



## Advent Theme: Holy Darkness

December 3, 2023

Second Sunday of Advent

### Prelude

Lo How A Rose

arr. Burkhardt

*Please respect those who wish to sit in silence.*

### Welcome and Announcements

Rev. Dr. Scott Jones

**Prayers:** We pray for **Val Himes**, who was placed on hospice care this week; and for **Nancy Schalles**, who returned to Omaha this week.

**Happy Birthday this week: Philip Smith, & Bev Fleckten!**

**Fair Trade Coffee:** Thank you to **Julie McKillip, Jim Ogden, & Saul & Stephanie Gonzalez** for sponsoring coffee for the month of December.

**Construction on Harney St:** The exit of our parking lot is temporarily closed due to a nearby construction project, so the entrance will need to be used to exit as well. While the exit is closed, we ask that you *do not park in the two rows closest to the street* so that they can be used as a through-lane to exit the parking lot and traffic can remain one-way through the parking lot. The construction project is expected to be completed by mid-December. If you have any questions, please contact the church office.

**Advent Workshop:** Join us after worship today for a potluck lunch, Christmas carols, & crafts!

**Youth Group:** The next Youth Group event will be a white elephant gift exchange on Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup>. Stay tuned for details!

**Cheap Art Sale:** We will be holding our Cheap Art Sale on December 3, 10, and 17, with all items priced under \$50.

**Eves:** Eves will have their Christmas party on Monday, December 11<sup>th</sup> at Susan Fortina's house. Bring a white elephant gift, cookies and snacks to share!

**Eves Retreat:** Finish up your holiday hubbub with a retreat! The retreat is much earlier this year (sorry, it was the only weekend available). We'll go out to Schuyler on **Friday, January 5th through Sunday, January 7th**. If you haven't been before, please think about it. Your own room and bathroom, friends, conversation, wine, and lots of snacks. Wear your slippers. It is a very relaxed retreat. If you're interested or have questions please contact Sara Sharpe, 402-639-4276, [frostsharpe@cox.net](mailto:frostsharpe@cox.net). *Signup deadline is December 18th.*

## Activities for the Coming Week

December 4-9

**Monday:**

**Tuesday:** Staff Meeting, 1:30pm

**Wednesday:** Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10am – 2pm  
Family Night, 5:30pm  
Choir Practice

**Thursday:** Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10am – 2pm

**Friday:** Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10am – 2pm

**Saturday:** Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10am – 2pm

## Sunday, December 10

**Lectionary Readings:** Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 88-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

**FIRSTForum:** Kelly Beaman will discuss how he composes a jazz Christmas piece!

**FIRSTKids:** There is no Sunday School next Sunday, December 10<sup>th</sup>.

**FIRSTYouth:** There is no Youth Group next Sunday, December 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Worship:** Next Sunday is the second week of Advent – God Saves in Darkness. We'll explore the story of Passover. The kids will perform their Christmas Program during worship. We'll also have a noisy offering – don't forget to bring your spare change!

**Cookie Walk:** Fire up your ovens! It's almost time for First Central's Annual Cookie Walk – Sunday, December 10, following worship and the kids' Christmas program. Anyone who would like to bake is asked to bring several dozen cookies to the church kitchen prior to worship on Dec. 10. After church, you can purchase to-go boxes and fill them with the many sugary delights from the tables in Memorial Hall. Questions? Call or text Sally Lewis (402-203-2484) or Cherie Ferber (402-301-6554).

## \*Greeting and Passing of the Peace

**"The Peace of God be with you."**

In Unison: **Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;  
the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.**

\*Let us rise in body or spirit.

## Call to Worship

Alice Love & David Nichols

A voice cries out declaring God's presence: Comfort, O Comfort my people.

**We come preparing the way of the Lord. Together, we actively wait for God's peace.**

A voice cries out declaring God's equity: Grass withers, flowers fade, but God's word stands forever.

