatness, O Lord;

People **Our spirits rejoice in you!**

Intercessor God our Savior, you ever remember your promise of mercy. Be merciful to the lonely, despised, sorrowful, and sick. Speak good news into sad hearts; come to the help of the needy. We pray for those in the St. Mary's circle of prayer: Erin, Dorothea, Lonnie & Heather, Mike & Connie, Virginia, Renee, Larry & Therese, Janet, Lawson, Josh & Lindsey, Nancy & Pat, Sally, Madi, Larry, Ron & Barb, Shanna, Charlene, DeeDee, Anita & Jim, Terri, Larry, Ron, Shelly; For those in the St. Andrew's circle of prayer: Nan, Jeffrey, Rodger & Judy, Elizabeth, Robert, Rob, Jessica, Krystal, Kevin, Kathy, Sharyn, Howie; For our family and friends in the armed forces and who are first responders: Richard, Corey, Matt, Teylor, Tony, Kim, Drew, Jon, Sabastian, Noah, Eli, Jess; And for all those we name at this time. *Silence*

My soul proclaims your greatness, O Lord;

People **Our spirits rejoice in you!**

Intercessor God our savior, nothing is impossible with you. May all those who have died find a place in the eternal kingdom of your Christ. *Silence*

My soul proclaims your greatness, O Lord;

People **Our spirits rejoice in you!**

Celebrant O Lord our God, accept the fervent prayers of your people; in the multitude of your mercies, look with compassion upon us and all who turn to you for help; for you are gracious, O lover of souls, and to you we give glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.

The Celebration of Special Days and Announcements

For a Birthday	Pew Card
For an Anniversary	BCP 431, first prayer
Travelers	BCP 831, #53

The Dismissal and Concluding Sentence

Officiant Let us bless the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Officiant Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to God from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Ephesians 3:20,21

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