

St. Thomas Episcopal Church

The Order of Worship for The Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 22, 2024 † 8:30 AM



Romare Bearden (1911–1988) / *The Visitation*, 1941 / gouache, ink, and pencil on colored paper, 30 1/2 × 46 1/2 in. / Museum of Modern Art, New York (inv. no. 258.2014)

Today is the Fourth Sunday of Advent. Over the past weeks, we have been meditating on liminality (from the Latin limen, limin-, “threshold”), and this morning, the threshold to Christmas is only two days away! Pregnancy—the gestation period of new life—is an archetypal liminal condition, and today’s Gospel reading features not one but two mothers-to-be. We have come full circle to the readings for Advent 1: during the four weeks before Christmas, we not only await the birth of Jesus, but we are also on the lookout for the return of Christ. Today, we experience the unsettling surprise of a child leaping in the womb as well as the “birth pangs” of the end times: wars and rumors of war, famines, earthquakes, and false prophets (Matthew 24). Are we ready for Christmas? Are we ready for Christ’s return in Majesty?

Thank you to Jonathan Frederick Walz, Ph. D, for selecting art for our Advent and Christmas bulletins. Jonathan is Director of Curatorial Affairs and Curator of American Art at The Columbus Museum, and a member of St. Thomas.

THE ENTRANCE

Please stand as you are comfortable at the ringing of the bell.

Prayers at the Advent Wreath *standing as comfortable*

Light and peace in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Blessed are you, O God of our ancestors:

To you be praise and glory forever.

Your prophet John bore witness to the truth as a burning and shining light. May we your servants rejoice in his light, and so be led to witness to him who is the Lord of our coming kingdom, Jesus our Savior and King of the ages.

Blessed be God forever.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST: RITE I

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

The Collect for Purity *unison*

BCP 323

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Celebrant Lord, have mercy upon us.

People **Christ, have mercy upon us.**

Celebrant Lord, have mercy upon us.

The Collect of the Day

BCP 160

The Lord be with you.

And with thy spirit.

Let us pray.

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Lessons

Please be seated for the reading of the scriptures.

A Reading from the Prophet Micah

Micah 5:2-5a

You, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Canticle: The Song of Mary *Enriching our Worship*

Luke 1:46-55

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in you, O God my Savior; *
for you have looked with favor on your lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed: *
You, the Almighty, have done great things for me, and holy is your Name.
You have mercy on those who fear you*
in every generation.
You have shown strength with your arm, *
and scattered the proud in their conceit,
Casting down the mighty from their thrones, *
and lifting up the lowly.
You have filled the hungry with good things *
and sent the rich away empty.
You have come to the help of your servant Israel, *
for you have remembered your promise of mercy,
The promise made to our forebears, *
to Abraham and his children for ever. Amen.

A reading from Hebrews

Hebrews 10:5-10

When Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do your will, O God' (in the scroll of the book it is written of me)." When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered

according to the law), then he added, "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Gospel *standing as comfortable*

Luke 1:39-45

Celebrant The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

People **Glory be to thee, O Lord.**

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

Celebrant The Gospel of the Lord.

People **Praise be to thee, O Christ.**

Sermon

The Nicene Creed *unison, standing as comfortable*

BCP 326

**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:

**by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.**

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.**

With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.

He 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 the People *kneeling or seated*

BCP 328

Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's Church and the World.

Almighty and everliving God, who in thy holy Word hast taught us to make prayers, and supplications, and to give thanks for all: Receive these our prayers which we offer unto thy divine Majesty, beseeching thee to inspire continually the Universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord; and grant that all those who do confess thy holy Name may agree in the truth of thy holy Word, and live in unity and godly love.

Give grace, O heavenly Father, to all bishops and other ministers, that they may, both by their life and doctrine, set forth thy true and lively Word, and rightly and duly administer thy holy Sacraments.

And to all thy people give thy heavenly grace, and especially to this congregation here present; that, with meek heart and due reverence, they may hear and receive thy holy Word, truly serving thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life.

