ST. STEPHEN'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF RIDGEFIELD

Belonging with purpose

Our Mission: Embracing and living God's commandment to love our neighbors through worship, stewardship, and service to others.

The First Sunday of Advent

November 29, 2026 • 10:00 A.M.

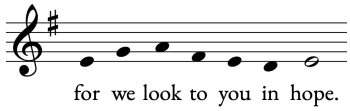
Prelude and Welcome

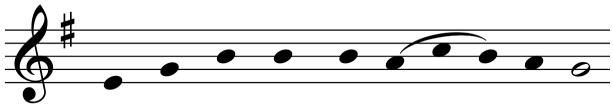
The Choir sings **Advent Prose**

Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness. Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity forever: thy holy cities are a wilderness, Sion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation: our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee. Drop down…

All stand and join in the **Advent Litany in Procession**

℣. Ruler of all things in heaven and earth, may the desert blossom like a rose, and may we, passing through what you have made good, guide each other to your holy mountain, where wolf and lamb can lie down together in peace,





℣. Judge of the Nations, may we not put you to the test in our arrogance, but find wisdom, restraint, and courage to beat our swords into plowshares and no longer to study the ways of war, for we look to you in hope.

℟. **O come, O come, Emmanuel!**

℣. Lord of compassion, forgive us all of our sins and wrongdoings, that we may be filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit to amend our lives, for we look to you in hope.

℟. **O come, O come, Emmanuel!**

℣. Foretold by John on the banks of the Jordan, immerse us into a baptism of repentance, so that we may rise from water, reaching out our hands to people of all faiths who long for your goodness, for we look to you in hope.

℟. **O come, O come, Emmanuel!**

℣. Lamb of God, enlighten and strengthen your Church, so that we may be stewards of your abundance and joyful heralds of the banquet to which all are invited, for we look to you in hope.

℟. **O come, O come, Emmanuel!**

℣. Herald of Good News, may all our words and deeds loosen the yoke of the troubled and lighten the burden of the poor, so that what we proclaim becomes what we spend ourselves to accomplish, for we look to you in hope.

℟. **O come, O come, Emmanuel!**

℣. Heir of David's Throne, empower us to establish justice in our cities and communities and to honor the covenant into which we have entered, so that all homes may be lively and joyful and all children may flourish, for we look to you in hope.

℟. **O come, O come, Emmanuel!**

℣. Head of the Household, may what you have entrusted to us, our homes, families, friends, and possessions, be ready always for your arrival, and keep us alert to the signs of your presence, for we look to you in hope.

℟. **O come, O come, Emmanuel!**

℣. Bridegroom of our Soul, draw us beyond selfish desire and fear, so that we may give ourselves fully to you, for we look to you in hope.

℟. **O come, O come, Emmanuel!**

℣. Incarnate of the Virgin Mary, care for our flesh, heal our diseases, strengthen our weakness, and enfold us at last in your peace, and may what is done in us be according to your will, for we look to you in hope.

℟. **O come, O come, Emmanuel!**

℣. Child of Bethlehem, make us your children, simplify and soften our hearts so that we may enter the realm of God with gratitude and joy, for we look to you in hope.

℟. **O come, O come, Emmanuel!**

℣. Gracious God, Eternal Light, come among us! Enter our darkness and guide us in those paths of justice and peace that fulfill your purposes for us. Lift us up to rejoice forever in the life of the Holy Trinity, and praise you, with the Father, and the Spirit, one God, from before time and through all eternity, for we look to you in hope.

