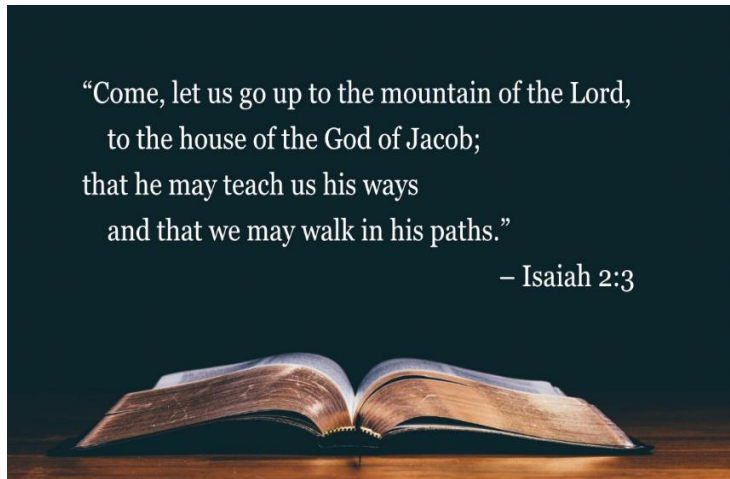


SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2025

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”

– Isaiah 2:3



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Ushers –

(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture texts
are from the **Common English Bible (CEB)**

*Please stand if comfortably able
and respond with words in **bold** print

SUMMARY OF SCRIPTURE TEXTS

On this day that is the turning point of the year, all of the assigned texts direct the attention of the church to the future. They begin the preparation for Christmas, but they also stress the eschatological dimensions of the coming of Jesus. *(Here we have that word again; eschatological. Not only is it hard to pronounce, it's also difficult to spell. According to "Essential Theological Terms" eschatology is the doctrine of "last things". It often deals with matters such as the Parousia or second coming of Jesus, the final judgment, eternal life, and resurrection of the dead.)*

Isaiah 2:1-5 The prophet foresees the days to come when the nations stream to the mountain of the house of the Eternal for learning and judgment.

Romans 13:11-14 This reading reminds the faithful that they are living between the ages and should be prepared at all times for the end of the present age.

Matthew 24:36-44 This passage likewise calls for watchfulness, for only the Father knows the day and hour when the new age will come. The expectation, mystery and celebration of the reign of God are the leading themes for the day.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

THE BELL IS RUNG:

PRELUDE: "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

Carol Tornquist

PENNIES FOR MISSION: Open and Affirming Coalition

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

One: As the sun rises on this new season, we turn within and ask God to renew hope in each one of us.

Many: For the sake of my relatives and friends, proclaim with joy, "Let us go to the house of our God and find hope within!"

One: Though the days are hard, and the news, grim, We turn to our siblings here asking them to trust God, as we have so many times in the past.

Many: For the sake of my relatives and friends, we proclaim with joy, "Peace be within the walls of this house, that our hope might spread beyond!"

One: In our fears and our desperation, in our exhaustion and our pain, God wraps us in bands of hope, holding us together so we may continue the struggle for justice and peace.

Many: For the sake of my relatives and friends, we proclaim with joy, "I will seek all that is good within the house of God, and I will carry it with me wherever I go!"

***INVOCATION:**

Emmanuel, we come here today to renew ourselves in the generosity of God's hope. We will climb the mountain hand in hand that we may learn again of God's promise to be with us, both in the valley and on the peaks. Let us set down our despair and rest in the light of God until we are renewed!

***OPENING HYMN: 110 "Now Bless the God of Israel"**

***UNISON PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:**

God, it is not a year abundant with hope. We cry out for solace, for rest, for strength; we curse in anger at the horrors we see perpetrated in your name; we turn our backs on those who suffer, and we scorn those who bring suffering upon others. We are lost and demoralized, aching for the hope in your Word, and yet when you speak, we do not hear. We do not quiet the spirit within or allow your peace to fall upon us. We root ourselves in devastation when true strength is born out of your tender grace. Forgive us, God, for abandoning hope in favor of fear and a desire for retribution.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

God does not turn us away when we falter. We are, instead, taken in and given sanctuary so that we may revive in God's tender mercy. God will be our shelter while we rest, as well as when we are ready, once again, to rise up. Thanks be to God!