We beseech thee also so to rule the hearts of those who bear the authority of government in this and every land especially Joe, our President, Kamala, our Vice-President, Donald, our President-Elect, J.D., our Vice-President -Elect, members of Congress and the Supreme Court, and our Governors, Mayors, and Legislators, and all working for peace and security around the world that they may be led to wise decisions and right actions for the welfare and peace of the world.

Open, O Lord, the eyes of all people to behold thy gracious hand in all thy works, that, rejoicing in thy whole creation, they may honor thee with their substance, and be faithful stewards of thy bounty.

And we most humbly beseech thee, of thy goodness, O Lord, to comfort and succor all those who in this transitory life, are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity, especially Thomas parishioners Kristie, Roger, the Partin family, Arthur, Bernie, Elissa,

Charlene, Charlotte, Chris, Becca, and Cindy; our homebound members John, Ramón and Maria, Carol, Bill, and William; friends of the parish Joe, Jimmy, Wayne, the Prins family, and Joyce, and those who care for them.

And we also bless thy holy Name for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear especially Dixie in this week of the one-year anniversary of her death, Bob, Judy, Murray, Judy, Rick and John, beseeching thee to grant them continual growth in thy love and service; and to grant us grace so to follow the good examples of all thy saints, that with them we may be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom.

Grant these our prayers, O Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only Mediator and Advocate.
Amen.

The Confession of Sin and Absolution *unison*

BCP 331

Let us humbly confess our sins unto Almighty God.

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all men: We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we from time to time most grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy divine Majesty, provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; for thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past; and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please thee in newness of life, to the honor and glory of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Peace

THE HOLY COMMUNION

The Offering

St. Thomas is grateful for your gifts.

You may mail a check to 2100 Hilton Avenue, Columbus, GA 31906,
donate online at our website (<https://www.stthomascolumnbus.org/give/>),
or use your mobile device by texting **STTCOLUMBUS** to **73256**.

The Great Thanksgiving *Eucharistic Prayer I*

BCP 333

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People **And with thy spirit.**

Celebrant Lift up your hearts.

People **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

Celebrant Let us give thanks unto our Lord God.

People **It is meet and right so to do.**

It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto thee, O Lord, holy Father, almighty, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord; because thou didst send thy beloved Son to redeem us from sin and death, and to make us heirs in him of everlasting life; that when he shall come again in power and great triumph to judge the world, we may without shame or fear rejoice to behold his appearing.

Therefore with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious Name; evermore praising thee, and saying,

Celebrant and People

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts:

Heaven and earth are full of thy glory.

Glory be to thee, O Lord Most High.

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

The Celebrant continues

All glory be to thee, Almighty God, our heavenly Father, for that thou, of thy tender mercy, didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption; who made there, by his one oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world; and did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death and sacrifice, until his coming again.

For in the night in which he was betrayed, he took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat, this is my Body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Likewise, after supper, he took the cup; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of this; for this is my Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins. Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me."

Wherefore, O Lord and heavenly Father, according to the institution of thy dearly beloved Son our Savior Jesus Christ, we, thy humble servants, do celebrate and make here before thy divine Majesty, with these thy holy gifts, which we now offer unto thee, the memorial thy Son hath commanded us to make; having in remembrance his blessed passion and precious death, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension; rendering unto thee most hearty thanks for the innumerable benefits procured unto us by the same.

And we most humbly beseech thee, O merciful Father, to hear us; and, of thy almighty goodness, vouchsafe to bless and sanctify, with thy Word and Holy Spirit, these thy gifts and creatures of bread and wine; that we, receiving them according to thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood.

And we earnestly desire thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; most humbly beseeching thee to grant that, by the merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we, and all thy whole Church, may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his passion.

And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto thee; humbly beseeching thee that we, and all others who shall be partakers of this Holy Communion, may worthily receive the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son Jesus Christ, be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction, and made one body with him, that he may dwell in us, and we in him.

