



**PANTHER VALLEY ECUMENICAL CHURCH**  
**Advent 1**  
**"I Believe in the Sun: Hope for Tomorrow"**

**November 29, 2020**

*Connecting with the Community,  
Growing Disciples, and Serving Jesus Christ*

*Our Worship can be viewed on our website*  
[PantherValleyChurch.org](https://PantherValleyChurch.org)

*FRIENDS ~ FAMILY ~ FAITH*



## PRELUDE

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

ONE: Make yourself ready!

**ALL: Raise your voices, change your hearts,**

ONE: get ready to be transformed, because now is the time.

**ALL: Let us embrace hope that we can do what needs to be done to bring more light into the world.**

### **LIGHTING THE CANDLE OF HOPE**

Reader One: When I look around, I see shadows of hunger. Particularly in this time of pandemic, so many neighbors, nearby and around the world, will go to bed hungry tonight...

Reader Two: When I look around, I see shadows of injustice, the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer — and someone somewhere will fall asleep under a bridge tonight...

Reader Three: In the face of hunger, we light a candle of hope...

Reader Two: In the face of injustice, in the face of despair, we light a candle of hope... (Light the first candle in your Advent wreath.)

Reader One: Let the light from this candle say to all that God's hope is coming, on earth as it already is in heaven.

Reader Three: Friends, be not afraid, God's hope is at hand!

## OPENING PRAYER

Holy One,  
we thank you for the glimpses we catch  
of your gift of untiring hope.  
Even in the midst of fear,  
of challenge, of struggle—  
even when our view is obscured  
by clouds of doubt,  
ignite the flame of hope within us,  
**People: ... that we might glow with its brilliance  
from the inside out.  
I believe in the sun,  
I believe in the sun,  
even when... even when...  
it s not shining.**

*[Choral response]*

*Pastor:* Help us face this bleak night of the soul  
and embrace it as a womb of rebirth.  
**Amen.**

## SONG *I Believe*

### SCRIPTURE READING:

Isaiah 40: 1-11 (CEB)

Comfort, comfort my people! says your God. Speak compassionately to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her compulsory service has ended, that her penalty has been paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins!

A voice is crying out: "Clear the Lord's way in the desert! Make a level highway in the wilderness for our God! Every valley will be raised up, and every mountain and hill will be flattened. Uneven ground will become level, and rough terrain a valley plain. The Lord's glory will appear, and all humanity will see it together; the Lord's mouth has commanded it."

A voice was saying: "Call out!"

And another said, "What should I call out?"

All flesh is grass; all its loyalty is like the flowers of the field. The grass dries up and the flower withers when the Lord's breath blows on it. Surely the people are grass. The grass dries up; the flower withers, but our God's word will exist forever. Go up on a high mountain, messenger Zion!

Raise your voice and shout, messenger Jerusalem! Raise it; don't be afraid; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" Here is the Lord God, coming with strength, with a triumphant arm, bringing his reward with him and his payment before him. Like a shepherd, God will tend the flock; he will gather lambs in his arms and lift them onto his lap. He will gently guide the nursing ewes.

### **Mark 1: 1-15 (CEB)**

The beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, God's Son, happened just as it was written about in the prophecy of Isaiah:

Look, I am sending my messenger before you.

He will prepare your way,  
a voice shouting in the wilderness:  
"Prepare the way for the Lord;  
make his paths straight."

John the Baptist was in the wilderness calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. Everyone in Judea and all the people of Jerusalem went out to the Jordan River and were being baptized by John as they confessed their sins. John wore clothes made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey. He announced, "One stronger than I am is coming after me. I'm not even worthy to bend over and loosen the strap of his sandals. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

About that time, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. While he was coming up out of the water, Jesus saw heaven splitting open and the Spirit, like a dove, coming down on him. And there was a voice from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness."

At once the Spirit forced Jesus out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among the wild animals, and the angels

took care of him.

After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee announcing God's good news, saying, "Now is the time! Here comes God's kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!"

**MESSAGE**    *Do You Hear What I Hear?*

**SONG** *I Heard the Bells*

**PRAYERS FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD**

One: I invite you to get in a comfortable position of rest. I invite you to get as quiet and still as you can. I invite you to a deep breath and a deep listening posture—perhaps eyes closed or fixed on a candle—as we prepare for a time of prayer.