***GLORIA:**

Glory to the Creator, and the Christ and the Spirit so near. As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One God always here. (Repeat two more times.)
(end) **One God always here. One God always here.**

LIGHTING THE CANDLE OF HOPE:

Today, we light the candle of Hope. We think of Hope as anticipation of something future, but in truth, Hope can be the incarnation of trust.

We trust in our Wonderful Counselor –
that when we seek guidance, we will find answers.

We trust that when we are exhausted,
our Emmanuel will send someone
to carry our burdens for a while.

We trust our Creator to renew our faith in community,
in the goodness of others,
and in the power of our empathy and action.

We trust in our Beloved God, that, when everything
around us seems too difficult, too broken, too

devastating for us to put to rights on our own,
Hope will appear, and we rush forward,
arms open wide to receive grace.

SCRIPTURE LESSONS: Isaiah 2:1-5 (CEB)

The Lord's mountain

² This is what Isaiah, Amoz's son, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

² In the days to come the mountain of the Lord's house will be the highest of the mountains. It will be lifted above the hills; peoples will stream to it.

³ Many nations will go and say, "Come, let's go up to the Lord's mountain, to the house of Jacob's God so that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in God's paths." Instruction will come from Zion; the Lord's word from Jerusalem.

⁴ God will judge between the nations, and settle disputes of mighty nations. Then they will beat their swords into iron plows and their spears into pruning tools. Nation will not take up sword against nation; they will no longer learn how to make war. ⁵ Come, house of Jacob, let's walk by the Lord's light.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 122 Page 705

EPISTLE LESSON: Romans 13:11-14

The day is near

¹¹ As you do all this, you know what time it is. The hour has already come for you to wake up from your sleep. Now our salvation is nearer than when we first had faith. ¹² The night is almost over, and the day is near. So let's get rid of the actions that belong to the darkness and put on the weapons of light. ¹³ Let's behave appropriately as people who live in the day, not in partying and getting drunk, not in sleeping around and obscene behavior, not in fighting and obsession. ¹⁴ Instead, dress yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ, and don't plan to indulge your selfish desires.

***GOSPEL: Matthew 24:36-44**

Day and hour

³⁶ "But nobody knows when that day or hour will come, not the heavenly angels and not the Son. Only the Father knows. ³⁷ As it was in the time of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Human One.^[a] ³⁸ In those days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark. ³⁹ They didn't know what was happening until the flood came and swept them all away. The coming of the Human One^[b] will be like that. ⁴⁰ At that time there will be two men in the field. One will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will

be grinding at the mill. One will be taken and the other left. ⁴² Therefore, stay alert! You don't know what day the Lord is coming. ⁴³ But you understand that if the head of the house knew at what time the thief would come, he would keep alert and wouldn't allow the thief to break into his house. ⁴⁴ Therefore, you also should be prepared, because the Human One^[c] will come at a time you don't know.

MESSAGE:

Thanksgiving is barely over and all the Christmas decorations are up and Black Friday sales for gifts are on-going. Some of us may still have leftovers in our refrigerators.

I hate to tell you this but Advent is not a period of Christmas preliminaries, but a season in itself, with its own integrity and its own announcement. Advent proclaims the coming of the Lord but that is not the same as saying that Christmas is coming. Lest Advent melt too easily into the birth stories, the first Sunday of Advent this season calls upon biblical texts that are not at all associated with the nativity. In fact, they are most usually understood as pointing to the "Second Coming" not the first coming.

In all three cycles of the lectionary the Gospel for the First Sunday of Advent is drawn from Jesus' apocalyptic discourse in Mark, Matthew, and Luke. Apocalyptic

means revelation of things to come. All three Gospel texts give us an extended call for watchfulness in view of the uncertain time of the Lord's coming.

What we have today in Matthew 24:36-44 consists of two statements; the uncertain time of the Lord's advent, and the behavior of the faithful in view of that uncertainty. That the time of the Lord's appearing is not known by angels or even by the Son, but by God alone, is a statement to other words of Jesus to the effect that some matters are hidden within God's own purposes. It's interesting that some scribes found it offensive to their Christology to speak of what the Son did not know, and so they deleted "nor the Son" from 24:36. And throughout church history there have been those unwilling to permit times and places to remain in the knowledge of God alone and who, therefore, have arranged certain texts so as to create a calendar of the last days. Talk about gerrymandering.