And although we are unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer unto thee any sacrifice, yet we beseech thee to accept this our bounden duty and service, not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offenses, through Jesus Christ our Lord; By whom, and with whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honor and glory be unto thee, O Father Almighty, world without end.

AMEN.

The Lord's Prayer *unison*

BCP 336

**Our Father, 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Breaking of the Bread

BCP 337

Celebrant Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

People **Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.**

Celebrant O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,

People **have mercy upon us.**

Celebrant O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,

People **have mercy upon us.**

Celebrant O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,

People **grant us thy peace.**

We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord whose property is always to have mercy. Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

Celebrant The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

All Christians are joyfully invited to share in communion. You do not have to be a member of St. Thomas or an Episcopalian in order to receive. Come forward down the center aisle when invited by the ushers. Go to the farthest end of the altar rail and stand or kneel. Hold out one hand to receive the bread and then dip the bread in the cup or drink from the cup. If you prefer not to share a common cup, hold out two hands to receive the bread and wine together. If you prefer not to receive either the bread or the cup, cross your arms across your chest. If you need a gluten-free wafer, let the server know. If you prefer to receive communion at your pew, let the usher know.

Postcommunion Prayer

BCP 339

Almighty and everliving God, we most heartily thank thee for that thou dost feed us, in these holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and dost assure us thereby of thy favor and goodness towards us; and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of thy Son, the blessed company of all faithful people; and are also heirs, through hope, of thy everlasting kingdom. And we humbly beseech thee, O heavenly Father, so to assist us with thy grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

The Blessing

May the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you and scatter the darkness from before your path;
And the blessing of God our Creator, Redeemer, and Giver of Life be with you always. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

In our prayers

St. Thomas parishioners: Kristie Ridgeway, Roger Redden, The Partin family, Arthur Frost, Bernie Sutter, Elissa Wagner, Charlene Moore, Charlotte Mills, Chris Jeffries, Becca Nicolson, Cindy Godwin

Homebound members: John Studstill, Ramón & Maria Capó, Carol Kennon, Bill Pauli, William South

Friends of the parish: Joe Moore (*Ena Hunt*), Jimmy Hatfield (*Amy Hatfield*), Wayne Simpkins (*Bernie Sutter*), The Prins family (*Reb Kreyling*), Joyce Butts (*Sandi Pauli*)

Those with continuing concerns: Gene Wells, Frank & Pam Feagle, Carlene Pawlowicz, Ralph Wimberly, Jessica McComb, April Jacobs, Jana Speer, Debbie & Max Anderson, Korie MacDougall, Nicole Ceccato, Deborah & Steve Tucker, Neal Fenter, Ellen Free, Steve Scott, Bernie Sutter, Raymond Campbell, Art France, Angela Tulloh (*Louise Tulloh*)

Soldiers & families at Ft. Moore and St. Thomas members & friends who are deployed: Dan Wilcox, Krk Malit

Those celebrating birthdays: Sid Regan 12/24, Oliver Meeks 12/24, Pat Daniel 12/25, Reggie Brushwood 12/25, Kelly McFalls 12/25, Parker Daniels 12/25, Michael Taylor 12/27

Those celebrating anniversaries: Michele Shumpert & Frank Garcia 12/22, Joe Mills & Jim Rutland 12/24, Toby & Virginia McCullough 12/26, Jerry & Martha Mullinax 12/27, Ed & Melanie Smith 12/27

Those who have died: Dixie Harmon 12/23/23, Bob Wadkins 1/11/24, Judy Harding 1/22/24, Murray Craig 4/4/24, Judy Gunter 4/6/24, Rick McKnight 7/30/24, John Partin 11/22/24

Announcements

For more information about the ministries of St. Thomas, pick up our latest *Seasons* newsletter or visit our website at www.StThomasColumbus.org.

Sundays

Coffee Time: 8:45-10:15. Homemade and packaged snacks are available in the parish hall.