**We lift up our voices with strength and good tidings. Together, we carry out God's peace.**

## \*Proclamation Hymn

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

*Black Hymnal*, No. 116

VENI EMMANUEL

# O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and  
 2 O come, O Wis - dom from on high, and  
 3 O come, O come, O A - do - nai, who  
 4 O come, O shoot of Jes - se, free your  
 5 O come, O Key of Da - vid, come, and

ran - som cap - tive Is - ra - el That mourns in lone - ly  
 or - der all things far and nigh; To us the path of  
 came to all on Si - nai high, And from its peak a  
 own from Sa - tan's tyr - an - ny, From depths of hell your  
 o - pen wide your heaven - ly home; Make safe the path to

ex - ile here, un - til the Child of God ap - pear.  
 knowl - edge show, and help us in that way to go.  
 sin - gle law pro - claimed in maj - es - ty and awe.  
 peo - ple save, and give them vic - tory o'er the grave.  
 end - less day, to hell's de - struc - tion close the way.

## Refrain

Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u - el shall come to you. O Is - ra - el!

6 O come. O Day-spring, come and cheer  
 our spir-its by your ad-vent here:  
 Love stir with-in the womb of night,  
 and death's own shad-ows put to flight.  
 (Refrain)

7 O come. De-sire of Na-tions, bind  
 all peo-ples in one heart and mind:  
 Make en-vy, strife, and quar-rels cease:  
 fill the whole world with heav-en's peace.  
 (Refrain)

### **\*Invocation**

Holy God, we would invite you to come down and dwell among us, yet we know that you are already and always with us – Emmanuel. God beside us, God before us, God behind us, and God within us. Dwelling even in darkness. We meet you there and receive your gifts of life. Amen.

### **\*Gloria**

*Black Hymnal*, No. 125

Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo

### **Lighting of the Advent Candle**

Alice Love & David Nichols

(liturgy adapted from *The Dark Night of the Soul* by Juan de la Cruz)

Live in faith and hope, though it be in darkness, for in this darkness God protects the soul.

O guiding night! O night more lovely than the dawn!

O night that has united the Lover with the beloved, transforming the beloved.

In the dark night of the soul, bright flows the river of God.

**Even as we light these candles of hope and peace, we name the beauty, goodness, and holiness of darkness, blackness, and night.**

### **Conversation with the Children**

Rev. Dr. Scott Jones

### **Anthem**

Kerrie Kleppin-Winn, *flute*  
Sara Sharpe, *flute*

Christmas Is Here  
Allison Beaman, *clarinet*  
Bethany Lowndes, *trumpet*  
Justin Lowndes, *trumpet*

Guaraldi/Beaman  
Kelly Beaman, *trombone*  
Grant Switzer, *percussion*

### **Scripture Lesson**

Genesis 32:24-30

*Pew Bible*, page 29

For the Word of God in scripture,  
For the Word of God within us,  
For the Word of God among us,  
**Thanks be to God.**

### **Sermon**

God dwells in Darkness

Rev. Dr. Scott Jones

### **\*Hymn**

In the Bleak Midwinter

*Black Hymnal*, No. 128  
CRANHAM

12-10-95 12-31-95  
12-13-95

CHRISTMAS


# In the Bleak Midwinter

128

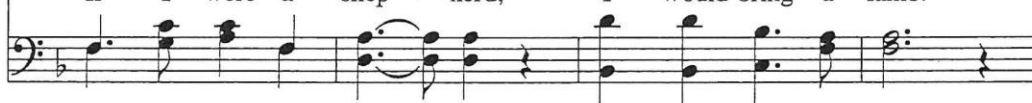
Christina G. Rossetti, 1872; alt.



1 In the bleak mid - win - ter, frost - y wind made moan,  
2 Our God tran-scends all heav - en, earth, and its do - main;  
3 An - gels and arch - an - gels may have gath-ered there,  
4 What can I of - fer, poor as I am?

earth stood hard as i - ron, wa - ter like a stone;  
heaven and earth shall flee a-way when Christ comes to reign;  
cher - u - bim and ser - a-phim thronged the mid - night air;  
If I were a shep - herd, I would bring a lamb.