℟. **O come, O come, Emmanuel!**

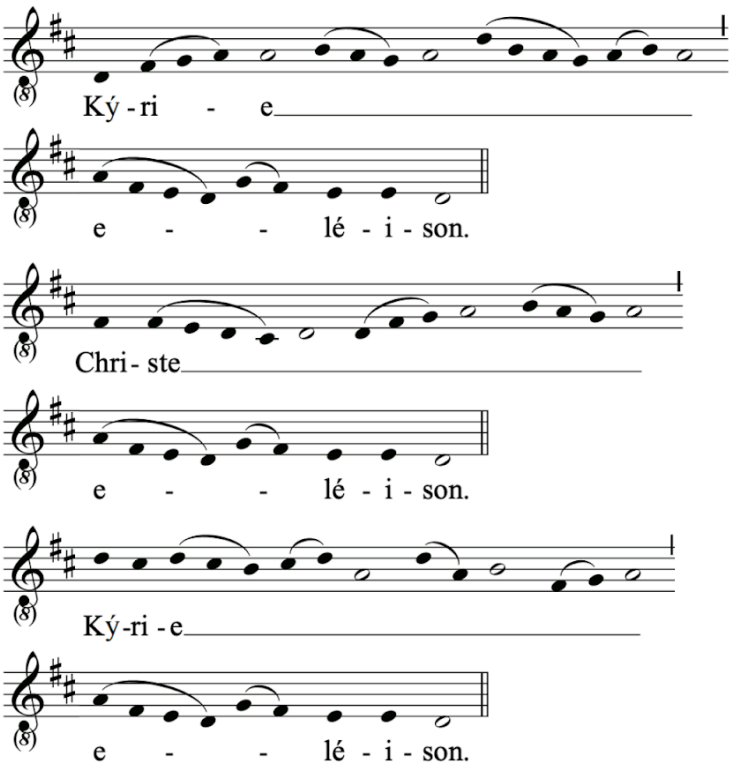
Celebrant Our King and Savior draweth nigh:
People **O come let us adore him.**
Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
People **And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.**

All join in **The Collect for Purity**

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Children are invited to follow
Storytime Leaders down to the Choir Room.

All sing the **Kyrie eleison** *Missa de angelis*



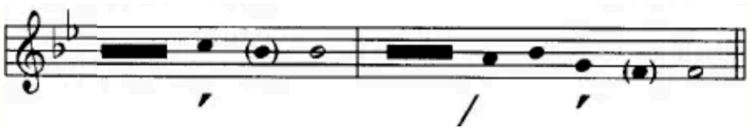
Celebrant The Lord be with you.
People **And also with you.**
Celebrant Let us pray. Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**.

All are seated for **A Reading from the Prophet Isaiah**

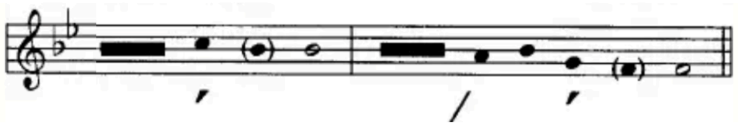
O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence--
as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil--
to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!
When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.
You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.
But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we transgressed.
We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
There is no one who calls on your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.
Yet, O Lord, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord,
and do not remember iniquity forever.
Now consider, we are all your people. *Isaiah 64:1-9*

Reader The Word of the Lord.
People **Thanks be to God.**

A Portion of Psalm 80 *sung by all*



1 Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a **flóck**; *
shine forth, you that are enthroned up / on the **ché**rubim.
2 In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Ma**nás**seh, *
stir up your strength and / come to **hélp** us.
3 Restore us, O God of **hósts**; *
show the light of your countenance / and we **sháll** be saved.
4 O Lord God of **hósts**, *
how long will you be angered
despite the prayers / of your **péo**ple?
5 You have fed them with the bread of **téars**; *
you have given them / bowls of **téars** to drink.



6 You have made us the derision of our **néigh**bors, *
and our enemies / laugh us **tó** scorn.
7 Restore us, O God of **hósts**; *
show the light of your countenance / and we **sháll** be saved.
16 Let your hand be upon the man of your **ríght** hand, *
the son of man you have made so / strong for **yóur**self.
17 And so will we never turn away from **yóu**; *
give us life, that we may / call up**ón** your Name.
18 Restore us, O God of **hósts**; *
show the light of your countenance / and we **sháll** be saved.

