



O Come, O Come,
EMMANUEL

4th Day Letters

Advent/Christmas 2020

*O Come, O Come Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile near, until the Son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel, shall come to you O Israel. (c) 1851, John Mason Neale*

It has been nine months since we received the first word to close the doors of our beloved buildings. We pivoted from In-person worship to Zoom Worship seemingly overnight – no small feat – and while we struggled to figure out just what that might mean, we built a community together, online.

Each week we are joined by people from the Elk Valley, various parts of B.C., Ontario, Montana, Florida and occasionally, England. We have become a community, despite distance and denomination. We are working together to further God's kingdom, and while we cannot all be together in person and we cannot all be together online, we are reaching out to each other in all ways that are possible. Through blended services with some in-person and others online.

I know you've heard the news as of late. The second wave of the virus is taking hold with no signs of it slowing down. People are scared. People are weary. COVID fatigue is a real thing, and most of us are experiencing it. This is the time for us to be extravagantly kind, calm and safe.

This year, Christmas services will be delivered exclusively online. The link will be published widely and we hope you will be able to join us. Even if you don't have a computer, you can call into the service. You won't be able to see anyone, but you will be able to hear us, and it may be a way to feel closer to your Church family, if you haven't been able to connect with a service before now.

The hymn "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" was originally written in Latin in the 8th Century. It tells the story of Christ's birth, but does so in a kind of covert code. This code was influenced by the O Antiphons of the 6th century. John Mason Neale translated the hymn into English in 1861. Our 4:00 pm Christmas Eve service, will look further into this sacred mystery.

So many things are different this year. The Church buildings are not decorated, the trees are not up. And that's okay. You may be debating about whether or not to decorate at home. Do what you feel is best. If you want to cover every inch with decor, go for it. If you want to go to bed until Christmas is over – go for it. Whatever it is you do, please be safe.

Our Christmas Worship services are as follows:

Christmas Eve – Thursday 24 December 2020

4:00 pm – Contemplative service, reflecting on the “O Antiphons”

7:00 pm – Traditional Christmas Service with hymns broadcasting from Knox United

9:00 pm – Traditional Christmas Service with hymns broadcasting from Christ Church

Christmas Day – Friday 25 December 2020

10:00 am – Contemplative Service broadcasting from home in my pj's. You can too!

Please join us by Zoom – use the same link for each service.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88970327028>

Meeting ID: 889 7032 7028

If you want to join us by PHONE. Dial 1 204 272 7920, then you will be prompted to enter the Meeting ID, which is 889 7032 7028. Follow the prompts and you'll be connected. It's as easy as that! Please join us, online or by phone. I know it's not the same as gathering in person.

We gather, not as we wish, but as we are able.

While this may all seem overwhelming, remember, it's not forever, it's just for now. We have been working at keeping each other safe. We to continue to do that for awhile longer, by washing our hands, for at least 20 minutes, wearing a mask when going out, praying, and loving. Also, remember to breathe deeply, in and out.

As we walk through this season of anticipation, we look forward to not only the birth of Christ, but also the development of a vaccine, which, once distributed, will see us able to gather once again. We, as the faithful, have waited and watched for generations. This year we have been forced to step back, possibly slow down, and see things in a different way. Not all of this has been bad. Let us renew our commitment to worship the ordinary baby; placed not in a fleece blanket and super-absorbent diapers, but wrapped in rags and laid in a food trough. Let his humble birth in rustic beginnings, be for us, a call to a simpler life. Not about “stuff”, but about memories. Not about status, but about family and friends. Not about scarcity, but about abundance.

From my home to yours I wish you a Blessed Advent and a safe and Merry Christmas,

Andrea+