



Welcome Home!

St. Mark's Episcopal Church: A Community of Grace

We spread God's word, love like Jesus,
enjoy worshipping together, and help our neighbors.

Advent 3, December 17, 2023

8 AM

“Lite” Blue Christmas

A Celebration of the Holy Eucharist

Opening Acclamation

Clergy: Blessed be our Loving, Liberating, Life-giving God.

Community: **And blessed be God's reign, now and for ever. Amen.**

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.

Centering Prayer and the Collect of the Day: *Please be seated.*

God be with you. **And also with you.** Let us pray.

Take a deep breath. Notice what your body is telling you. Notice what your soul is telling you. What is being born in you? What is being born in us?

Remembering with the Advent Candles

We will be using the five candles to focus our prayers and meditations. We will be remembering our losses and offer to God our grief. Please engage in this spiritual exercise as you are able and as is helpful.

The Commendation Candle: *The first candle is lit*

We remember before God our loss: the loss of relationships, jobs, health, and especially, loved ones. We grieve the loss of the elementary school and preschool. We remember those whom we have loved and lost. We offer to God the memory that binds them to us.

The Change Candle: *A second candle is lit*

We remember how our lives are now changed. We offer to God the challenge of change: an empty space, a missing presence, a different routine, an open wound, an added burden, a new commitment.

The Community Candle: *A third candle is lit*

We remember ourselves in the midst of community. We offer thanks for the kind thoughts, words, and deeds of family and friends, for all who stood with us. We forgive those things said or done out of ignorance or fear. We give thanks for every attempt to reach out and support.

Our Questions Candle: *A fourth candle is lit*

We remember the questions that still haunt us. We offer to God our disbelief, pain, anger, sadness, and confusion. We acknowledge that pain, illness, and death are not the will, lessons, punishments, or the plan of God.

The Christ Candle: A fifth candle is lit

We remember the presence of God in Jesus Christ. We give thanks for our faith and the gift of hope, which the Christmas story offers.

Commendation Prayer: Please remain seated

Let us give thanks to God for our loved ones. For the love they offered and received; for all the good things in their life; for all that was important to them; for everything in which they were great; and for all the things they will be remembered for by us, their family and friends.

Give rest, O Christ, to your servants with your saints, where sorrow and pain are no more, neither sighing, but life everlasting. You only are immortal, the creator and maker of humankind; and we are mortal, formed of the earth, and to earth shall we return. For so did you ordain when you created us, saying, "You are dust, and to dust you shall return."

All of us go down to the dust; yet even at the grave we make our song:

Community: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Into your hands, O merciful Savior, we commend your beloved children. Acknowledge, we humbly beseech you, sheep of your own fold, lamb of your own flock, sinners of your own redeeming. Receive them into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace, and into the glorious company of the saints of light. **Amen.**

The Lessons

1 Samuel 1:19-28; Canticle of Hannah: (1 Samuel 2:1-10); Titus 3:4-7; Matthew 1:18-25 (Joseph)

First Testament

A reading from the first book of Samuel.

Hannah and her husband Elkanah rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I have asked him of the LORD."

The man Elkanah and all his household went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow. But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, that he may appear in the presence of the LORD and remain there forever; I will offer him as a nazirite for all time." Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Do what seems best to you; wait until you have weaned him; only, may the LORD establish your word."

So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him. When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine. She brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh, and the child was young. Then they slaughtered the bull and brought the child to Eli. And she said, "Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence praying to the LORD. For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me the petition that I made to him. Therefore I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD." And they worshiped the LORD there.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people. **Thanks be to God.**

Canticle

Let us say the Canticle responsively by whole verse beginning with the south side.

¹ Hannah prayed and she said,
“My heart exults in the Holy One of Old;
my horn is lifted up in my God.
My mouth opens wide against my enemies,
for I will rejoice in my victory.

² There is none holy like the Most High,
none besides you;
there is no rock like our God.

³ Speak proudly no more, multiplying pride,
nor let arrogance come from your mouth;
for the Ageless God is a God of knowledge,
and by God deeds are accounted.

⁴ The bows of the mighty are broken,
Yet the feeble gird on warrior-strength.

⁵ Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,
Yet those who were hungry are fat.
She who was barren has birthed seven children,
Yet she who has many children languishes.

⁶ The Creator of All kills and gives life;
Brings down to Sheol and raises up.

⁷ The Gracious One makes poor and makes rich;
Brings low and also lifts up.

⁸ God raises the poor from the dust,
And lifts the needy from heaps of human waste,
To seat them with nobles and inherit a seat of honor.
For to the Creator belong the pillars of the earth,
And on them God has set the world.

⁹ God will guard the feet of the faithful who belong to God,
While the wicked perish in shadow;
For it is not by might that one prevails.

¹⁰ The Holy One of Sinai!
Those who strive against God shall be shattered;
God thunders against them from heaven.

The Fount of Justice will judge the ends of the earth;
God will give strength to God's ruler,
And exalt the power of the anointed of God."

