



TREE OF LIFE

Christian Fellowship

“for Healing, Obedience, & Peace on Earth” (H.O.P.E.)



Advent IV | 21 Dec 2025
“Death Swallowed”
Isaiah 24:1—25:12

✠ The Way of Jesus Liturgy ✠

Invocation

Father, Creator of Heaven and Earth, ♦ **you created us to serve and protect your creation.** ♦ But we selfishly destroyed the balance of your creation ♦ **by choosing our own “good” and making Civilization.** ♦ So you sent your Son Jesus to embody the Way of the Lamb, ♦ **so we will die with him to Civilization’s Way of arrogance, fear, and violence.** ♦ And also be reborn with him through your Holy Spirit ♦ **to care for all of your creation by following Jesus’s Way of faith, hope, and love.**

Processional Song — GC2 527 “*Canticle of the Turning*”

♫ *Though I am small, my God, my all, you work great things in me. And your mercy will last from the depths of the past to the end of the age to be. Your very name puts the proud to shame, and to those who would for you yearn, you will show your might, put the strong to flight. Could the world be about to turn?* ♫ (REFRAIN)

REFRAIN: ♫ *My heart shall sing of the day you bring, let the fires of your justice burn. Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is about to turn.* ♫

♫ *From the halls of power to the fortress tower, not a stone will be left on stone. Let the king beware for your justice tears ev'ry tyrant from his throne. The hungry poor shall weep no more, for the food they can never earn; there are tables spread, ev'ry mouth be fed, for the world is about to turn.* ♫ (REFRAIN)

♫ *Though the nations rage from age to age, we remember who holds us fast: God's mercy must deliver us from the conqueror's crushing grasp. This saving word that our forebears heard is the promise which holds us bound til the spear and rod can be crushed by God, who is turning the world around.* ♫ (REFRAIN)

Advent Litany

We are burdened by the past, ♦ **Jesus bring healing love to our yesterdays.**

We are stressed in the present, ♦ **Jesus bring living love to us today.**

We are worried about the future, ♦ **Jesus bring love to us for tomorrow.**

Prayer of the Day

Jesus says, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there with them.”

(the Christ candle is lit to remind us that Jesus is coming among us)

♫ *Oh come, oh king of nations bind, in one the hearts of all mankind. Bid all our sad divisions cease, and be yourself our king of peace. Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel has come to us and God is with us now!* ♫ (tune: LSB 357)

The Lord Jesus be with you. ♦ **And also with you.** ♦ Let us pray. Heavenly Father, help us to trust that death has been defeated and has no power over us anymore. In the name of Jesus, your Son, our Lord. † **Amen.**

† Baptism — The Way of Faith †

Surrendering to the Creator

Jesus says, “If you hold onto your life, ♦ **you will destroy it.** ♦ But if you let go of your life, ♦ **you will save it.** ♦ You must be born again through water and the Spirit ♦

to enter the Creator’s Kingdom.” ♦ Father, Son, & Holy Spirit ♦ I surrender to you all of my † mind, all of my † heart, and all of my † body and † soul.

(we make the sign of the cross—touching forehead, heart, and shoulders)

Father, into your hands ♦ I commit my spirit. ♦ Father, not my will, ♦ but your will be done. ♪ *Take my life and all my heart, take my whole soul ev’ry part. Take my mouth and let it be, filled with your truth and mercy. ♪ Take my hands and let them love, with compassion from above. Take my feet and let them go, on the Way that Jesus showed. ♪ Take my money and fam’ly, give me faith and set me free. Take my life and teach me how to love all creation now. ♪ (LSB 783)*

Listening to the Creator

Jesus says, “Come to me, all of you who are tired and burdened. Learn from me and practice my teachings and you will find rest for your souls. Those who listen will live.”

♪ *Listen to what Jesus teaches, listen to him every day. Listen as you walk and follow, listen also as you pray. Listen to him every moment, listen with an open mind. Listen to find peace and patience, listen so you will be kind. ♪ (LSB 770)*

Remembering the Saints & Martyrs — Nicholas of Myra

Father, we give you thanks for the great cloud of saints and witnesses who have gone before us and have embodied the Way of Jesus. Today we remember Nicholas (270-343 AD) who was left to be raised by Christians after his wealthy parents died and spread his inheritance around by helping those in need. On one occasion he threw three bags of gold in the window of a very poor man, saving each of the man's three daughters from a life of prostitution. Help us learn from his faith and example, † Amen.