Snow had fall - en, snow on snow, snow on snow,  
In the bleak mid - win - ter a sta - ble place suf - ficed the  
But his moth - er on - ly, in her maid-en bliss,  
If I were a wise one, I would do my part; but




in the bleak mid - win - ter, long a - go.  
sov - ereign God al - might - y, Je - sus Christ.  
wor - shiped the be - lov - ed with a kiss.  
what can I of - fer: all my heart.



Christina Rossetti has portrayed the Christmas story, not in warm Bethlehem, but in the winter of her native England.

Tune: CRANHAM Irr.  
Gustav Holst, 1906

## **\*Confession**

Rev. Dr. Jim Harmon

**We come singing songs of peace and hope, this morning. Though we may not be inspired much right now, we still sing. Though it may take us time to sit with our hampered thoughts and sift through the growing pile of despair, we still sing. In spite of everything ridiculous and sad – though we may be beyond belief, depressed, confused, and mad – some of us got dressed, and some of us made it out of bed or out the door, and we still sing. Amen.**

## **\*Assurance**

**Help us to learn to trust the long nights of our lives, that you are with us regardless of the outcome. May our friendship with you teach us how to repair the harms that are ours to own, in our relationships to ourselves, others, and creation. Through our honest connections, may peace have a place to make its home in us. Amen.**

## **Prayers**

**Pastoral Prayer**

**Lord's Prayer**

**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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

## **Offertory**

Once He Came In Blessing

arr. Burkhardt

## **\*Hymn of Dedication**

VENI EMMANUEL

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Christ all creatures here below. Praise Holy Spirit evermore. Praise Triune God whom we adore. Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!**

## **\*Offertory Prayer**

**We exist in the paradox of the “already but not yet,” of the Gospel. The prophecy of peace can be felt right now and yet its full expression in our world has certainly not yet come. May the offerings of this community be blessed in the support they provide today and the goodness that continues to unfold tomorrow. May these gifts be lifted up in honor of our covenant with you, O God, to make a just world for all. Amen.**

## **Celebration of the Sacrament of Communion**

**God be with you**

**And also with you.**

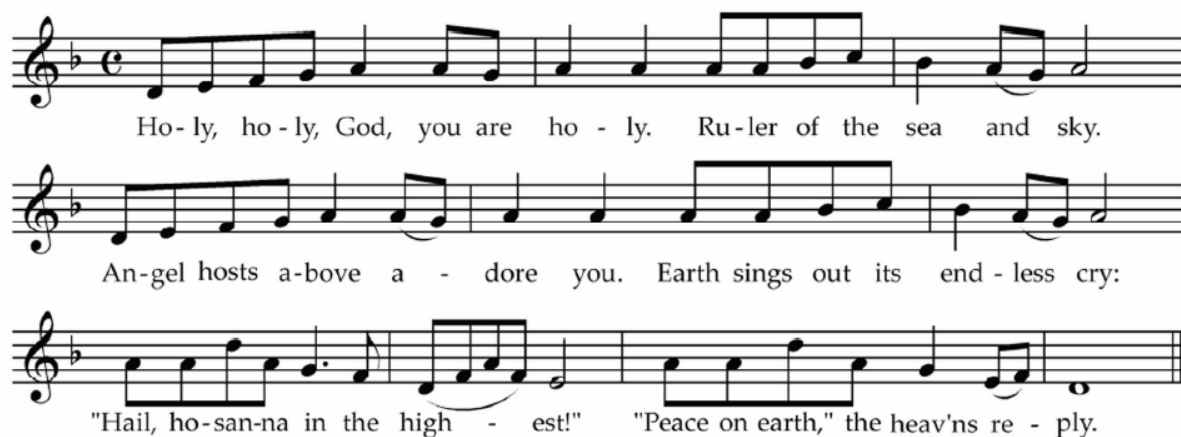
**Lift up your hearts.**

**We lift them up to God**

**Let us give thanks and praise to God.**

**In the rich dark of winter, God makes an astounding promise: “I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up.” In the wilderness, a voice cries out, longing for the Refiner’s fire, repair, and renewal, the promised birth (and rebirth) of hope. Called to bear the weight and fruit of promise, Mary sings ancient trust – the song of generations – that God comes to fill the hungry and lift the humble. She sings that love and truth will meet, that justice and peace will kiss. In the midst of uncertainty, Jesus**

