

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Geneva

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Third Sunday of Advent + 15 December 2013

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle: *Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo*

We have the 3 of the 4 Advent Sunday Candles on the altar. We have the candles there from weeks 1, 3 and 4, but the candles from week 2 will come from the daily prayers with those hosting them as part of the intercessions.

Welcome

Prelude

Regine Kummer

Greeting

At the end of the Prelude, a person comes in with the candle is already lit. She lifts it up and says

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom.

Greeting

We have 6 people come with the poinsettias to the right side the altar, so they can easily one by one put the poinsettias in place after their phrase. The first person presents the plant

Blossoming,

the promise that the desert will bloom,

The person puts the first plant in place.

The second person comes.

Blossoming,

ears opened to hear a prophet's voice,

The person puts the second plant in place.

The third person comes.

Blossoming,

a cataract removed and all of a sudden the world has reds and blues,

The person puts the third plant in place.

The fourth person comes.

Blossoming,

a new set of knees able to move,

The person puts the fourth plant in place.

The fifth person comes.

Blossoming

a sudden way forward when all the roads seem closed,

The person puts the fifth plant in place.

The sixth person comes.

Blossoming,

the thrill of full-throated people singing their fears away.

The person puts the sixth plant in place.

Steve: Joy to the world.

We praise the wonders of the love of God,

and prepare room for the one who comes to make his blessings flow.

In the communion of the Spirit we repeat the sounding joy. Amen.

Hymn Joy to the world

Isaac Watts 1719: England

Lowell Mason (1792-1872): USA

1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come: let earth re-ceive its
 2. Joy to the world! The Sa- vior reigns: let us our songs em-
 3. No more let sins and sor- rows grow, nor thorns in- fest the
 4. He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the na- tions

King; let eve- ry heart pre- pare him room and
 ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains re-
 ground; he comes to make his bless- ings flow far
 prove the glo- ries of his right- eous- ness and

heaven and na- ture sing, and heaven and na- ture
 peat the sound- ing joy, re- peat the sound- ing
 as the curse is found, far as the curse is
 won- ders of his love, and won- ders of his
 and heaven and na- ture sing, and

sing, and heaven, and heaven and na- ture sing.
 joy, re- peat, re- peat the sound- ing joy.
 found, far as, far as the curse is found.
 love, and won- ders, won- ders of his love.
 heaven and na- ture sing.

Call to prayer

Christmas bells ring: "bling-bling"?
 By Andrew Bauer-Moore and Greg Rakness

Scenario

Manger scene located in front of altar. Ariel and Muriel stage-right back of altar with branches to make wreath. Narrator sitting next to pulpit. Gabriel enters stage-left from vestry.

Scene 1

Gabriel: (*muttering to himself*) Boy oh boy, have we got to focus. We have got to focus! (*stops stage-left back of altar, sees Ariel*) Hey there, Angel Ariel, I was just looking for you. I just got out of the Head Angels' Management Meeting with The Boss. You know, The Boss, our Lord? He's always got us working on something! Well, this time he's concerned that not enough people know about the message of Christmas. He said to me, "Angel Gabriel, as Head Angel of Celestial

Marketing, you are in charge of publicity for the birth of my one and only Son.”

Ariel: Right, right. Message of Christmas...

Muriel: Check!

Ariel: Publicity...

Muriel: Check!

Gabriel: So then, get this. You know how The Boss likes symbolism and stuff? He hands me a bunch of evergreen branches and says, “Keep it simple.” What are we going to do? We don’t *do* simple.

Ariel: Right, right. Hmm... *(thinking)* Branches... hmm... Christmas... hmm... symbolism... Aha, I’ve got it! OK, so, we know The Boss likes a little bit of drama, right? A little bang for the buck. A little bling-bling. For example, remember the exodus? He didn’t just lead his people out of Egypt...

Gabriel: He parted the Red Sea!

Ariel: Remember the 10 commandments? He didn’t just write them on a piece of paper...

Muriel: He wrote them on stone!

Ariel: Remember changing Jacob’s name to Israel? He didn’t just rename him...

