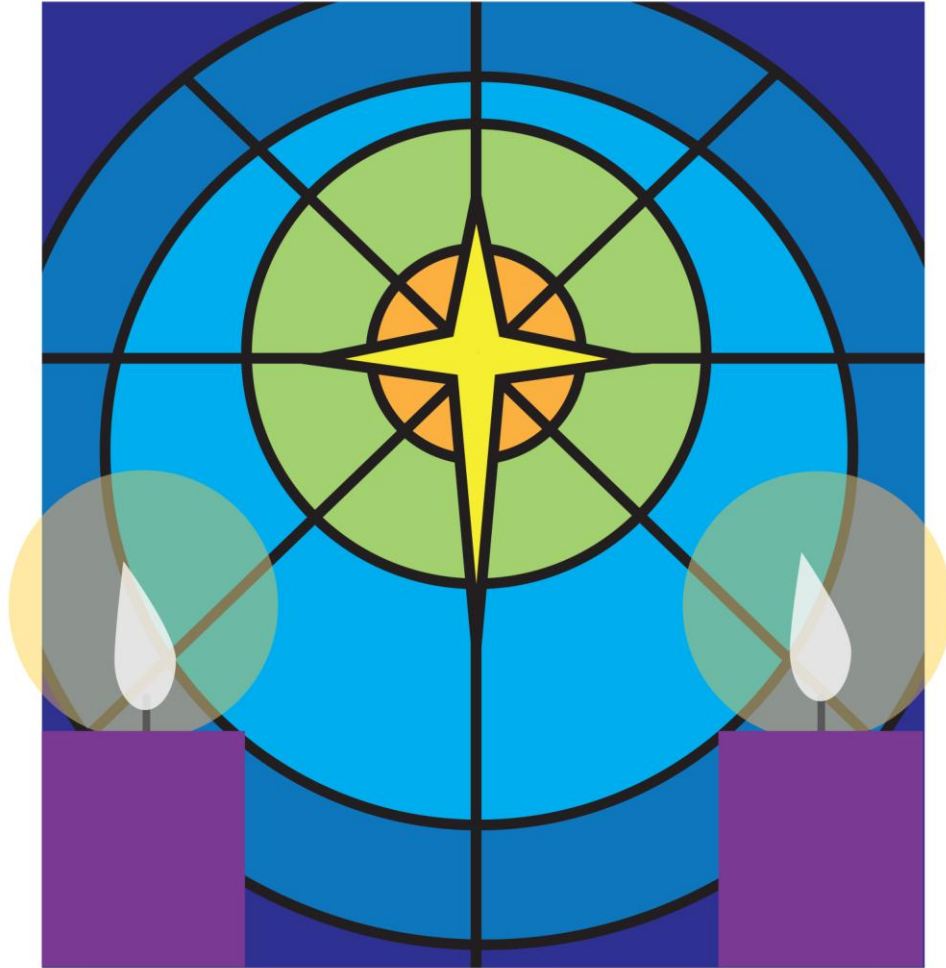


Second Sunday of Advent
Sunday, December 6, 2020, 9:00 am



SECOND SUNDAY
OF
Advent

Welcome to Our Savior's Lutheran Church!

We are “a worshipping and caring Christian community, sharing God's compassion and grace with all people in need of love and acceptance within this congregation, the community, and the world!”

PRELUDE

Introduction to the day

John calls people to repent, to clear the decks, to completely reorder their lives so that nothing gets in the way of the Lord's coming. The reading from Isaiah gives the context for this radical call: the assurance of forgiveness that encourages us to repent; the promise that the coming one will be gentle with the little ones. Isaiah calls us all to be heralds with John, to lift up our voices fearlessly and say, "See, your God is coming!" We say it to one another in worship, in order to say it with our lives in a world in need of justice and peace.

WELCOME

Gathering

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

As we await the fullness of Christ's coming, let us acknowledge our sins and failures before God.

silence for reflection and self-examination

Our impatience for your coming,
we confess to you, Lord.

Our desire to control time and seasons,
we confess to you, Lord.

Our failure to be alert to signs of your presence in our midst,
we confess to you, Lord.

Our lack of concern for those who come after us,
we confess to you, Lord.

