

The Warm Heart of Advent

Worship Resource 2023



Northwest Synod of Wisconsin
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Warm Heart of Advent



Hello dear friends,

Advent is a relatively short season in our Lutheran liturgical year, but in it we find space for many meaningful things: traditions of decorating trees, church buildings and homes, lighting candles, enjoying holiday theater and music, sharing gifts and crafts and stories, baking treats, family photos and cards, and special meals and celebrations with relatives and friends. For many people here in the Midwest, the anticipation builds in the weeks leading up to Christmas, and the first snow or the eagerness of children can magnify this excitement.

Have you ever experienced or wondered what Advent and Christmas traditions exist in other regions of the country or around the world? Christianity is present in 158 countries... what elements do you suppose are consistent across all cultures? What practices or traditions might be different as we prepare to share the story of the birth of Jesus Christ this season?

The Northwest Synod of Wisconsin has a partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi, a geographically small, sub-Saharan country in Africa. During my first visit there in July of 2016 I asked our ELCM guide what Malawians did to prepare for and celebrate Christmas. He said, "Christmas is a religious holiday...we go to worship." There are, of course, festivities that happen in Malawi to celebrate the birth of Christ - dancing and singing and enjoying food together, children often participate in a nativity drama during worship, and some families give gifts, but in Malawi, this season has a simpler presence - Jesus is the heart of faith and life.

Malawi is fondly known as the *Warm Heart of Africa* - a nickname given to them by visitors who had received generous hospitality and love by the people there. Receiving this kind of generosity continues to be our experience when we visit. During this season of Advent, you are invited to use this resource, *The Warm Heart of Advent*, which will include elements to help us remember our friends in Malawi through words, prayers, and action. It will provide a time to ponder what it looks like to embody hospitality, generosity, joy, and love together as we prepare for Emmanuel, *God with us*. You'll notice the use of the Nicene Creed which includes a communal (*We believe*) rather than individual (*I believe*) profession of faith, serving as a reminder that God's grace in Jesus Christ is relational and collective. Together we can lift up the truth that God's church is global, comprised of varied languages, worship spaces, and imaginations of Jesus. What curiosities might God be stirring in us as we consider these things?

As you begin your own Advent journey, whether in your household or at a church, know that you are not alone. We are beloved children of God. We are church together, messy and wonderful and meant to be in relationship with God and each other on this journey. We prepare for the coming of Jesus, the One who is central in our faith and in our lives, who embodies and calls us into unconditional, radical, and transforming peace and love.

Advent blessings,

Deacon Laura Ramlow

Note about offering: In June of 2024 our synod will host up to seven visitors from Malawi for two weeks. We are inviting any offering gathered during these worship services to be earmarked for their travel expenses. Simply include a note indicating 'Malawi 2024 Visitor Fund' and send to the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin office: 944 24 1/4 Street, Suite 2 Chetek, WI. 54728. Thank you for your continued generosity!

If you would like more information about our partnership with Malawi you can visit: <https://nwswi.org/malawi>



Northwest Synod of Wisconsin
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Advent: Week 1 “Hospitality”

Welcome

Greeting

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, the love of Christ that guards our hearts and minds, and the joy and consolation of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

Confession & Forgiveness

For the times we are afraid of the stranger,
for the times we refuse the stranger,
because we think our resources are just too meager,
Lord, forgive us.

For the times we stereotype the stranger
as enemy,
as dangerous,
as inferior somehow,
Lord, forgive us.

For the times we are too busy trying to impress our guests—
the times we think we are being hospitable,
but instead serve only our own needs—
Lord, forgive us.

For the times we miss the gift of the stranger,
for the times we close our door in fear,
for the times we miss your face and presence in others,
Lord, forgive us.

Holy and Gracious God,
We believe you welcome all to your banquet table.
In your mercy, help us to unlearn the prejudice, hatred, and apathy that incites cruelty and rejection.
Open our eyes, hands, and hearts to others,
teaching us how to see you in the face of the stranger, the suffering, the oppressed, the marginalized,
the scared, and the hurting.
And, filled with your Spirit, give us the strength to embody your compassion so that all will know your love. Amen.

