Plymouth
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

APPROACHING LIGHT

First Week in Advent

NOVEMBER 29, 2026

PRELUDE

CHORALE PRELUDE ON "WACHET AUF" — *Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)*

PRELUDE ON "DIVINUM MYSTERIUM" — *John Watkinson (1953)*

WELCOME — Rev. JT Smiedendorf

SHARING GRACE

Please rise in body, mind, or spirit, as you are able, for every hymn.

PROCESSIONAL HYMN COME, THOU LONG-EXPECTED JESUS *"Stuttgart"*
(see page 5)

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH — Emily & Greg Venell

One: We begin again the annual journey of faith with Advent.
All: **Amidst darkness, there is approaching Light.**
One: Though the darkness grows, we find hope in approaching Light.
All: **We light the first candle of Advent for Hope.**
One: Let faith open us to the advent of Hope.
All: **In faith, we approach the Light that gives hope to all people and all Creation.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Tender, loving God, 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 the glory for ever. Amen.

Please be seated.

ANTHEM E'EN SO, LORD JESUS, QUICKLY COME *Paul Manz (1953)*

Peace be to you and grace from Him
Who freed us from our sins,
Who loved us all and shed His blood
That we might savèd be:
Sing Holy, Holy to our Lord,
The Lord, Almighty God,
Who was and is and is to come;
Sing Holy, Holy, Lord!
Rejoice in heaven, all ye that dwell therein,
Rejoice on earth, ye saints below,
For Christ is coming soon!
E'en so, Lord Jesus, quickly come,
And night shall be no more;
They need no light nor lamp nor sun,
For Christ will be their All!
—Words from Revelation 22, collated by Ruth Manz

SCRIPTURE READING LUKE 1:39-56 Rev. JT Smiedendorf

One: These are the words of our ancient tradition.

All: May these words become Living Wisdom within us, among us, and beyond us.

SERMON APPROACHING HOPE AMIDST DARKNESS

Hymn WATCHERS, TELL US OF THE NIGHT *"Aberystwyth"*
(page 6)

Invitation to Offering

One: In deep humility and gratitude to God, who shepherds and comforts us, let us bring our offerings to God.

All: **In thanks and gratitude, we offer these gifts to you.**

You may use the QR code on page 8 to give.

Offertory KEEP YOUR LAMPS! *African-American spiritual*
Tim Brunelle, *percussion* *arr. André Thomas, 1982*

Keep your lamps trimmed and burning, the time is drawing nigh.
Children, don't get weary 'til your work is done.
Christian, journey soon be over, the time is drawing nigh.
—based on Matthew 25:1–13

Please rise in body, mind, or spirit, as you are able.

Doxology *"Dix"*

Praise to God, immortal praise, for the love that crowns our days!
Bounteous source of every joy, let thy praise our tongues employ;
Singing thus through all our days: Praise to God, immortal praise! Amen.

Please be seated.

The Sacrament of Communion

Invitation Birdie Cunningham & Rev. JT Smiedendorf

Blessing of the Elements

Sharing the Elements

Healing prayer and anointing with oil is an ancient practice of the church. We offer it here for those who choose it knowing that while a cure is not always available, healing always is.

Communion Music SAVIOR OF THE NATIONS, COME *Paul Manz*
("Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland)

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL ROSE *Egil Hovland*

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God, thank you for the gracious gifts of your loving presence and generous abundance. Through the nourishment of the bread and cup, we go forth inspired by hope, moved to pursue peace, awakened in joy, and surrounded by love. May we reverently approach Your approaching Light. May it shine on Your beloved in every place and time, uniting all in love and peace forever more. Amen.

Recessional Hymn REJOICE, REJOICE, BELIEVERS! *"Haf trones lampa färdig"*
(page 7)

Benediction

As the postlude is played, you are welcome to leave the sanctuary or stay and enjoy the music.

Postlude TOCCATA ON "VENI EMMANUEL" *Adolphus Hailstork*
("O Come, O Come, Emmanuel") *(1982)*