Our injustices toward all the people you came to save,
we confess to you, Lord.

In the mercy of almighty God, I declare to you the forgiveness of your sins, and the grace to know joy in the Savior's coming. **Amen.**

GATHERING HYMN

"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

254



1 Come, thou long-ex - pect-ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo-ple free;
2 Born thy peo-ple to de - liv - er, born a child, and yet a king;



from our fears and sins re - lease us; let us find our rest in thee.
born to reign in us for - ev - er, now thy gra - cious king-dom bring.



Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art,
By thine own e - ter - nal Spir-it rule in all our hearts a - lone;



dear de - sire of ev - 'ry na - tion, joy of ev - 'ry long - ing heart.
by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788
Music: JEFFERSON, W. Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1835

ADVENT WREATH

The Candle of Peace

Reader 1 In a world of war, violence and abuse, where families live in shelters and children grow up in fear, God, we call upon you to come.

Reader 2 In a world where peace seems to be so far away, we call upon you, Prince of Peace, to come.

Reader 1 In this season of Advent, we wait for the coming of Peace into our world. We await the birth of Emmanuel, God with us, who comes into our lives in a new way.

Reader 2 Come, Messiah, come, and save us.

Prayer Dear God, **we pray for the peace that only You can bring through your Son, Jesus the Christ. May we walk in the paths of peace. Amen.**

GREETING

Christ comes to lighten our darkness. **Come, Lord Jesus.**

May the light of God's glory be with you always. **And also with you.**

KYRIE



Lord, have mer - cy__ on your peo - ple. Christ have mer - cy__ on__ us.
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.__ Chri - ste e - le - i - son.



Shine your light in__ to our__ dark - ness. Fill__ us__ with your ho - ly love.
Heal all__ con - flicts be - tween na - tions. Teach us__ how to__ live as one.



Be our strength in times of__ trou - ble. Set us free from__ chains that__ bind.
Show us how to love our__ neigh - bor. Run to those who__ cry for__ help.



Breathe new__ life in - to our__ spir - its. Pu - ri - fy our__ hearts and minds.
Word made flesh who lives a - mong us; Christ our__ Lord, Em - man - u - el.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming, strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

CHILDREN'S SERMON

Word

FIRST READING

Isaiah 40:1-11

In grand, flowing, poetic lines, the prophet announces that the exile of God's people in Babylon is over. God will deliver Israel and will care for her as a shepherd cares for the sheep. This word can be trusted, because the only enduring reality in life is the word of God. A reading from Isaiah.

¹Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. ²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. ³A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." ⁶A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. ⁷The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. ⁸The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. ⁹Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" ¹⁰See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. ¹¹He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM

Psalms 85:1-2, 8-13

¹You have been gracious to your land, O LORD;
you have restored the good fortune of Jacob.

²**You have forgiven the iniquity of your people
and blotted out all their sins.**

⁸I will listen to what the LORD God is saying;
for you speak peace to your faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to you.

⁹**Truly, your salvation is very near to those who fear you,
that your glory may dwell in our land.**

¹⁰Steadfast love and faithfulness have met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

¹¹**Faithfulness shall spring up from the earth,
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.**

¹²The LORD will indeed grant prosperity,
and our land will yield its increase.

¹³**Righteousness shall go before the LORD
and shall prepare for God a pathway.**

SECOND READING

2 Peter 3:8-15a

This short letter deals with pressing concerns regarding the final advent of Jesus, especially concerns that could arise over its apparent delay. The author of the letter calls on Christians to anticipate the promised coming of the Lord through conduct dedicated to God. A reading from 2 Peter.

⁸Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. ¹¹Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? ¹³But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. ¹⁴Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; ^{15a}and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia,
Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia!

James J. Chepponis
based on ADESTE FIDELES

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The holy gospel according to the 1st chapter of St. Mark. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

GOSPEL

Mark 1:1-8

The Gospel of Mark does not begin with a story of Jesus' birth but with the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord.

¹The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; ³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" ⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

Where do you think you would find the longest, straightest road in the United States?

You might be inclined to guess that it's somewhere in Kansas—somewhere west of here on I-70.