assures his disciples: Just as the tree blooms, so the signs are clear that the kingdom of God is near. In the deep of our own winter, we look for them: bud of hope, branch of peace, sprig of joy, blossom of love. While around us the snares of fear and conflict lie in wait of infant hope, you, O Wisdom, O Endless Love, O Holy Darkness, are there, keeping vigil with us, in this season of expectation. We gather at this table, praying that crooked ways be made straight, that valleys be lifted up and mountains might be brought low, so that all God's people might rejoice together, singing:



## Words of Institution

## Invitation to the Table

*Please come forward as the ushers indicate. If you are unable to come forward, remain in your seat and an usher will serve you. The bread is gluten free.*

## The Bread and Cup

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

French carol

## Prayer of Thanksgiving

## \*Recessional Hymn

Watcher, Tell Us of the Night

*Black Hymnal*, No. 103  
ABERYSTWYTH

## \*Benediction

## \*Benediction Response

Bouma

## Postlude

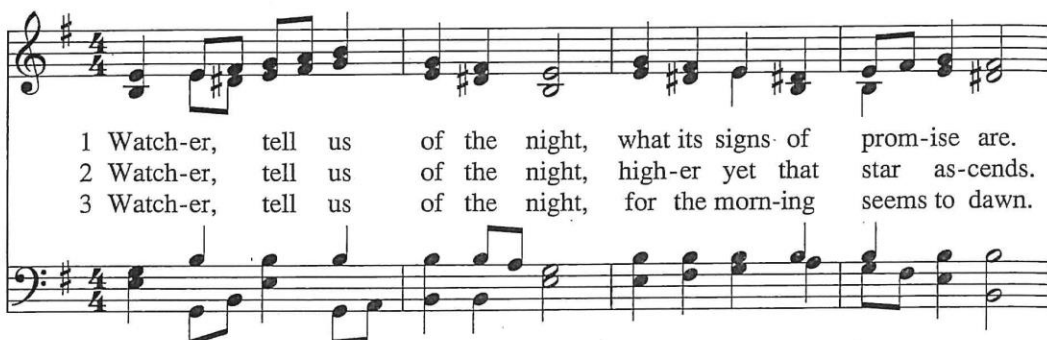
Wake, Awake

arr. Burkhardt

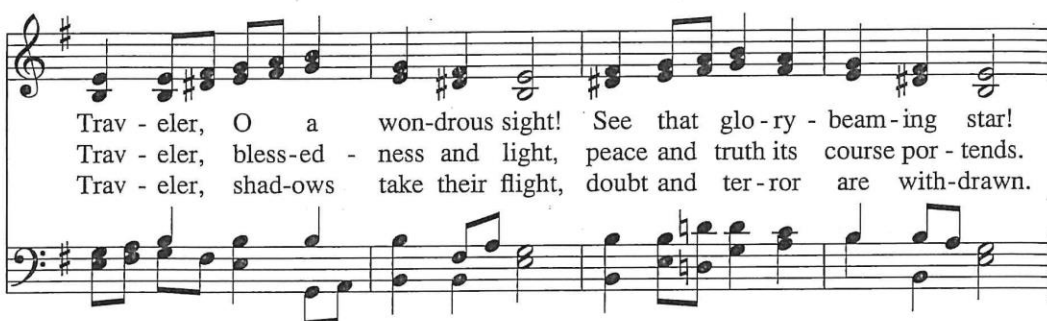
## Watcher, Tell Us of the Night

Isa. 21:11-12


John Bowring, 1825; alt.



