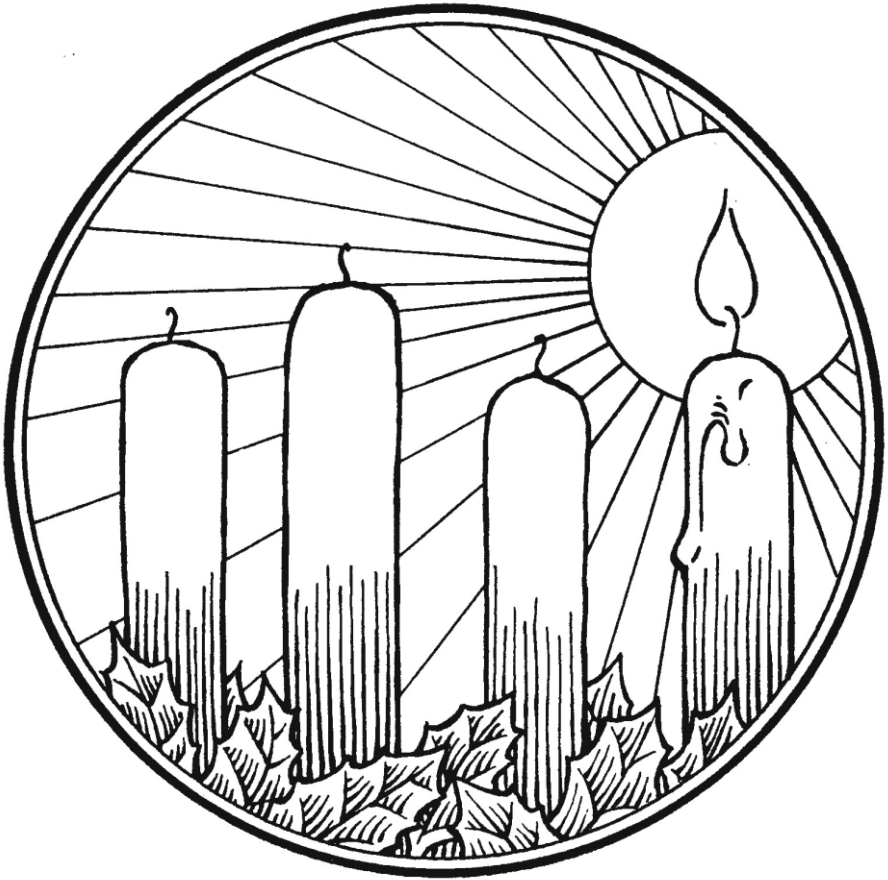


FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT
3 DECEMBER 2023



OUR SAVIOR'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN WORSHIP, SETTING 10

The liturgy is in the front of the ELW starting on page 203.

The hymns begin in the middle of the ELW with numbers at the top of the pages.

PRELUDE

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

HANGING OF THE CHRISTMAS GREENS

P: Our Father, we long for the simple beauty of Christmas – for all the old familiar melodies, words, and symbols that remind us of that great miracle when God who had made all things came one night as a babe, to lie in the crook of a woman’s arm. But in that longing, let us even more yearn for your renewed presence among us even as we celebrate and expect the Coming of your Son. Before such mystery we kneel, as we follow the shepherds and Wise Men to bring You the gift of our love – a love we confess that has not always been as warm or sincere or real as it should have been. Now, as we enter into this Advent Season, we pray that love would find its Beloved, and from You receive the grace to make it pure again, warm and real.

We bring You our gratitude for every token of Your love, for all the ways You have heaped blessings upon us during the years that have gone. And we do pray, Lord Jesus, that as we begin this four-week journey of expectation and hope, we may do it in a manner well pleasing to You. May all we do and say, every tribute of our hearts, bring honor to Your name, that we, Your people, may remember Your birth and feel Your presence among us even yet.

May the loving kindness of this Advent Season and the true Spirit of Christmas not only creep into our hearts this season, but there abide, so that not even the return to earthly cares and responsibilities, not all the festivities of our own devising may cause it to creep away weeping. May the joy and spirit of Christmas remain with us now and forever. In the name of Jesus, who came to save His people from their sins, even in that lovely name we pray.

C: Amen.

THE MEANING OF THE SERVICE

P: As we begin the Christian Year, we also celebrate the Holy Season known as Advent. It is a time when we prepare ourselves for the coming of our Messiah. Advent means "Coming." We celebrate these days of Advent in expectation and preparation for Christ's arrival.