But, no. Depending on how you define those terms—the longest, straightest road—there are many who would say that the answer can be found in North Dakota. Highway 46, which stretches straight across 123 miles of North Dakota prairie from Highway 30 in the west to a nameless county blacktop just past 1-29 in the east.

Which is impressive. But if you want to quibble, it's not perfectly straight. Nearly every straight road is still going to shift a little bit here and there, bending just a bit around a rock or a tree or making an adjustment to cross a bridge—and Highway 46 does this, too. In fact, when it comes to being perfectly straight, the best that Highway 46 has to offer is a 31 mile stretch from Gackle to Beaver Creek.

Which is still pretty impressive, though you should know that there is another very straight road in this country—Interstate 80, where it runs through the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah. That part happens to be 35 miles long.

Now I can remember, all the way back when I was 16 years old and taking Driver's Ed, that the instructor of that class told us that those very straight roads were the ones you had to watch out for. The danger, he said, was when the drive got so monotonous that you stopped paying attention. And that's when you start to drift off of the road, drift into the other lane—and who knows what kind of trouble is going to come from doing something like that.

In the case of our reading today from the prophet Isaiah, though, the straight road is treated, not as a novelty, and not as a liability, but as something very good. This particular section of Isaiah seems to come from the time when the exile of the people of Israel was just beginning to come to an end. For more than a generation they had been taken away from their homeland and forced to make the best of things in a new home far away.

But now, through the prophet, a new word from God comes—a word of comfort and peace. Better times were coming, were already on the horizon, and soon they would be able to see for themselves that for all that they have been through together, they would all receive a double portion of God's grace. That sounds pretty wonderful, doesn't it?

And so they are called to prepare the way of the Lord. And a big part of that preparation was going to involve the construction of a whole new section of road—a superhighway, if you will—as straight as it can possibly be, with absolutely no obstacles in the way. No valleys to have to go down into, and no mountains to have to climb up over. Why is this an important detail? Because it means that God is going to come to the aid of his people, and they're going to want his way to be as straight, and level, and smooth as it can possibly be, so that there will be nothing at all to delay his coming.

Now I have to admit to you that if we had a time machine and could travel back to this particular moment in history, we wouldn't be able to find that there was any major road construction project going on in this part of the world. Valleys were not being filled in, and mountains were not being leveled. So what on earth could Isaiah be talking about here?

When Isaiah wrote these words, he may well have thinking about the ancient practice of constructing a ceremonial pathway to welcome a visiting dignitary. Sometimes communities would use these pathways to make sure that the visit would be something special. Only in this case, Isaiah doesn't so much want us to be thinking of building a literal highway as he does making a way in the midst of a people who felt abandoned and downtrodden. He wants the people to know that there really is something to look forward to, something that was worth getting excited about, and it was coming for sure. And now was the time to start getting ready for it.

But if that preparation doesn't involve gathering a bunch of heavy equipment and building supplies, then what does it involve?

Well, let me tell you, it's not complicated. For us, to prepare the way means not letting go of hope. It means holding onto our trust. God still comes to the help of his people. What we're going through right now? It's not going to last forever. God will see us through. There will be better times to come. And God is never going to stop holding our hand.

We also prepare the way when we think of others, when we let kindness rule over all. We prepare the way when we continue to be generous, when we stand up for what's right and what's true. When we don't let the despair win.

Christmas is coming. And though that thought may bring a little stress along with it, we've got to keep remembering what it all really means. That God is for us. That God came to us. That God continues to come to us.

And his coming really is something to start getting excited about. He is coming soon! And we can't wait for him to get here. So prepare the way. Make the way straight and smooth and level, with absolutely nothing to get in his way. "Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together." Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

"All Earth is Hopeful"

266



To - da la tie - rra es - pe - ra al Sal - va - dor
 1 All earth is hope - ful, the Sav - ior comes at last!
 2 Peo - ple of Is - rael, you heard the proph - et tell:
 3 Moun - tains and val - leys will have to be pre - pared;
 4 We first saw Je - sus a ba - by in a crib.



