

Sunday Gathering Liturgy

From Cancellation—Into
Charity, Matthew 1:18-25 -
Bradley Bell

December 5, 2021

Advent: From Darkness—Into
Light

Call to Worship - Isaiah 9:2

As you can see this morning, our church has a tradition of lighting Advent candles as a way of tangibly picturing the light of Jesus Christ coming into the darkness of our world. We are going to light them a bit differently this year in order to coincide with our sermon series titled "From Darkness—Into Light". The first candle that is lit today actually represents the theme of love, because the subject of today's sermon is "From Cancellation—Into Charity". In other words, what we need in a world of condemnation is the light of God's love in Christ. Amen?

But you may be here this morning, and let's be honest, the love ain't flowing. You don't really feel it flowing to you, or you don't really see it flowing out of you. You know what? You are welcome here. Jesus Christ wasn't born because we loved him; he was born because he loved us.

So let's announce this truth together from the prophet Isaiah:

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwell in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone. Isaiah 9:2

Lord, through Jesus you are shining your light on us. Help us feel it and believe it!

On Christ The Solid Rock

Confession - 1 Timothy 1:15

When we say "From Cancellation—Into Charity," what does that mean? What does that look like? How does it apply to us? If we are to move from darkness into light, then we need to confess our cancellation, in order to open ourselves to God's charity. One of our members is now going to share what that has looked like for him:

"One of the greatest temptations of my adult life has been cynicism, what one author describes as intellectual lassitude. I'm slow to learn and quick to cancel, especially when it comes to the kinds of people to whom I feel morally superior. Humans are social beings, and our sin, too, is social. To quote the same writer: "We have allowed ourselves to become bitterly factionalized, and truth has lost its power to resolve or to persuade." Our first Truth is Jesus Christ, who came to save sinners, among whom, as Paul says, I am chief. I've been confronted again and again by the Holy Spirit and by the world around me—reminded that nothing is simple, least of all people, in all of our God-breathed goodness and inborn Sin. Lord, forgive me for my cynicism, my intellectual lethargy, my sinful certitudes about others. Rather than cancel me for my sin, you canceled my sin for me. Let me freely give the charity you first gave; and let me forgive others, never neglecting that you first forgave. Amen."

Now, let's make that prayer our own:

Lord, forgive us for our cynicism, our intellectual lethargy, our sinful certitudes about others.

Congregation: Rather than cancel me for my sin, you canceled my sin for me.

Let us freely give the charity you first gave; and let us forgive others, never neglecting that you first forgave.

Amen.

Let Us Be Known By Our Love

O Come O Come Emmanuel

Sermon - Matthew 1:18-25

Communion - 1 Corinthians 11:23-28

Behold the Christ (Sojourn)

Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

Lexington Rd Arrangement with new melody / chorus

Announcements & Benediction - Romans 5:8

You may be seated. Thank you for joining us in today's gathering! We hope that you have experienced the welcome of Jesus. You may be seated as we give a few next steps from today's gathering.

1) Giving & Visitors - antiochpeople.org/give - We want to be a people who reflect the generosity of God at Advent. So this year we have a goal of raising \$5,000 for global missions, which will be divided among all our distributed members. We remind you that 2% of our annual budget is already designated to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, but if you'd still like to give to that, simply designate it on your check or on GivApp.

2) MCT Prayer Calendars - Another goal is to sell out our MCT prayer calendars. They are \$10 each. This is great opportunity to help us fulfill our commitment to pray for the members we have distributed among the nations.

Also, we want to invite you to share your Christmas cards with our distributed members (or just write them a note if you're behind on the Christmas cards). There is a box in the back of the auditorium, and also next week there will be materials for kids to write their own cards.

3) Ladies Christmas Brunch - Antioch Women: Please join us here at the church this Saturday, December 11 at 10 am for the annual Ladies Christmas Brunch. There will be food and a gift exchange. For more details on the gift exchange, and to sign up to bring food, please see the announcement in the church Facebook group, or find Katie Bell after the gathering.

4) Family Meeting - Covenant members, just a reminder there is a Family Meeting this next Sunday, December 12th here at the building from 6-8 PM. Childcare will be provided as well as snacks. This will replace normal FG meetings for that week.

5) ESL - Today there is an ESL interest meeting in the training room immediately following the gathering. If you have already signed up for this, or if you're just exploring, please come as we make plans to launch classes next month.

We begin each gathering with a call to worship and we end with a benediction which simply is a reminder that we are blessed to be a blessing. I invite you to hold out your hands as a posture of receiving this blessing:

Church, God has demonstrated his own love toward you in this: rather than cancelling you for your sin, he cancelled your sin for you. Now as you go into a world still in the darkness of shame, fear, and guilt, may you shine as remarkable examples of God's charity.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Let's say this together: We are sent.
