

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 21, 2014



St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
1512 Willow
Blytheville, AR 72315

The Rt. Rev. Larry Benfield, Bishop of Arkansas
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Opening Rites

BCP 75

The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. *Isaiah 40:5*

Confession of Sin

Officiant Let us confess our sins to God.

The people kneel as they are able.

A period of silence is kept.

All say together

Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Absolution

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

The people stand as they are able.

Invitatory and Psalter

Invitatory

Officiant Lord, open our lips.

People *And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.*

Officiant and People Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen. Alleluia.

The Invitatory

BCP 80

Our King and Savior now draws near: Come let us adore him.

Venite Psalm 95:1-7; 96:9, 13

Come, let us sing to the Lord; *

let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.

Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving *

and raise a loud shout to him with psalms.

For the Lord is a great God, *

and a great King above all gods.

In his hand are the caverns of the earth, *

and the heights of the hills are his also.

The sea is his, for he made it, *

and his hands have molded the dry land.

Come, let us bow down, and bend the knee, *

and kneel before the Lord our Maker.

For he is our God,

and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. *

Oh, that today you would hearken to his voice!

A period of silence is kept.

Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18

Misericordias Domini

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- 1 Your love, O LORD, for ever will I sing; *
from age to age my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness.
- 2 For I am persuaded that your love is established for ever; *
you have set your faithfulness firmly in the heavens.
- 3 “I have made a covenant with my chosen one; *
I have sworn an oath to David my servant:
- 4 ‘I will establish your line for ever, *
and preserve your throne for all generations.’”
- 15 Happy are the people who know the festal shout! *
they walk, O LORD, in the light of your presence.
- 16 They rejoice daily in your Name; *
they are jubilant in your righteousness.
- 17 For you are the glory of their strength, *
and by your favor our might is exalted.
- 18 Truly, the LORD is our ruler; *
the Holy One of Israel is our King.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: * as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

A reading from The Second Book of Samuel (7:1-11, 16).

¹Now when the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²the king said to the prophet Nathan, “See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.” ³Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you.” ⁴But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: ⁵Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a

tabernacle. ⁷ Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?” ⁸ Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹ and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰ And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹ from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. ¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

The Word of the Lord
People
Thanks be to God

A period of silence is kept.

The Song of Mary

Canticle 15

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Luke 1:46-55

Canticle 15

The Song of Mary

Magnificat

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; *
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed: *
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him *

in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm, *
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, *
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things, *
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel, *
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
The promise he made to our fathers, *
to Abraham and his children for ever.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

A reading from The Letter of Paul to the Romans (16:25-27).

²⁵ Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel
and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the
mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but is now disclosed, and
through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles,
according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the
obedience of faith— ²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to
whom be the glory forever! Amen.

The Word of the Lord
People
Thanks be to God

A period of silence is kept.

The Second Song of Isaiah

Canticle 10

Isaiah 55:6-11

Canticle 10

The Second Song of Isaiah

Quaerite Dominum

Seek the Lord while he wills to be found; *
call upon him when he draws near.

Let the wicked forsake their ways *

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and the evil ones their thoughts;
And let them turn to the Lord, and he will have compassion, *
and to our God, for he will richly pardon.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts, *
nor your ways my ways, says the Lord.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth, *
so are my ways higher than your ways,
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as rain and snow fall from the heavens *
and return not again, but water the earth,
Bringing forth life and giving growth, *
seed for sowing and bread for eating,
So is my word that goes forth from my mouth; *
it will not return to me empty;
But it will accomplish that which I have purposed, *
and prosper in that for which I sent it.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Gospel

A reading from the Gospel according to Luke (1:26-38).

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom

there will be no end.”³⁴ Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”³⁵ The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.”³⁶ And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren.³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.”³⁸ Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

The Word of the Lord
People
Thanks be to God

Sermon

The people stand as they are able.

The Apostles' Creed

All say together

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the
Virgin Mary.
He 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, and is seated at the right hand of the
Father.
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

Officiant The Lord be with you.

People *And also with you.*

Officiant Let us pray.

***Officiant and
People***

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.

V. Save your people, Lord, and bless your inheritance;

R. Govern and uphold them, now and always.

V. Day by day we bless you;

R. We praise your Name for ever.

V. Lord, keep us from all sin today;

R. Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy.

V. Lord, show us your love and mercy;

R. For we put our trust in you.

V. In you, Lord, is our hope;

R. And we shall never hope in vain.

Collect

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that
your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion

prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Collect

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O God, you make us glad with the weekly remembrance of the glorious resurrection of your Son our Lord: Give us this day such blessing through our worship of you, that the week to come may be spent in your favor; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Collect

Lord God, almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your mighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Prayer for Mission

O God and Father of all, whom the whole heavens adore: Let the whole earth also worship you, all nations obey you, all tongues confess and bless you, and men and women everywhere love you and serve you in peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Hymn

The Hymnal 1982 #66 - Come thou long expected Jesus

Prayers of the People

BCP 383

Intercessor

With all our heart and with all our mind, let us pray to the Lord, saying, “Lord, have mercy.”

