# NOVEMBER 29, 2026
# FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

St. John United Church of Christ
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Rev. Rosemary Captain, Pastor and Teacher
*Organist – Sharon Banjavcic*
*Liturgy – Rev. Teña T. Nock*
*Ushers -*
*(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI License #11164431*
**Please stand if comfortably able.*
*Respond with words in bold print.*
*Bible translation – CEB Common English Bible*

**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:**
**THE BELL IS RUNG:**
**PRELUDE: "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"**
**Carol Tornquist**
**PENNIES FOR MISSION:**
**Open and Affirming Coalition**

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**
One: Truly I tell you, these generations will not pass away until the many things have been made right.
**Many: Heaven and earth will pass away, but your words will remain.**
One: Be aware, stay alert, you don't know when the fulfilment of my promises will happen.
**Many: We will keep alert, we will stay aware, for we know the time draws near.**
One: I will meet you gladly, right where you are, as you do what is right and remember my ways.
**All: We gather in reverence to behold your presence.**

***INVOCATION:**
Holy one who opens the heavens and causes mountains to quake, we invoke your presence amidst this gathering of beings that you shaped with your own hands. Help us to perceive you in all we hear, say, and do in this time of worship. Amen

***OPENING HYMN: 102 "O How Shall I Receive You"**

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***UNISON PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:**
**Holy God, in times of internal and external upheaval, you send your grace across chasms and breach barriers. Your grace cannot be contained. It reaches us when we can't reach ourselves and gathers us back to you.**

***WORDS OF GRACE:**
The Holy One is able to make all things right. Let us give thanks as we accept the invitation to be delivered from all forms of oppression and be restored to right relationship within and without.

***GLORIA:**
**Glory to the Creator, and the Christ and the Spirit so near. As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One God always here. (repeat twice)**
**(end) One God always here. One God always here.**

**SCRIPTURE LESSONS**

**OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 64:1-9**
64 If only you would tear open the heavens and come down!
Mountains would quake before you
2 like fire igniting brushwood or making water boil.
If you would make your name known to your enemies,
the nations would tremble in your presence.
3 When you accomplished wonders beyond all our expectations;
when you came down, mountains quaked before you.
4 From ancient times,
no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any god but you
who acts on behalf of those who wait for him![c]
5 You look after those who gladly do right;
they will praise you for your ways.[d]
But you were angry when we sinned;
you hid yourself when we did wrong.
6 We have all become like the unclean;
all our righteous deeds are like a menstrual rag.
All of us wither like a leaf;
our sins, like the wind, carry us away.
7 No one calls on your name;
no one bothers to hold on to you,
for you have hidden yourself from us,
and have handed us over to our sin.
8 But now, Lord, you are our father.
We are the clay, and you are our potter.
All of us are the work of your hand.
9 Don't rage so fiercely, Lord;
don't hold our sins against us forever,
but gaze now on your people, all of us:

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19**
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**EPISTLE: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9**
3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
**Thanksgiving for the Corinthians**

[4] I thank my God always for you, because of God's grace
that was given to you in Christ Jesus. [5] That is, you were
made rich through him in everything: in all your
communication and every kind of knowledge, [6] in the
same way that the testimony about Christ was confirmed
with you. [7] The result is that you aren't missing any
spiritual gift while you wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to
be revealed. [8] He will also confirm your testimony about
Christ until the end so that you will be blameless on the
day of our Lord Jesus Christ. [9] God is faithful, and you
were called by him to partnership with his Son, Jesus
Christ our Lord.

***GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 13:24-37**

[24] "In those days, after the suffering of that time, the sun
will become dark, and the moon won't give its light.
[25] The stars will fall from the sky, and the planets and
other heavenly bodies will be shaken. [26] Then they will
see the Human One coming in the clouds with great
power and splendor. [27] Then he will send the angels and
gather together his chosen people from the four corners
of the earth, from the end of the earth to the end of
heaven.

**A lesson from the fig tree**

[28] "Learn this parable from the fig tree. After its branch
becomes tender and it sprouts new leaves, you know
that summer is near. [29] In the same way, when you see
these things happening, you know that he's near, at the
door. [30] I assure you that this generation won't pass away
until all these things happen. [31] Heaven and earth will
pass away, but my words will certainly not pass away.
[32] "But nobody knows when that day or hour will come,
not the angels in heaven and not the Son. Only the
Father knows. [33] Watch out! Stay alert! You don't know
when the time is coming. [34] It is as if someone took a
trip, left the household behind, and put the servants in
charge, giving each one a job to do, and told the
doorkeeper to stay alert. [35] Therefore, stay alert! You
don't know when the head of the household will come,
whether in the evening or at midnight, or when the
rooster crows in the early morning or at daybreak.
[36] Don't let him show up when you weren't expecting
and find you sleeping. [37] What I say to you, I say to all:
Stay alert!"

