

*My whole being hopes and I wait  
for God's promise*

*Psalm 130:5*

## *Meaning of the colors of the candles*

The Candles symbolize that Jesus is the Light of the World.

There are four candles, one for each Sunday leading to Christmas and a fifth candle for Christmas day. There are variations in the coloring of the candles, often there are three purple and one pink candle. The central candle is usually a large white pillar candle.

The purple represents repentance. The pink symbolizes joy. The central candle is called the Christ candle and is not lit until Christmas day.

### **The First Candle (The Candle of Hope)**

The first candle is sometimes called the candle of prophecy because it symbolizes the promises the prophets delivered as messages from God; promises that foretold Christ's birth. Others consider the candle to be a symbol of the hope we have in Christ and so it is called the Hope candle.

### **The Second Candle (The Candle of the Way)**

The second candle shows that Christ is the Way. Christians are lost in sin and Christ is the Light sent into the world to show them the way out of darkness.

### **The Third Candle (The Candle of Joy)**

The third candle indicates that the only lasting Joy to be found in life on earth is through Christ. All other joy is fleeting and does not last.

### **The Fourth Candle (The Candle of Peace)**

The fourth candle reminds that Jesus comes to bring Peace to both the world and to people's hearts. Without Christ there is no peace in this world.

### **The Fifth Candle (The Christ Candle or Christmas Candle)**

The fifth candle represents Christ himself who is born to save people from their sins. It is a celebration of the fulfillment of prophecy as represented in Christ's birth and hope in the final fulfillment when Christ comes again and Christians join him.



# ADVENT SONG (II)

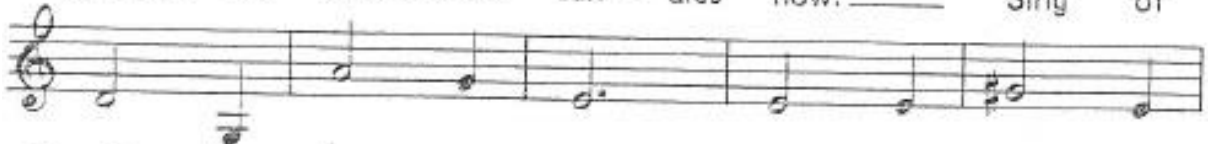
(Organ: p. 20 // Guitar)

Mary Lu Walker

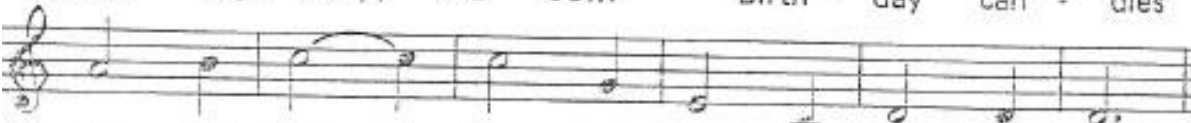
## VERSES:



- 1. Light the Ad - vent can - dle one. \_\_\_\_\_ Now the
- 2. Light the Ad - vent can - dle two. \_\_\_\_\_ Think of
- 3. Light the Ad - vent can - dle three. \_\_\_\_\_ Think of
- 4. Light the Ad - vent can - dle four. \_\_\_\_\_ Think of
- 5. Light the Christ - mas can - dles now. \_\_\_\_\_ Sing of



- 1. wait - ing has be - gun. We have start - ed
- 2. hum - ble shep - herds who filled with won - der
- 3. hap - py har - mo - ny. An - gels sing - ing
- 4. joy for - ev - er - more. Christ - child in the
- 5. don - key, sheep, and cow. Birth - day can - dles

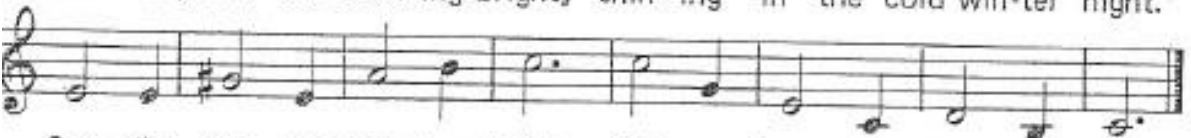


- 1. on our way. \_\_\_\_\_ Time to think of Christ - mas Day.
- 2. at the sight \_\_\_\_\_ of the Child on Christ - mas night.
- 3. "Peace on earth" \_\_\_\_\_ at the Sav - ior's bless - ed birth.
- 4. sta - ble born. \_\_\_\_\_ Gift of love that Christ - mas morn.
- 5. for the King. \_\_\_\_\_ Let the "Al - le - lu - ias" ring.