Chanted Psalm — Psalm 4



♪ *Answer me when I cry out, my | righteous God!*

** Set me free from | my troubles!*

The Lord takes personal care of | the faithful.

** The Lord will hear me when I cry | out to him.*

So be afraid, and don’t disobey | the Lord God!

** Offer your life and | trust the Lord!*

I will lie down and fall asleep | with your peace

** because you alone, Lord, let me live | in safety. ♪*

Law & Prophets — Isaiah 25:6-12

The Prophets reading comes from Isaiah 25. ♦ **Blessed are the ears that listen.**
We do not live on bread alone, ♦ **but on every word from the Lord.**

Epistle — 1 Corinthians 3:1-23

The Epistle reading comes from 1 Corinthians 3. ♦ **Blessed are the ears that listen.**
We do not live on bread alone, ♦ **but on every word from the Lord.**

† Holy Gospel †

As we await the coming of Jesus, we omit the Gospel reading and pause to yearn for his

coming. *(brief silence)* Come quickly Lord Jesus. ♦ **Amen, come quickly Lord Jesus.**

Message

† Repentance — The Way of Hope †

Confronting Our Past

Jesus says, “I know everything you do. Pay attention and remove the log from your own eye. I have called you out of Civilization. Repent, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!”

(silence for reflection)

For prostituting ourselves with the false lovers of self, family, and nation,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to love you with every thought, word, and deed.**

For trusting the technology and works of human hands, especially money,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to trust in your power alone.**

For being double-minded hypocrites who misrepresent your name,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to obediently live as your children.**

For overworking and oppressing land, animals, and each other,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to live in restful peace with all creation.**

For not respecting those you send to guide us and teach us,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to listen to our fathers and mothers in Christ.**

For being violent to our bodies and your creation,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to love all creation, including our enemies.**

For degrading ourselves and others with our sexuality,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to keep our sexuality within marriage.**

For trying to possess and control your creation,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to share everything we have.**

For not being vulnerable and honest with others,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to be truthful in all situations.**

For competing with others and desiring more than we need,

♦ **Father, forgive us and help us to be content in all circumstances.**

Father, turn us back to walking in your Spirit. ♪ *Lord Father we have wandered and hidden from your face. Rescue your whole creation with your almighty grace. From trust in wealth and weapons and blindness to your Way, save us and all creation with your own hands, we pray.* ♪ *(LSB 449)*

Jesus says, “I discipline those I love. If you love your self, family, or nation more than me, you cannot be my disciple. Come out of Civilization, my people, so you will not share in its sicknesses. Not one stone will be left standing, it will all be torn down.” Will you turn away from Civilization’s Way of arrogance, fear, and violence and reaffirm your Baptism into Jesus’s Way of faith, hope, and love? ♦ **Yes, I renounce Civilization’s Way and pledge to follow Jesus.** ♦ Jesus says, “Put your sword away. If you live by the sword, you will die by the sword. But if you forgive others, your heavenly Father will forgive you.” Will you release all debts and grudges that you hold against anyone—including every member of this church? ♦

Yes, I forgive all those who have hurt me, frustrated me, or owe me anything. ♦ Jesus says, “Your sins are forgiven. Get up and walk. Go and sin no more.” † **Amen.**

Song of the Day — LSB 355 “O Savior, Rend the Heavens Wide”

- ♫ *O Savior, rend the heavens wide; Come down, come down with mighty stride; Unlock the gates, the doors break down; Unbar the way to heaven’s crown.* ♪
- ♫ *O Fount of hope, how long, low long? When will You come with comfort strong? O come, O come, Your throne forego; Console us in our vale of woe.* ♪
- ♫ *O Morning Star, O radiant Sun, When will our hearts behold Your dawn? O Sun, arise; without Your light We grope in gloom and dark of night.* ♪
- ♫ *Sin’s dreadful doom upon us lies; Grim death looms fierce before our eyes. O come, lend us with mighty hand From exile to our promised land.* ♪

Waiting on the Creator

- ♫ *Our Father, bring your Rule and will to earth. Give what we need for worry-free rebirth. Bring peace among us and forgive us too, as we forgive and love in all we do.*
- ♫ *Protect us from all things that will mislead. Keep us from selfishness, violence, and greed. We place our lives into your hands this day. Teach us to listen and to walk your Way. Amen.* ♪ (LSB 637)

(incense is lit to symbolize our prayers ascending to God and as its smell fills this space we are reminded of his presence among us)

Jesus says, “Learn from the birds. They do not store up for tomorrow and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Do not fear or worry about tomorrow. Seek only your Father’s Kingdom and he will give you everything you need.”

