

THOSE
WHO *prepare
the way*
DREAM

2ND sunday in Advent



THE 2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
A Service of the Word

December 6, 2020 ✦ 10:00 a.m.

The 2nd Sunday of Advent

John the Baptizer calls people to repent, to clear the decks, to completely reorder their lives so that nothing gets in the way of the Lord's coming. A prophet known as Isaiah gives the context for this radical call: the assurance of forgiveness that encourages us to repent; the promise that the coming one will be gentle with the little ones. Isaiah calls us all to be heralds with John, to lift up our voices fearlessly and say, "See, your God is coming!" We say it to one another in worship in order to say it with our lives in a world in need of justice and peace.

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit gathers us in unity on the first day, the day of Christ's resurrection

Prelude — "Variations on FREU DICH SEHR" by Böhm

Dr. Patricia Snyder

Welcome

Greeting

One: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Many: **And also with you.**

Call to Worship

One: John the Baptist said, "Prepare the way."

So family of faith, how do we prepare our minds for worship?

Many: **We silence the inner critic.**

We let go of busy thoughts.

We make space for God to speak.

One: How do we prepare our hearts for worship?

Many: **We bless all emotions.**

We feel what we feel.

We open ourselves up to be moved.

One: How do we prepare our bodies for worship?

Many: **We take in the scent, sight, and feel of the space we find ourselves in.**

We breathe in God's mercy.

We exhale God's love.

One: How do we prepare our souls for worship?

Many: **We bring our full selves into this space.**

We wear our hearts on our sleeves.

We trust that even now, God is here.

One: Family of faith, what we practice in worship,
we must live out in our daily lives.

So prepare the way. Let us worship Holy God.

Confession & Forgiveness

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Many: Holy God,

we have heard your prophet call to us, “Prepare the way of the Lord.”

And yet, we have failed to prepare your way.

We have even, instead, stood in your way:

when we let the challenging words of today’s prophets
roll off of our lives,

rather than let them spark change;

when we walk around a neighbor in need,

rather than encounter a chance for compassion.

Forgive us, O Lord, and grant us assurance

that the glory of your coming does not depend

upon the righteousness of your followers.

Forgive us, O Lord, and free us to try again. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GOD’S FORGIVENESS

Lighting the Candle of Peace

Kate Alexander and Sarah Pressly

News from our Life Together

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song

Refrain — “In the Lord I’ll Be Ever Thankful”

IN THE LORD I’LL BE EVER THANKFUL (Taizé)

In the Lord I'll be ev - er thank - ful; in the Lord I will re -
joyce! Look to God; do not be a - fraid. Lift up your
voic - es; the Lord is near. Lift up your voic - es; the Lord is near.

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture Reading — Isaiah 40:1-11

In grand, flowing, poetic lines, the prophet announces that the exile of God's people in Babylon is over. God will deliver Israel and will care for her as a shepherd cares for the sheep. This word can be trusted, because the only enduring reality in life is the word of God.

Scripture Reading — Mark 1:1-8

The Gospel of Mark does not begin with a story of Jesus' birth, but with the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord!

The *refrain* (“In the Lord I’ll Be Ever Thankful” – music above) is repeated.

Sermon — “Those Who Dream... *prepare the way*”

The Rev. Matthew Emery

RESPONSE

We begin our lives of responding to the gospel in prayer and offering

Responding with our Gifts

Give online: Go to www.storrscongchurch.org and click the green “Give now...” button.

Text: Text “StorrsCongChurch” to 73256, followed by your gift amount (i.e. “StorrsCongChurch \$100”).

Those participating via Zoom are welcome to submit prayer petitions (joys and concerns) via the Chat feature.

An Offering Thought

A voice cries out: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’ — Isaiah 40:3

The year 2020 has certainly upended our worship and community life. Christmas will be much different from what we’ve known. As faithful stewards, we prepare to welcome Jesus even if circumstances are not what we expect or desire. Remember: God is faithful and Christ is with us.

OFFERTORY MUSIC — “Climb to the Top of the Highest Mountain” by Carolyn Jennings
SCC Choral Scholars Sarah Marze, Audrey Rivetta, & Cooper Clark

Climb to the top of the highest mountain, Joyous tidings proclaim to the world,
Lift up your voice, shout the good news: Behold, your Lord comes to you.

He will feed his flock like a shepherd, He will carry the lambs in his arms,
He will ever keep them safe from harm. Behold, your Lord comes to you.

