



Breath Prayer:
INHALE: In you, O God,
EXHALE: I find my worth.

This quilt square is a simplified abstract image of the angel Gabriel who tells Mary that she is “blessed among women.”
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December 1, 2024
9:45 AM *Prayer and Care*
10:00 AM *Worship*

1st Sunday of Advent

WE GATHER TOGETHER TO WORSHIP GOD

*Words in **BOLD** indicate the congregation reading together. Words of the worship leader are in PLAIN type. An asterisk * indicates that the congregation may stand, as you wish.*

Gathering Song GtG 92

While We Are Waiting, Come

**While we are waiting, come; while we are waiting, come.
Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel, while we are waiting, come.**

**With grace and justice, come; with grace and justice, come.
Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel, while we are waiting, come.**

**Come, Savior, quickly come; come Savior, quickly come.
Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel, while we are waiting, come.**

Time of Prayer and Care

Prelude

*Lighting of the Advent Candle of Hope

One: In a weary and worn world, how do we begin again? Where do we start?

All: Let us begin with the good news! Let us begin by trusting that we are a blessing, loved by a gracious God. Let us begin with music and singing! Let us begin with warmth and welcome. Let us begin with hope.

One: Yes, let us begin with hope. Today we light the candle of hope to shine a light in a worn and weary world.

All: May this be our foundation. May this be our fresh start. May this be our new beginning.

One: May hope flow forth from here. Amen!

* Presbyterian Hymnal #11

O Lord, How Shall I Meet You? *vv. 1, 3*

O Lord, how shall I meet you, how welcome you aright?
Your people long to greet you, my hope, my heart's delight!
O kindle, Lord most holy, a lamp within my breast,
to do in spirit lowly all that may please you best.

You come, O Lord, with gladness, in mercy and goodwill,
to bring an end to sadness and bid our fears be still.
In patient expectation we live for that great day
when your renewed creation your glory shall display.

Prayer of Confession

One: In the Gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel tells Mary two things: that she is highly favored, and that she is going to have a child. Mary's response to this news is simple. With awestruck authenticity, she asks, "How can this be?" Every time we approach the prayer of confession, we might ask this same awestruck question, "How can this be?" How can God's mercy know no end? How can God be so gracious with someone as fickle as me? Regardless of the week we've had, this good news never changes. So let us join together in speaking the truth of our lives. Join me in the prayer of confession, and may God's mercy leave you awestruck. Let us pray:

All: Affirming God, your first words to creation were words of love. You looked at this earth and said, "It is good." You spoke affirmations through the prophets. You spoke blessings over Mary. You spoke belonging through Christ. At every turn, you have reiterated that we are a blessing, made in your image, held in your love. Forgive us for forgetting this truth. Forgive us for measuring our worth by society's measuring stick instead of yours. We believe. Help our unbelief. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

Words of Forgiveness

One: Family of faith, I don't know the last time someone told you that you are good, just as you are. I don't know the last time you heard that you are loved and created in the image of God. I don't know the last time you trusted those words and truly believed that you are a blessing. However, in case it has been a while, hear these words from Isaiah:

God says,

**All: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name.
You are mine.”**

One: We are forgiven. We are loved. Let it leave you awestruck.

All: Thanks be to God! May we believe it. Amen.

Sing Glory PH 23

Angels We Have Heard on High

**Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o’er the plains,
and the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.**

Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

The Peace of Christ

One: Jesus takes on flesh and blood to live among us as our peace. Christ’s peace which is rooted in our hearts through the Holy Spirit gives us courage to become peacemakers in this world of division. Begin by offering signs of peace to those who are close to you, and asking God’s peace to be upon those who are far off. The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

Those in the sanctuary are invited to greet those around you.

Those on zoom are invited to offer greetings in the chat.

Offering our Gifts and Prayer of Dedication

For those who would like to make a physical offering, the offering plates are available in the middle of the sanctuary. Donations can also be made online. www.cliftonpc.org

One: We are invited to bear God’s love to one another in our living, in our giving, in our forgiving. May we freely share what has been given to us in Jesus Christ. Let us pray.

All: Holy God, look in favor upon the imperfect gifts we offer you in this act of worship. May they become mercy for those tossed aside by the world; may they become a family for those scattered by fear; may they become a meal for those whose stomachs are empty, and hope for those whose hearts are hollowed out by despair. This we ask in the name of the child who came to be a servant to all, Jesus. Amen.

WE HEAR THE WORD OF GOD

Prayer for Illumination

Presbyterian Hymnal #9 O Come, O Come Emmanuel v. 1

**O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.**

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

First Reading Isaiah 43:1-7 (NRSVUE)

¹ But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel:
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine.

² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you,
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.
³ For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.
I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you.
⁴ Because you are precious in my sight and honored and I love you,
I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life.
⁵ Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east,
and from the west I will gather you;
⁶ I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold;
bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth—
⁷ everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."
One: God be in our listening, God be in our understanding.
All: Amen.

Second Reading Luke 1:26-38 (NRSVUE)

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.

One: For the Word of God in scripture, for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us,

All: Thanks be to God.

Sermon **Words for the Beginning: A Series for Advent** *Diane Walton Hendricks*
You Are a Blessing

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

Communion Anthem

Invitation to the Lord's Table

Great Thanksgiving, Prayers of the People, and the Lord's Prayer

One: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up to the Lord.

One: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

One: Loving God... As our Savior taught us, we are bold to pray,

All: 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.

Breaking of the Bread and Communion of the People

Communion Hymn Presbyterian Hymnal #19

To a Maid Engaged to Joseph

1 To a maid whose name was Mary, the angel Gabriel came.
"Fear not," the angel told her, "I come to bring good news;
good news I come to tell you, good news, I say, good news."

2 "For you are highly favored by God the Lord of all,
who even now is with you. You are on earth most blest;
you are most blest, most blessed; God chose you, you are blest!"

3 But Mary was most troubled to hear the angel's word.
What was the angel saying? It troubled her to hear,
to hear the angel's message, it troubled her to hear.

4 "Fear not, for God is with you, and you shall bear a child.
His name shall be called Jesus, God's offspring from on high.
And he shall reign forever, forever reign on high."

5 "How shall this be?" said Mary, "I am not yet a wife."
The angel answered quickly, "The power of the Most High
will come upon you shortly, your child shall be God's child."

6 As Mary heard the angel, she wondered at his words.
"Behold, I am your handmaid," she said unto her God.
"So be it; I am ready according to your word."

Prayer After Communion

WE ARE SENT TO THE WORLD

Celebrating Ministries

Ringing of the Bell, Charge, and Benediction

Benediction Response Presbyterian Hymnal #12 People, Look East
People, look east. The time is near of the crowning of the year.
Set every peak and valley humming with the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east and sing today: Love, the Lord, is on the way.

Thank you for joining us for worship this morning. We can be reached at office@cliftonpc.org

Most prayers and liturgy adapted from Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org.
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Thanks to those leading us in worship

Hosts: Beth and Ed Corish

Deacon Note Taker: Brenda Ference

Liturgist: Phil Radzikowski

Advent Candle Lighting: Beth and Ed Corish

Technical Team: Jim Wrightson

Mission Elder: Kimberly Davis

CPC STAFF

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Kate Trussell, Preschool Director ♦ Rev. Dr. Lynn Stanton-Hoyle, Pastor Emerita