For the peace from above, for the loving kindness of God, and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, have mercy.*

For the peace of the world, for the welfare of the holy Church of God,

and for the unity of all peoples, let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, have mercy.*

For our Bishop, and for all the clergy and people, let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, have mercy.*

For our President, for the leaders of the nations, and for all in authority, let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, have mercy.*

For this city (town, village, _____), for every city and community, and for those who live in them, let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, have mercy.*

For seasonable weather, and for an abundance of the fruits of the earth, let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, have mercy.*

For the good earth which God has given us, and for the wisdom and will to conserve it, let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, have mercy.*

For those who travel on land, on water, or in the air [or through outer space], let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, have mercy.*

For the aged and infirm, for the widowed and orphans, and for the sick and the suffering, let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, have mercy.*

For _____, let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, have mercy.*

For the poor and the oppressed, for the unemployed and the destitute, for prisoners and captives, and for all who remember and care for them, let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, have mercy.*

For all who have died in the hope of the resurrection, and for all the departed, let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, have mercy.*

For deliverance from all danger, violence, oppression, and degradation, let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, have mercy.*

For the absolution and remission of our sins and offenses, let us pray

to the Lord. *Lord, have mercy.*

That we may end our lives in faith and hope, without suffering and without reproach, let us pray to the Lord. *Lord, have mercy.*

Defend us, deliver us, and in thy compassion protect us, O Lord, by thy grace. *Lord, have mercy.*

In the communion of [_____ and of all the] saints, let us commend ourselves, and one another, and all our life, to Christ our God. *To thee, O Lord our God.*

Collect

BCP 394

Heavenly Father, you have promised to hear what we ask in the Name of your Son: Accept and fulfill our petitions, we pray, not as we ask in our ignorance, nor as we deserve in our sinfulness, but as you know and love us in your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

General Thanksgiving

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.

Prayer of St. Chrysostom

Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication to you; and you have promised through your well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered

together in his Name you will be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting. Amen.

Officiant Let us bless the Lord.

People *Thanks be to God.*

Closing Sentence

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen. 2
Corinthians 13:14

Prayer List

Charles, Carolyn, Charlotte, Caden, Tony, the Meadows family, Barbara-
Dale, Dale, Angie, Marcel, Pat, Nicholas E, Pat P, St. Ambrose, ... those suffering from seasonal storms, meals on wheels, making better, men of young men, those serving our country, those traveling, and for those we now name...

Announcements

Decorate for Christmas services after services this morning

Worship Leaders

Date	Proper	Service	Eucharistic Minister	Reader	Intercessor
12/21	Fourth Advent	MP	Kathryn	Corbet	Corbet
12/24	Christmas Eve		Liz		Beth
12/28	First after Christmas		Beth		Corbet

Presiding Bishop Schori Christmas message 2014

The altar hanging at an English Advent service was made of midnight blue, with these words across its top: “We thank you that darkness reminds us of light.” Facing all who gathered there to give thanks were images of night creatures – a large moth, an owl, a badger, and a bat – cryptic and somewhat mysterious creatures that can only be encountered in the darkness.

As light ebbs from the days and the skies of fall, many in the Northern Hemisphere associate dark with the spooks and skeletons of secular Hallowe’en celebrations. That English church has reclaimed the connection between creator, creation, and the potential holiness of all that is. It is a fitting reorientation toward the coming of One who has altered those relationships toward new possibilities for healing and redemption.

Advent leads us into darkness and decreasing light. Our bodies slow imperceptibly with shorter days and longer nights, and the merriness and frantic activity around us are often merely signs of eager hunger for light and healing and wholeness.

The Incarnation, the coming of God among us in human flesh, happened in such a quiet and out of the way place that few noticed at first. Yet the impact on human existence has been like a bolt of lightning that continues to grow and generate new life and fire in all who share that hunger.

Jesus is among us like a flitting moth – will we notice his presence in the street-sleeper? He pierces the dark like a silent, streaking owl seeking food for hungry and defenseless nestlings. He will overturn this world’s unjust foundations like badgers undermining a crooked wall. Like the bat’s sonar, his call comes to each one uniquely – have we heard his urgent “come and follow”?

God is among us, and within us, and around us, encountering, nudging, loving, transforming the world and its creatures toward the glorious dream the shepherds announced so many years ago, toward the beloved community of prophetic dreams, and the nightwatch that proclaims “all is well, fear not, the Lord is here.”

May Christ be born anew in you this Christmastide. May his light burn in you, and may you labor to spread it in the darkness. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, and it is the harbinger of peace for all creation.

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori

Presiding Bishop and Primate

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