Gabriel: He sent me to wrestle with him all night! Oof. I’m still sore! OK, so what’s your idea to add a little “bling-bling” to the Christmas story?

Ariel: Here’s what our writers have managed to come up with.

Muriel: Lights, camera, action!

Scene 2

During Narrator’s speech, Mary and Joseph enter from the back of the church (choir-side), move slowly up to the altar, and take their place in front of the altar.

Narrator: In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Gabriel: Stop stop stop! *(to Ariel, disappointed)* Ariel, what is this? You call this “bling-bling”? A manger? Swaddling clothes? *(pointing at Mary)* And that actress will never do. Look at her, she’s a mess!

Mary: *(indignant)* I’d like to see how you look after riding a donkey from Nazareth to Bethlehem when you’re nine months pregnant, and then give birth in a barn!

Ariel: Right, right. And now we bring in the branches, with just a touch of “bling-bling”. (*gives a branch to Mary and one to Joseph*) Here’s a branch for each of you. (*to audience*) ... with a little something extra...

Mary: A branch? What am I going to do with this? (*looking more closely*) Hey, wow, this is great! My branch has money in it! Nothing better than a Christmas that goes ka-ching. That’s what Christmas is all about!

Joseph: A branch? What am I going to do with this? (*looking more closely*) Hey wow, this is great! My branch has an electronic calendar! Now I can keep track of the thousand and one appointments I have every day. Now that’s a Christmas story I can appreciate.

Gabriel: (*nodding his head*) Hey, wow, not bad. The Christmas story is much more sellable with cold hard cash and the latest gadgetry. Alright, let’s see what else you’ve got.

Muriel: Lights, camera, action!

Scene 3

During the following speech of the Narrator, the Shepherds appear from the back of the church (lectern-side) and make their way to the lectern-side of the altar where the mic is located.

Narrator: And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

Gabriel: Stop stop stop! (*to Ariel, disappointed*) Ariel, what is this? You call this “bling-bling”? First a manger, and now shepherds? (*pointing at the shepherds*) Who cares about shepherds? We need Justin Bieber!

Shepherd 1: Without shepherds, the world would be full of stray sheep.

Ariel: Right, right. So let’s add a little bling-bling to appeal to our audience, and of course the branches. (*gives one to each shepherd*) Here’s a branch for each of you. (*to audience*) With a little something extra...

Shepherd 1: A branch? What am I going to do with this? (*looking more closely*) Hey, wow, this is great! My branch has a smart phone. I’ll never be alone with my thoughts again. This addition to the Christmas story is a great idea.

Shepherd 2: A branch? What am I going to do with this? (*looking more closely*) Hey, wow, this is... good. But my branch only has a Blackberry. His branch is a lot nicer than mine. This addition to the Christmas story makes me jealous.

Gabriel: (*nodding his head*) Hey, wow, not bad. You’re a genius, Ariel. The Christmas story could use a little 21st century technology and some jealousy to keep the audience’s interest. Alright, let’s see what else you’ve got.

Scene 4

Shepherds move to choir-side of altar. Wisemen appear from the back of the church (lectern-side) and make their way to the lectern-side of the altar where the mic is located.

Narrator: After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Wisemen from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." ...and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Gabriel: Now this is great stuff! Kings! Gold! This is what I call "bling-bling." (*pointing at wisemen*) Maybe they should enter in a gold plated car with some fake smoke? We need a rock band, light show and dancers!

Wisewoman 1: (*pompously*) My dear sir, do not speak to us as you would speak to a plebian. We are wise men and women. We don't (*cough cough*) "do" rock bands...

Ariel: Right, right. (*as if it's just the normal course of affairs*) And here are your branches. With a little something extra...

Wiseman 1: A branch? What am I going to do with this? (*looking more closely*) Hey, wow, this is great! My branch has a mirror. I do love to look at myself, because I always look so queenly... and wise. This addition to the Christmas story is a great idea.