All stand and sing **Hymn 56 v. 1-2** *Veni, veni emmanuel*

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!

2 O come, thou Wisdom from on high,
who orderest all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show
and teach us in her ways to go. *Refrain*

Gospeller The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.
People **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

Jesus said, "In those days, after that suffering,
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

"But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake." *Mark 13:24-37*

Gospeller The Gospel of the Lord.
People **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

Sermon The Rev'd Whitney Altopp, D. Min.

A moment for reflection follows the sermon.

All stand for **The Nicene Creed**

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Prayers of the People

Let us pray to the Lord:
People **Lord, have mercy.**

All kneel for **The Confession of Sin**

Celebrant Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

People **Gracious Lord, we confess our willingness to be loved but also our reluctance to love.**
We confess our readiness to accept your forgiving love but also our own refusal to forgive.
We confess our eagerness to grasp your offer of redeeming love but also our resistance to following you without question.
Forgive us our failure to respond as we should.
Come to us anew by your Spirit, and by your grace help us to receive you
with humble trust, as Mary;
with joy, as John;
with submission to you, as Elizabeth;
with awe, as the shepherds;
with gratitude, as Simeon;
with love, as you have loved us.
Even so, come Lord Jesus.
Amen.

Celebrant Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

All stand for **The Peace**

Celebrant The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People **And also with you.**

Children return from Storytime as all share signs of peace.

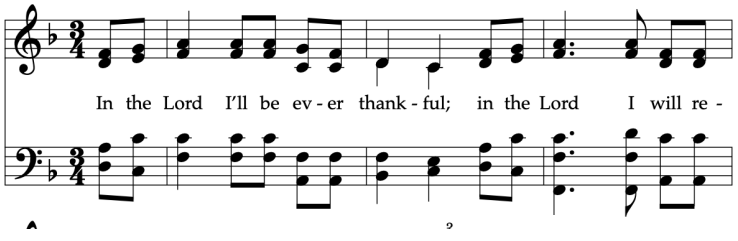
Offertory Sentence

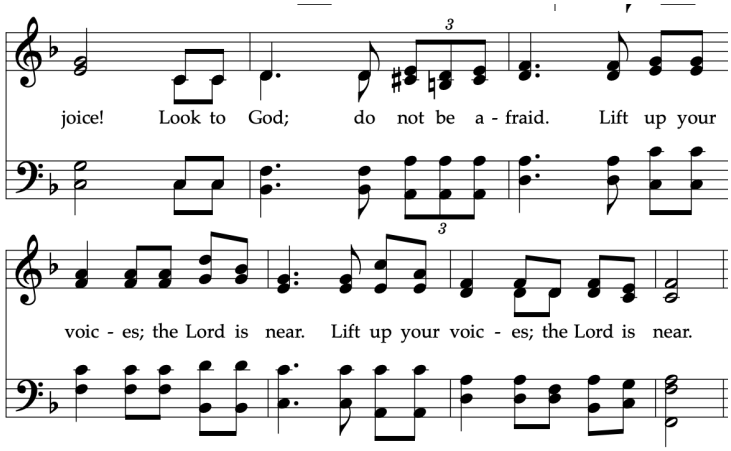
Celebrant Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and make good thy vows unto the Most High. *Ps. 50:14*

Anthem Advent Message — Martin How

Come, Lord Jesus, amen.
O come quickly, come Lord Jesus, come Lord, come.
A voice of him that crieth in the wilderness
"Prepare ye the way of the Lord.
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God."
Yea, come quickly. Amen.

Presentation Hymn — *Taizé Chant*





The Great Thanksgiving — *Eucharistic Prayer C*

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you**.

Celebrant Lift up your hearts.

People **We lift them to the Lord.**

Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

Celebrant God of all power, Ruler of the Universe, you are worthy of glory and praise.

People **Glory to you for ever and ever.**

Celebrant At your command all things came to be: the vast expanse of interstellar space, galaxies, suns, the planets in their courses, and this fragile earth, our island home.