The call for watchfulness consists of three parts with different images and emphases. Verses 37-39 employ the catastrophe of the flood as an analogy. However, it is not the wickedness at the time of the flood, but rather the lack of preparedness that is Matthew's concern. In verses 40-41, the theme of an all-encompassing destruction is dropped and replaced by the image of the one taken and the one left. The form of the third part of the exhortation to watchfulness is that of a parable. If the

householder had known when to be alert, his house would not have been burglarized.

A flood, a kidnapper, a thief: all are sharp, intrusive, disturbing images with which to begin Advent. But they are effective in instructing us in alertness, in making preparation for uncertain certainties. Watch, stay awake; the Lord is coming. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC: "Soon and Very Soon" – Collinsville Chorale (featuring Adam Reynolds)

PASTORAL PRAYER:

God Most High, of great compassion long-suffering, and very merciful, you relent at human suffering. According to your great goodness you have promised repentance and forgiveness to those who have sinned against you, and in the multitude of your mercies you have appointed repentance for sinners, so that they may be saved. Speed the message of salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth and ministries of healing to those who live at great distances from medical care that the healing presence of the Christ may be known by many and great rejoicing greet the salvation and healing of those who have been far from you.

Refine the life of your church by the Holy Spirit that gives radiance to the selfless witness and work of the body of Christ in the world, spreading the rule of Christ,

diminishing cruelty and fear, and spreading friendship and peace.

Bless this land where we live and work and play. Enlighten our leaders in government, education, business, and industry that the use of power may not be an end in itself but a means of ordering and enriching our common life and providing meaningful occupations for all of us and opportunities for continuing learning and recreation.

Bless our families gathered about us, and at a distance. May the ties that bind us in kinship and affection also serve to prevent our wandering from the way of Christ. Teach us to love as we ought and our neighbors as ourselves.

Hear our prayers for the sick and those who are in any kind of difficulty and distress. Comfort the bereaved, heal the sick in body, mind, or spirit, grant sure hope to the dying and a peaceful rest. Today we especially pray for Mary Lou Baum who will be having surgery tomorrow. May the hands of the surgeon be guided by skill and patience. May all the medical staff be attentive and filled with compassion. We pray for swift healing and recovery so that she may return to us as soon as possible. We pray that her family has patience as they care for her and Urban during this time.

We pray all these things in the name of our Savior, Jesus the Christ.

OUR LORD'S PRAYER:

PRAYER RESPONSE:

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay close by me forever and love me, I pray.

Bless all the dear children in your tender care, and fit us for heaven to live with you there.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

Hope is not only fuel that sustains our spirits. Hope lives within the tangible gifts we give each week to support the most vulnerable among us. In our generosity, we act on God's behalf, ensuring the needs of our community are met.

OFFERTORY: "Chanson de Noel" P. Beaumont

***DOXOLOGY:**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise God, all creatures here below;

Praise God above you heavenly host;

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen

***UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THANKSGIVING:**

Beloved Creator, we offer these gifts to you in the spirit of Hope. We place our trust in you and in those who faithfully care for your people, that these gifts will be used to protect and uplift those who are in need. Help

**us to remember our role to act as agents of your grace
each and every day. Amen.**

***CLOSING HYMN: 119 “My Soul Gives Glory to My God”**

***BENEDICTION:**

When we leave this place today, let us carry the flame of Hope within us, no matter how small it may seem. We feed it with the knowledge that God’s love is incendiary. Our Beloved’s breath blows through us, allowing the flames to rise and catch and give us strength all the days of our lives. Amen

BENEDICTION RESPONSE: “Let There Be Peace on Earth”

THE BELL IS RUNG:

POSTLUDE: “Jubilate” Stewart Landon

PRAYER LIST: Camille Abboud, Ingrid Alexiou, Becky Ballard, Mary Lou and Urban Baum, Ronald Bopp, Private Ben Boyle, Lorraine Brown, Geralyn Gammon, Neal Holiday, Marilyn Paul, Ella Perez, Pam and Syd Safriet, Gloria Stephens, Yvonne Weber, Sue and Dave in Florida, Russ Hartmann.