Wiseman 2: A branch? What am I going to do with this? (*looking more closely*) Hey, wow, this is great! My branch has a designer handbag. Nothing better than the soft touch of Louis Vuitton. I like this addition to the Christmas story.

Gabriel: (*nodding his head*) Ariel, I gotta hand it to you. You've given the Christmas story mass appeal, and even managed to work in the branches.

Ariel: Well, I try to keep the Boss happy, while doing my part to stimulate consumption and keep the old economy rolling.

Wiseman 3 enters from door stage left.

Wiseman 3: Hold on a second. I think you're missing the point.

Gabriel: Stop stop stop. Who are you?

Wiseman 3: I am the third wiseman. I'm late because it was cloudy and I lost track of the star. But now I've arrived, and I see that you all have lost track of everything! You people with branches. The message of Christmas is not about getting presents, money, or an expensive handbag. And Christmas is certainly not about who has the latest smartphone or who looks the best. Don't you see? That baby. That baby right there. He is the message of Christmas.

Ariel: (*slowly*) Right, right. You mean to say that the baby Jesus is the message of Christmas? But, then, that means... ohhh... (*realizing they have made a mistake*) I just had another idea. Let's take all those branches and place them around the manger.

The actors put the branches to make a wreath around the manger.

Gabriel: Ohhh... Now I see. The message of Christmas doesn't need drama. The message of

Christmas doesn't need bling-bling. Ariel my friend, another job well done: the message of Christmas is centred in the wreath. Christ the King is a baby in the manger.

All kneel before the Manger. Angel Choir enters and sings "Away in a manger"

Prayer of confession

Fragile God, as helpless as a baby,
when we bury you under a pile of presents,

forgive us.

When we lose track of what we are celebrating,

forgive us.

When we succumb to the wiles of style
rather than following your example of self-denial,

forgive us.

*Turn us to simplicity,
a fear-less fragility, filled with your grace,
whose branches gather us round a nativity of love,
blossoming bright with new birth,
through Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Kyrie eleison

Words of acceptance

Jesus Christ, our way through the desert,
Jesus Christ, our awakening to new possibilities,
Jesus Christ, the blossom in the night
with the fragrance of forgiveness,
enveloping us within his love,
which leads to eternal life. Amen.

Here we put the coffee beans in place in their spot.

Please rise.

Hymn of Praise

Prayer of the day

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray

Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God,
and strengthen our faith in your coming,
that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your way
blossoming with your love;
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship slightly adapted*

Alleluia

Gospel Reading

Matthew 11:2-11

The Gospel according to Matthew chapter 11.

Glory to you, O Lord.

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are

cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.'

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you." Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Before the Alleluia we put the branches in place on the altar.

Alleluia

The people are seated.

The six people who had brought the flowers now gather on the choir side, with the six candles from week 1. We are doing this backwards, so we end with the verse about the blossoms.

Old Testament Reading Isaiah 35:1-10
A reading from the prophet Isaiah chapter 35

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Someone lights the sixth of the first week's daily candle

A highway shall be [in the desert], and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.

Someone lights the fifth of the first week's daily candle

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

Someone lights the fourth of the first week's daily candle

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

Someone lights the third of the first week's daily candle

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you."

Someone lights the second of the first week's daily candle

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it

shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing.

Someone lights the first of the first week's daily candle

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Rev. Dr. Stephen Larson

Since I have not included in the liturgy any interaction with the blossom, maybe you could invite people to tell stories when something unexpected blossomed in someone they know. (Or maybe about themselves. But telling about someone else gets us over the me-me-me ethos of our time.) You could take a poinsettia and give it to someone, (someone pre-prepared) but then maybe other stories would come.