y el sur - co_a - bier - to, la ob - ra del Se - ñor; es el
 Fur - rows lie o - pen for God's cre - a - tive task: this, the
 "A vir - gin moth - er will bear Em - man - u - el"; she con -
 new high - ways o - pened, new pro - to - cols de - clared. Al - most
 This same Lord Je - sus to - day has come to live in our



mun - do que lu - cha por la li - ber - tad, re -
 la - bor of peo - ple who strug - gle to see how
 ceived him, "God with us," our broth - er, whose birth re -
 here! God is near - ing, in beau - ty and grace! All
 world; he is pres - ent, in neigh - bors we see our



cla - ma jus - ti - cia y bus - ca la ver - dad. dar - nos li - ber - tad.
 God's truth and jus - tice set ev - 'ry - bod - y free.
 stores hope and cour - age to chil - dren of this earth.
 clear ev - 'ry gate - way, in haste, come out in haste!
 Je - sus is with us, and ev - er sets us free.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

God of power and might, comfort your people and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

We pray for all who doubt and wonder. Give us faith and discernment. Lord, we ask you: **Wait with us. Watch with us. Hear our prayers.**

We pray for all who suffer discrimination and injustice. Give them truth and comfort. Lord, we ask you: **Wait with us. Watch with us. Hear our prayers.**

We ask for your help for those who will go hungry this day. For all those looking for work, trying to climb out of poverty, show them the way. Lord, we ask you: **Wait with us. Watch with us. Hear our prayers.**

We ask you to be with us throughout these December days. When we struggle with depression, give us hope. When we feel we have little to celebrate this year, fill us with your grace. Give your beauty to all our holiday preparations. Lord, we ask you: **Wait with us. Watch with us. Hear our prayers.**

We pray for all in need this day, especially those who are sick, those who are hospitalized, those in quarantine. Save all peoples from the corona virus. Grant your healing presence to all our family and friends who need it most, whom we now remember in silence. Lord, we ask you: **Wait with us. Watch with us. Hear our prayers.**

We remember those who mourn and ask you to lighten their darkness. Lord, we ask you: **Wait with us. Watch with us. Hear our prayers.**

Eternal Father, strong to save, receive our prayers for the sake of your Son Jesus, who came, who comes, and who will come, to bring us life.
Amen.

PEACE

OFFERING

"Advent Kyrie"

Grace Notes

OFFERING PRAYER

God of hope, we bring before you these gifts and, along with them, our very lives. Bless our offering and strengthen our hearts in love as we wait and watch for the coming of your Son, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

p. 154

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. **Amen.**

Sending

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BLESSING

May the God of peace ☩ sanctify you entirely; and may you be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN

"The King Shall Come"

260



- 1 The King shall come when morn-ing dawns and light tri - um-phant breaks,
- 2 Not as of old a lit - tle child, to bear and fight and die,
- 3 Oh, bright - er than the ris - ing morn when Christ, vic - to - rious, rose
- 4 Oh, bright - er than that glo - rious morn shall dawn up - on our race
- 5 The King shall come when morn-ing dawns and light and beau - ty brings.



when beau - ty gilds the east - ern hills and life to joy a - wakes.
but crowned with glo - ry like the sun that lights the morn-ing sky.
and left the lone - some place of death, de - spite the rage of foes.
the day when Christ in splen - dor comes, and we shall see his face.
Hail, Christ the Lord! Your peo - ple pray: come quick - ly, King of kings.

Text: John Brownlie, 1859–1925

Music: CONSOLATION, A. Davison, *Kentucky Harmony*, 1816

DISMISSAL

The glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together.
Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

