

**Service Prayers**

**for the Second Sunday of Advent, Year B**

**December 6, 2020**

*Isaiah 40:1-11 • Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13 • 2 Peter 3:8-15a • Mark 1:1-8*

*Since Congregations are returning to “in-person” services at different paces, Worship Ways for will be edited for online use. “Rubrics” for virtual services will be noted in red; take and adapt as you need!*

*Leader should speak the lines of the people, along with the Leader’s lines*

**Meditation on Community Life: The Advent Wreath**

*The Advent Wreath, which in recent years has been adopted enthusiastically as a congregational ritual during public worship, actually began as an at-home devotional practice. So if your church is worshipping virtually, encourage your members to create an Advent Wreath in their households.*

*An Advent wreath has 5 candles arranged in a circle. Candles may be tapers, or pillars:*

*3 blue or purple, lit on 1st, 2nd and 4th Sundays*

*1 rose or pink, lit on 3rd Sunday*

*1 white or gold, placed in the center, to be lit on Christmas Eve.*

*Surround the candles with evergreen boughs, or other decorative elements that speak to the season of the year. You may want to hold off on the reds and greens of Christmas; Advent is a celebration of anticipation, waiting, getting ready.*

*Each week of Advent you may invite a household to share their Advent wreath, and take the lead in lighting the appropriate candles.*

*The Advent Candle Lighting time may be used at the start of worship, or perhaps during the Sermon time, as an interactive devotional time, or a simple Bible study. It may be a moment to help the community reflect on the year past, with its trauma and displacements, in light of the scriptures that call us to faithfully get ready for a new moment in the coming of Christ.*

**Week Two:** *The readings this week continue the theme of great change coming to a people struggling with faithfulness. God’s continuing challenge is clear, but so is God’s tenderness and care for a weary people, offering “Comfort, comfort…” Isaiah gives voice to the emotional ups and downs of a community under stress—surely this people is only “grass”—yet that same people is called out to the hard, future oriented work of preparing the way for the Holy One. 2 Peter acknowledges the mystery of God’s time—Kairos—where one day may be a thousand years by human reckoning, and the community is called to live attentively in this very moment, listening for the call of God. The beginning of Mark’s Gospel is one such moment: the appearance of an unkempt and unruly prophet, calling people to change their lives in the expectation that God is doing something radically new. One is coming into their midst with the power of the Holy Spirit.*

*Invite someone from the congregation to read portions of these three readings with their all-over-the-place emotional content; choose according to where you feel the congregation is in this moment—weary, determined, listening, ready for a jolt of surprise and challenge? Do the readings offer hints, encouragement or even direction to the congregation as they face a future unlike anything they may have imagined before this strange year of 2020?*

***Light the first and second candles:***

O Holy One, we light this second candle,

 A candle offering comfort to weary spirits

 After a year of pain and loss.

 Let its glow remind us of your tender care,

 And warm our lives in

 the Light of Peace.

 Let it guide us to your presence in our midst,

 Leading us to your Justice and Joy in the service of Love.

**People:** *Out loud, but muted*

 **God be with us in this Light of Peace.**

**Call to Worship**

Let us hear what God will speak,

 Tender words for a burdened people:

**People:** *Out loud, but muted*

 **Comfort, comfort, my people!**

 **The days of sorrow are ending!**

 Let us hear what God will speak,

 Encouraging words for an anxious people:

**People:** *Out loud, but muted*

 **Prepare a way for the Holy One,**

 **Through deserts of despair**

 **build a highway for our God!**

 Let us hear what God will speak,
 words of vision for a weary people:

**People:** *Out loud, but muted*

 **Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;**

 **righteousness and peace will kiss!**

Come, let us worship!

**Invocation**

O Holy One,

you are tender shepherd,

architect of the Way,

beguiling hope of all who go looking for you

deep in their lives.

 Surprise us here with

Sweetness, challenge, vision—

Whatever we may need

In this moment to recognize you

and follow you into the future.

We pray in the name of Jesus, the Beloved.

**Prayer of Confession**

The year past has been riddled with crisis and losses:

 Covid-19,

 natural disasters of fire and hurricane,

 exposure of societal injustices rooted in racist and sexist structures,

 painful political reckonings.

 In this moment we are called to examine our hearts

 for our role in the last year:

 to name what traditionally have been called

 Sins of Commission—

 that is, what we may have done

 to contribute to the pain and chaos of these days;

 Sins of Omission—

 that is, what we may have left undone

 which contributed to the pain,

 or failed to help alleviate suffering.

*Silence; leave space for people to examine their hearts, and, if it seems appropriate, to voice to what they have done or left undone.*

**Assurance of Grace**

Comfort, comfort, my people,

says the God of Justice and Compassion.

You are forgiven your sin,

And showered with grace to change your life,

And to work toward the kin-dom of the One who is to Come:

New heavens and new earth, where righteousness is at home.

**Amen.**

**Scripture, Sermon, Prayers of the People**

*Notes for the worship planners in 2020:*

*Consider a* ***simple message*** *or even* ***an interactive Bible Study*** *that engages people with the Scriptures for today. For the* ***Prayers of the People****, you might use a bidding prayer (“God, we pray today for those who are sick, including ….”) and encourage folk to type in their prayers using Zoom chat or Facebook Live; allow for more time in silence for those prayers to be typed and read. Consider a collective response at the end of each bidding prayer.*

* ***A caution regarding prayers of the People online: Folks*** *gathered in-person often recount a lot of detail in their prayers concerning other members or family* ***(“Elderly Name, living alone, experiencing isolation…”*** *In a private, in-person gathering, this information may be safe, but online,* ***it can******expose vulnerable people to harm****, since we can’t control who will join the gathering or access it later online. Invite people to be prudent in offering prayers: “For First name only, in need of healing”; “For First name only, comfort in grief” etc.*

***Encourage people to contact the pastor directly with news of those needed extra pastoral care***

**Call To Offering**

In struggle and in joy, God is faithful to us.

We bring forth our offerings – our tithes, our treasures, our least coins –

to demonstrate our faithfulness to God.

**Dedication**

**People:** *Out loud, but muted*

**O Faithful One,**

**accept these gifts of our hearts and hands.**

**May they be multiplied and magnified**

**as the living presence of Christ in the world. Amen.**

**Benediction**

Go forth into the world

energized to seek signs of God’s future

everywhere:

especially in the unruly, unkempt, and persistent voices

of Prophets in our midst:

calling us to prepare the way

in our lives and our world

For the Holy One who is coming!

**Amen.**

**Service Prayers for Advent 2 Year B 2020** are written by the Rev. Susan A. Blain, Minister for Worship and Gospel Arts, Faith INFO Ministry Team, UCC.



Copyright 2020 Local Church Ministries, Faith INFO Ministry Team, United Church of Christ, 700 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115-1100. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.