Opening Prayer & Lighting of the Advent Wreath

God With Us, as we begin our Advent journey, abide with us in radical hospitality, welcoming all with your presence, your peace, and your promise. **Amen.**

Gathering Song

All Are Welcome
Look Who Gathers at Christ's Table

ELW #641 or
ACS #977

Readings

Isaiah 64:1-9

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Gospel

Mark 13:24-37

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| • Spark Story Bible | “Be Ready” | Pages 346 - 347 |
| • Jesus Storybook Bible | “Get Ready” | Pages 170 - 175 |

Children’s Message

**Optional handout, page 18*

**In some Malawian churches a mat made of reeds, or large piece of fabric, is placed on the floor for children to sit on during worship - including a version of this could add a memorable element to your children’s message.*

Message

Song of the Day

Let My Prayer Rise Up

ELW #232

Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed includes a communal (We believe) rather than individual (I believe) profession of faith, serving as a reminder that God’s grace in Jesus Christ is relational and collective. Together we can lift up the truth that God’s church is global, comprised of varied languages, worship spaces, and imaginations of Jesus.

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,*
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

With all the people of God, we pray for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation.

We are thankful for all the ways you generously provide all that we need, God of creation; help us to be good stewards of these gifts, to be mindful of our consumption, make changes that impact the Earth in positive and sustainable ways, and to share what we have with others. Merciful God, **Receive our prayer.**

For all people who live with fear, for those who are lonely, for those who face illness, hunger, violence, oppression, grief, addiction or suffering of any kind, we pray, Gracious Lord that you will surround them with care and fill them with the hope that Jesus Christ provides. Merciful God, **Receive our prayer.**

We are grateful for our siblings in Malawi who exemplify God's wide welcome through the gift of hospitality and we ask for your continued blessings on our partnership together. Merciful God, **Receive our prayer.**

Grant us patience, God, as the world experiences continued division, violence, and conflict; help us be a voice of peace and wisdom and, through your Word, guide us toward actions that show others they are valued unconditionally. Merciful God, **Receive our prayer.**

Loving God, we give all these prayers to you, trusting in your mercy and grace. **AMEN.**

Peace

Peace be with you. (English). Mtendere ukhale nanu. (Chichewa)

Offering

**Optional offering can be collected for Malawi travelers who will visit our synod in June 2024.*

Communion

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

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.

Invitation to the Table – Distribution

We gather around the table in places far and near, eating sourdough, rye, tortillas, crackers, flatbread, and wafers - the body of Christ. Drinking the wine or the juice from handmade chalices and silver goblets, golden spoons and little mini cups – the blood of Christ. The bread and the cup unite us with Christ. This meal reaches back through the centuries. This table reaches around the world. Let us share this meal with grateful hearts.

Post-Communion Prayer

We thank you, O God, that you have strengthened our hearts through this feast of life and salvation. Shine the light of Christ on our path, that we may do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you, now and forever.
AMEN.

Sending

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in + Christ Jesus.
Amen.

Sending Song

Soli Deo Gloria
Hallelujah! We Sing Your Praises (Haleluya, Pelo tsa rona)
Sent Forth By God's Blessing

ELW #878 or
ELW #535 or
ELW #547

Dismissal

Go with peaceful hearts; welcome others to the table; abide in Christ together.
Thanks be to God. (English). **Zikomo Mulungu** (Chichewa)



+ Text, tune, and arrangements used by permission of Augsburg Fortress License #12387-S
+ Confession adapted from the Columbia Presbyterian Church
+ Invitation to the Table adapted from Joanna Harader, Spacious Faith
+ Spark Story Bible - Augsburg Fortress, 2009. + Jesus Storybook Bible - Zondervan, 2009

Advent: Week 2 “Generosity”

Welcome

Greeting

The love of God poured into our hearts, the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and the abundant life of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

Litany of Generosity

Gracious God, give us generous hearts,

So we may know the joy that comes from helping others,

So we may give without counting the cost,

So we may fully appreciate all God’s many gifts to us.

Gracious God, give us generous hearts,

So that that we may show the world another way of living,

So we may celebrate the Story that shapes our story,

So we may live an abundant life in response to all God provides.

Gracious God, give us generous hearts,

So we may share without expecting something in return,

So we may learn the difference between what we need and what we want,

So we may hold all our treasures in an open hand.

Gracious God, give us generous hearts,

So we may give thanks for the heritage of faith and trust in you passed on to us by our parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, godparents, and friends,

So we may give thanks for all the generous saints who have walked before us,

So we may recognize the many blessings of each new day.

Gracious God, give us generous hearts.

May we be a blessing to others as we continue to thank God and serve God with humble and generous hearts.

AMEN.

