

Jesus lay down his sweet head. The stars in the sky look down where he lay, the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.” Christmas music calls us home to our roots, home to the story of the homeless one who became our shelter, home to the reminder we enter this world by the grace of God and completely dependent upon the kindness of others. Let the melodies of Christmas call our spirits home into God’s care this year.

***Hymn:—#240 (Blue Hymnal)**

“Hark the Herald Angels Sing”

***BENEDICTION:** The Lord bless all your preparations for the coming of Jesus. May God’s peace, grace, forgiveness and love find a cradle in your hearts. **Amen**

All prayer requests are welcome. Please write them in the book on the desk in the narthex.

MEMBERS: Please sign the pew pad and pass it down the pew and then back to the start. The last person should put the sheet in the offering plate. All e-mail addresses will be protected in blind copy so no one else sees your e-mail address. If you are receiving regular e-mails from Church, it is not necessary to write it in again.

VISITORS: Please fill out a yellow card found in the pew and place it in the offering place.

North Star District Prayer List for this week includes:
Park rapids; Riverside—Lee Kantonen

On this first Sunday of Advent, Lord, our hearts turn to your most precious gift, Jesus Christ. Help us eagerly anticipate his coming.

HYMN: - #196 (Blue Hymnal)

“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

TO HEAR GOD’S WORD & RESPOND

CHILDREN’S MOMENTS

THE INVITATION:

Holly Eckman

Stars illumine the night sky; carols resonate in the air; candlelight shimmers on windowpanes; lights drape like rainbows around evergreens; wreaths adorn doors; poinsettias flame red; angels stand at attention on treetops; cookies and baked goods adorn the air with sweetness. These are a few images woven into the sacred message of the night God became flesh and dwelt among us—not to dominate and control us, but to gently be held by us. Celtic tradition speaks of thin places where it seems especially likely to feel the presence of God. May our Christmas preparations birth *thin places* where we remember the baby Jesus and await Christ’s second coming. Welcome to a journey through the symbols of Christmas.

THE ADVENT COLORS:

Sharon Fangsrud

Today is the first day of the church calendar’s New Year. The year begins with waiting, an expectancy of help yet to arrive on this journey through life. In years past, **purple** found favor as the Advent color. Purple was viewed as the color of a heavenly king and broken king. Purple is a royal color—hence the phrase “purple mountains’ majesty.” Recently however, some churches have reclaimed another ancient color of advent—**blue**. Blue is the color of royalty, too. It hints at somberness and whispers of *the blues*. It reminds us of the sky before nightfall and the Genesis image of the Spirit of God hovering over the face of the waters about to do a new thing. Plus, blue points toward baptism and is a color of peace. Advent is NOT Lent. Following Christ is more than suffering. Life with Jesus is also joy, growth, peace and new birth. Purple and blue speak of royalty and baptism.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Isaiah 2:1-5 (NRSV)

Pastor Roger Grafenstein

CHOIR: “What Child Is this?”

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 24:36-44 (NRSV)

Naomi Grow

THE CHRISTMAS WREATH:

Doyne Grow

Made of that which is ever-green the wreath forms a circle: without beginning or end; it is a symbol of eternal life. It is an invitation to enter into the circle of God’s love; it’s a visual mission statement: Christ’s church exists to invite others into the circle of love and everlasting life. Wreaths with red holly and red ribbons have their own history. Tradition indicates holly was used to fashion Jesus’ crown of thorns. Red Holly berries bespeak Christ’s blood, as do the ribbons. Each doorway with a prickly wreath this season reminds us Jesus was willing to undergo great pain to open the door to a new way of life.

***Hymn: # 216 (Blue Hymnal)**

“Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming”

SILENT AND SPOKEN PRAYER :

Angie Horn

There is no way of knowing the prayers of Mary and Joseph when they found the inn was full and settled in the stable for the night. Loneliness, labor pains, far away from home. Somehow their prayers became angels singing of a beautiful baby born, coaxing shepherds to join Mary and Joseph. Somehow their prayers became a beacon of light that guided wise and generous visitors who chose to help provide for the family. Journeying with Jesus is believing in prayer’s power.

SHARING OF JOYS, CONCERNS, AND PRAYERS

(Please wait for the microphone and speak clearly, keeping it about an inch or two from your mouth.)

*** THE LORDS PRAYER**

HYMN: - # 235 (Blue Hymnal)

“Rock-a-Bye, My Dear Little Boy”

OFFERING: The gift-giving of Christmas has roots in the gifts of the Magi—gold, frankincense and myrrh. Frankincense points toward the movement of the spirit. Myrrh is symbolic of a holy anointing for life (or death). Gold is gold. Practically speaking it allowed Joseph and Mary to pay their way into Egypt while escaping Herod. Jesus needed supporters 2000 years ago just as he does now. Jesus’ ministry, message and love still live through our gifts.

THE POINSETTIA:

Stephanie Grow

An American in Mexico admired a beautiful plant that bloomed red each Christmas. In 1828 he brought the plant and its tradition back to the U.S. The Poinsettia was a visual sermon. “On the night of Jesus’ birth the Star of Bethlehem was so bright that it illumined the earth. The earth received the light, reflected the light and was changed by the light. On the night of Jesus’ birth a star-shaped flower was born—with white petals and golden-star centers. It became known as the Flower of the Holy Night, a sign of the ‘stars shouting forth the glory of God,’” Its whiteness was like starlight and the purity of baby Jesus. Its redness was the memory of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. Its green was the promise of new life. As the star heralded Jesus’ birth, each poinsettia still preaches the story of salvation —Jesus’ life, death and resurrection.

(Poinsettia carriers—Sunday School Children)

THE CHRISTMAS CAROLS:

Lori Burkhardt

A Native American Christian recalls the tradition of his grandparents. “Everyday,” grandma and grandpa said, “start the day with singing,” “During the night your soul travels and singing calls your soul back home to its body.” The metaphor may explain the power of music as we journey through Advent toward Christmas. Somehow the carols of the season sing our souls home. “Away in a manger no crib for a bed, the little Lord