Through the centuries, Christians have observed a time of waiting and expectation before celebrating the birth of the Savior at Christmas. The Advent season is a time for reflection and preparation, but its mood is joyful. Advent has been enriched by Christian tradition to reflect its distinctive Christian meaning. It proclaims the revelation of God's love as expressed in Christ's birth in a humble stable, His sacrificial death on the cross, and His victorious resurrection! It points to the hope of Christ's coming again as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Advent makes innkeepers out of all of us, asking each of us to make room for the arrival of Christ The King. Let us, today, prepare Him room in our hearts, our lives, and our homes!

HYMN #436: "WAKE, AWAKE, FOR NIGHT IS FLYING "

THE LESSONS OF ADVENT

Over these next weeks of Advent, let us listen to the lessons of the years and the centuries, not just to impressions of the moment. The images in the biblical story are often discouraging - war, hate, famine, epidemics, a Caesar on his throne, a Paul in prison, Christians being persecuted. But now, after the centuries, the Caesar is gone; Paul is a symbol of Faith; and Jesus, the Truth and the Light, is reaching out to every nation!

Let us, through the great traditions of our Faith, join with the shepherds of Bethlehem, the wise men from the east, and the seekers throughout the ages, to welcome the One who came at Christmas. Let us at Christmastide bring our gifts to Him, and may the message of our songs be "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, Peace and goodwill to peoples everywhere."

HYMN: PREPARE THE ROYAL HIGHWAY

♪ **Prepare the royal highway; the King of kings is near!**
Let ev'ry hill and valley a level road appear!
Then greet the King of glory, foretold in sacred story:
Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God's word!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray. (*concluding...now and forever.*)

C: Amen

READINGS

L: The Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Please stand.

GOSPEL

P: The Holy Gospel according to Mark, the 13th chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Please be seated.

THE SANCTUARY EVERGREENS

The most striking and the most universal feature of Christmas is the use of evergreens in churches and homes. Among ancient Romans evergreens were an emblem of peace, joy, and victory. The early Christians placed them in their windows to indicate that Christ had entered the home. Holly and ivy, along with pine, and fir are called evergreens because they never change color. They are ever-green, ever-alive, even in the midst of winter. They symbolize the unchanging nature of our God, and they remind us of the everlasting life that is ours through Christ Jesus.

Under Christian thought and sentiment, holly became widely used in church celebrations. Holly was considered as the burning bush, or a symbol of Mary whose being glows with the Holy Spirit. The red berries represented the blood drops from the cruel thorns in the crown of Jesus.

In Isaiah 60:13 we find these words: "The Glory of Lebanon shall come unto you, the fir tree, the pine tree and the box together, to beautify the place of your sanctuary." Our forefathers called the procuring of these evergreens, "Bringing home Christmas!"

HYMN: AWAKE! AWAKE, AND GREET THE NEW MORN

As the song is sung, the evergreens on the side walls are put in place.

**♪ Awake! Awake, and greet the new morn,
for angels herald its dawning.
Sing out your joy, for soon he is born,
behold! the Child of our longing.
Come as a baby weak and poor,
to bring all hearts together,
he opens wide the heav'yly door
and lives now inside us forever.**

THE CHRISTMAS TREE

Today, the Christmas tree is the center of our festivities. Glittering with lights and ornaments, it is a part of the beauty and meaning of Christmas. There are several legends and stories about the Christmas tree.

The first use of the Christmas tree was in the medieval German Paradise Plays, held outdoors and portraying the creation of humankind. The Tree of Life was a fir tree decorated with apples. Later other ornaments were hung upon them, such as paper flowers and gilded nuts. In England branches or whole trees were forced into bloom indoors for Christmas. From these beginnings the use of a tree at Christmas was established.

Martin Luther was perhaps the first to use a lighted tree. The story is told that on one Christmas Eve Martin Luther wandered outdoors and became enraptured with the beauty of the starry sky. Its brilliance and loveliness led him to reflect on the glory of the first Christmas Eve as seen in Bethlehem's radiant skies. Wishing to share with his wife and children the enchantment he had felt, he cut from the forest an evergreen, glistening with snow, and took it home. He placed upon it candles to represent the glorious heavens he had seen. The use of a

candle-lighted tree spread to all Europe, then America came to regard it as the central ornament of Christmas.