In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♫ Lord have mercy. ♪ Father, set us apart from Civilization in all our thoughts, words, and deeds. Take charge of our lives and all those in authority. Use everything that happens to bring your good judgment and healing upon all creation. *In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♫ Lord have mercy.* ♪ Father, provide for us, protect us, and heal our brokenness. Especially this day we remember Charlene Sargent, John Espino, Bill Mellott, Cebra Sims, and those we name in our hearts... Father, give us exactly what we need this day and teach us to be content with that. *In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♫ Lord have mercy.* ♪ Father, forgive us and free us from all that enslaves us. Help us to walk away from our anxieties, traumas, and addictions to Civilization’s Way, so we may walk in Jesus’s Way. Empower us to love and forgive everyone, even our enemies, in the way you have loved and forgiven us. *In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♫ Lord have mercy.* ♪ Father, humble us and remind us that we have no strength apart from you. Stay with us in difficult times and save us from our selfishness. Comfort us in the certain hope that all your creation and children will be renewed and raised from the dead. *In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♫ Lord have mercy.* ♪ Father, help us to let go and surrender everything into your loving hands, trusting that you work all things for the good of those who love you. ♦ **Our Father in Heaven, may your name be holy, may your Kingdom come, and may your will be done—on Earth as in Heaven. Give us this day what we need for today. Forgive us in the same way that we forgive others. Do not abandon us when we are tempted, but pull us away from what is evil. For the Kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours—now and forever. † Amen.**

† Communion — The Way of Love †

Sharing the Lord's Peace

Jesus says, “Make peace with each other **♦ before you come to the Lord's altar.**
By this all people will know that you are my disciples: **♦ if you love each other.**”

Offering & Musical Offering

Jesus says, “Do not store up things on earth. To be my disciple you must give up everything you own. Sell your possessions and give to the poor.” We offer all we have to the Lord, while also offering gifts to support this communion.

Pledge of Allegiance

♫ *We come before you, Lord, to bow. We lay our lives at your feet now. All things are yours, we own nothing! Our lives are in your hands this day. Give what we need, O Lord, we pray. Please protect us, provide for us! Watch over us, ever with us, always love us!* ♫ (LSB 816) Jesus says, “If you pledge your allegiance to me before others, then I will pledge my allegiance to you before my heavenly Father.”

♦ I pledge allegiance to one God, the all-powerful Father, who is the Creator of Heaven and Earth, of all things visible and invisible.

♦ I pledge allegiance to one Lord, Jesus Christ, who is God's only Son. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He loved and he suffered. Under Pontius Pilate, he was crucified, died, and was buried. On the third day he was raised from the dead. He ascended to heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. He is coming to judge the living and the dead. His Kingdom will not end.

♦ I pledge allegiance to the Holy Spirit, who is the giver of life, the holy universal Church, the communion of saints, the baptism for forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life in the age to come. † Amen.

Thanksgiving — Εὐχαριστία

Let us give thanks to our Creator! **♦ It is right to give him thanks and praise!**

Father, we praise and thank you, **♦ for you provide, protect, love, and renew us and all creation!** ♦ We are grateful for all that you give, especially for... Father, we thank you for marrying yourself to us and uniting Heaven and Earth, Spirit and Flesh, and Christ and the Church through your Son Jesus! ♫ *Joyful, joyful we adore you, Creator of all that lives! Earth and heaven praise and thank you, for your love and all you give! Fields and forests, fruit trees and birds, thunderstorms and starry skies, seas and mountains, and grazing herds, praising you who never dies!* ♫ (LSB 803)

† Words of Our Lord Jesus †

On the night before our Lord Jesus was crucified, he revealed his Way of rescuing all creation from the Way of Civilization. Before supper, Jesus humbly washed the feet of his students and enemies. Jesus said, **♦ “Follow my example. Love each other, even your enemies, in the same way I have loved you.”** ♦ During supper, Jesus then took the bread and broke it. He gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is being given for you. Do the same for each other in my memory.” After supper, Jesus then took the cup and gave thanks. He said, “This is my blood of the covenant which is

being shed for you, for the forgiveness of your sin. Do the same for each other in my memory.” ♪ *Oh come Lord Jesus come and dine and give yourself through bread and wine. Feed us so we may have new birth, and bring your rule ov'r all the earth. Come now, come now! Our Lord Jesus and bring your healing love to us!* ♪ (LSB 357)