People **By your will they were created and have their being.**

Celebrant From the primal elements you brought forth the human race, and blessed us with memory, reason, and skill. You made us the rulers of creation. But we turned against you, and betrayed your trust; and we turned against one another.

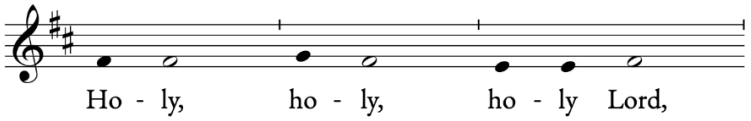
People **Have mercy, Lord, for we are sinners in your sight.**

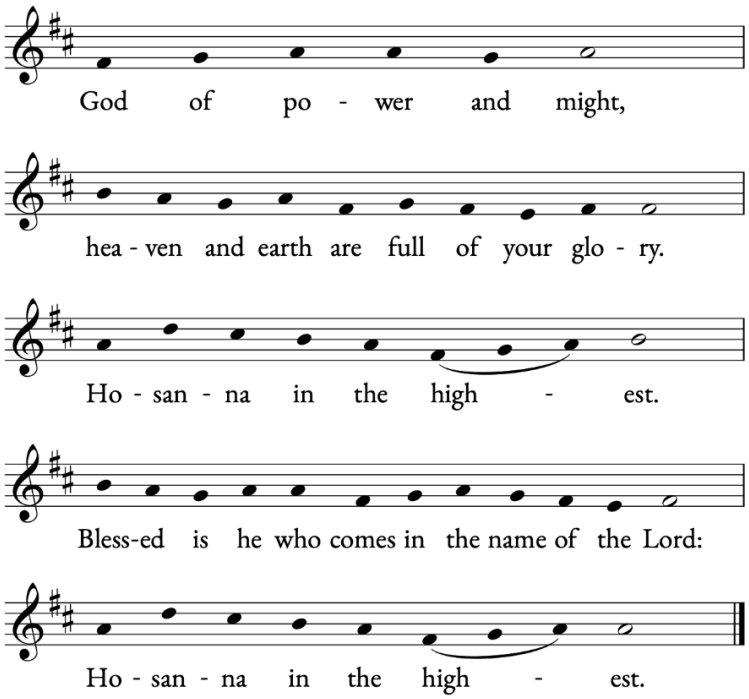
Celebrant Again and again, you called us to return. Through prophets and sages you revealed your righteous Law. And in the fullness of time you sent your only Son, born of a woman, to fulfill your Law, to open for us the way of freedom and peace.

People **By his blood, he reconciled us.**
By his wounds, we are healed.

Celebrant And therefore we praise you, joining with the heavenly chorus, with prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and with all those in every generation who have looked to you in hope, to proclaim with them your glory, in their unending hymn:

All sing **Sanctus** S-124





All stand or kneel as the Celebrant continues and ends with

Remembering now his work of redemption, and offering to you this sacrifice of thanksgiving,

People **We celebrate his death and resurrection, as we await the day of his coming.**

The Celebrant continues and ends with

Let the grace of this Holy Communion make us one body, one spirit in Christ, that we may worthily serve the world in his name.

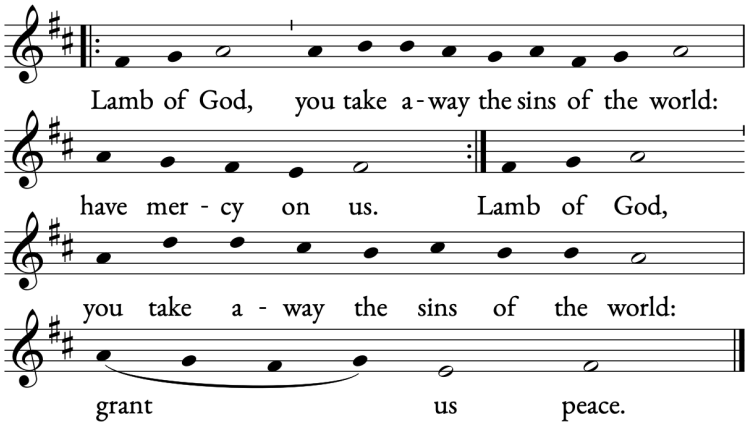
People **Risen Lord, be known to us in the breaking of the Bread.**