## REFRAIN:



Can - dle, can - dle burn - ing bright, shin - ing in the cold win - ter night.



Can - dle, can - dle, burn - ing bright, fill our hearts with Christ - mas light.

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# Season of Advent - Holy Eucharist

## Liturgy of the Word

### Entrance Rite

*At the sound of the bell, all stand for the Entrance of the Ministers into the church.*

### Processional Hymn

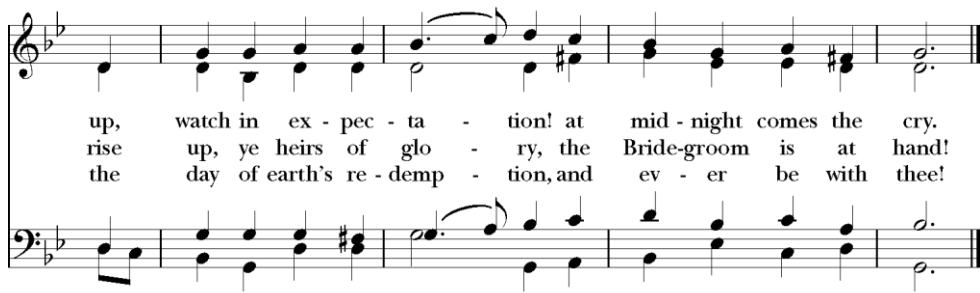
*Rejoice! Rejoice believers*

Hymnal 68

1 Re - joice! re - joice, be - liev - ers, and let your lights ap - pear!  
2 See that your lamps are burn - ing, re - ple-nish them with oil;  
3 Our hope and ex - pec - ta - tion, O Je - sus, now ap - pear;

The eve - ning is ad - vanc - ing, and dark - er night is near.  
look now for your sal - va - tion, the end of sin and toil.  
a - rise, thou Sun so longed for, a - bove this dark - ened sphere!

The Bride - groom is a - ris - ing, and soon he will draw nigh;  
The mar - riage - feast is wait - ing, the gates wide o - pen stand;  
With hearts and hands up - lift - ed, we plead, O Lord, to see



up, watch in ex - pec - ta - tion! at mid - night comes the cry.  
 rise up, ye heirs of glo - ry, the Bride-groom is at hand!  
 the day of earth's re - demp - tion, and ev - er be with thee!