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This week at Our Saviors

Sun. 12/6

Second Advent

9 am

Online Worship

10:15 am

Online Adult Sunday School

Zoom

Mon. 12/7

6:15 pm

Executive Council

FH

Tue. 12/8

6 pm

Worship Committee

Zoom

Wed. 12/9

6:15 pm

Advent Midweek Service

Online

7 pm

Grace Notes Rehearsal

WC

Sun. 12/13

Third Advent

9 am

Online Worship

10:15 am

Online Adult Sunday School

Zoom

10:30 am

Dialog Deadline

What's Happening at OSLC

- Due to the uncontrolled spread of COVID-19 in the Shawnee County community, **we will not be able to worship in person until further notice.** We will continue to make a video service available each week on the OSLC YouTube channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsZtRIWOPR5nqEy-QwLoGg>
- Join Pastor Jim for an **Advent Bible Study** this Sunday at 10:15 am! This week we'll be studying Matthew 1:1-17. What in the world does this long list of names have to do with getting ready for Christmas? Come find out! Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86876538026?pwd=QkNaSE93TFFWc0d2cVhiTmwyUVYzQT09>
Meeting ID: 868 7653 8026 Passcode: 540971
- **Barb Keil, RN is the Parish Nurse for OSLC.** She can be reached at 408-4114, at bkeil4514@gmail.com, or you may leave a message with the church office or her mailbox in the Fellowship Hall. She would also like to let you know that monthly blood pressure checks are on hold due to COVID distancing and cleaning requirements.
- **Join us for Midweek Advent Prayer services!** Take some time to renew your faith, bless your heart, and get ready for Christmas all at once! You are invited to Advent Evening Prayer, a service of music and prayer to help get you in the mood for the season. This year's theme is "Fling Wide the Door!" We'll reflect together on preparing for the welcome of Christmas. We'll be using the "Behold Our Light" service. Join us live online on the church's website, www.oslctopeka.org, at 6:15 pm on Wednesdays during Advent. The dates and weekly themes are as follows: **Dec. 9:** Watching at the Gates; **Dec. 16:** Christ is Knocking. Offerings made at this service will be given to the ongoing drive to help purchase new Sunday School materials for our companion synod in Papua, New Guinea. We hope you will join us!
- Thank you for your **continuing monetary support of our congregation.** Although we are not able to gather like we are used to doing, the expenses and needs of the church go on. Your support makes this ministry possible. As we continue to navigate these unprecedented waters, please continue to be safe. Please remember that God is with us.
- You are invited to **borrow a hymnal from church** for use in your own times of devotion and worship. These are in the kitchen area. Sign the form to let us know.
- Sometimes it is just a phone call, or a card or note, or a picture that you or your child colored that can make a shut-in's day. So since we are all basically "shut-in's" in one way or another for a while longer, **why not reach out and brighten up a friend's day?** You might just brighten your own as well! We must take care of each other during these trying times, in whatever ways we can.
- Page Turners will be supporting the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (<https://imaginationlibrary.com>) again this year for their December project. According to The Library Foundation (TSCPL) they are serving just under 6000 kids in Shawnee Co. It is an estimated cost of \$30/child to send them books for one year. **If you would like to join Page Turners with a donation, please make a check out to The Library Foundation with Dolly Parton written in the memo line. Please mail your check to Beth Edmonds by December 10.**

In Our Prayers

Those who need healing... Sheila Gutierrez; Sue Henke; Avis Cowhick; Kay Dobbs; RB Cowhick; Sharon Rumpel; Janice Greer; Betsy Hawkins; Cecilia Harris; Pat Dunavan; Kathi Christman; Mark McClafflin

Those who are homebound... Dean Olson; Melissa Smith

Those in our families and community... **Dwight**—neighbor of Carol Hunt; **Janet**—cousin of Sue Henke; **Ralph**—brother of Betsy Hawkins; **Paula**—niece of Betsy Hawkins; **Marcia**—cousin of Betsy Hawkins; **Joe**—uncle of Pat Koenig; **Ray**—friend of Betsy Hawkins; **Sharon**—mother of Matt Ledell; **Cheryl**—sister of JoLana Pinon; **Nicole**—niece of Jodi Ledell; **Gary**—husband of Betsy Hawkins; **Jolene**—sister-in-law of Jim Oestreich and Janet Bolton; **PJ**—grandson of Virginia Mendez; **Fred**—uncle of Clay and Katie Davis; **Claudia**—friend of Trisch Stender and Pat Koenig; **Clark**—brother of Betsy Hawkins; **Spencer**—nephew of Carol Hunt; **Ashley**—friend of Katie Davis; **Cari**—daughter of Dawn & George Bradley; **Wyatt**—cousin of Dawn Bradley; **Paul**—friend of Sarah Thomas and Donnita Thomas; **Juanita**—friend of Trisch Stender and Pat Koenig; **Don**—friend of Trisch Stender and Pat Koenig; **Ray**—brother of Dwight Rumpel; **Daxton**—grandbaby of a friend of Sue Rohleder; **Ann**—Aunt of Pat Koenig; **Dora**—friend of Trisch Stender and Pat Koenig; **Dave**—friend of Marj Odell; **Skip**—uncle of Clay Davis; **Craig**—brother of Betsy Hawkins, **Shannon**—cousin of Carol Hunt; **Gen Cater**—former OSLC member; **Tess**—friend of Betsy Hawkins; **Sherry**—friend of Idella Basart; **Leonard**—friend of Geoff Dahlman; **David**—cousin of Myron Dunavan; **Donna**—friend of Idella Basart; **Sheila**—friend of JoLana Pinon; **Roxie**—sister of Andrea McGee; **Gene**—father of Jodi Ledell; **Dale**—brother of Myron Holter; **Karen**—sister-in-law of Lila McClafin; **C.J.**—brother of Dwight Rumpel