✠

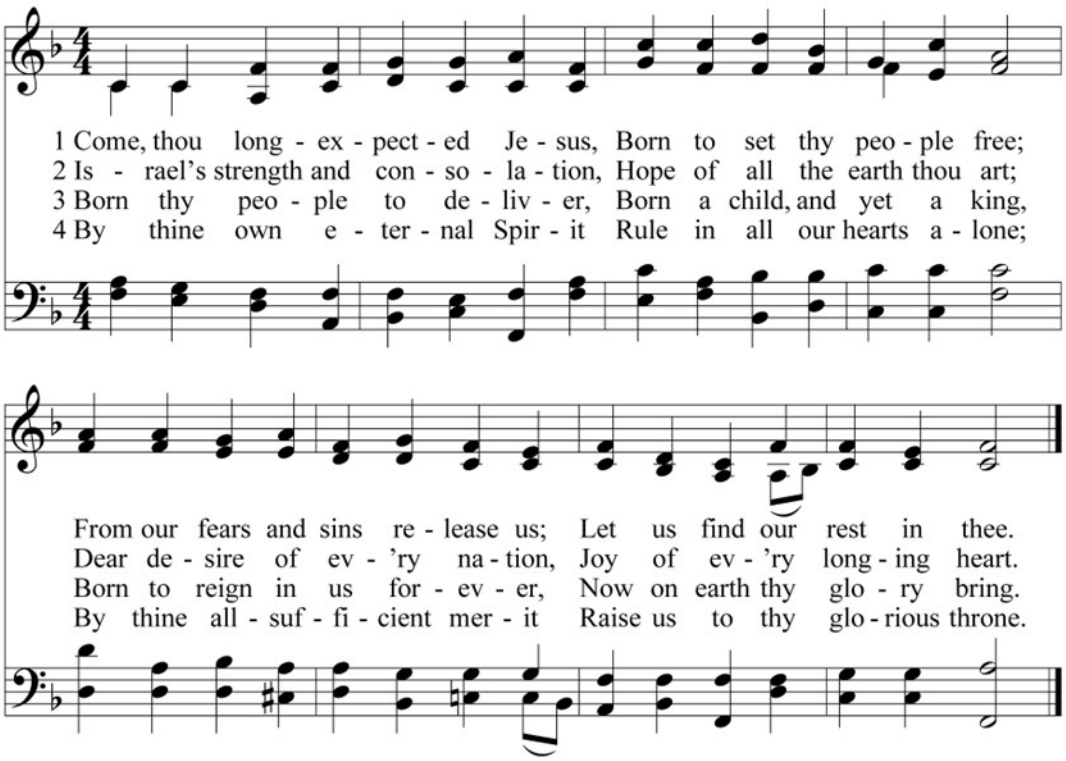
Plymouth Congregational Church gratefully acknowledges that we are on the sacred traditional territory of the Dakota people. It is an honor to live, pray, seek justice, and create community alongside Dakota, Ojibwe, and other Indigenous people in the Twin Cities.

Many African American spirituals and hymns were never credited to their creators or were claimed by other individuals. When Plymouth Congregational Church uses music or music texts created by people who were kept in chattel slavery, we will donate to a historically Black institution as a reparative action in honor of the creators and their descendants.

COME, THOU LONG-EXPECTED JESUS

Charles Wesley, 1707-1788, alt.

STUTTGART 8.7.8.7.
Melody attr. to Christian F. Witt, 1660-1716
"Psalmodia Sacra," Gotha, 1715