*All standing, the Celebrant says*

Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*People*

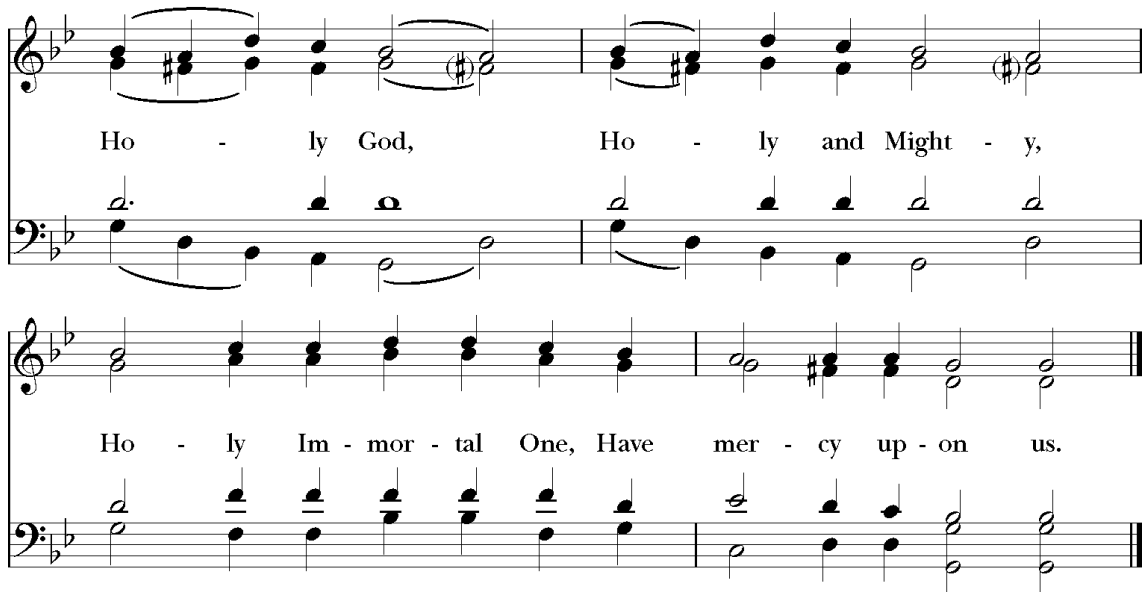
And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.

Amen.

*The Celebrant says the Collect for Purity*

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*The following is sung, all standing (Three times)*



Ho - ly God, Ho - ly and Might - y,  
 Ho - ly Im - mor - tal One, Have mer - cy up - on us.

## Collect of the Day

*Celebrant*            The Lord be with you.

*People*                And also with you.

*Celebrant*            Let us pray.

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### First Reading

Zephaniah 3:14-20

*All sit.*

A Reading from the book of the prophet Zephaniah.

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord.

*Reader*                The Word of the Lord.

*People*                Thanks be to God.

### Psalm

*Remain seated.*

## Canticle 9

BCP p. 86

The First Song of Isaiah *Ecce, Deus*

Surely, it is God who saves me; \*

I will trust in him and not be afraid.

For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, \*  
and he will be my Savior.

Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing \*  
from the springs of salvation.

And on that day you shall say, \*

Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name;

Make his deeds known among the peoples; \*

see that they remember that his Name is exalted.

Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great things, \*  
and this is known in all the world.

Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy, \*

for the great one in the midst of you is the Holy One of Israel.

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.

## Second Reading

Philippians 4:4-7

A Reading from Paul's letter to the Church in Philippi.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

*Reader*            The Word of the Lord.

*People*            Thanks be to God.

## Sequence

*All stand.*

Rejoice in the Lord always

Voices Found 162

1 F C7 F

Re - joice in the Lord al - ways, and a - gain I say, re - joice!

The first system of music features a vocal line in treble clef and piano accompaniment in grand staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 3/8. The vocal line begins with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, Bb4, and C5. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Chord symbols '1 F', 'C7', and 'F' are placed above the vocal line.

2 C7 F

Re - joice in the Lord al - ways, and a - gain I say, re - joice!

The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has a quarter note G4, eighth notes A4, Bb4, and C5. The piano accompaniment follows the same pattern as the first system. Chord symbols '2', 'C7', and 'F' are placed above the vocal line.

3 C7 F

Re - joice! Re - joice! And a - gain I say re - joice!

The third system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has a quarter note G4, eighth notes A4, Bb4, and C5. The piano accompaniment follows the same pattern as the first two systems. Chord symbols '3', 'C7', and 'F' are placed above the vocal line.



4 C7 F

Re - jice! Re - jice! And a - gain I say re - jice!

## Holy Gospel

Luke 3:7-18

*All stand.*

*Celebrant* The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

*People* Glory to you, Lord Christ.

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.” As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

*Celebrant*        The Gospel of the Lord.  
*People*            Praise to you, Lord Christ.

## **Sermon**

### **Nicene Creed**

BCP p. 358

*All stand and together say*

We believe in one God,

    the Father, the Almighty,  
    maker of heaven and earth,  
    of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

    the only Son of God,  
    eternally begotten of the Father,  
    God from God, Light from Light,  
    true God from true God,  
    begotten, not made,  
    of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation

he came down from heaven:

by the power of the Holy Spirit

he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;

    he suffered death and was buried.