Celebrant Accept these prayers and praises, Father, through Jesus Christ our great High Priest, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, your Church gives honor, glory, and worship, from generation to generation. **AMEN.**

Celebrant And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say:

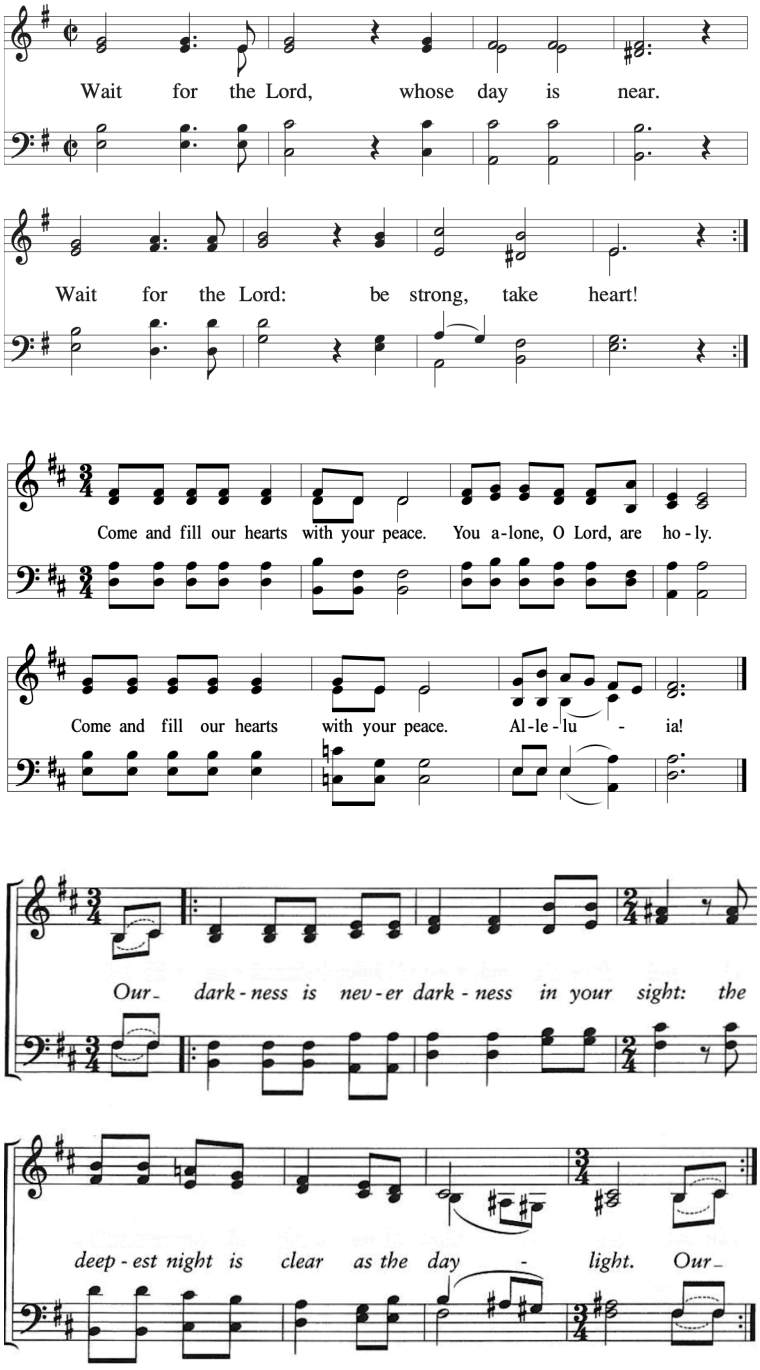
People **Our Father, who art in heaven,**
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

All sing **Fraction Anthem** S-154



Celebrant The Gifts of God for the people of God.

All join in singing **Taizé Chants at Communion**



All kneel for the **Prayer After Communion**

Celebrant Let us pray.

All **O Lord our God, through these holy mysteries make us watchful and keep us faithful as we await the coming of your Son our Lord; that, when he shall appear, he may not find us sleeping, but active in his service and joyful in his praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Blessing

May Almighty God, by whose providence our Savior Christ came among us in great humility, sanctify you with the light of his blessing and set you free from all sin. **Amen**.

May he whose second Coming in power and great glory we await, make you steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and constant in love. **Amen**.

May you, who rejoice in the first Advent of our Redeemer, at his second Advent be rewarded with unending life. **Amen**.

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you for ever. **Amen**.

All stand and sing **Hymn 57** *Helmsley*

1 Lo! he comes with clouds descending,
once for our salvation slain;
thousand, thousand saints attending
swell the triumph of his train:
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Christ the Lord returns to reign.

2 Every eye shall now behold him,
robed in dreadful majesty;
those who set at nought and sold him,
pierced, and nailed him to the tree,
deeply wailing, deeply wailing, deeply wailing,
shall the true Messiah see.

3 Those dear tokens of his passion
still his dazzling body bears,
cause of endless exultation
to his ransomed worshipers;
with what rapture, with what rapture, with what rapture,
gaze we on those glorious scars!

4 Yea, amen! let all adore thee,
high on thine eternal throne;
Savior, take the power and glory;
claim the kingdom for thine own:
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Thou shalt reign, and thou alone.

Dismissal

Response **Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia!**

Postlude

MUSIC NOTES

The **Advent Prose** comes from a series of ancient Latin antiphons and responses drawn primarily from Isaiah, long cherished in both Roman and Anglican traditions. The refrain "Rorate caeli desuper"—"Drop down, ye heavens, from above"—expresses Israel's longing for God's mercy amid exile. Its chant-like contour and modal harmony evoke the deep simplicity of early Christian prayer. Sung during the earliest weeks of Advent, it invites the congregation into a posture of hopeful waiting, crying out for God's presence in a world in need of redemption.

Composed by Jacques Berthier for the ecumenical Taizé Community in France, **Wait for the Lord** is drawn from Isaiah's promise that "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed." Its meditative refrain and layered ostinatos create a spacious musical silence, inviting worshippers into the stillness and watchfulness at the heart of Advent. In repeating the simple text, the congregation practices the season's essential discipline: waiting with trust for God's coming. Built on Psalm 136's call to rejoice in God's steadfast love, **Come and fill our hearts** holds together longing and praise. Its gentle, mantra-like melody encourages deep listening and communal breath—hallmarks of the Taizé style. The repeated invocation "You alone, O Lord, are holy" opens space for prayer that is both personal and communal, a quiet center amid Advent's urgency. Rooted in Psalm 139, **Our darkness is never darkness** affirms God's presence even in the unknown places of the soul. The music's calm, circular motion mirrors the text's assurance that "the night is as bright as the day." Sung in Advent, it reminds the assembly that God's light is already at work within us as we prepare for the coming of Christ, the Light of the world.

A grand Advent hymn of expectation, **Lo, he comes with clouds descending** brings together Charles Wesley's vivid apocalyptic imagery and the stately 18th-century tune HELMSLEY. The text contemplates Christ's coming in glory, drawing on Revelation's vision of every eye beholding the risen Lord. The tune's sweeping phrases and dramatic harmonic shifts amplify the hymn's sense of awe and cosmic scale. Long treasured in Anglican and Methodist traditions, this hymn places the Church's Advent waiting in its widest horizon: the fulfillment of all things in Christ.