

a popular Christmas carol. Modern composer, Mark Hayes, set the last verse of that poem to music as our theme song for our Advent/Christmas series. It reminds us that even if we are feeling poor — in resources, in body or spirit — we can simply be a gift of presence, we can give our hearts.

Together

What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.

Lee Arnold: We unwrap a present on this first Sunday of Advent with great anticipation for the gift that God will reveal.

***People:* We open our hearts as we open the gift!**

[pause while the featured gift box is unwrapped...]

Lee Arnold: The promise of Hope is the Divine Gift we receive.

***People:* And what will we do with it?**

[the kids will hang word 'hope' on a small tree]

Lee Arnold: The gift of hope is an essential survival tool because it reminds us that the hard times do not have the last word.

Hope is not simply a wish.

Hope calls us into action based on a belief that things can be different.

We can work to bring about the better world that we hope for.

***People:* We light this Candle of Hope as a sign that we will be Present with Hope in the world.**

Sing Together:

**What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.**

Prayer of Presence

Let us pray:

**Holy Living Light of God,
you are our Hopeful Presence.
Let this hope grow in our lives each day,
so we can be a Present of Hope to others.
Unwrap and open our hearts.
May it be so.
Amen.**

Opening Hymn UMH 87
[“What Gift Can We Bring”](#)

The Peace

 **The Word Present Among Us: Proclaiming** 

First Readings

Psalm 80: 1-2 and 1 Corinthians 1: 4-7

Becky Arnold: The book of Psalms was the songbook of the Hebrew people. Psalm 80 was written in a time when the people were exiled from their homeland. In it we hear the conviction and hope that God will restore the people. Let us read responsively:

*Shepherd of Israel, hear us,
you who lead Joseph like a flock!*
You who are enthroned on the cherubim, shine out!
Shine out before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh!
Awaken your power and come to save us!
*O God, return to us — let your face smile on us,
and we will be saved!*

Another community at a later time — the early Christians — also lived in a time of oppression by the Roman occupiers. The letters that circulated among them gave them hope for the future. Hear this excerpt from the First Letter to the Corinthians:

I continually thank my God for you because of the gift bestowed on you in Christ Jesus, in whom you have been richly endowed with every gift of speech and knowledge. In the same way, the testimony about Christ has been so confirmed among you that you lack no spiritual gift, as you wait for the revelation of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Witness to the Word in Music
Rejoice! Your Light Has Come

Gospel Reading
Mark 13: 24-37

Lee Arnold: The first Gospel reading of Advent from the Book of Mark describes life as calamity. In the midst of it, Jesus reminds his disciples to make sure they pay attention and don't get distracted by all the bad news. Stay awake, stay alert, he says. Watch for the signs of a new day.

“But in those days, after that time of distress, ‘the sun will be darkened, the moon will lose its brightness, the stars will fall from the sky and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.’ Then they will see the Promised One coming in the clouds with great power and glory; then the angels will be sent to gather the chosen from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. Take the fig tree as a parable: as soon as its twigs grow supple and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see these things happening, know that the Promised One is near, right at the door. The truth is, before this generation has passed away, all these things will have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it — neither the angels of heaven, nor the Only Begotten — no one but Abba God. Be constantly on the watch! Stay awake! You do not know when the appointed time will come. It is like people traveling abroad. They leave their home and put the workers in charge, each with a certain task, and those who watch at the front gate are ordered to stay on the alert. So stay alert! You do not know when the owner of the house is coming, whether at dusk, at midnight, when the cock crows or at early dawn. Do not let the owner come suddenly and catch you asleep. What I say to you, I say to all: stay alert!”