New Testament

A reading from the book of Titus.

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel

The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ according to Matthew. **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

The Gospel of Our Savior. **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

Sermon: At the invitation of the preacher, please be seated.

The Nicene Creed: Please stand as you are able

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 became truly human. 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, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who 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: An Advent Litany of Darkness and Light

Clergy: Let us pray.

Reader: We wait in the darkness, expectantly, longingly, anxiously, thoughtfully. The darkness is our friend. In the darkness of the womb, we have all been nurtured and protected. In the darkness of the womb, the Christ-child was made ready for the journey into light.

You are with us, O God,

Community: **In darkness and in light.**

It is only in the darkness that we can see the splendor of the universe—blankets of stars, the solitary glowings of distant planets. It was the darkness that allowed the magi to find the star that guided them to where the Christ-child lay.

You are with us, O God, **In darkness and in light.**

In the darkness of the night, desert people find relief from the cruel, relentless heat of the sun.

In the blessed darkness, Mary and Joseph were able to flee with the infant Jesus to safety in Egypt. You are with us, O God, **In darkness and in light.**

In the darkness of sleep, we are soothed and restored, healed and renewed. In the darkness of sleep, dreams rise up. God spoke to Jacob and Joseph through dreams. God is speaking still. You are with us, O God, **In darkness and in light.**

In the solitude of darkness, we sometimes remember those who need God's presence in a special way—the sick, the unemployed, the bereaved, the persecuted, the homeless; those who are demoralized and discouraged, those whose fear has turned to cynicism, those whose vulnerability has become bitterness. Sometimes in the darkness, we remember those who are near to our hearts—colleagues, partners, parents, children, neighbors, friends. We thank God for their presence and ask God to bless and protect them in all that they do—at home, at school, as they travel, as they work, as they play.

You are with us, O God, **In darkness and in light.**

Sometimes, in the solitude of darkness, our fears and concerns, our hopes and our visions rise to the surface. We come face to face with ourselves and with the road that lies ahead of us. And in that same darkness, we find companionship for the journey.

In that same darkness, we sometimes allow ourselves to wonder and worry whether humanity is going to make it at all. You are with us, O God, **In darkness and in light.**

Let us offer our own prayers of thanksgivings and intercessions.

When the time is right, a concluding collect is added.

Confession and Absolution of Sin: Please kneel as you are able

Clergy: Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Silence is kept. When the time is right...

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to

the glory of your Name. Amen.

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

The Peace: Please stand as you are able

The peace of Christ be always with you. **And also with you.**

Everyone's space and sensitivities are respected.

When someone offers their elbow, fist, or a peace sign, we respond appropriately.

Doxology: Please stand as you are able

All things come of thee, O Lord; **And of thine own have we given thee.**

The Great Thanksgiving

Large/full text of Eucharistic Prayer is available in the narthex.

God dwells in you. **And also in you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to our God**

Let us give our thanks to God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

We praise you and we bless you, holy and gracious God, source of life abundant...

And so, this day we join with Saints and Angels in the chorus of praise that rings through eternity, lifting our voices to magnify you as we say:

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 who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Glory and honor and praise to you, holy and living God...

Through Christ and with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, to you be honor, glory, and praise, for ever and ever. **AMEN.**

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

Our Father/Mother/Creator, 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.

The Bread is broken. A period of silence is kept.

We break this bread to share in the Body of Christ.

We who are many are one body, for we all share in the one bread.

All are invited to Holy Communion.

We come to the altar and receive the bread. We ask the minister if we desire a gluten-free wafer. We receive the wine in a personal chalice. They are placed in the baskets by the pillars as we return to our seats. To receive a blessing, we cross our arms across our chest. It is the historic position of the church that communion is complete with just one of the elements. We let an usher know if we wish communion to be brought to us.

The Bread and the Cup are given with these words.

The Body of Christ, the bread of heaven. **Amen.**

The Blood of Christ, the cup of salvation. **Amen.**

Postcommunion Prayer: Please stand as you are able

Almighty and everliving God, we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and for assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the Body of your Son, and heirs of your eternal kingdom. And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

*Blessing: After the blessing the community responds: **Amen.***

*Dismissal: After the dismissal the community responds: **Thanks be to God.***

St. Mark's Episcopal Parish: A Community of Grace

Vision: We will be a faith community that spreads God's word, loves like Jesus, enjoys worshiping together, and helps our neighbors.

Mission: To be a place where love and hope abound: we welcome everyone to our worship and communion, we help one another understand God and know Jesus, we nurture our community and the world, and we celebrate diversity and work for social justice.

330 E. 16th St., Upland, CA 91784

(909) 920-5565

E-mail: parishadmin@stmarks-upland.org

Web: www.stmarks-upland.org

Facebook: Saint Mark's Episcopal Parish Upland, CA

YouTube: Saint Mark's Episcopal Church Upland, CA

Instagram: [@stmarksupland](https://www.instagram.com/stmarksupland)