Formation for all ages: 9:30-10:15am

Children PreK - 4th grade meet in the Outreach Center

Tween and Teens meet in the Youth Room.

Adults:

Today: Reflections from C. S. Lewis, Library

December 29: No Sunday School or Formation hour on this day

January 5: Epiphany Eve Breakfast, Parish Hall, with a visit from the Magi

Contemplative/Healing service will be held this evening, December 22, as the night gets just a bit shorter for the first time this season. We will gather at 5:00 pm in the chapel, and you are invited to bring a friend along with you. It will be a holy and candlelit time of silence, prayer, simple Taizé chanting, healing prayers & anointing with oil, Holy Eucharist with homemade bread, and the sacred gift of quiet time with God.

Wednesdays *Wednesday Activities will resume January 8, 2025-* The Rev. Adrian Chester will speak at 6:30 about the Honorable John Lewis and his book *Across that Bridge*. We will discuss the book on Wednesday in January.

News for this week

Brewer Buddy Packs: A Great Christmas Gift Idea

Make a donation for Buddy Packs in honor or memory of someone and we will send a special card acknowledging your gift. Scan the QR code below or find more information on our website.

Christmas Eve Services 4:30 & 10:30 pm

Two nearly identical services with Eucharist, candlelight, and the Christmas story. Children's chapel and nursery care are offered at the 4:30 service only. Incense will be used at the 10:30 service only.

Upcoming & Ongoing

End of Year Donations Thanks to all who support St. Thomas with your financial gifts. A reminder that gifts for the 2024 tax year must be received or postmarked by December 31, 2024. The office will be open that day until 3:00 pm.

Epiphany Eve Breakfast *Sunday, January 5 at 9:30 in the Parish Hall*

Join us for Breakfast with the Magi as they make their way to see Jesus. Be sure to get your photo with them. In addition, we will share in the custom of Blessing Homes at Epiphany. This custom developed because the Magi visited Jesus at his house. Kits for blessing our homes will be available to help us invite Christ to dwell with us throughout the year. Breakfast is a grits bar!

St. Thomas Book Group *January 10, 11am*

An informal group, everyone is welcome. Come and bring your friends. Contact Linnea Grosse for further information. January book - *Confession: An Inspector Ian Rutledge Mystery* by Charles Todd

Altar Flowers

The giving of Altar Flowers on Sunday is a wonderful way to celebrate a special occasion or remember our loved ones. In addition to enhancing the beauty of worship, the name(s) of those being honored or remembered and the name(s) of the donor will be listed in the Sunday bulletin. A contribution of \$75 is requested for altar flowers prepared by the Flower Guild, or you may order flowers from a professional florist if you prefer. Sign up online or contact the church office for the schedule. More info at stthomascolumbus.org/altar-flowers/

QR Code for signups! Use the QR code to find a list of current signups at St. Thomas. New to QR codes? Open the camera on your smartphone (or a QR reader), point at the black and white code box, when prompted push the link that shows up on your screen.



St. Thomas Staff

Administrative Assistant: Lupe Ortiz-Sanchez; *Director of Children and Family Ministries:* Shayla Holloway; *Director of Music:* Debbie Anderson; *Director of Parish Administration:* Patty Slembariski; *Director of Parish & Community Engagement:* Meg Olive-Allison; *Director of Youth & Young Adults:* Taylor Mack; *Interim Organist:* Adley Scott; *Kitchen Manager & Sexton:* Seth Burgamy; *Livestream Technician:* Nick Williams; *Maintenance & Cleaning:* Frances Woolfolk; *Nursery:* Riley Mullen, Evie Smith, Dorothy Uwanawich, Jenneken Varnum; *Sexton Assistant:* Morgan Camp

St. Thomas Clergy

Associate Rector for Mission: Darius Sudayi; *Associate Rector for Pastoral Care:* Roxane Gwyn;
Rector : Grace Burton-Edwards