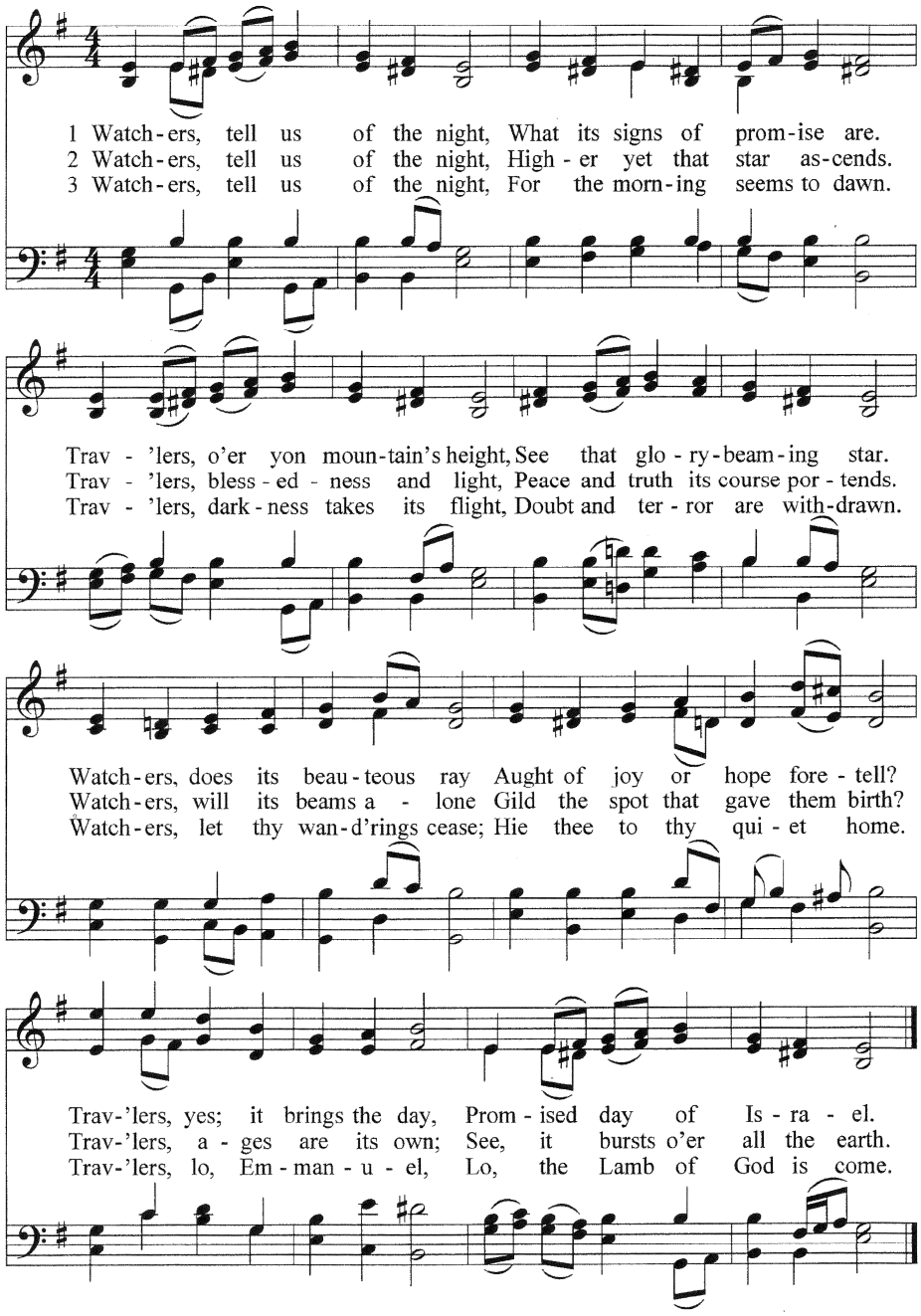
Worship & Program Staff: Rev. JT Smiedendorf, *Acting Lead & Intentional Interim Minister*; Rev. Kate Taber, *Director of Spiritual Formation,* Birdie Cunningham, *Director of Congregational Care;* Nina Jonson, *Director of Children, Youth & Families;* Philip Brunelle, *Organist-Choirmaster*; Marie Scholtz, *Associate Music Director*; Laura Caviani, *Chapel Trio Director*; Mary Laymon, *Chapel Choir Director,* Meredith Wallace, *Handbell and Youth Choir Director;* Cody Bourdot, *Director of Theater Arts & A/V Production*

The Plymouth Choir: Philip Brunelle, *director*; **Solo Quintet:** Maria Jette & Kathryn Rupp, *soprano*; Lisa Drew, *alto*; Dan Dressen, *tenor*; and James Bohn, *bass*

WATCHERS, TELL US OF THE NIGHT

John Bowring, 1792-1872, alt.