    On the third day he rose again

    in accordance with the Scriptures;

    he ascended into heaven

    and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,

    and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,

    who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

    With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.

He has spoken through the Prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead, and  
the life of the world to come. Amen.

## **Prayers of the People**

*All remain standing.*

*Celebrant*

Brothers and sisters, as we joyfully await the full manifestation of God's reign in Christ, let us pray for the needs of the church and the world.

**O Wisdom**, you come forth from the mouth of the Most High and reach from beginning to end, mightily and sweetly ordering all things. Behold and bless your church, remembering especially Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael our Presiding Bishop, Jennifer our Bishop, Christopher our priest, Caroline and Cherie our Wardens, our Bishop's Committee, and in the Diocesan Cycle of Prayer praying for \_\_\_\_\_ and in the Anglican Cycle of Prayer praying for \_\_\_\_\_. We pray for our companion congregation, St. Francis in the Fields, Zionsville, The Rev. C. Davies Reed and The Rev. Allan Wallace and for our companion dioceses of Bor and Brasilia and their bishops, Ruben and Mauricio, for our emerging partnership with the Diocese of Atootch.

*Come and teach us the way of prudence.*

**O Adonai**, God of the Covenant, ruler of the house of Israel, you appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush and on Mount Sinai gave your law. Forgive us when we stray from your guidance and will. During this season of Advent, we pray for the wall that surrounds Bethlehem to come down. Almighty God, Creator of the wonderful complex diversity of humanity; you have fashioned us in your image and commanded us to love one another; reach down your divine hand so that the wall shall come down in Bethlehem, the birth place of your Son, the Prince of Peace; and may the crumbling walls herald the fall of all barriers that divide us. Bind us together so that love gives rise to an abundance of tenderness among all people; and may our

hearts like Mary's magnify the Lord, and may your love shower down throughout the world so all divisions are scattered and washed away.

*Come and redeem us for our life together.*

**O Root of Jesse**, you stand as an ensign to humankind; before you rulers will shut their mouths, and nations bow in worship: We pray for your peace and justice in every nation and throughout the world; be present to all whose lives are ravaged by war and strife; especially we hold before you those from among us who serve their country abroad: \_\_\_\_\_. Guide the leaders of this and every land into the paths of peace and goodwill.

*Come save us and do not delay.*

**O Key of David**, and scepter of the house of Israel, you open and no one can shut, you shut and no one can open: Guide us in opening the doors of opportunity for the unemployed, for the homeless, for prisoners, and for all who are oppressed; and lead us in closing the doors that lead to poverty, bigotry, and injustice.

*Come and bring the captives out of the prison house.*

**O King of the Nations**, you are the cornerstone that makes us one: We lift up all who are suffering and in need, especially.... Tend the sick, give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous and help us minister to them in your love.

*Come and save us whom you have fashioned out of clay.*

**O Dayspring**, radiance of the Light Eternal and Sun of Righteousness: Shine your light on those who have died; remember especially those we now name..., and bring comfort to all those who mourn.

*Come and enlighten all who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.*

**O Emmanuel**, God with us, Expected One and Saviour, We give thanks for all the blessings of this life; for all those who today celebrate birthdays... and anniversaries...; we give thanks for the care of creation ministries here at Saint

Peter's and in our community and for the other blessings we now name silently or aloud [pause]. Make each of us ready to receive you into our hearts, to serve you in all whom we meet, and to greet you in the fullness of your glory in the day of your appearing.

*Come and save us, O Lord our God.*

*The Priest adds the following concluding Collect*

Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit you have made us one with your saints in heaven and on earth: Grant that in our earthly pilgrimage we may always be supported by this fellowship of love and prayer, and know ourselves to be surrounded by their witness to your power and mercy. We ask this for the sake of Jesus Christ, in whom all our intercessions are acceptable through the Spirit, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## **Confession of Sin**

*All kneel.*

*The Celebrant says*

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.      *1 John 1:8, 9*

*The Celebrant says*

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

*Silence.*

*Minister and People together say*

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.**

*The Priest stands and says*

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

## Peace

*All stand.*

*Celebrant*            The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
*People*                And also with you.