He who made the stars in the heaven, He who fashioned the earth and the sea,
From time eternal, He was Alpha and Omega, He, Behold, your Lord!

He will come in power and glory, He will rule with mercy and truth,
Hope of the nations, Light of the world, Light of all.

He will love the little children, He will hold them in his arms,
Love him and trust him as a child, Your Lord comes to you.

Love him, trust him as a child.

The Prayers of the People, *ending with* The Lord’s Prayer

Many: 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and glory forever. Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us forth in mission for the world

Hymn — “Soon and Very Soon”

this bulletin, pg. 8

Affirmation

One: We believe that a voice cried out in the wilderness,
Saying, “Prepare the way of the Lord.”

***Many:* And so, we show up for worship, even from home.**

One: We march toward justice.

***Many:* We roll up our sleeves.**

One: We plant trees for our children.

***Many:* We make art.**

One: We choose hope.

***Many:* We gather at the Table.**

One: We set an extra plate.

***Many:* We sing loudly, with joy.**

One: We share stories and wisdom.

***Many:* We celebrate children.**

One: We fall together.

***Many:* We rise together.**

One: We love together.

***Many:* We do all these things**

**because we believe that God loves us so much
that God shows up here,
in this world, in our lives,
for us, for all, for all our tomorrows.**

**So we prepare and prepare
for that next beautiful day. May it be so. Amen.**

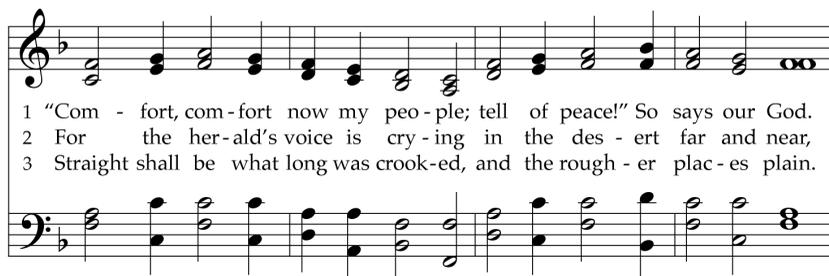
Blessing

Postlude — “Soon and Very Soon,” *reprise*, arr. by Dilworth

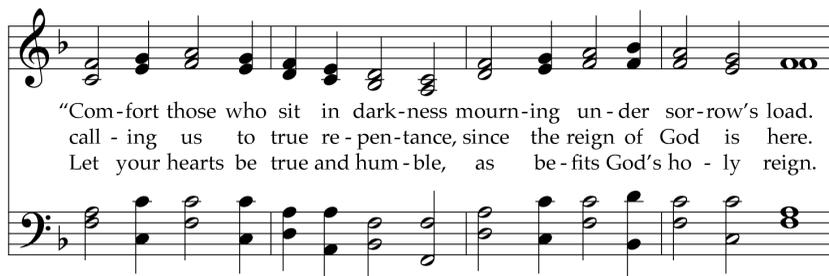
Dr. Patricia Snyder

Following the postlude, the Zoom Meeting will remain open for those who wish to connect and chat—a bring-your-own-coffee “coffee hour”! We look forward to connecting with you!

Comfort, Comfort Now My People 87



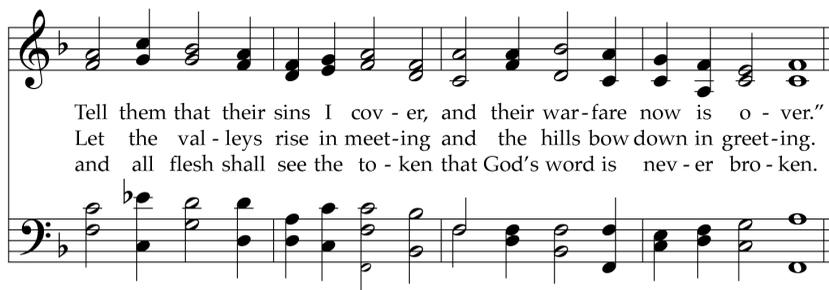
1 "Com - fort, com - fort now my peo - ple; tell of peace!" So says our God.
 2 For the her - ald's voice is cry - ing in the des - ert far and near,
 3 Straight shall be what long was crook - ed, and the rough - er plac - es plain.