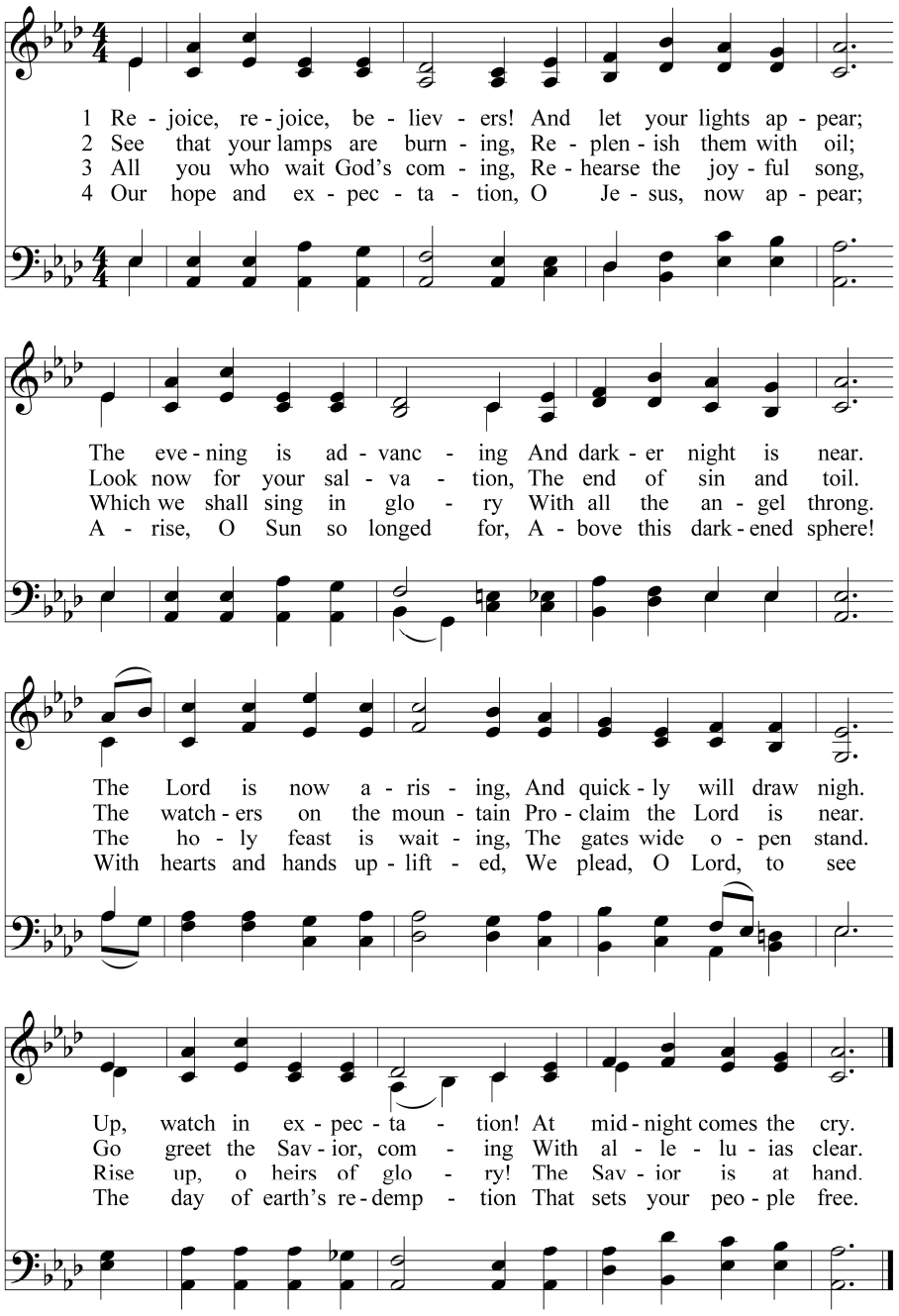
ABERYSTWYTH 7.7.7.7.D.
Joseph Parry, 1841-1903



REJOICE, REJOICE, BELIEVERS!

Laurentius Laurenti, 1700
Tr. Sarah B. Findlater, 1854, alt.

HAF TRONES LAMPA FÄRDIG 7.6.7.6.D.
Swedish Folk Melody



Chancel Flowers: On this first Sunday in Advent, chancel flowers are given in loving memory of Shirley and Ray Gores by their daughters, Nancy and Beverly.

CHURCH REGISTER

Hospitalized
Steve Jones

Convalescing
Martha Brown, after knee surgery

Home and Hospital Visits: Plymouth's minister and Director of Congregational Care call upon members of the church in their homes, hospitals, or care and rehabilitation centers. If you know of someone who would like a visit, please contact Birdie Cunningham at 612-977-1261.

Music Notes: The famous Bach chorale prelude for Advent, "Wake, a voice is calling," was composed in 1747 as the first of his six Schübler Chorales. English composer John Watkinson was organist for 40+ years at St. Mary's in Hull.

Paul Manz, composer of many organ works and Cantor emeritus at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Minneapolis for 20 years was a close friend of Plymouth's former organist, Arthur Jennings, as well as our present organist, Philip Brunelle.

André Thomas is a renowned African American composer and professor emeritus of music at Florida State University. He is past president of the American Choral Directors Association and has written books on the history and importance of Negro spirituals.

Egil Hovland, the Norwegian organist and composer, was organist at the Glemmen church in Fredrikstad, Norway for 49 years. He visited Plymouth Church in the 1990s when his cantata, "The Most Beautiful Rose," was performed—part of which will be heard in today's communion music.

Adolphus Hailstork is a well-known African American composer who taught for many years as composer-in-residence in Virginia at Norfolk State University.

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