

Order of Worship for December 7, 2025 (like 12/4/22)

The **Great “O Antiphons”** used in the service this morning have been used in the Christian Church in the days before Christmas since the 8th Century and are the basis of the Christmas hymn, “*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*”. The author of these antiphons is unknown.

Prelude:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

Calling on God: (Pastor) C. **Amen.**

Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 11:1-10

R: There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what His eyes see, or decide disputes by what His ears hear, but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His waist, and faithfulness the belt of His loins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of Him shall the nations inquire, and His resting place shall be glorious.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Advent Call for Repentance

P: Blessings on Him who comes as King, whom comes in the name of the LORD.

C: **Praise to our God, and peace to His people on earth.**

P: I will hear what the LORD God has to say.

C: **A voice that speaks for peace.**

P: Peace for all people and for His friends,

C: **And those who turn to him in their hearts**

P: His help is near for those who fear Him.

C: **And His glory will live in our land.**

P: Blessings on Him who comes as King, whom comes in the name of the LORD.

C: **Praise to our God, and peace to His people on earth.**

P: We bless You, O God, for Your Word of promise, for the coming of Your Son through the waters of Baptism and the Bread of Life. We look to His coming in glory and confess our common faith.

Gospel Lesson: Matthew 3:1-12

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew the third chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” For this is He who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight.’”

Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

“I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.”

P: This is the Gospel of our Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

THE GREAT "O ANTIPHONS" OF ADVENT

FIRST ANTIPHON – SAPIENTIA

O Wisdom, proceeding from the mouth of the Most High, pervading and permeating all creation, mightily ordering all things: Come and teach us the way of prudence.

P: Behold, the name of the Lord cometh from far:

C: And let the whole earth be filled with His glory.

Congregation sings:

*O come, Thou Wisdom from on high, Who ord'rest all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show, And teach us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

SECOND ANTIPHON – O ADONAI

O Adonai and ruler of the house of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the burning bush and gave him the Law on Sinai: Come with an outstretched arm and redeem us.

P: Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Alleluia!

C: Make His paths straight. Alleluia!

Congregation sings:

*O come, O come, Thou Lord of might, Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times didst give the Law, In cloud, and majesty, and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

THIRD ANTIPHON – O RADIX JESSE

O Root of Jesse, standing as an ensign before the peoples, before whom all kings are mute, to whom the nations will do homage: Come quickly to deliver us.

P: Rejoice greatly, O Jerusalem.

C: Behold thy King cometh.

Congregation sings:

*O come, Thou Branch of Jesse's tree, Free them from Satan's tyranny
That trust Thy mighty pow'r to save, And give them vict'ry o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

FOURTH ANTIPHON – O CLAVIS DAVID

O Key of David and Scepter of the house of Israel, You open and no one can close, You close and no one can open. Come and rescue the prisoners who are in darkness and the shadow of death.

P: Come, O Lord, and make no tarrying:

C: Loosen the bonds of Thy people Israel.

Congregation sings:

*O come, Thou Key of David, come, And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high, And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

FIFTH ANTIPHON – O ORIENS

O Dayspring, splendor of light everlasting. Come and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

P: Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined:

C: Our God shall come. Alleluia!

Congregation sings:

*O come, Thou Dayspring from on high, And cheer us by thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, And death's dark shadow put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

SIXTH ANTIPHON – O REX GENTIUM

O King of the nations, the ruler they long for, the cornerstone uniting all people: Come and save us all, whom You formed out of clay.

P: Behold, the Lord shall come and all His saints with Him. Alleluia!

C: And in that day, the light shall be great. Alleluia!

Congregation sings:

*O come, Desire of nations, bind In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease, And be Thyself our King of Peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

SEVENTH ANTIPHON – O EMMANUEL

O Emmanuel, our king and our Lord, the anointed for the nations and their Savior:
Come and save us, O Lord our God.

P: Drop down, ye heavens from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness:

C: Let the earth open and bring forth salvation.

Congregation sings:

*O come, O come, Emmanuel And ransom captive Israel, That mourns in lonely exile here Until
the Son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

Sermon: “Far From Home”- Isaiah 11:1-10

Welcome to the busiest time of the year. In the days and weeks leading up to Christmas, we are all over the place. We spend long hours at work, trying to wrap up a project or two before the office shuts down for the holidays. We have the obligatory parties, the school performances, and a terribly long list of errands to run. Especially here in Ames, when everything seems to be crammed into the first two weekends before all of the Iowa State students leave town, it feels like a lot. In the run-up to Christmas, we are bouncing here, there, and everywhere, spending time far from the one place we long to be. And where is it that we want to be? You know the answer: home. We all just want to be home, maybe wrapped up under a blanket with a fire going, with the people we love the most in the place that brings us peace.