**MESSAGE: "What are We Staying Awake For?"**

**With thoughts by Rev. Fred Craddock**

"And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake" verse 37. It may be bewildering at first that the Gospel lection to begin Advent is from Mark, who has no birth narrative, and that the particular reading from Mark is from a sermon about the end of time. But the appropriateness not immediately apparent becomes clear upon reflection. Advent, after all, has to do with the coming of

the Lord, the birth being but one form of the appearance of Christ. And at the center of faith's understanding of the end times is the coming of the Lord. Because God is "The One Who Comes" to strengthen, to reveal, to judge, and to redeem, the posture of the people of God is always the same: **repentance, expectation, and hope.**

Mark 13:24-37 concludes a lengthy discourse of Jesus sometimes called "the little Apocalypse" because of its similarity to the Apocalypse to John.

In Greek, the term apocalyptic simply means "revelation" and it is in that sense that it is employed in the Revelation of John, which begins precisely with that word. In its most common usage, it simply means catastrophic, as when commentators speak of "an apocalyptic view of the coming economic downturn." Apocalyptic Literature speaks of the end of time usually expressed by visions or dreams.

The reader of apocalyptic literature is impressed through vivid cosmic images that God's coming, whether to punish or to rescue, is no small event. When God comes, the heavens break their cycle of days and seasons, and the earth convulses. The farthest star, the smallest blade of grass, everything created, is affected by the activity of the Creator. Such are the events (the end of the temple, the end of all things, and the coming of the Son of Man are interwoven themes) described here.

At the time that Mark wrote his Gospel, Jerusalem and the temple lay in ruins. Civil strife had outlived Romans patience , and the threats by Emperor Caligula (AD 39-40) are now (AD 70) carried out. What did this disaster mean for the purposes and promises of God!? Jewish prophets had fed the war effort with messianic ideology, but how were followers of Jesus to understand the end of the Hoy City and the temple? Added to the persecution at the hands of religious and political authorities and the anguish of families torn apart by differing loyalties was the unbearable confusion created by false messiahs and false prophets. Experiencing most heavily now the absence of Jesus, the faithful are torn between giving themselves up to despair or reaching for any flicker of hope.

To that church and to all the faithful everywhere the word of our text is both encouraging and demanding. The believers are not robbed of their expectation of a final day, a day of relief and vindication. That time will come, but it will be at God's determination and accompanied by signs God will give. All human calculations are confusing and futile. In fact, the day of the Lord is not to be tied to any political condition or religious institution. No one knows the time or place of all of this, not even Jesus knew. God survives all human structures and institutions, sometimes having to shatter and re-create the communities that exist for God's work

in the world. In other words, true hope is trust in the faithfulness of God, constant amid the rise and fall of the worst and the best of human achievement.

Why do we need to read this scripture? What can we learn? The clear evidence of trust in the faithfulness of God is faithfulness in our work and witness. This is the meaning of being alert and watchful. To watch is not to scan the heavens, read the horoscope, comb through obscure texts, and begin every sentence with the words "When the Messiah comes." Such uninvolved waiting for the Messiah is not hope; it is postponement and evasion. Looking upon scenes of human misery and mouthing "when the Messiah comes" has nothing to do with this text. The brief parable makes it clear what life is for the disciples of Jesus. It is as though a master, absent on a journey, had left his servants in charge, each **with work to be done**, with a keeper at the door. The message, then, is to be neither falsely optimistic nor falsely discouraged. Christ will come and with signs that no one can miss. In the meantime, appropriate Christian behavior is enduring, without trying to guess when; it is continuing the mission to the nations without giving up. "And when I say to you I say to all. Keep awake." To keep awake is to be faithful in our work, as though we were already in the presence of the One for whose coming our hearts are eager. Amen

**ST. JOHN CHANCEL CHOIR: "Advent Cry"**
**Joseph M. Martin**

**PASTORAL PRAYER:**
**OUR LORD'S PRAYER:**
**PRAYER RESPONSE: 769**
**Hear our prayer, O God. Hear our prayer, O God,**
**Incline your ear to us, and grant us your peace.**

**INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:**
In this moment, we gather our time, talent, and treasure, and offer them to the Holy One. As we do so, we remember the many ways that you have gifted and do gift us with much. Amen.

**OFFERTORY: "Soon and Very Soon" Andrae Crouch**

***DOXOLOGY:**
**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;**
**Praise God, all creatures here below;**
**Praise God above you heavenly host;**
**Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen**

***UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION:**
Righteous One, receive these gifts that we gladly gathered and offered to you. May they be sent forth for the transforming of the conditions in which we live and love. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 104 "We Hail You God's Anointed"**

***BENEDICTION:**
As we exit this sacred gathering, Creator sends us forth with the conviction that no matter where life takes us, God will meet us where we are. May we be willing to move things on earth as God move things in heaven, to share compassion with others as we meet them where they are. Amen.

***BENEDICTION RESPONSE: "Let There Be Peace"**
**Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me:**
**Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.**
**With God, our creator, children all are we.**
**Let us walk with each other, in perfect harmony.**
**Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now,**
**With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow;**
**To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.**
**Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.**

**THE BELL IS RUNG:**

**POSTLUDE: "Jubilate" Stewart Landon**

**PRAYER LIST:** Terry Gammon, Bruce Wagner**,** Jim Warning**,** Kim Holmes, Becky Ballard, Russ Hartmann, Marilyn Paul, Mary Lou and Urban Baum, Pam and Syd Safriet, Yvonne Weber, Jackie Canterbury, Wayne Huss, Liv C., Nate Hbich, **our Beloved Country.**