Sharing the Bread & Wine

Jesus says, “I am the bread of life. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood is united with me and will be raised from the dead.” As we feed on the Bread of Heaven ♦ **we are made members of Christ’s Body.** ♦ We no longer live for ourselves ♦ **but Christ lives within us.** ♦ We invite all Baptized members of the holy universal Church, who give their undivided allegiance to Jesus and are at peace with their brothers and sisters in Christ, to join us ♦ **as the Creator’s Lamb mysteriously gives himself to us in, with, and under this bread, wine, and communion.** ♪ *Come, oh long expected Jesus, born to set your people free. From our fears and sins release us, open up our eyes to see. By your own eternal Spirit, rule in all our hearts alone. By your love that has no limit, bow us to your loving throne.* ♪ (LSB 338)

Recessional Song — LSB 354 “Arise, O Christian People”

- ♪ *Arise, O Christian people! Prepare yourselves today; Prepare to greet the Savior, Who takes you sins away. To us by grace alone The truth and light were given; The promised Lord from heaven To all the world is shown.* ♪
- ♪ *Prepare the way before Him; Prepare for Him the best. Cast out what would offend Him, This great, this heav'nly guest. Make straight, make plain the way: The lowly valleys raising, The heights of pride abasing, His path, all even lay.* ♪
- ♪ *The humble heart and lowly God raises up on high; Beneath His feet in terror The haughty soul shall lie. The heart sincere and right, That heeds God's invitation And makes true preparation--It is the Lord's delight.* ♪
- ♪ *Prepare my heart, Lord Jesus; Turn not from me aside, And help me to receive You This blessed Advent-tide. From stall and manger low Come now to dwell within me; I'll sing Your praises gladly And forth Your glory show.* ♪

Ἀγάπη Feast & Text Discussion

Jesus says, “Do you love me? Then feed my sheep.” We now move to our Bible study room to continue devoting ourselves ♦ **“to the Apostles’ teaching, to communion with each other, to the sharing of bread, and to prayer.”**

Sent to “Do the Same in My Memory”

Christ Jesus, you are the Lamb, who has laid down your body and blood for us, ♦ **help us to be lambs who do the same for each other in your memory.** † Amen.

Jesus says, “Go and live this truth: ♦ **The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!** ♦ Heal the sick, raise the dead, ♦ **cleanse the unclean, and cast out evil spirits.** ♦ Freely you have received from the Creator, ♦ **now freely you must give.** ♦ I am sending you like lambs among wolves, ♦ **but do not fear, take up your cross and follow me.”**

♪ *Hark the glad sound the Savior comes the Savior promised long; let ev'ry heart prepare a throne and every voice a song.* ♪ *He comes the prisoners to release, in Satan's bondage held. The gates of brass before him burst, the iron fetters yield.* ♪

He comes the broken heart to bind, the bleeding soul to cure, and with the treasures of his grace to enrich the humble poor. ♪ (LSB 349)

Blessing

Jesus says, “Blessed are you in your poverty and suffering, for you are in the Creator’s Kingdom. Blessed are you in your humility, for you will inherit the earth. Blessed are you when you are merciful and peaceful, for you will find mercy and peace.” † **Amen.**

- * Faith & Film: “Signs” (Jan 5, 12) | “The Woodsman” (Jan 19, 26) | “The Chosen” Season 5 (Feb 9, 16, 23, Mar 2, 9, 16, 23, 30)
- * Growing in H.O.P.E.: Wednesdays @ DG (5:30 pm food/fellowship, 6:00 pm study)
- Questions & Conversations:**
- Jan 7 (potluck) — “Spiritual Disciplines”
- Jan 14 — “The Bible & Inspiration”
- Jan 21 — “Biblical Interpretation”
- Jan 28 — “Violence in the Old Testament”
- * Game Night: First Fridays @ DG (6 pm, BYOB), Jan 2, Jan 30, Mar 6
- * Christmas Eve: Join us for our candlelight service on Dec 24 at 6 pm.

| Weekly Calendar December 21 - 28, 2025 | | |
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| Sun, Dec 21 | 9:30 am | Liturgy & Αγάπη Feast Isaiah 24:1—25:12 |
| Mon, Dec 22 | | |
| Wed, Dec 24 | 6:00 pm | Candlelight Service Matthew 1:1—2:23 |
| Sat, Dec 27 | 7-9 am | Breakfast & Devotion |
| Sun, Dec 28 | 9:30 am | Liturgy & Αγάπη Feast Matthew 3:1—4:25 |

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