



The kingdom of God is, at its heart, about God's sovereignty sweeping the world with love and power, so that human beings, each made in God's image and each one loved dearly, may relax in the knowledge that God is in control . . . God, the creator, loves to give good gifts, loves to give you the kingdom – loves, that is, to bring his sovereign care and rescue right to your own door.

-N.T.Wright

To those joining us on line today...THANK YOU!

We are made to worship together, but we find ourselves living in a particular and unprecedented moment that has not touched American lives in generations. The good news is that while we are made to worship God together, we do not need to be in a particular place to meet with God. So I hope you have gathered together with your housemates, family, and maybe a couple others. God is present with us at all times, and He delights to meet with you today regardless of where you are or how many people you are with. We seek to offer this service as an encouragement to you amid these difficult times. We look forward to worshiping together again, breaking bread and giving hugs to one another. You are missed.

As an encouragement to others, please take a picture of your home gathering, post it to social media with the hashtag *#abbottchurchathome* and tag us on Instagram *@abbottchurchbaltimore*

NEED PRAYER? From 12:00 PM until 1:00 PM, Monday through Friday, someone will be available to pray for anyone in need of prayer. The time will also be focused on praying for the ministry of our church and for God's Spirit to be at work in our midst. If you would like to be part of this new prayer ministry, please let the pastor know. Please text prayer requests to the pastor, Julius and/or George.

You can access children's bulletins at the following address:
www.childrensbulletins.com/Covid19-childrens-activites-for-churches

ORDER OF WORSHIP

The Christian Year

Christian-year spirituality is nothing less than the calling to enter by faith into the incarnation, the life and ministry, the death and resurrection of Jesus. God's saving action is not only presented to us through the practice of the Christian year, it also takes up residence within us and transforms us by the saving and healing presence of Christ in our lives. As we enter the saving events of Jesus, he shapes us by the pattern of his own living and dying so that our living and dying in this world is a living and dying in him.

-Robert Webber

Advent

Advent is a season of hopeful expectation and preparation, as the Church anticipates the coming of Christ – both at his birth in Bethlehem many years ago, and at his future, final coming to judge the world at the end of time. During Advent, we prepare our hearts for the Lord, so that when he comes, he may find us watching and waiting.

WELCOME TO ABBOTT CHURCH

CALL TO WORSHIP (read responsively)

Zephaniah 3 (selected verses)

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion!

Shout for joy, O Israel!

Rejoice with all your heart,

exult, 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.

He will rejoice over you with gladness,

he will renew you in his love.

SILENT PREPARATION

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE - Litany of Love

- *The Lee and Mary Chaney Spencer Family*

Leader: Why do we light the Advent candles?

All: **The light reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world who comes into the darkness of our lives to bring newness, life and love.**

Leader: What is the meaning of the fourth lighted candle?

All: **The fourth lighted candle is the candle of love. It draws attention to God's great love for us in sending the Messiah to rescue and redeem us.**

Leader: What do the gospels say about this love?

All: **John writes, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**

Leader: How did Jesus show us God's love?

All: **John writes in his first letter, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us."**

Leader: How should we then respond to that love?

All: **John continues, "We ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."**

Angels we have heard on high sweetly swinging o'er the plains
And the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains

Gloria In Excelsis Deo

Gloria In Excelsis Deo

Shepherds why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
Say what may the tidings be, which inspire your heavenly song?

Come to Bethlehem, and see Him Whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn King

See within in a manger laid Jesus Lord of heav'n and earth
Mary, Joseph lend your aid, with us sing our Savior's birth

CONFESSION OF SIN (in unison)

Heavenly Father, you exalted the humble and meek: give us humble
and contrite hearts. Lord Jesus, you grew towards birth in the
Virgin's womb: be planted also in our hearts and lives. Holy Spirit,
you overshadowed Mary, that she might become the God-bearer: fill
us with your heavenly gifts. Lord, have mercy; forgive us and heal us.

(Please confess your sins silently to the Lord)

WORDS OF COMFORT AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot
be destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth,
strengthen us to do God's will, and give us the joy of his kingdom,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: **AMEN**

When Love came down to earth and made His home with men,
The hopeless found a hope, the sinner found a friend.
Not to the powerful, but to the poor He came,
And humble, hungry hearts were satisfied again.

What joy, what peace has come to us!
What hope, what help, what love!

When every unclean thought, and every sinful deed
Was scourged upon His back and hammered through His feet.
The Innocent is cursed, the guilty are released;
The punishment of God on God has brought me peace.

What joy, what peace has come to us!
What hope, what help, what love!

Come lay your heavy load down at the Master's feet;
Your shame will be removed, your joy will be complete.
Come crucify your pride, and enter as a child;
For those who bow down low He'll lift up to His side.

What joy, what peace has come to us!
What hope, what help, what love!

EXTENDING GOD'S WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS and GREETING

Minister: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

All: **And also with you.**

12

For you, O Lord, our souls in still-ness wait. For

3

you, O Lord, our souls in still-ness wait. Tru-ly our hope is in

5

You. Tru-ly our hope is in You. For You.

verse

1. O Lord of life, our on - ly hope Your ra - diance
2. O Joy a - bove all oth - er loves In you we

9

shines on all who look to You in the
find more than e - nough. We come as we

10

repeat verse

dark. Em-man - u - el come, come light our hearts. —
are, O heal and re-store, come light our hearts. —

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER.

Members of the congregation lead us in prayer.

Come, Lord Jesus, do not delay;
give new courage to your people, and heal us in your love.
By your coming, raise us to share in the joy
of your kingdom on earth as in heaven.

Maranatha:

All Lord, hear our prayer.

Come to your world as King of the nations.
Hear the cries of injustice and deliver. Remind us that one day
all rulers will stand before you in silence.

Maranatha:

All Lord, hear our prayer.

Come to us as shepherd and guardian of our souls.
Come to the suffering as Savior and comforter.
Break into our lives, those sick, those weary,
those in need, and set us free to serve you for ever.

Maranatha:

All Lord, hear our prayer.

And for what else should we pray?

Members of the congregation may add their own intercessions at this time, ending with,
For this, O Lord, we pray:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Now gathering our prayers into one, let us pray boldly as our Savior has
taught us:

**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 and ever. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE FOR THE SERMON

Matthew 1:18-25

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel"

(which means, God with us). 24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

MEDITATION

George Lenning

God with Us

OFFERING

The offering is a way for members and friends of Abbott Church to support the church's mission and ministry. If you are our guest today, please feel under no compulsion to give. If you would like to give online, you may do so at www.abbottchurch.org/giving

Arise, shine, for your light has come
and the glory of God is on you.

Arise, see, though the earth grows dark,
that the Lord will arise upon you.
The Lord will arise upon you

Nations will come to your light, lift up your eyes and see.
We'll gather together and come to you,
And your love will be all that we know,
And your love will be all that we know.

Arise come to the open gates, for the Father is welcoming you!
Fear not for the Lord brings peace
and redemption to all who believe
and redemption to all who believe.

Nations will come to your light, lift up your eyes and see!
We'll gather together and come to you
And your love will be all that we know
And your love will be all that we know

The sun will not shine cause you'll be all the light that we need
and violence will end. All the wars that we wage will cease.
Oh, the sun will not shine cause you'll be all the light that we need
and violence will end. All the wars that we wage will cease.

We will glorify your name
We will glorify your name.

Nations will come to your light, lift up your eyes and see
We'll gather together and come to you
And your love will be all that we know
And your love will be all that we know.
Words and Music: Jered McKenna, 2013

PRAYERS FOR REFLECTION

Prayer for those searching

Lord Jesus, you claim to be the way, the truth, and the life. Please guide me, teach me, and open to me the reality of who you are. Grant that I might be undaunted by the cost of following you as I consider the reasons for doing so. Give me an understanding of you that is coherent, convincing, and that leads to the life that you promise. Amen.

Prayer of belief

Lord Jesus Christ, I admit that I am weak and sinful, but through you I am loved and accepted. I thank you for taking my place in death, in order to offer me forgiveness and renewal. Knowing that you have been raised from the dead, I turn from my sins and receive you as my Savior and my Lord. Amen.

Prayer for those struggling with sin

Lord Jesus, grant that I may see in you the fulfillment of all my need, and may turn from every false satisfaction to feed on you, the true and living bread. Enable me to lay aside the sin that clings so closely, and faithfully follow you in life. Amen.

Prayer of commitment to God's people

Lord Jesus, you have called us to follow you in baptism and in a life of committed discipleship in your church. Grant that I may take the steps necessary to be one with your people and live in the fullness of your Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of thanksgiving

Lord, you have put gladness in our hearts; you have satisfied our hunger with good things. In giving all, you have not withheld from us your own dear Son. How can we withhold anything from you, our Lord and our God? Renew us day by day with the gift of your Spirit, that we may give ourselves completely to your service and walk with joy in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

Today is the **fourth Sunday in Advent**. We want to encourage everyone to find ways to fully engage in a this season of the church year. One helpful tool can be found at www.thecommonrule.org, where they have a downloadable advent guide.

WE NEED YOU! There are currently many areas of service and leadership that you may be able to fill. Some areas of need are immediate and can be done during this time of COVID and limited in person activities, others are more strategic and longer term. Ministries such as “WeCare”, children’s ministry, social media, diaconal programs, teaching, and more all have needs. If you know of someone that you believe would make a good elder or deacon, we would encourage you to speak to that person and encourage them towards that ministry. Also speak to one of the elders or the pastor about them and let us know so that we can follow up as well.

HE HEARS

"This is the assurance we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." — 1 JOHN 5:14

"The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth."

— PSALM 145:18

Please pray for:

- Your church staff, officers and leaders
- Men and women of the military, police and fire departments
- Family members and friends who are not walking with Christ
- Ongoing health concerns for the following members and friends:
Larry Halterman, Milly Flynn, Gene and Diane Shaw, Phyllis Brown, Dawn Brewer, Brent Schepleng, Clint Neuder, Brenda Neuder, Robin and Toni (Billie Mitchell's granddaughters), Narouz family (especially Vicky), Don Sapp, Jackie Lubin
- *Raj Mohan's wife, dementia, and granddaughter, mental health issues*
- *Lydia Frasca, chemotherapy and radiation treatment*
- *David Files, pain management*
- *Mike Brooks, son of Earl and Betty Brooks, fighting a rare cancer.*

MISSIONARIES AND MINISTRIES WHICH WE SUPPORT:

- Andy and Bev Warren with MTW in Ethiopia
- Jason and Liz Polk with MTW in Ethiopia
- Jessica Ringsmuth with MTW in Kenya
- Bert and Nancy Williams with MTW in Uganda
- Bruce and Pat with MTW in France
- Chris Garriott with RUF at the University of Maryland
- Jacob Jasin with RUF-I at Johns Hopkins University
- Mountain View Bible Camp — Abbott Center for the Arts
- Abbott Tutoring Center — We Care Ministry

Welcome to Abbott.

We're glad we worshiped
with you today!

December 20, 2020

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

How may we serve you?

(please check the appropriate box)

- I am a visitor
- I would like to find out how
to become a Christian
- I am interested in membership
(Abbott schedules classes regularly)
- I would like a call from the pastor
- I would like prayer
- I would like to join a
community group
- My contact information has changed

Staff Contacts

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