Song of Illumination
UMH#454 Open My Eyes, That I May See vs1

Announcements

1. Advent Book study continues from Nov 29 (Wed) at 7 p.m. through zoom. The book “Right Here Right Now: The Practice of Christian Mindfulness” by Amy G. Oden, Marjorie J. Thompson.
2. Haven UMC Christmas Concert is today at 3 p.m.
3. Winter Celebration on Dec. 9(Sat) from 9 4:30-6:30p. Andrea is looking for volunteers to help set up crafts for adults and children, make/donate hot chocolate and apple cider, lead some Christmas songs, donate snacks/baked goods and clean up. Other ideas and help are also appreciated! Contact Andrea dunnansmed@hotmail.com or call 207-8017

Tau Cross

The cross hanging above the altar for the Advent season is called the Tau Cross. It is so named because it resembles the Greek letter of that name. It is also called the Old Testament Cross because, according to tradition, the pole on which Moses lifted up the brazen serpent was a Tau Cross. This is the original form of a cross. The cross was made many years ago by Robert Baldwin Sr.

Birthdays

- 3 Kevin Quinn
6 Amy Quinn Morin
7 Isla Poplar Arnold, Bob Bradbury, Grant Horatio Taylor
Seamus Sullivan O'Rourke
8 Annie Olive Arnold

Flowers

The flowers on the altar this week are given to the glory of God and in loving memory of Rita Eaton, her mother, and John (Jack) Eaton, her brother, by Joan and Dick White, Cheryl, Carrie, and Michael.

In the name of the Holy Presence,
the Divine Gift,
and the Spirit of Hope that is just waiting for us
to unwrap abundant life.

Amen.

Postlude “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming” Hanna Noh

Sermon
“Being Present with Hope”

Rev. Yohan Go

 **Fully Present in the Moment: Praying** 

Prayers of the People
“Right Here, Right Now”

Sing Together

*Right here and right now we open our senses
to see and perceive the gifts we’ve been given,
to know and believe that what we must do
is open our hearts to let all gifts flow through.*

Pastor: In our time of prayers during this Advent and Christmas season, we will take the opportunity to practice being fully present in the moment. Mindfulness has deep roots in our Judeo-Christian tradition. The scriptures say “be still and know that I am God” and, as we have heard, Jesus speaks often about “staying awake” to what God is up to. Prayer is an intentional way to stay awake and alert to the presence of God among us.

We will begin our prayers with three questions, each followed by a short silence. Focusing intentionally on thoughts and memories can be a kind of prayer, bringing our lives into a conversation with the Holy. I invite you to take a deep breath and close your eyes if you are comfortable doing that.

The first question is this: Who was a gift of presence to you this week? Did you experience their attention in a way that felt like a special connection? Take a moment to recall this in your mind’s eye, seeing it emerge like opening a gift. If you cannot recall such a moment, it is OK... this week you will notice these moments more deeply.

The second question is this: How did you offer yourself as a gift of presence? What did it feel like to extend your attentiveness and availability beyond yourself? Did you notice how it made a difference to someone else for you to be truly present to them?

The third question is this: Is it possible that God's presence is felt more acutely in these moments when we truly tend to one another? What could you do this coming week that would allow God's gift of Hope to flow through you to someone else? It may be as simple as finding opportunities to speak an encouraging word. Or as complex as actually lifting up someone's circumstances through volunteering or donating.

Sing Together

***Right here and right now we open our senses
to see and perceive the gifts we've been given,
to know and believe that what we must do
is open our hearts to let all gifts flow through.***

In this prayerful, present moment, we train our attention on those who are in distress.

Sharing Joy and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

We pray this week for... (speak the names of people you lift up in your prayer and the prayer concerns of our community and the world)

In this prayerful, present moment, we train our attention on thanksgiving and joy.
We give thanks this week for... (speak your gratitude and the prayers of gratitude of our community and the world)

In this prayerful, present moment we ask you, Christ Jesus, the Greatest Gift of All, to help us savor our journey toward the celebration of Christmas.
Help us recognize and create moments of sweet presence rather than filling the voids with the things that do not last.
Help us to stop, notice what we are experiencing, and accept it with open hearts and minds.
In doing this, we allow you to meet us in the right here, right now, right where we are.
Amen.