"Com - fort those who sit in dark - ness mourn - ing un - der sor - row's load.
 call - ing us to true re - pen - tance, since the reign of God is here.
 Let your hearts be true and hum - ble, as be - fits God's ho - ly reign.



To my peo - ple now pro - claim that my par - don waits for them!
 O, that warn - ing cry o - bey! Now pre - pare for God a way.
 For the glo - ry of the Lord now on earth is shed a - broad,



Tell them that their sins I cov - er, and their war - fare now is o - ver."
 Let the val - leys rise in meet - ing and the hills bow down in greet - ing.
 and all flesh shall see the to - ken that God's word is nev - er bro - ken.

This 17th-century German paraphrase of Isaiah 40:1-5 was one of the texts translated as part of the 19th-century British interest in German religious poetry. It is set here to one of the most popular Genevan Psalter tunes, probably derived from an earlier French folksong.

384 Soon and Very Soon

1 Soon and ver - y soon we are going to see the King.
2 No more cry - ing there: we are going to see the King.
3 No more dy - ing there: we are going to see the King.
4 Soon and ver - y soon we are going to see the King.

Soon and ver - y soon we are going to see the King.
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No more dy - ing there: we are going to see the King.
Soon and ver - y soon we are going to see the King.

Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, we're going to see the King!

This spirited African American gospel hymn draws on John's vision of the new heaven and the new earth in Revelation 21:3-4, with its wonderful promise that God will wipe away the tears from all eyes, that death will be no longer, and that there will be no more mourning or pain.

Notes and Acknowledgements

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- Prayer of Confession adapted from *Call to Worship: Liturgy, Music, Preaching and the Arts*, vol. 54.1, *Lectionary Aids for 2020–2021, Year B*.
- Refrain – “In the Lord I’ll Be Ever Thankful”: Text from the Taize Community, 1986. Music by Jacques Berthier, 1986. Text and music ©1991 Les Presses de Taize, admin. GIA Publications, Inc; all rights reserved; reprinted under OneLicense.net #A-719182. Reprinted from *Glory to God: Hymns, Psalms, and Spiritual Songs*, ©2013 Westminster John Knox Press, #654.
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- **Mail:** You can mail your check or money order to us at the church office:
Storrs Congregational Church UCC, 2 North Eagleville Rd., Storrs Mansfield, CT 06268.
- **Drop-off:** You can drop off cash, checks, or money orders at the church office during the week.
- **Online Bill Pay:** Most banks and credit unions offer an "online bill pay" in their online account access. All you need to do is set up the church as another payee in that system, and your bank or credit union will take care of printing a check and mailing it to us—you don't even need to find a stamp! There is no cost, either to you or to the church, for using this option! You can even set up your contribution as an automatic/recurring payment, so that your generosity keeps flowing always.
- **Online or text via ACH debit from a checking or savings account:** By using our website giving portal (go to www.storrscongchurch.org and click the green "Give now..." button), you can make an auto-debit from your checking or savings account. (Note that we are assessed a small processing fee, 1% of the contribution, plus 35¢ per transaction. You will be given the option—and it is optional—when you make your contribution to add a small amount to offset the 1% processing fee.)
- **Online or text via Debit Card or Credit Card:** By using our website giving portal (go to www.storrscongchurch.org and click the green "Give now..." button), you can charge your contribution to a debit card or credit card. (Note that we are assessed a small processing fee, 3% of the contribution, plus 35¢ per transaction. You will be given the option—and it is optional—when you make your contribution to add a small amount to offset the 3% processing fee.) Please note, if using a *credit* card: we as a church do *not* want you to add to any debt load in order for you to contribute, as that's not good stewardship for any of us! If using a *credit* card, please make sure for your own sake that it is a card for which you pay off the balance each month.

If you have any questions about how to make a contribution, or about your giving history, feel free to contact our Collector, Donna Latincsics (contact info available through the church office).

We envision our community as a welcoming, historic, and progressive Christian community. We are an Open and Affirming congregation: Believing that each of us is unique and blessed with special talents from God, each a creation of God's love, alike and yet different, we open our doors and our ministry to *all*. We accept into full participation in the life of this Church: people of any age, economic status, gender, marital status, race, sexual orientation, and physical, emotional and mental capability. As a community, we will work to put aside all prejudices and to affirm and promote the worth and dignity of each person.

STORRS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

*We share in God's love by growing in faith,
courageously seeking justice, and generously caring for all people.*

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