



# How does a weary world rejoice?

## Words for Worship for Advent–Baptism of the Lord Sunday

Written by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

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## ABOUT THIS LITURGY OUTLINE

- *Italicized lines are notes for worship leaders.*
- Unbolded lines are to be spoken by worship leaders and, when appropriate, printed in bulletins or projected on screens.
- **Bolded lines are to be spoken by the congregation and printed in bulletins or projected on screens.**

### A benediction for the series

#### How does a weary world rejoice?

Family of faith,  
as you leave this place,  
you go into a weary world—  
so speak tenderly.  
Do the good that is yours to do.  
Choose connection.  
Hold onto hope.  
And remember  
that Christ took on flesh for you.  
You are God’s beloved.  
So go rejoicing.  
The world needs it.  
Amen.



The First Sunday of Advent | How does a weary world rejoice?

*We acknowledge our weariness* Luke 1:1-23 | Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

## Call to Worship

In God's house, we can be joyful.

**We can be grateful.**

**We can be hopeful.**

In God's house, we can be weary.

**We can be anxious.**

**We can be grieving.**

In God's house, we can be honest—

**inspired or tired,**

**delighted or doubtful,**

**connected or curious,**

**and everything in between.**

This is God's house. You are welcome exactly as you are.

**Let us worship our loving God.**

## Candle Lighting Liturgy

### Option A

*Written for two liturgists.*

**A:** How does a weary world hope?

**B:** By telling stories of hope,  
by lighting candles in the night,  
and planting seeds in the winter that will  
bloom in the spring.

By praying for children as they grow,  
and picking up trash on the sidewalk.

By insisting that small acts can make a  
difference.

**A:** There are a million ways to practice hope.  
So today we light the candle of hope as a  
reminder and a charge.

**B:** With God's help, may we bring hope into  
a weary world. Amen.

### Option B

*Written for a liturgist with congregational response.*

How does a weary world hope?

**By telling stories of hope,  
by lighting candles in the night,  
and planting seeds in the winter that  
will bloom in the spring.**

By praying for children as they grow, and  
picking up trash on the sidewalk.

**By insisting that small acts can make a  
difference.**

There are a million ways to practice hope.  
So today we light the candle of hope as a  
reminder and a charge.

**With God's help, may we bring hope  
into a weary world. Amen.**

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## Call to Confession

Friends, in today's scripture passage, a man named Zechariah is given good news from God and his response is to ask, "How can this be?"

Have any of you ever felt that way when receiving good news?

It can be hard to receive good news when we don't expect it.

It can be hard to accept God's grace and God's love when we think we don't deserve it.

But friends, scripture tells us over and over again of a loving, generous, and gracious God. So may we come to the prayer of confession today, not with fear, but with an awe so deep that we ask ourselves, "How can this be?"

Let us pray:

## Prayer of Confession

Gracious God, we are weary.

For weary bodies that ache and cry out, we pray:

**Forgive us for pushing ourselves too hard.**

**Reminds us that we deserve Sabbath rest.**

For weary minds that feel overwhelmed and saturated with news, we pray:

**Forgive us for creating so many distractions.**

**Remind us that in the quiet, we can hear you.**

For weary hearts that long to feel the joy of this season, we pray:

**Forgive us for being impatient with ourselves.**

**Remind us that healing takes time, and that joy and grief can coexist.**

For the weary edges of our faith that struggle to hold onto hope,

**Forgive us. Remind us of Zechariah and Elizabeth.**

**Remind us that your good news knows no bounds. Amen.**

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## Words of Forgiveness

Family of faith,  
no matter how many times we wear ourselves thin,  
no matter how many times we lose ourselves to distractions,  
no matter how many times we ask ourselves, “How can this be?”  
God’s love keeps showing up for us.

So say this with me:

**We are loved. We are claimed. We are forgiven.**

**Thanks be to God. Amen.**

## Prayer for Illumination

Loving God, the source of our joy,  
as we turn our hearts toward your Word,  
we ask that you would soften us.

Soften the callouses on our hearts.

Weave yourself in between the cracks in our spirits.

And plant hope where there is room.

And as you do this,  
like flowers toward the sun,  
we will turn ourselves toward you,  
eager to hear a Word so good that we cannot help but ask ourselves,  
“How can this be?”

With openness and gratitude we pray,  
amen.

## Affirmation of Faith

**We believe in a God who hears our prayers,  
who knows the shape and form of our weariness.**

**We believe in a God who wants joy and delight for us,  
not just survival and existence.**

**We believe in a God who looks ahead,  
who is not done dreaming for the world—  
a God who sends hope in the form of people and change,  
movements and Spirit. (continued)**

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## Affirmation of Faith *(cont.)*

**And so we return to this space.**

**We bring our joy and our weariness  
like two sides of the same coin,  
and we trust that God is already at work.**

**Yes, we believe in a God who hears our prayers.**

**Thanks be to God for a love like that.**

**Amen.**

## Prayer of the People

Gracious God,

You carry us through our days. You know every word on our tongue, every hair on our head.  
You know the dreams in our hearts, and the weight of our bones.

You also know the weariness we bring with us into the morning and into this space. So with honesty  
we come before you, both with hearts full of gratitude and with prayer requests on our lips.

First, holy God, we thank you for the gifts of this life that *give* energy.

For birthday candles and sunrises, for handwritten cards and jobs that we are passionate about.  
For stories that can make us laugh until we cry, and for friends that feel like family.

*(Optional: Add in gifts relevant to your local community here.)*

For all these gifts, thank you.

In addition to these prayers of gratitude, loving God, we also bring you the things that weigh heavy  
on our hearts. For gun violence, for family and friends in chemotherapy, for seasons of transition  
and grief that won't let us go—we ask for your attention. We ask for your love and care.

*(Optional: Insert concerns from your community here.)*

Take this yoke from us. Relieve some of the burden on our backs, and wrap your arms around  
places where we feel most tender.

And as we enter into this new Advent season—a season marked with joy, hope and light—we ask  
that you would remind us that our full humanity is welcome here. There is room for both joy and  
grief. There is room for weariness and awe. There is room for faith and doubt, for nothing is too  
big or too far gone for your love to reach it.

So with hope in our hearts, we unite our voices once more to pray the words your son taught us  
to pray, saying:

**Our Father...**

*Continue with the Lord's Prayer in the language and wording most familiar to you.*