It's interesting, if you think about it. We endure the hustle of the holidays with hearts yearning for the comforts of home. It parallels the story that sits at the heart of Christmas itself. It's the story of a God who leaves his own home to gather his people—a people whose faith was riddled with doubt and disbelief, whose bodies were breaking and heaving in a sin-sick world, and whose minds raced with fear and uncertainty due to the evil forces swirling about them. God gathers us, so that we can come home to him.

Isaiah was prophesying to a people under the threat of extermination. Judah, the southern kingdom of God's people, had witnessed the obliteration of Israel—the northern kingdom—at the hand of the Assyrians. The world of privilege, protection, and blessing that God's people saw as their birthright no longer existed. And the reality of themselves being overtaken, exiled, or eradicated cast a shadow over their lives. The lush, large, and enduring tree that was God's people was being felled by outsiders, leaving nothing but a cursed stump, waiting to be ground into non-existence.

This is not just the awful state of God's people in 740 BC. It is a picture, a metaphor, for the state of the entire world as a result of sin. The faithlessness of Israel and Judah would bring about their respective exiles. But long before God's people existed, it was the faithlessness of Adam and Eve that earned the world an exile from Eden. It was their refusal to believe in the promises of God—repeated countless times in the heart of every man and woman since—that pushed you and me into a world where judgment looms and the pains of being ousted from God's presence abound. Our bodies break, our hearts are unfaithful, death taunts us, and we constantly suffer a hunger for approval that no amount of effort and accomplishment can satisfy.

The philosopher Heidegger called it *unheimlichkeit*—a feeling of deep dislocation, of being out of place in the very world we inhabit. It's feeling alienated in our own bodies, living in a world that doesn't meet our deepest needs or fit our true desires. We are out of sync, we are out of rhythm, knowing deep down inside of us that this place, this life—with all of its pains and problems, sins and struggles, evils and atrocities, anxieties and idolatries—isn't what we were made for. You feel it, don't you? There's the perpetual sin that you keep running to, despite all of the promises you've made to your spouse, to yourself, and to God. There's the guilt you can't shake from a mistake in the past, despite being told time and again that it's been forgiven. There's the chronic pain you carry, despite having worked so hard to take care of your health. There's the heart and soul you poured into kids and career and hobbies and habits, thinking they'd make you feel right and good, full, and happy—only to find that you're still nagged by a sense that you're not enough. It's that quiet whisper: "This isn't how it's supposed to be." We're homesick for a home we've never known. As CS Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity*, "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."

And you're right. It's not. Because this isn't the home God intends for us. Listen to this reminder from Moses in Psalm 90: "Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God" (Ps. 90:1–2). Your true home, the only place where all will be right, is with God—your true home.

God is coming to bring you home. To him, you have been restored, with him, you have been reunited, and in him, you have rest. He brings us from our sin-earned exile and makes us to dwell with him. He is our home. That's the heartbeat of Isaiah's message and the heartbeat of Advent.

At the center of the Christmas story is the promise that we are, and we will be, brought home to God. This stump of humanity will not be ground to pieces, and the pains and problems of a life lived east of Eden will come to an end. The hurry and hustle of life—where we are forced to run ourselves ragged, bouncing here and there in an effort to manufacture some sense of meaning, to prove that we matter—has come to an end, and we will end up in the place that truly satisfies, in the place we long to be.

This is the promise that Isaiah proclaims to the beleaguered southern kingdom. He tells them, quite stunningly, that although they are being cut down, a new branch—a fruitful branch—will bloom out of their sad stump: “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit” (Isa. 11:1) He’s promising a king. But not just any king. The fact that Isaiah mentions “the line of Jesse” (David’s father) and not the line of David himself indicates that this will be a new David, a greater David, a king to beat all kings. Isaiah is promising that there will be a Savior. And he will be full of the Spirit, filled with wisdom and might, and fear of the Lord. He will be perfect. And look at what he will usher in! He will bring with him a world of peace and safety, a world of justice and goodness, a world that is filled to the brim with the beauty of God—with the unfiltered presence of God himself! He will establish a world that allows the southern kingdom—indeed all of humanity—to breathe a sigh of relief and say, “At last! Home is on the horizon.”