Opening Prayer & Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Stir up our hearts, God With Us, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with generous lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Gathering Song

Let Us Go Now to the Banquet (Vamos todos al banquete)

Hark the Glad Sound

Prepare the Royal Highway

ELW #523 or

ELW #239 or

ELW #264

Readings

Isaiah 40:1-11
Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
2 Peter 3:8-15a

Gospel

Mark 1:1-8

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| • Spark Story Bible | “John the Baptist” | Pages 234 - 239 |
| • Jesus Storybook Bible | “Heaven Breaks Through” | Pages 200 - 203 |

Children’s Message

**Optional handout, page 19*

**In some Malawian churches a mat made of reeds, or large piece of fabric, is placed on the floor for children to sit on during worship - including a version of this could add a memorable element to your children’s message.*

Message

Song of the Day

Take My Life, That I May Be

ELW #583

Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed includes a communal (We believe) rather than individual (I believe) profession of faith, serving as a reminder that God’s grace in Jesus Christ is relational and collective. Together we can lift up the truth that God’s church is global, comprised of varied languages, worship spaces, and imaginations of Jesus.

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,*
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

With all the people of God, we pray for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation.

As we prepare our hearts for Jesus, we remember all those who face war and abuse, displacement and family separation, hunger or illness, unfair treatment or violence of any kind, and we pray for them to experience peace that can only come from God. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Our partners in Malawi have faced devastation from storms causing hunger, illness, grief, and homelessness. Empowered by your compassion, God of life, give us the wisdom to know how to assist, the strength to help carry the burdens, and the generosity to share resources that will provide relief. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God of hope, you continue to give us reasons to look forward, to work and serve others, and to find new and creative ways to connect with creation, our neighbors, and with you. Grant us the power of the Holy Spirit, that we might continue to be inspired and renewed, and strengthen us for the days and weeks ahead. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Through your benevolence, God of grace, you have given us all that we need; open our eyes to the world around us, to the stories of those we meet, and guide us to respond with the same abundance that you so freely share with us. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Loving God, we give all these prayers to you, trusting in your mercy and grace. **AMEN.**

Peace

Peace be with you. (English). Mtendere ukhale nanu. (Chichewa)

Offering

**Optional offering can be collected for Malawi travelers who will visit our synod in June 2024.*

Communion

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

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.

Invitation to the Table – Distribution

We gather around the table in places far and near, eating sourdough, rye, tortillas, crackers, flatbread, and wafers - the body of Christ. Drinking the wine or the juice from handmade chalices and silver goblets, golden spoons and little mini cups – the blood of Christ. The bread and the cup unite us with Christ. This meal reaches back through the centuries. This table reaches around the world. Let us share this meal with grateful hearts.

Post-Communion Prayer

We thank you, O God, that you have strengthened our hearts through this feast of life and salvation. Shine the light of Christ on our path, that we may do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you, now and forever.
AMEN.

Sending

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in + Christ Jesus.
Amen.

Sending Song

The Lord Now Sends Us Forth
Send Me, Jesus (Thuma mina, Nkosi yam)
Hark, the Glad Sound

ELW #538 or
ELW #549 or
ELW #239

Dismissal

Go with peaceful hearts; share with equity and love; abide in Christ together.
Thanks be to God. (English). **Zikomo Mulungu** (Chichewa)



+ Text, tune, and arrangements used by permission of Augsburg Fortress License #12387-S
+ Litany of Generosity from The Generosity Project, ELCA 2019 - <https://www.elca.org/generosityproject>
+ Invitation to the Table adapted from Joanna Harader, Spacious Faith
+ Spark Story Bible - Augsburg Fortress, 2009. + Jesus Storybook Bible - Zondervan, 2009

Advent: Week 3 “Love”

Welcome

Greeting

The love of God poured into our hearts, the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and the abundant life of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And also with you.

Opening Litany

Come, Emmanuel. The time draws near, each moment magnified as we watch and prepare, for God is doing great things!
**A spark of love lights the way, turning the world around to match the promise:
That we love because God first loved us.**

Confession & Forgiveness

God of light and love,
We confess our lack of attention to the prophets and messengers you send. We confess that we do not keep our eyes peeled and our ears open to the ways that you are revealing yourself and announcing your message in our lives. We confess that we dismiss those who might be speaking for you who in our minds are not old enough, not educated enough, not refined enough. Open our hearts, our eyes, our ears, and our minds to watch and listen for your Word being proclaimed among us this day and always.
Amen.

Friends, We can rejoice in the Lord! With an everlasting covenant sealed by love and mercy, God has clothed us with salvation. God has covered us with righteousness. The prophets have promised this good news: In Jesus Christ, our coming Lord, we are forgiven!

My whole being shall exult in my God. In Jesus Christ we are indeed forgiven. Thanks be to God.