HYMN: I AM SO GLAD EACH CHRISTMAS EVE

♪ **When mother trims the Christmas tree
Which fills the room with light,
She tells me of the wondrous Star
That made the dark world bright.**

**She says the Star is shining still,
And never will grow dim;
And if it shines upon my way,
It leads me up to him.**

After the song is sung, the tree is decorated. After the decorations have been placed on the tree, the lights are turned on.

THE CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA

Most Christmas greenery reflects European traditions. But one colorful plant, which looks like a flaming star, the poinsettia, is a native to the American continent. It was named after Dr. Joel Robert Poinset, an ambassador to Mexico who first introduced it to the United States in 1828. The people of Mexico and Central America call the brilliant tropical plant the "Flower of the Holy Night." The Poinsettia is a many-pointed star that has become a symbol of the Star of Bethlehem.

HYMN: THE KING SHALL COME

As the song is sung, the flowers are placed on the altar.

♪ **The King shall come when morning dawns
and light and beauty brings.
Hail, Christ the Lord! Your people pray:
come quickly, King of kings.**

THE PARAMENTS AND ADVENT COLORS

Both visual and performing arts have always been important ways to communicate the Christian faith. The use of music has helped believers understand their Godly hope. Other forms of visual art have

been used from the beginning to help express various aspects of Christian doctrine and life.

Colors, altar paraments or coverings, and banners are some of the most important visual ways Christians have used to express their faith in worship. The objective in covering the Communion Table with cloths of various colors was to help focus the attention of worshippers on the special nature of Christ as the Perfect Sacrifice. In the early days of Christian worship, Advent and Christmas were seen as a somber time, much like Lent is today. Purple table coverings were used to speak of Christ's Kingship, but the mood was somber.

As Christians began to share their celebration of Christmas with their non-Christian neighbors they began to focus on the joy of the Christmas event. As the emphasis of Christmas began to change to one of joyful celebration the color used also changed to express Christ the King in that more happy way. While purple is still used in some churches and at certain times, many Christian churches now use blue to speak of the Kingship of Christ when the occasion is joyful. At Advent we wait with anticipation and celebration for our coming Christ.

HYMN: ON JORDAN'S BANK THE BAPTIST'S CRY

As the song is sung, the paraments are changed.

**♪ On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
announces that the Lord is nigh;
awake and harken, for he brings
glad tidings of the King of kings!**

THE ADVENT CANDLES

Advent is a time of expectation, and this is symbolized, not only by the four-week period of preparation, but also by the lighting of an Advent Candle on each Sunday of the season. The flame of each new candle reminds us, the worshipers, that something is happening, and something more is still to come.

The candles are arranged in a circle to remind us of the continuous power of God, which knows neither beginning nor ending. There is also symbolism in the colors of the candles. The blue candles

symbolize the coming of Christ from the royal line of David. He is coming as the King of Kings as well as the Prince of Peace. The large white candle in the center is known as the Christ candle, and points to Jesus as the Christ, the Light of the world.

A progression is noted in the lighting of the candles of the Advent wreath each Sunday. Each candle symbolizes various aspects of our waiting experience. The culmination of the season comes as we light the Christ Candle on Christmas Eve. We join in rejoicing that the promise of long ago has been fulfilled.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT
~ HOPE FOR THOSE WHO WAIT ~

P: Advent is a time for the human heart to wait, while trusting God's eternal time.

C: How long, O Lord, how long?

P: For those waiting for answered prayer:

C: Grant Your steadfast patience.

P: For those waiting in the face of uncertainty:

C: Grant unshakable confidence in your sovereign provision.

P: For those waiting for justice and mercy to reign:

C: Grant a glimpse of your glory in our wounded world.

P: For all of us waiting for God's kingdom to come:

C: Grant that we might have the peace of Christ as we wait, the love of Christ as we act, and the grace of Christ as we speak.

CANDLE LIGHTING

This morning we light the **first candle** which reminds us that throughout history, God's people have spent time waiting, wandering and wondering about the timing of God's eternal plan. Like the people of old, we long for God's presence to illuminate the areas of life where we are called to wait. This morning we echo the words of the Psalmist, "Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!" (Psalm 27:14)

“CHRIST, BE OUR LIGHT!”