*Then the Ministers and the People may greet one another in the name of the Lord.*

## Announcements

*Announcements may be made at this point in the service.*

## Liturgy of the Table - Holy Communion

### Offertory Hymn – *see insert*

*Baptized in water*

Hymnal 294



1 Bap - tized in wa - ter, sealed by the Spi - rit,  
2 Bap - tized in wa - ter, sealed by the Spi - rit,  
3 Bap - tized in wa - ter, sealed by the Spi - rit,



cleansed by the blood of Christ our King:  
 dead in the tomb with Christ our King:  
 marked with the sign of Christ our King:



heirs of sal - va - tion, trust - ing his prom - ise,  
 one with his ris - ing, freed and for - giv - en,  
 born of one Fa - ther, we are his chil - dren,



faith - ful - ly now God's praise we sing.  
 thank - ful - ly now God's praise we sing.  
 joy - ful - ly now God's praise we sing.

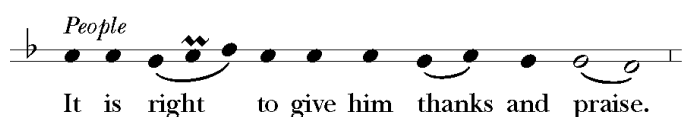
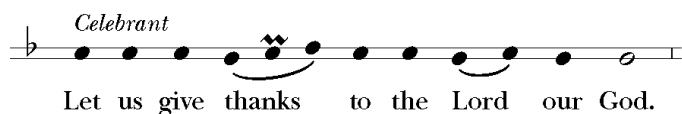
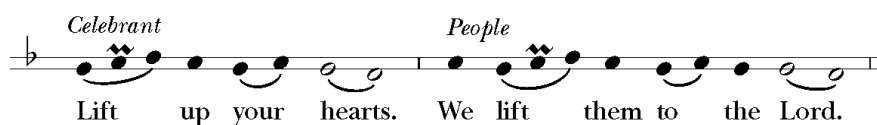
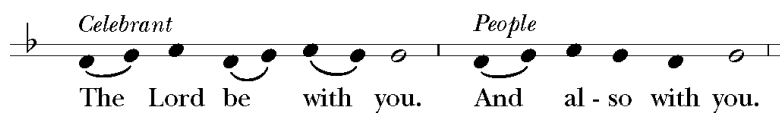
*Representatives of the congregation bring the people's offerings of bread and wine, and money or other gifts, to the Celebrant or celebrant. The people stand while the offerings are presented and placed on the Altar.*

## Great Thanksgiving

### Eucharistic Prayer B

BCP p. 367

*The people remain standing.*



*The Celebrant proceeds*

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

Because you sent your beloved Son to redeem us from sin and death, and to make us heirs in him of everlasting life; that when he shall come again in power and great triumph to judge the world, we may without shame or fear rejoice to behold his appearing.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Ho - ly, ho - ly,  
ho - ly Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho-san-na in the  
high - est. Bless - ed is he who  
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san-na in the high-est.

*The people stand or kneel.*



We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love which you have made known to us in creation; in the calling of Israel to be your people; in your Word spoken through the prophets; and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus, your Son. For in these last days you sent him to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary, to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In him, you have delivered us from evil, and made us worthy to stand before you. In him, you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.

On the night before he died for us, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me." After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me." Therefore, according to his command, O Father,

*Celebrant and People*

We remember his death,  
We proclaim his resurrection,  
We await his coming in glory;

*The Celebrant continues*

And we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to you, O Lord of all; presenting to you, from your creation, this bread and this wine.

We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant. Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice, that we may be acceptable through him, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country where, with Blessed Peter and all your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation.

By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. *AMEN.*

*The Celebrant then continues*

And now, as our Savior  
Christ has taught us, we  
are bold to say,

*People and Celebrant*

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.

