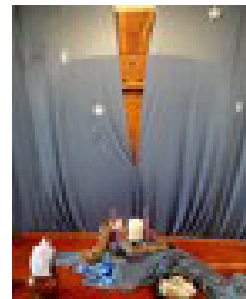


# Advent 2011 – Tear Open the Heavens

## GATHERING



## ENTRANCE

## REFLECTION

Our whole life is Advent – that is, a time of waiting for the ultimate, for the time when there will be a new heaven and a new earth . . . . Learn to wait, because he has promised to come. . . . We call to him: “Yes, come soon, Lord Jesus!”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *A Testament to Freedom*

## CANDLE LIGHTING

*As the Advent candles are lit each week this season, there is a short reading adapted from Godly Play. The first week speaks of the prophets who foretold Christ’s coming; the second week, we hear of Mary, Joseph, and the donkey on the way to Bethlehem; the third week, we remember the shepherds who heard the angels sing; and the fourth week, we think of the magi, who followed a wild star to the place where the Christ Child lay.*

## **CALL TO WORSHIP**

Leader: Holy Spirit of all Creation,  
we come here eager to know what lies ahead.

People: We come, hungry for the Good News  
that you will be present here  
in ways we can't anticipate.

Leader: We come, bringing our hopes, our fears,  
and our commitment to be with you.

All: Holy God, tear open the heavens  
  
and show us how to be your people in this  
time,  
  
this place, this pregnant moment in history.

## **INVOCATION**

## **HYMN**

## **WORD FOR THE CHILDREN**

## **SILENCE**

## **PRAYERS**

## **COMMON CONFESSION**

Leader: We are an impatient people,  
  
wanting the heavens torn open now.

People: We run away and hide from the work you call us to do.

Leader: We care for our own comfort more than justice for all.

All: We are mired in greed and selfishness.

## INDIVIDUAL PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

### ASSURANCE

Leader: The donkey with its sacred burden

does plod toward Bethlehem.

The Holy One who is coming is here even now,  
offering love and forgiveness.

All: Amen

## PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

### PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

All: O Holy One, we come today

to claim our relationship with you.

We pray for the commitment to grow together,

sharing the gifts you give us with others

here and in the wider world.

Forgive us for the hurt we have inflicted,

and help us forgive those who have hurt us.

Give us strength and discipline

to nurture our relationship with you;

to care for every part of your creation;

to foster justice and be in solidarity with those in need;

to work to end all war, and violence, and discord;

and to respond joyfully when you call,

freely giving our selves as you have shown the way.

We open our hearts to you and your creation

in the name of Jesus, who is the Christ. Amen.

**HYMN**

**THE WORD**

**SCRIPTURE**

**SERMON**

**SILENT REFLECTION**

## **OFFERING**

## **COMMUNION**

### **GREAT THANKSGIVING**

Leader 1: God of grace and generosity,  
we thank you for your ultimate promise  
of a new heaven and a new earth.

People: We offer our gratitude  
for Christ always with us,  
as we wait for Christ coming.

Leader 2: We overflow with gratitude  
for your Holy Spirit moving in us  
as we wait in anticipation.

People: We thank you for your holy church,  
where we find communion  
with our brothers and sisters.

### **BLESSING THE ELEMENTS**

Leader 1: Christ invites everyone to eat the bread of life,  
to drink the cup of the new covenant.

Leader 2: Jesus said, I am the bread of life.

You who come to me shall never hunger,

You who believe in me shall never thirst.

Leader 1: On the night of his arrest, Jesus took bread,  
and after giving thanks to God, broke it and  
said,

This is my body,  
broken for the healing of the world.  
Whenever you eat it, do so remembering me.

Leader 2: After supper, Jesus took the cup and said,  
This is the cup of the new covenant,  
poured out for you and for all.  
Whenever you drink it, do so remembering me.

## **SHARE THE ELEMENTS**

## **PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION**

All: God of abundance and mercy,  
we give joyful thanks  
for your eternal love and healing presence  
in our celebration of bread and cup.  
Bless this body of Christ  
that we may attend faithfully  
to our call to be your servants,  
with each other and throughout the world.  
Amen.

## SHARED REFLECTIONS

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

## HYMN

## BENEDICTION

Leader: The one for whom we wait is near.

Prepare the way of the Lord!

And may the God of justice and  
righteousness,

who feeds you like a shepherd,

bless you, heal you, and give you peace.

All: Amen