

Mighty God,

We're honored to come into your presence today, on the fourth Sunday of Advent, ready for Jesus to burst onto the scene. Thank you for hearing us when we pray, and not only hearing us, but being attentive to us too – caring for us, loving us, listening to us. Our hearts long to be in tune with your heart, and we come to you in worship so that you might reorient us toward Jesus Christ. That is our primary prayer today: that we would be unified with Jesus and experience all the salvation, compassion, grace, mercy, and justice that being with Jesus entails.

As a church community God, we are desperate for your presence in so many ways. We long to be worshiping in person together. We long for our country and our world to be healed: for the virus that plagues us to vanish, for the injustice that haunts us to be righted, for the power not of you that tempts us to be revealed for what it is, for grace to fall like fresh snow on the earth. We long to recover from injury or illness, to regain strength, to find joy, to identify purpose. Lord God Almighty, we long for these, we turn to you, and we pray that your presence be near to us!

God of comfort, in this season, be especially close to those mourning loved ones we have lost. The holidays are so different without them, and we tend to miss them sharply this time of year. For anyone grieving today, wrap them in your arms and remind them repeatedly of your love, and of the eternal life found in Jesus Christ.

We also pray for the forgotten, for those on the margins of society, for the downcast, outcast, and downtrodden. Send your Holy Spirit on them so they are comforted by the Lord of the Universe, and send us, too, into those places where we can offer warmth or comfort or safety. Your light shines in the darkness Lord, and the darkness has not overcome it. Shine your light on this world; illuminate the dark spaces and bring your mercy close.

Triune God, break into our lives. Break into this world. Shatter stereotypes and bigotry, repurpose your creation, fill the streets with your love and compassion. Draw us and all people nearer and nearer to you, O God, that your purposes on earth might be fulfilled. And Lord, because we don't always know how to pray or what to pray for, thank you for Jesus Christ, who prays with us and for us, and who taught us to pray with these words:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come. Your 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.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**