Hymn **Lo, how a rose e'er blooming**

Köln 1599, English vs 1,2 Theodore Baker Alte Catholische Geistliche Kirchengesäng, 1599
vs 3 Harriet R. Krauth. vs 4, John C. Mattes. harm. Michael Praetorius, 1609

1. Lo, how a Rose e'er bloom - ing from ten - der stem hath sprung!
2. I - sa - iah 'twas fore - told it, the Rose I have in mind;
3. This flower, whose fra - grance ten - der with sweet - ness fills the air,
4. O Sav - ior, child of Mar - y, who felt our hu - man woe;

Of Jes - se's lin - eage com - ing, as those of old have sung.
with Ma - ry we be - hold it, the Vir - gin Moth - er kind.
dis - pel in glo - rious spen - dor the dark - ness ev - ery - where.
O Sav - ior, king of glo - ry, who dost our weak - ness know:

It came, a flower - et bright, a - mid the cold of
To show God's love a - right, she bore to us a
True man, yet ver - y God, from sin and death he
bring us at length, we pray, to the bright courts of

win - ter, when half spent was the night.
Sav - ior, when half spent was the night.
saves us, and light - ens ev - ery load.
heav - en and in - to end - less day.

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

***I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,***

*suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven. He is seated at the right hand of the Father
and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen*

Prayers of Intercession

In homes, here at church, by video, we as a community and beyond our community have been praying every day this past week. We begin our prayers of intercession by bringing the candles lit during these days. The candles bring to this altar the prayers offered in other places. Could we have the six persons come and gather in front of the altar. Then with a word or sentence offer a prayer while you light the candle.

Tom
Kiki
Simone
Miriam
Andrew
Becki

Response Advent Wreath part 3

bud by bud
 des - serts will flower. Song by song joy re - leas - es its power.
 Whole - ness re - vealed for all to see,
 dance with the one who sets wear - y hearts free.

Then the prayers continue.

The Peace

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

Gathering of Gifts *Maria durch ein Dornwald ging* *choir*
German medieval carol

*Maria walks amid the thorn, Kyrie eleison. Maria walks amid the thorn,
 Which seven years no leaf has born. Jesus and Maria.*

*What 'neath her heart doth Mary bear? Kyrie eleison.
 A little child doth Mary bear, Beneath her heart He nestles there. Jesus and Maria.*

*And as the two are passing near, Kyrie eleison. Lo! roses on the thorns appear,
Lo! roses on the thorns appear. Jesus and Maria.*

Offertory hymn

The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Preface

Creator of deserts blossoming in the washing rain.

Creator of women and men re-formed into your image

by the saving love of your Beloved,

Creator of joy flowing in your people like a river of clear, pure water

so that with the trees of the field

we break forth into song

joining the church on earth and all the hosts of heaven

in the praise of your glory.

Sanctus

Eucharistic Prayer

Blessed is Jesus the Christ.

Of him we tell what we see and hear:

the blind receive their sight, the lame walk,

the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear,

the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.

Blessed is the Jesus the Christ, who blossoms red.

Words of Institution

On the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Flowers grace this table, as well as bread,

Candle light is reflected on the wine,

because our host invites us to a glorious feast,

where all are fed,

where best and least gather close to dine without distinction,

sharing his body, his blood.

We proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Send your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine,

so that we blossom as your people,

a flowering of your love for the sake of the whole world.

Christ born in love

Christ dying for love

Christ coming again so love is over all,
whom with you and the Holy Spirit we praise now and forever.
Amen.

Lord's Prayer *in our many languages*

We say the Lord's Prayer in our many languages
*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.*

Agnus Dei

Sussex Carol

You take a - way the sin of the world, O
Lamb of God have mer - cy. You take a - way the
sin of the world, O Lamb of God have mer - cy.
You take a - way the sin of the world,
O Lamb of God grant us your peace.

Communion

(Because this is the table of Jesus Christ, all people are welcome and invited to his feast. Communion is continuous. Please come forward and gather around the altar. Receive the bread in your hands. Glutenfree wafers are available from the server. Take the chalice from the server or help yourself to one of the small, individual glasses. Please return to your seat after receiving communion.)

Songs during communion

Sending forth

You do not give up, God,
you keep feeding us,
leading us,
filling us with the big words of your realm.
Send us forth as branches of your vine, Jesus Christ,
able to do your will, and share your love,
today, this week, now unto forever. Amen.

Benediction

Introduction of Visitors and Announcements