Those serving overseas and other concerns... We pray for front line workers and essential workers during the Corona virus, including **Andrea, Anise, and Riley**—relatives of Virginia Mendez and **Haley**—daughter of Lloyd and JoLana Pinon. **Imanee**—granddaughter-in-law of Dawn Bradley who is serving abroad. Pray for the innocent children affected by violence.

We mourn for... **Keith**—brother of Lila McClafin

DECEMBER 6, 2020
SECOND SUNDAY
OF ADVENT



God has good news for all people.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Mark 1:1-8	The beginning of the good news
Monday	Isaiah 40:1-11	Comfort my people
Tuesday	2 Peter 3:8-15a	Promise of the Lord's coming
Wednesday	Malachi 4:1-6	The great day of the Lord
Thursday	Matthew 3:1-10	The preaching of John the Baptist
Friday	1 Timothy 1:12-17	Gratitude for God's mercy
Saturday	Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13	A prayer for God's peace
Sunday	John 1:6-8, 19-28	John's witness to the light

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

"[T]he voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" Mark 1:3 (NRSV)

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:

Eternal God, we thank you that through your Son, Jesus Christ, love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Amen. (Psalm 85:10)

Mealtime Prayer:

Generous God, may this gift of food strengthen us to walk in your way of comfort, hope, and peace through the good news of Jesus Christ. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May the Lord God feed you like a shepherd and keep you safe. (Isaiah 40:11)



DECEMBER 6, 2020

HYMN OF THE WEEK

*There's a Voice in the
Wilderness*



**taking†
faith
home**

WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS



Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- What is some good news you have heard recently?
- What events in the news do people consider to be positive news or good news?
- The word gospel means good news. How is the coming of Christ into our world good news for you?

DEVOTIONS



Read: Mark 1:1-8.

The beginning of a book helps set up what the book is about and where the story is going. This is true of the Gospel of Mark as well. Mark 1:1-8 is part of Mark's prologue (vv. 1-13) and was used in ancient writings with this very purpose in mind: to give information that helps people follow the story as it unfolds. Mark's point is that good news ("good tidings" in Isaiah 40:9), the gospel, is beginning to happen through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This good news is linked to John the baptizer who is himself reminiscent of Elijah. When Elijah comes again, God's people will encounter God's promised deliverance (Malachi 4:5). That future time is now present through John and through Jesus. John's message of repentance (v. 4) will be continued by Jesus when he says, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:14). Where do you see the good news of Jesus happening today?

Pray: **Merciful God, we thank you for fulfilling your promise of hope and peace through the good news of Jesus Christ. Amen.**

SERVICE



Good news has a positive effect on people. Isaiah 40 gives prophetic comfort to God's people. What word of comfort or encouragement can you give to someone this week?

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS



Set up a Christmas nativity set in your home. Place the wise men further away from the set for now. Wait to place Jesus in the manger until Christmas Eve. On your Advent wreath, light the first candle of hope and the second one of peace. Pause for a moment to sit in silence and look upon the nativity set and think about the coming of Jesus.

Say this Bible verse: **Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people.** (Psalm 85:8a)

Pray: **Lord, help us to prepare the way of the Lord. Give us peace and hope. Amen.**



In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: www.milestonesministry.org