



In the Rich Dark of Winter

An Advent Communion Service

The theme for this liturgy is anticipating God's fulfilled promise of the renewal of all things. Because of the rich scriptural imagery associated with this season of expectation and preparation, the language is largely expansive. The liturgy incorporates principal images from Jeremiah and the three minor prophets that we encounter in the Advent Year C readings; it can be used during any week of Advent.

The communion hymn is the familiar Advent carol "O Come, O Come Emmanuel. If the choir receives communion first, they can lead the congregation in this hymn as the elements are received, with the chorus operating as a familiar sung response for all who care to join in.

God be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to God.

Let us give thanks to God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

In the rich dark of winter, God makes an astounding promise:

"I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up." (Jeremiah 33:15)

In the wilderness, a voice cries out, longing for
the Refiner's fire, repair, and renewal,
the promised birth (and rebirth) of hope.

Called to bear the weight and fruit of promise,
Mary sings ancient trust—the song of generations—
that God comes to fill the hungry and lift the humble.
She sings that love and truth will meet, that justice and peace will kiss.

In the midst of uncertainty, Jesus assures his disciples:

Just as the tree blooms, so the signs are clear
that the kingdom of God is near.

In the deep of our own winter, we look for them:
bud of hope, branch of peace, sprig of joy, blossom of love.

While around us the snares of fear and conflict lie in wait of infant hope,
you, O Wisdom, O Endless Love, O Radiant Dawn, are there,
keeping vigil with us, in this season of expectation.

We gather at this table, praying that crooked ways be made straight,
that valley's peace be lifted up and mountain's might brought low
so that all God's people might rejoice together, saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest!
Blessed is the one that comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest!**

We give thanks for the mystery and wonder revealed that first night,
as humble people led by hope gathered in a quiet stable
and were witness to your promise reborn.

We give thanks for the blessing and love Jesus shared
with all whom he met, in food and story.

We remember that, on the night before he was handed over to die,
Jesus broke bread with his friends, blessed it, gave thanks, and said,
"Take, eat. This is my body, which I give for you. When you share it, remember me."

We remember that he took the cup and, giving thanks, said,
"This cup is the new covenant in my blood. When you drink it, remember me."

Revealed in stable, cross, and empty tomb, we give thanks, O God, for your limitless love for all.
With your people of all times and places, we await with hope the fulfillment of your vision for
all creation.

**Bless us, O God, and these your gifts.
Encourage us to share your life and love,
which make us, and the gifts we share, truly holy.**

Transform us, God, and your world, and bless your children:
those who feel alone or afraid...
those whose souls and homes are broken by violence...
those who will go hungry, thirsty, and cold tonight...
those who long only to hear that they are loved...

God made known in Jesus Christ,
hear our prayer.

We pray these things, trusting in God's faithfulness revealed:
Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Sharing the Bread & Cup

Communion Hymn: O Come, O Come Emmanuel (*Voices United 1*)

Other options include "God of All Places" (VU 4), "O Ancient Love" (VU 17), and "Hark the Glad Sound" (VU 29).

Prayer after Communion

At this table, Christ is the host, welcoming all who hunger.
At our tables, may Christ be our guest this day and always,
that we might welcome hope, peace, joy, and love into our lives,
and become hosts to God's presence and people.

God of Love, guide us to the stables of our world,
where the lonely and longing gather.
Lead us to the mangers of our time,
where hope and renewal are born again.
Make us heralds of your love and joy. Amen.

—Rev. Andrew O'Neil,
St. Paul's United Church, Riverview, NB