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, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Breaking Bread and Sharing the Cup

 **Present to the World: Sending** 

Closing Carol

Becky Arnold: We close our service with a Christmas carol. While singing carols in Advent has been, for some, too soon to proclaim the birth, we sing carols in this worship series just like we are opening presents a bit early, to remind ourselves that God is with us already and always. The carol we sing today has a restored third stanza that says "oh hush the noise and cease the strife to hear the angels sing." May we give ourselves the time and room this season to hush, to hear, to listen, to just be... present.

UMH 218

["It Came Upon the Midnight Clear"](#)

Benediction

"The good news of Jesus Christ is that God is with us,
no matter what, no matter where, no matter when.
There is no place you can go where God is not,
no time of the day when God is off the clock.
This is the teaching of the Incarnation, God with us, Emmanuel."

So now go and be truly present
so you may be a gift of presence for others.
That's all that is expected —
that the gift that is YOU
is the best gift you can give.

lift up this cup.
Know of my promise,
a new covenant.
This now is poured out
to offer my love.
Take, drink, remember,
do this and believe.”

And so,
in remembrance of your mighty gifts in Jesus Christ,
we offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice,
in union with Christ’s gift for us,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here,
and on these gifts of bread and wine.
Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ,
so that we may be for the world the body of Christ,
redeemed by his love.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ,
one with each other,
and one in ministry to all the world,
until Christ comes in final victory
and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

**With Jesus, the Christ, and with the Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours, Giving God.
We know and believe that what we must do
is open our hearts to let all gifts flow through.**

Together, let us pray the prayer Jesus taught us, saying...

Lord’s Prayer
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;

Together
**Right here and right now we open our senses
to see and perceive the gifts we’ve been given,
to know and believe that what we must do
is open our hearts to let all gifts flow through.**

Offering / Interlude “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” Alice Pace

Offering Prayer

Communion

Invitation to the Table

Together:
**Right here and right now we open our senses
to see and perceive the gifts we’ve been given,
to know and believe that what we must do
is open our hearts to let all gifts flow through.**

Pastor: We are all invited to this table of Jesus. This is one of the ways that we acknowledge the continual gift of his presence with us. We remember the rituals of his Last Supper with his disciples in which he offered a poignant invitation for all of his followers to be together at meals, break bread and lift cups, and know that we are never alone. This is the invitation now. The gift of presence — with each other and with Christ. This is the mystical union that binds us to Christ, present in this moment, and to all who have ever gathered at this table... no matter where, or when.

Confession and Assurance

There are times when we have cut ourselves off from this gift of presence. We distance ourselves from the [hope/peace/joy/love/light] that is ours as heirs in the family of God. It seems too wonderful a gift. And yet the Shepherd comes to find us, leading us gently back into safety, back into care, back into relationship. In this moment, we take a deep breath [*pause to do so*], we feel our bodies relax into the right here, and right now, and we acknowledge those regrets that are best let go...

[silence for a moment and then the piano underscoring comes in lightly]

Know this... there are gifts with your name on them called “Grace,” called “Forgiveness,” called “Assurance.” They are yours whenever you accept and open them. They are already and always there for you... you do not have to “be good enough” to get them. They are there because that is the nature of our loving God, God-with-us, Emmanuel.

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.
In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.
Glory to God, Amen.

Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to God.
Let us give thanks.
It's so right to do.
We open our hearts
to let all gifts flow through.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing,
always and everywhere to give thanks to you,
Almighty God, Gift-Giver of all that exists.
You formed us in your image
and breathed into us the breath of life.
When we turned away, and our love failed,
your love remained steadfast.
You delivered us from captivity,
made covenant to be our sovereign God,
and spoke to us through your prophets.

And so,
with your people on earth

and all the company of heaven
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed are they who come in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.
Your Spirit anointed him
to preach good news to the poor,
to proclaim release to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
and to announce that the time had come
when you would save your people.
He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners.
By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection
you gave birth to your church,
delivered us from slavery to sin and death,
and made with us a new covenant
by water and the Spirit.

When the Lord Jesus ascended,
he promised the gift of his presence with us always,
in the power of your Word and Holy Spirit.

They all came together
at table that night.
He broke bread and said,
“this is my body
broken for you
and also for you.
Take, eat, remember,
do this and believe.”

Whenever you gather,