THE NATIVITY

One of the most heart-warming expressions of Christmas is the Nativity. The Nativity speaks of the mystery of God's wisdom. Why God chose to send his Son into our world as a baby of humble birth, born in common surroundings, we do not know. What we do know is that God reached out to all people including the poor and wealthy, the simple and the wise, the powerless and the powerful. All who found him knelt in humility before him. Knowing God is possible because he came to us, at our level. Whenever we see a Nativity, we find ourselves with Mary and Joseph; with the Shepherds, and with the Wise Men; bowing before the manger, overwhelmed by God's expression of love in coming to us.

HYMN: AWAY IN A MANGER

As the song is sung, the nativity is put in place.

**Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
the stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.**

THE GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS

From the beginning of Christmas celebrations, gift giving has been a part of the season. The Wise Men gave out of their treasures, and the Shepherds gave of themselves. Both express the Gift of God in giving Christ as the Savior of the World.

Unique in our history of generous givers is the story of Saint Nicholas, Bishop of Myra in Lycia in the fourth century A.D. He is reputed to have been wealthy, his emblem being three purses and three golden balls. This was the symbol of rich Italian families of his time. It survives today in the signs of some of our pawnshops. The good Bishop gave his money away secretly to those whom he found in need. He was deeply interested in young people, giving his wealth especially to maidens whose lack of a dowry was affecting their matrimonial future, and to needy boys. Gifts coming from unknown sources were commonly attributed to him and parents customarily gave him credit for their gifts to their children.

The discovery of his generosity is said to have been made by the father of three dowry-less daughters. The eldest two each received from the chimney on successive nights a substantial gift of gold with her name on it. The father resolved to watch and see who their generous benefactor could be. His vigil revealed the good Saint Nicholas as the donor of the gifts. His name survives today as the human embodiment of unselfish giving.

Hanging up our stockings in pleasant anticipation of Santa's gifts may have originated from the fact that the maidens of this Bishopric of Myra, needing and expecting a dowry from the good Saint Nicholas, suspended a stocking to catch the money purse the generous Bishop was sure to drop down the chimney.

HYMN #296: "WHAT CHILD IS THIS"

The offering is collected during the hymn.

THE CHRIST OF CHRISTMAS

Please stand.

The greatest Gift of Christmas is the Gift of God in Christ Jesus. All that we do at this Holy Season points to that expression of Holy Love. Christ came as a babe in Bethlehem, God's gift at Christmas. As Christians we seek to pass on our heritage to our children and to those who, by faith in Christ, become part of the Family of God. It is through the work of the Holy Spirit in your life and mine that the Gift goes on.

CONFESSION OF FAITH: NICENE CREED

P: Living in the Hope of the Gift of Christ's coming again, we confess our faith.

**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,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and 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 and the Son,
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.**

GREAT THANKSGIVING

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE [*PAGE 207*]

P: It is indeed right...and join their unending hymn:

C: ♫ Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
 heav'n and earth are full of your glory.

 Hosanna in the highest.

 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

 Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

LORD'S PRAYER

**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,
forever and ever. Amen.**

CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

*ALL WHO ARE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST JESUS ARE INVITED TO RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION
GLUTEN-FREE WAFERS AND WHITE GRAPE JUICE ARE AVAILABLE.*

**♪ O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;
you suffered death our lives to save: have mercy now, we pray.**

**O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mercy now, we pray.**

**O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;
eternal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.**

HYMN #256 “COMFORT, COMFORT NOW MY PEOPLE”

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

P: Let us pray.

O God, you have caused this world to shine with the illumination of the true Light. You have given us your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him to reveal to us your glory and grace. As you have given this gift in love, may we receive it with joy. Grant that we, being regenerate and made your children by adoption and grace may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit. Grant us, we pray, that as we have known the mystery of that Light upon earth, so may we also reflect that light to a darkened world; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

BLESSING

P: May God direct your ways in peace, make you abound in love for one another and for all, and strengthen your hearts until the coming of our Lord Jesus. Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

C: Amen

HYMN #254 “COME, THOU LONG-EXPECTED JESUS”

DISMISSAL

P: Go in peace. Keep awake.

C: Thanks be to God!

