



+ Those who are able are invited to stand.  
 UMH-United Methodist Hymnal FWS-The Faith We Sing

You are invited to respond with the **Bold** responses.

God of winter and starlight, you have promised us your presence: to live among us, to right all wrongs, to bring good things to all who wait for your new day. In these dark days, we look for signs of your coming: the sounds of children at play, the music that fills our hearts with anticipation, the company of all who serve the last and the least. Make us at home with righteousness, that we may be ready to walk in your holy ways. Amen.

**GOOD MORNING! WELCOME TO WORSHIP!**

**THE CHURCH GATHERS TO WORSHIP**

PRE-SERVICE MUSIC *Renee Warner*

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND HOSPITALITY

PRELUDE *Dan Martin*

SERVICE OF LIGHT *The Acolytes*  
*Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world."*

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP *UMH 216*  
*Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming, v. 1*

**Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung! Of Jesse's lineage coming, as those**

**of old have sung. It came, a flower bright, amid the cold of winter, when half spent was the night.**

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

*Light the first candle in the Advent wreath.*

The prophet Isaiah wrote, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

*(Mark 1:2-3, NRSV.)*

And John, the messenger of God, proclaimed to all the people who came to him in the wilderness that they must repent of their sins and be baptized. Many people heard his message, repented, and were baptized in the river Jordan.

It has become our custom to prepare for the birth of the Messiah by decorating our cities and homes, hanging lights inside and out, singing "Frosty the Snowman" and "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer," and measuring the quality of our Christmas morning by the number of gifts we receive.

*Light the second candle in the Advent wreath.*

As we light this second candle in preparation for the coming of the Messiah, we need to listen again to John the Baptizer's message, preparing the way of the Lord:

...make straight the paths  
 ...repent of your sins  
 ...be baptized  
 ...and live holy lives devoted to God.

**Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.**

OPENING PRAYER *Responsively*

Compassionate God, greet us with your grace this day, for we need you. We cannot save ourselves. Though we may be frantic with activity, our efforts do not yield peace, peace as you can give. Today we would be quiet enough to hear your voice. Today we would be still enough to feel your touch.

Help us to find that place where we can receive as well as give, wait as well as act, and listen as well as speak. Our whole world needs your peace. Let us come before you and learn your ways, laying down our weapons and feeding the hungry. Come to us now, through Jesus the Christ. Amen.

+HYMN OF PRAISE *UMH 238*  
*Angels We Have Heard on High, vv. 1, 2, & 3*

THE CHURCH IN MOMENTS OF CONFESSION

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON *Philippians 3:1-11*

CALL TO CONFESSION

The confession of our sin before God and one another reminds us that as individual believers and as a community of faith, we do stray or turn from the ways of love and grace. We believe that if we confess, we shall be forgiven and freed from the burden of guilt and empowered to lift and carry the ministry of Christ. And so, with confidence in the grace and mercy of God, let us pray.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION *Responsively*

God of Grace, you blow the breath of life into our lungs, you have formed us in your image. **And yet we acknowledge that sometimes we are not who you would have us be.**

You challenge us to embrace the refining fire of your love, to meet you on the threshing floor of life, to be washed as with fuller's soap.

**But in our heart of hearts we would rather keep those things that would be removed in such an encounter.**

Through your Grace, life-giving God, accept us as we are,

**Unrefined, unwashed, the chaff mixed in with the grain.**

And help us to move into a new way of being.

PERSONAL PRAYER OF CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Listen! For this is Good News!  
God's Grace is wider than our wildest imaginings.  
God's Grace embraces us as we are and where we are  
and draws us out to be the people we were created to  
be.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER *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, forever. Amen.**

RESPONSE *UMH 223*

*Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light, v. 3*  
**Come, dearest child, into our hearts, and leave your crib behind you! Let this be where the new life starts for all who seek and find you. To you the honor, thanks, and praise, for all your gifts this time of grace; come, conquer, and deliver this world, and us, forever.**

THE CHURCH WORSHIPS BY GIVING

OFFERTORY INVITATION

OFFERTOR PRAYER *Unison*

Loving God, in this Advent season, we bring our offerings with hearts open to your call. Just as John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus, may our gifts help prepare the way for your kingdom. Use these offerings to bring hope, justice, and transformation. Help us to look beyond the surface, to see your work in surprising places and people. Bless our giving, that it may shine with the presence of Emmanuel. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

+DOXOLOGY *In the Bleak Midwinter, v.4. UMH 221*

**What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
if I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;  
yet what I can I give him: give my heart.**

THE CHURCH LISTENS FOR THE WORD  
THE WORD

CHORAL CALL TO WIGGLETIME *UMH 219*

*What Child is This, v. 1*

**What child is this who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap  
is sleeping? Whom angels greet with anthems  
sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping?  
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds  
guard and angels sing; haste, haste to bring him  
laud, the babe, the son of Mary.**

WIGGLETIME *...and then, to Children's Church*

ANTHEM *Chancel Choir*

SERMON *Rev. Steve Meadows*

THE CHURCH SCATTERS AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

+HYMN OF DEDICATION *UMH 213*

*Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates*

+SERVICE OF LIGHT *The Acolytes*

*Jesus said, "You are the light of the world."*

+BENEDICTION

Go, now, blessed with a passion that refines, molds,  
and shapes each of our hearts to reflect God's glorious  
love that transforms despair into hope, violence into  
peace, and distress into flourishing. Amen.

+POSTLUDE *Dan Martin*

*...and the worship continues.*