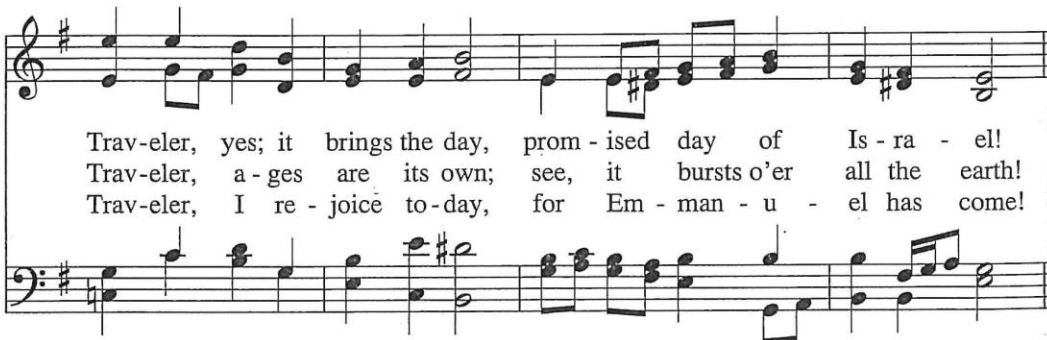
1 Watch-er, tell us of the night, what its signs of prom-ise are.  
 2 Watch-er, tell us of the night, high-er yet that star as-cends.  
 3 Watch-er, tell us of the night, for the morn-ing seems to dawn.



Trav - eler, O a won-drous sight! See that glo-ry - beam-ing star!  
 Trav - eler, bless-ed - ness and light, peace and truth its course por - tends.  
 Trav - eler, shad-ows take their flight, doubt and ter - ror are with-drawn.



Watch-er, does its beau - teous ray news of joy or hope fore - tell?  
 Watch-er, will its beams a - lone gild the spot that gave them birth?  
 Watch-er, you may go your way; has - ten to your qui - et home.

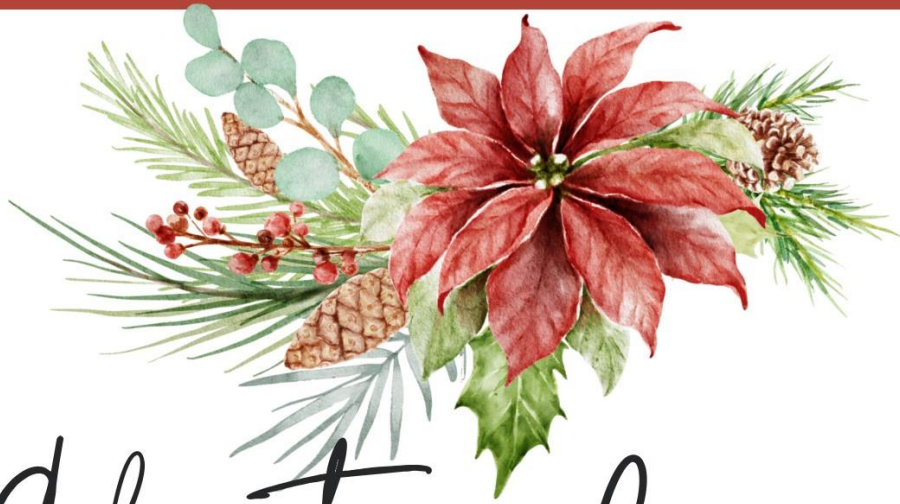


Trav-eler, yes; it brings the day, prom - ised day of Is - ra - el!  
 Trav-eler, a - ges are its own; see, it bursts o'er all the earth!  
 Trav-eler, I re - joice to-day, for Em - man - u - el has come!

This hymn, a dialogue between watcher and traveler, was suggested by the dialogue in Isaiah 21:11-12. John Bowring was

Tune: ABERYSTWYTH 7.7.7.7.D.  
 Joseph Parry 1879





# Advent is here...

As we prepare for the season, we are again decorating the Sanctuary with greenery and flowers. If you would like to donate a Memorial Gift of \$15 towards the purchase of Christmas flowers, greens and decorations, please fill out the order form below, and return it to the church office by **Monday, December 18th.**

*Please make checks payable to First Central, and indicate on your check that it is for "Christmas greenery."*

The flowers and greenery will remain in the Sanctuary throughout the holiday season, and some will later be delivered to our hospitalized and homebound members.

## Memorial Gift - Christmas Greens & Flowers

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

In loving memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

Or, in honor of: \_\_\_\_\_