RINGING OF THE BELL

POSTLUDE

Pastor: Rev. Leah Holloway-Nilsen
Organist: Jason Boussetot or Linda Whitman
Acolyte: Caden Will
Lector:
Communion Assistant: Neil Holmquist
Usher: Shane Glover
Cleaners: Brian Boussetot and Mary Timmerman

CONTACT INFORMATION

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THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Wednesday	5:45 pm	Christmas program practice at Our Savior's
	6:15 pm	Mid-week Advent meal at Our Savior's
	7:00 pm	Mid-week Advent service at Our Savior's
	7:30 pm	Bible Jam at Our Savior's
Sunday	8:00 am	Worship Service at Faith
	9:25 am	Sunday School at Our Savior's
	10:30 am	Worship Service at Our Savior's

Those to keep in prayer: Diane Sievers, Mallory Boussetot; the homebound: Carol Christensen, Ron Gasper, Delores Lahann, Lucy Lee Petersen, Myrna Kay Peterson, Rusty Porth, Betty Schau, Bus Seastrand and Vera St. John; and those serving in the military.

Advent Schedule

Join the confirmation students and Pastor each Wednesday for our mid-week Advent service. A meal will be served at 6:15 pm with the Advent service starting at 7:00 pm

Dec. 06 – Our Savior's Lutheran Church
Dec. 13 – Our Savior's Lutheran Church
Dec. 20 – Faith Lutheran Church

During the month of December, **winter coats, hats and gloves** will be collected for the Carroll Assistance Center.

The confirmation students have selected Holden Evening Prayer and will plan scriptures and hymns for the service. If you would like to assist the confirmation students in leading the vocal music, please contact Pastor.

The **God Squad Christmas party** will be at 7:30 pm on Wednesday, December 13, at Our Savior's Church. Junior high and high school youth are invited to join in the holiday fun!

The **Children's Christmas Program** will be at 10:30 am on Sunday, December 17, at Our Savior's. Two rehearsals are at 5:45 pm on Wednesdays, December 6 and 13, at Our Savior's. The final practice at 10:00 am on Saturday, December 16, will be followed by Christmas Caroling and a pizza party at Happy Joe's in DeWitt.

All reports for the **Faith and Our Savior's Annual Reports** are due in the church office by **Monday, December 18th**. These reports include: Pastor, Council Presidents, God Squad, Memorials and Gifts, Our Savior's Cemetery, and all Committees (Education, Outreach, Property and Management, and Worship). Financial reports, budgets, and audit reports are due in the church office by Monday, January 15, 2024.

Sunday, December 24th, there will be **one** morning service at Faith at 9:00 am. There will be no Sunday School that morning.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at Our Savior's at 9:00 pm.

Christmas Day Worship at Faith at 9:00 am

Sunday, December 31st, there will be **one** service at Our Savior's at 9:00 am. There will be no Sunday School that morning.

LIGHTING THE CANDLE

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth; now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light", and there was light. And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. (Genesis 1:1-4)

Thanksgiving Day is past, the pumpkin pie gone, the turkey all eaten, and the world has survived another Black Friday. I'm excited about putting up Christmas lights. Each year I am a lot more excited about putting up the lights than taking them down. I am like a little kid about the lights of Christmas! Give me any kind of Christmas light and I am thrilled: lights on the trees, lights on the houses, lights on the shops, lights on the cars, but especially the lights of a Christmas Eve service.

The importance of light for the world is dramatically set forth on the first page of the Bible. In the beginning of the creation story darkness covers the earth. But then, God sovereignly commands: "'Let there be light', and there was light." At these powerful words the cosmic battle of light against darkness is under way.

Darkness is opposed to God's purpose of goodness, beauty, and truth so much so that God's first creative act is to speak forth light. What is the first thing we do when the lights go out, but to search for a candle or flashlight to put out the darkness? On this first Sunday of Advent we reflect on the story of God's triumph of light.

Darkness is a fitting metaphor for many of life's bitter experiences. Darkness is a spiritual reality in our world, a powerful spiritual force working evil. Scripture speaks of "the power of darkness" (Colossians 1:13). Although darkness covers the earth on the first page of the Bible, by the time we reach the Bible's last page, God's defeat of darkness is final. "There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever" (Revelation 22:5). There is promise here in today's Genesis text as the Spirit of God begins to pierce the darkness. As we begin this Advent season it is a great time to put up lights and ready our Advent candles. We do this confident that darkness shall not prevail! With each light we joyfully proclaim Jesus as God's true Light who "shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5).

Loving Father, as we begin Advent, we light a candle in the midst of darkness. This candle represents our faith that one day all darkness, pain, and sorrow will be overcome by the light of Jesus. We look forward to God's new day when death will be no more, neither sorrow, nor pain. Let this candle be our reminder and our hope for your promised coming, your final triumph over darkness. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Timothy L. Smith