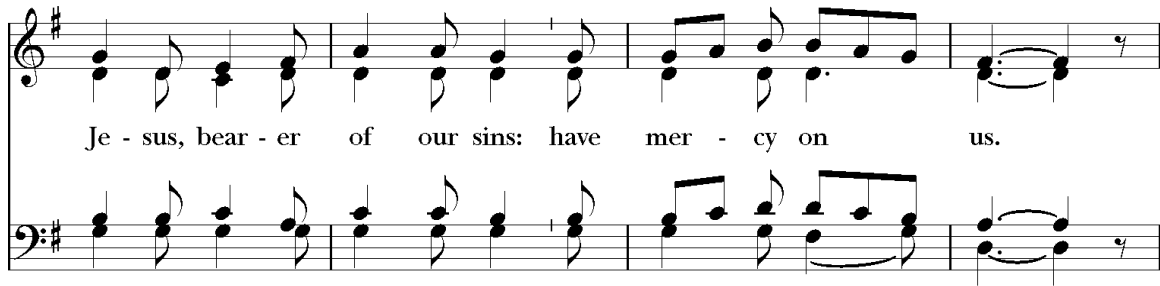
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

## **Breaking of the Bread**

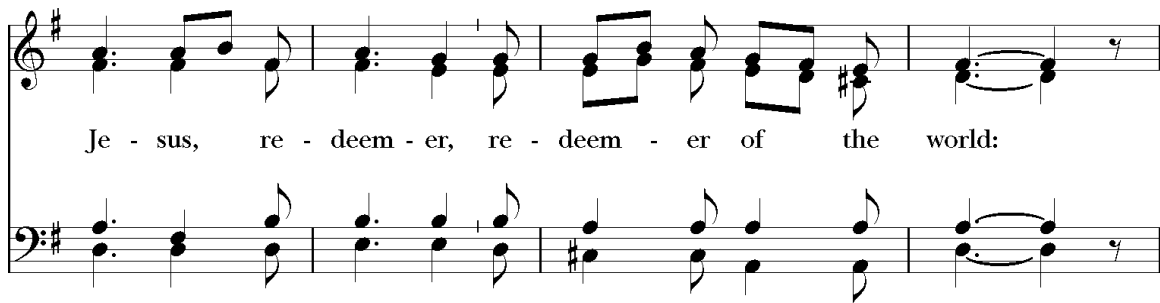
*A period of silence is kept.*

Je - sus, Lamb of God: have mer - cy on us.

The musical notation consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The vocal line is written in a simple, hymn-like style with lyrics underneath. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines.



Je - sus, bear - er of our sins: have mer - cy on us.



Je - sus, re - deem - er, re - deem - er of the world:



give us your peace, give us your peace.

*The Celebrant says*

The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

*All baptized persons are welcome to receive Holy Communion.*

Communion Hymn – see insert

So the day dawn for me

750

1. So the day dawn for me, so the day break,  
2. Be the day shine for me, be the day bright,

Christ watch - ing o - ver me, Christ as I wake.  
Christ my com - pan - ion be, Christ be my light. *to vs. 3*

3. Be the day dark to me, be the day drear,  
4. Be the day swift to me, be the day long,

Christ shall my com - fort be, Christ be my cheer.  
Christ my con - tent - ment be, Christ be my song. *to vs. 5*

5. So the day close for me, so the night fall,



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Music: *Wildridge* and *St. Charles, Queensborough Terrace*, David Ashley White (b.1944);  
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*After the Communion Hymn, the Celebrant says*

Let us pray.