Opening Prayer & Lighting of the Advent Wreath

God With Us, without love we have nothing, wandering aimlessly in a world without hope.
As we journey this Advent, guide us gently with the assurance of your grace and abundance as we practice sharing love with one another.
Amen.

Gathering Song

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn
Gather Us In

ELW #242 or
ELW #532

Readings

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Psalm 126

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Gospel

John 1:6-8, 19-28

- Spark Story Bible

“The Light of the World”

Pages 416 - 419

Children’s Message

**Optional handout, page 20; Print one per child - they separate and share!*

**In some Malawian churches a mat made of reeds, or large piece of fabric, is placed on the floor for children to sit on during worship - including a version of this could add a memorable element to your children’s message.*

Message

Song of the Day

People, Look East

Come Now, O God

ELW #248 or

ACS #902

Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed includes a communal (We believe) rather than individual (I believe) profession of faith, serving as a reminder that God’s grace in Jesus Christ is relational and collective. Together we can lift up the truth that God’s church is global, comprised of varied languages, worship spaces, and imaginations of Jesus.

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,*
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

With all the people of God, we pray for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation.

Gracious God, you pour out your love for your children each and every day; help us to show this same unconditional love to others so that all may know they are valued and cared for.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

In the middle of the hustle of holiday preparations, gracious Lord, help us to focus our attention first on the manger and the coming light of Christ that has the power to shine brightly in the midst of darkness and despair.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

You have entrusted us with the care of your world, Creator God, and there is work to be done to ensure the sustainability of clean water, soil and air, as well as natural habitats and ecosystems that provide the future of our food resources. Fill us with the power of the Holy Spirit, and give us the understanding and motivation needed to see that this work is done. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

The gift of partnership with the Warm Heart of Africa - Malawi - has shown us how brightly your light can shine, Lord Jesus. When relationships outshine schedules and busyness, we get a glimpse of the kind of love you so freely give the world. Help us to take a deep breath and slow down enough to put one another first.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Loving God, we give all these prayers to you, trusting in your mercy and grace. **AMEN.**

Peace

Peace be with you. (English). Mtendere ukhale nanu. (Chichewa)

Offering

**Optional offering can be collected for Malawi travelers who will visit our synod in June 2024.*

Communion

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

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.

Invitation to the Table – Distribution

We gather around the table in places far and near, eating sourdough, rye, tortillas, crackers, flatbread, and wafers - the body of Christ. Drinking the wine or the juice from handmade chalices and silver goblets, golden spoons and little mini cups – the blood of Christ. The bread and the cup unite us with Christ. This meal reaches back through the centuries. This table reaches around the world. Let us share this meal with grateful hearts.

Post-Communion Prayer

We thank you, O God, that you have strengthened our hearts through this feast of life and salvation. Shine the light of Christ on our path, that we may do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you, now and forever.
AMEN.

Sending

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in + Christ Jesus.
Amen.

Sending Song

Christ, Be Our Light
Light Dawns on a Weary World
I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

ELW #715 or
ELW #726 or
ELW #815

Dismissal

Go with peaceful hearts; be people of love; abide in the light of Christ together.
Thanks be to God. (English). **Zikomo Mulungu** (Chichewa)



+ Text, tune, and arrangements used by permission of Augsburg Fortress License #12387-S
+ Litany - Rev. Teri Peterson + Confession - Rev. Stephanie Anthony
+ Opening Prayer - Rev. Stephen M Fearing
+ Spark Story Bible - Augsburg Fortress, 2009. + Jesus Storybook Bible - Zondervan, 2009

Advent: Week 4 “Joy”

Welcome

Advent Poem

Active preparation.
radical play and sacred pretendings –
we practice the future,
making the impossible possible
with the fearlessness of children,
unrestrained by the stale logics of what is. a divine invitation extends:
do not be afraid.
Try on dreams of tomorrow.
Experiment with and for each other
moving together imaginatively,
In conflict. In rest. In material distribution.

We play until practice makes possible;
counter-performance constructs a counter-reality.
Community preparing the way.
This is the time to try on the world to come;
to bring it close(r)
one small, ordinary, practice at a time.

Practice, practice, practice.
Neither a new way nor a new world
will come to us all at once.
Not quickly.
Not without failure(s).
Not without patience and determination
but through holy repetition –
radical rituals of hope and curiosity,
of learning and unlearning,
mending and repairing,
inventing alternative habits of power,
that construct life anew.
Divinity takes on flesh.
Salvation draws near.