*[pause for a breath]*

**ALL: The gentle pull of God is often lost amidst the rush of all the obligations which lay a claim on us.**

**Yet just beyond the frantic pace our restless feet have trod lie deep still pools of quietness— the dwelling place of God.**

**Meet me in the stillness, Lord Be the air I breathe Meet me in the stillness, Lord**

**Free me to receive**

**O take me to that secret place where lost in wonder and in awe, the moment comes and I rejoice to be and be with God.**

**Meet me in the stillness, Lord Be the air I breathe Meet me in the stillness, Lord**

**Free me to receive**

*We invite you at this time to lift up Prayers for the World.*

*Today's flowers are given by  
the Pflugfelder Family in loving memory of Bruce Mueller*

**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. Amen**

## **PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**Believe, with a hopeful heart!  
Believe, and shine your light!  
Believe, because the song we sing is sung for all!**

**And now let the weak say, "I am strong;"  
let the poor say, "I am rich  
because of what our God has done for us."  
Believe!**

## **BENEDICTION**

We wait for justice but we do not wait to work for change;  
We wait for restored health but we do not wait to work to heal;  
We wait for wholeness but we do not wait to work at binding brokenness;  
We wait for peace but we do not wait to work to eliminate hatred.  
And so, my friends, like bells ringing out the news that the sun still shines even  
on cloudy days, fill the night left by sadness with messages of hope.  
Go into your lives humming the tunes that keep that hope alive in you and that  
spur you on in your work of justice and reconciliation.  
Raise your voices and repeat after me...  
"do not be afraid!"  
"do not be afraid!"  
Amen!

## **POSTLUDE**

- Credits: Today's Liturgy is adapted from: Worship Design Studio, Advent Candle liturgy is from SALT Project, Opening Prayer, "Singers for "Crossing the Threshold" Haylee Coburn, Jared Pugh, Katie Ledsinger, Ryan Rose; music by Mark A. Miller; mixed by Jared Pugh, Claremont UMC. Used with permission. [www.worshipdesignstudio.com](http://www.worshipdesignstudio.com)", "I Believe" written by Mark A. Miller, permission granted by University of LaVerne Chamber Singers to use online/streaming worship. Used with permission. [www.worshipdesignstudio.com](http://www.worshipdesignstudio.com), I Heard the Bells On Christams Day, 2008 My Refuge Music Travelin' Zoo Music BanaHama Tunes Be Essential Songs Curb Word Music.

## **Hanging of the Greens Open House**

Sunday December 6, 10:30am – 12:30pm

As you start to prepare for this Christmas Season take a journey to know, understand and enjoy the meanings of the Christmas symbols! You are welcome to arrive at any time. Invite a friend! (We suggest allowing 20 – 30 minutes.)

## **PVEC Annual Congregational Meeting**

Sunday December 6, 1:00pm

Via Zoom Meeting ID: 827 5185 6086 Passcode: 1490

## **Blue Christmas Open House**

Friday December 18, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

People have undergone unprecedented loss this year. Family and friends have succumbed to death in this pandemic, millions have lost economic security through loss of jobs, some have lost businesses they built over a lifetime. Most of us have lost our beloved rhythms of life that felt familiar and gave our lives the richness of gatherings and adventure.

Throughout Advent we proclaim hope, love, joy, and peace. This is the church's gift to the world—that our faith story is grounded in the presence of God that came and dwelt among us, during hardship. But on this night we gather to acknowledge and remember what we have lost. It is important to name that sometimes hope, love, joy, and peace are distant feelings when we have encountered so much loss.

Come when you can and stay as long as you wish.

## **PANTHER VALLEY ECUMENICAL CHURCH**

1490 Route 517 Hackettstown, NJ 07840

Pastor: Ninabeth Metcalf, Music Director: Diane Van Dongen

Church Secretary:

Office hours: Mon. – Fri. 9:00am – 2:00pm

Website: <http://www.panthervalleychurch.org>

Tel: 908-852-5444 Fax: 908-850-4754 Email: [Panthervalleychurch@gmail.com](mailto:Panthervalleychurch@gmail.com)