*Celebrant and People*

## **Postcommunion Prayer**

BCP p. 365

Eternal God, heavenly Father,  
you have graciously accepted us as living members  
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,  
and you have fed us with spiritual food  
in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.  
Send us now into the world in peace,  
and grant us strength and courage  
to love and serve you  
with gladness and singleness of heart;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **Blessing**

*The priest blesses the people, saying*

May Almighty God, by whose providence our Savior Christ came among us in great  
humility, sanctify you with the light of his blessing and set you free from all sin.  
**Amen.**

May he whose second Coming in power and great glory we await, make you  
steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and constant in love. **Amen.**

May you, who rejoice in the first Advent of our Redeemer, at his second Advent be rewarded with unending life. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you for ever. **Amen.**

**Recessional Hymn** – *see insert*

*Hark! the glad sound! the Savior comes*

Hymnal 72

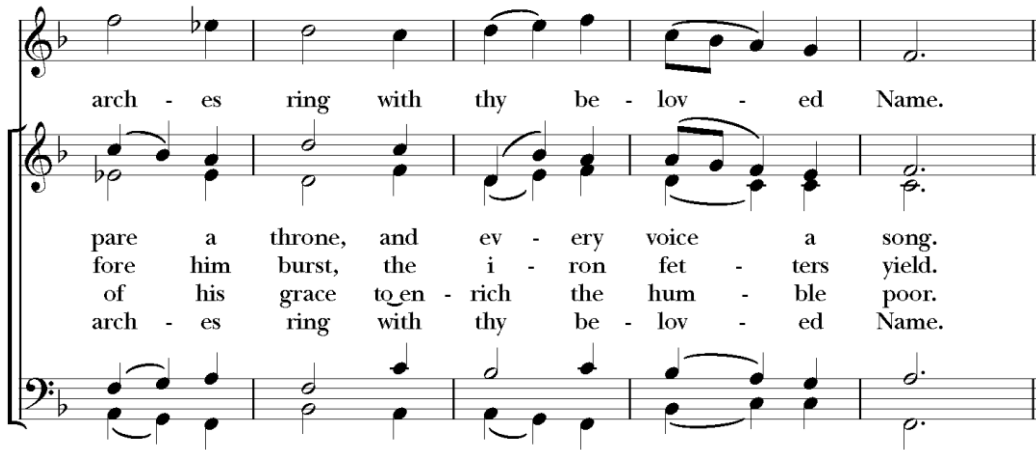
*Descant*

4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of Peace, thy wel - come

1 Hark! the glad sound! the Sa - vior comes, the Sa - vior  
 2 He comes, the pri - soners to re - lease in Sa - tan's  
 3 He comes, the bro - ken heart to bind, the bleed - ing  
 4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of Peace, thy wel - come

shall pro - claim; and heaven's e - ter - nal

prom - ised long: let ev - ery heart pre -  
 bond - age held; the gates of brass be -  
 soul to cure; and with the trea - sures  
 shall pro - claim; and heaven's e - ter - nal



arch - es ring with thy be - lov - ed Name.

pare a throne, and ev - ery voice a song.  
fore him burst, the i - ron fet - ters yield.  
of his grace to en - rich the hum - ble poor.  
arch - es ring with thy be - lov - ed Name.

## Dismissal

*Celebrant* Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

*People* Thanks be to God.

## A Note on Today's Readings

*The Third Sunday of Advent—Year C*

*In our readings and in the Collect for today, the major themes of biblical, prophetic religion come together, deepening the preparation of God's faithful people for the approaching Christmas festival. We pray that God will "stir up his power and come among us" and we are given the paradoxical message of fearful judgment and joyful anticipation.*

*This message is given first in Zephaniah's announcement of "the Day of the Lord" when God will come to draw all people into a saving and life-giving community. "The Lord, your God, is in your midst." "Sing aloud... Rejoice... Exult."*

*For Paul and the church in Philippi, the Lord has indeed come in Jesus' death and resurrection. "Rejoice," Paul says, and be partakers in the peace of God, which is our true guardian and protector.*

*But first, we hear the harsh words from John the Baptist, warning that we must be prepared for that coming if it is indeed to be a time of rejoicing. Repentance is the key to that preparation. However, repentance must be more than a feeling, and it must be deeper than outward rituals such as water baptism, or tracing one's descent from Abraham. That repentance must bear fruit in social righteousness—in self-giving and concrete actions of love and mercy toward others.*

*The Lord is in the midst of us, and so we sing out joyful Alleluias as he comes to us in his Word, and again as he comes to us in the breaking of the bread.*

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