Opening Prayer & Lighting of the Advent Wreath

God With Us, we rejoice in the reality of who you are. Although we can often be challenged by discontentment, our **joy** is deeply rooted in our identity as your beloved children. As we approach the end of our Advent journey together, encourage and prepare us to respond to this joy and proclaim your love to all the world.
Amen.

Gathering Song

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

ELW #242

Readings

12 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

Romans 16:25-27

Gospel

Luke 1:26-38

- Spark Story Bible “Angels Visit” Pages 196 - 201
- Jesus Storybook Bible “He’s Here!” Pages 176 - 179

Children’s Message

**Optional handout, page 21 ; Print one per child - they separate and share!*

**In some Malawian churches a mat made of reeds, or large piece of fabric, is placed on the floor for children to sit on during worship - including a version of this could add a memorable element to your children’s message.*

Message

Song of the Day

O, Sing to God Above (Cantemos al Señor)
My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness

ELW #555 or
ELW #251

Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed includes a communal (We believe) rather than individual (I believe) profession of faith, serving as a reminder that God’s grace in Jesus Christ is relational and collective. Together we can lift up the truth that God’s church is global, comprised of varied languages, worship spaces, and imaginations of Jesus.

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,*
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

With all the people of God, we pray for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation.

God of Glory, for you nothing is impossible. By your Holy Spirit, fill us with new life and hope and overshadow us with your power and grace so that we, like Mary, might be your servants, bearing witness to the promise of your Word. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Mysterious God, you continue to surprise us with moments of unexpected joy – connections with friends and family, holiday traditions, answered prayers, music and dancing; we thank you for bringing Jesus to the world - a gift of joy that fills our hearts and spirits with gratitude, not to be kept to ourselves, but shared with those around us. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

This piece of your creation here in Northwest Wisconsin is shining with white frosty mornings and Christmas lights at night. As we see the colors and wonder of the season, help us to notice the trees, the land, birds, animals, and rivers and lakes, appreciating their beauty during these months of hibernation, and remind us that you are calling us to care for this good earth even during the winter. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God of wonder, your compassion is boundless; you interrupt our darkness and tragedy with joy, bringing healing and comfort to those in need. We are grateful for the people of Malawi who demonstrate this joy in community with one another; encourage us to join them in proclaiming the power of Christ and singing prayer and praise for the faithfulness of God. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Loving God, we give all these prayers to you, trusting in your mercy and grace. **AMEN.**

Peace

Peace be with you. (English) Mtendere ukhale nanu. (Chichewa)

Offering

**Optional offering can be collected for Malawi travelers who will visit our synod in June 2024.*

Communion

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

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.

Invitation to the Table – Distribution

We gather around the table in places far and near, eating sourdough, rye, tortillas, crackers, flatbread, and wafers - the body of Christ. Drinking the wine or the juice from handmade chalices and silver goblets, golden spoons and little mini cups – the blood of Christ. The bread and the cup unite us with Christ. This meal reaches back through the centuries. This table reaches around the world. Let us share this meal with grateful hearts.

Post-Communion Prayer

We thank you, O God, that you have strengthened our hearts through this feast of life and salvation. Shine the light of Christ on our path, that we may do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you, now and forever.
AMEN.

Sending

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in + Christ Jesus.
Amen.

Sending Song

Go to the World
Joy to the World

ACS #991 or
ELW #267

Dismissal

Go now with peaceful hearts; be people of great joy; abide in the wonder of Christ together.
Thanks be to God. (English). **Zikomo Mulungu** (Chichewa)



+ Text, tune, and arrangements used by permission of Augsburg Fortress License #12387-S
+ Prayer - Rev. Anna Blades + Opening Prayer - adapted from Joanna Harader
+ Prayers of Intercession - adapted from PCUSA
+ Spark Story Bible - Augsburg Fortress, 2009. + Jesus Storybook Bible - Zondervan, 2009

God is all around the world!

We have friends in Malawi that we have known for a long time, and who teach us many things!

Where is Wisconsin? Name an animal that lives in Wisconsin. What is your favorite food? What activities to kids do here?

Where is Malawi? Name an animal that lives in Malawi. What foods to you think they eat there? What activities do kids do in Malawi?



YOU HAVE
**Bright
ideas!**



YOU ARE
**One of
a kind!**



YOU ARE
**Tree-
riffic!**

YOU MAKE ME
**Snow
proud!**



YOU ARE A
**Sweet
friend!**



YOU ARE A
**Beary
good
friend!**

YOUR KINDNESS
MAKES MY

**Heart
sing!**



YOU
**Warm
my
spirit!**