And the fulfillment of that promise is found in Christmas, at the advent of Christ—the greater David, the King of all Kings. His birth in Bethlehem is the branch breaking out of the stump of human tragedy.

But take note of how it happens. Mary and Joseph were on a road trip, headed to Bethlehem for a census. And then it’s suddenly time for Jesus to be born, and they are stuck with a stable. It’s cold. It’s awful. And this young woman is going to experience the awful pains of labor, lying in stink, pushing a child into existence in the most unsanitary conditions possible. Even if we take into account ideas that this is done out of hospitality, out of the idea that the stable was more private than the main house, it wasn’t a great experience. This poor, young family is far from home indeed. But there’s so much more. Their child is not simply a child chosen by God to rescue his people, but is the incarnate Son of God himself. He is coeternal with the Father, “very God of very God,” born as one of us to save us. Jesus enters the world wrapped in the frailties of human flesh and the helplessness of a baby. He arrives exiled from comfort, alienated from anything remotely resembling the glories of Heaven. Talk about far from home.

That’s the brutally beautiful, shocking story of Christmas. God joins us in our exile, in our homelessness, in our discomfort to free us from it and to forge a path home. You have to love that. You must. He doesn’t send us a map or just give us an address to put in our phones or GPS. He doesn’t drop a list of rules to follow so that we can climb our way out via our own moral performance. He doesn’t just shout inspiration and encouragement at us, “You can do it!”

No, he leaves home and he joins us. He becomes the Way himself. He buries himself in the stump, emerges from within it, and fights for us. Jesus, whose birth we anticipate, will arrive and he will continue to be exiled and abused; he will be misunderstood and rejected. He will be crucified. He will die. He will experience the worst of what this life can offer. He will succumb to it. But he will rise, showing his power over all of it. And he will announce us—those who belong to him—to be free from the lasting effects of it. All so we could no longer be exiles from Eden, far from home, but instead be at home with him forever.

Sharing Our Ministry

Offerings and Voluntary "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" – Choir Anthem (8:30)

Prayer for Advent

P: O Wisdom, proceeding from the mouth of the Most High, ruling over the universe unto the ends of the earth with tenderness and power, come and teach us the way of wisdom.

C: Lord, come soon.

P: O Lord, Head of the house of Israel, Who appeared to Moses in the burning bush and gave him the Law on Mount Sinai, come open-armed to redeem us.

C: Lord, come soon.

P: O Branch of Jesse, arising as a sign among the nations, before Whom kings will keep silence and to Whom nations will call for help, come to deliver us and delay no longer.

C: Lord, come soon.

P: O Key of David, Scepter of the house of Israel, You open that which no one can close and close that which no one can open, come and deliver the prisoners lying in deep captivity and in the shadow of death.

C: Lord, come soon.

P: O Morning Star, Splendor of eternal light and Sun of righteousness, come and enlighten those living in darkness and in the shadow on death.

C: Lord, come soon.

P: O King of the nations. You answer their longing; O Cornerstone, You reconcile nations opposed, come and save us whom You made from dust.

C: Lord, come soon.

P: O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, Hope and Savior of all nations,

C: Lord, come soon.

(Special concerns)

P: Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Epistle Lesson: Romans 15:4-7

R: For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Service of the Sacrament

P: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

C: From the house of the Lord, we bless you.

P: Hear our prayer, dear Father in heaven, for we have sinned against you.

C: We have not loved You above all else, we have not loved others as we love ourselves.

P: Lord, have mercy upon us.

C: Christ, have mercy upon us.

P: Lord, have mercy upon us,

C: And grant us Your peace.

P: "While we were yet helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since therefore we are now justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God ... We rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation." (Romans 5:6, 7-9, 11) You are forgiven. Be at peace.

C: "Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

The Words of Our Lord:

Lord's Prayer:

Agnus Dei: (*"Lamb of God"*) p. 163

Distribution of Holy Communion: "O Savior of Our Fallen Race" Choir Anthem with congregation (8:30)

"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence" - **Hymn #621**

"When All the World Was Cursed" - **Hymn #346**

Prayer After Communion:

P: Christ Jesus, we thank You for answering the call to come into our world, become one of us, and bring about our salvation. We thank You for now for coming to us right now in this precious Sacrament. Help it to sustain us until the day You return.

C: Amen.

Blessing: (Pastor)

C: Amen

Closing Hymn: *"On Jordan's Bank, the Baptist's Cry"* - **Hymn #344**

Postlude: