

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2024

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

FOURTH SUNDAY of ADVENT

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Not in the mighty places of power,
but in little Bethlehem,
in a room out back:
All: The Messiah is coming.
One: Not born in nobility and wealth,
but of Mary and Joseph,
who pondered and planed wood:
All: The Messiah is coming.
One: Not announced by prophets, priests, and kings,
but by two women,
who were the first to know:
All: The Messiah is coming.
One: Nothing will be impossible for God,
but when and where we least expect it,
look among the straw and the stars:
All: The Messiah is coming.

***OPENING HYMN** “Angels, from the Realms of Glory” GtG 143

- 1. Angels, from the realms of glory,
wing your flight o'er all the earth;
you, who sang creation's story,
now proclaim Messiah's birth:
come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the newborn king!**
- 2. Shepherds, in the fields abiding,
watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing;
yonder shines the infant light:**

(continued...)

**come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the newborn king!**

**3. Sages, leave your contemplations;
brighter visions beam afar;
seek the great desire of nations;
you have seen his natal star:
come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the newborn king!**

**4. All creation, join in praising
God the Father, Spirit, Son,
evermore your voices raising
to th'eternal Three in One:
come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the newborn king!**

Words: Stanzas 1-3, James Montgomery, 1816, 1825; stanza 4,
Salisbury Hymn Book, 1857
Music: REGENT SQUARE, Henry Thomas Smart, 1867
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UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**God our Savior, we ask for your mercy.
We are grateful for the love you have shown us
in sending your Son, Jesus Christ;
yet we admit that we fail to share that love
as it has been shared with us.
Though we have heard Mary's song,
we still seek security in pride and power and possessions.
Though we know your story,
we resist the costs of following you.
We pass by those considered lowly in this world.
We turn away from hungry people who still wait to be filled.
Forgive us, we pray, for being distrustful
and for withholding your love from others.
Help us to work for the justice you intend.
Make us messengers of the peace you bring.
Remind us that, as we do not deserve your love,
so we are not to put conditions on our own love.
Teach us to care for others
with the same boundless grace you demonstrate to us.
And let the spark of your love be born again within our hearts.
We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Emmanuel. Amen.**

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON *(from John 3 & Luke 2)*

One: In this is love, that God gives us the gift of Jesus Christ to remind us of the truth of Immanuel: that God is with us.

All: The Good News is this: "God loved the world so much that God gave God's only Son." This is indeed "good news of great joy for all the people."

One: So rejoice and be glad, for in Jesus Christ we are loved, in Jesus Christ we are embraced, in Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

All: "Glory to God in the highest heaven!"

THE PEACE

One: The peace of Christ be with you all.

All: And also with you.

(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)

THE WORD

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH: The Candle of Love

One: We celebrate this season the expectant hope that we have in the coming of the Lord. We rejoice in the peace we can know in him. We share his joy with angels and others.

All: The shape of our hope is the small form of a baby and the promise of new life. The beginning of our peace, and our wholeness, is the confession of our brokenness. The foundation of our joy is in the sorrow of a cross.

One: But what of the love? For without love we are nothing but "a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." (I Corinthians 13:1) What is the substance of our love?

All: The substance of our love is in giving – self-giving – and our obedience unto death.

One: "For God loved the world so much that God gave" to us the Son, Jesus the Christ. (John 3:16) Jesus loved us so much that he gave his life for us, "humbling himself and becoming obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross." (Philippians 2:8) So we are to love him so much that we will "take up our cross and follow him." (Mark 8:34)

All: With the birth of the Child of Bethlehem, love blossoms in the world.

Sing "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" GtG 129 *(Verses 1-2)*
(next page...)

**1. Lo, how a rose e'er blooming
from tender stem hath sprung,
of Jesse's lineage coming,
by faithful prophets sung.
It came, a floweret bright,
amid the cold of winter,
when half spent was the night.**

**2. Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
the rose I have in mind;
with Mary we behold it,
the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright
she bore for us a Savior,
when half spent was the night.**

Words: German carol; stanzas 1, 2 trans. Theodore Baker, 1894, alt.
Music: ES IST EIN' ROS', *Alte Catholische Geistliche Kirchengesang*,
1599; arr. Michael Praetorius, 1609
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SCRIPTURE READINGS Micah 5:2-5a
Luke 1:39-56

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON "The Look of Love" by Pastor Bill Vincent

***HYMN** "Love Has Come" GtG 110

**1. Love has come: a light in the darkness!
Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it;
hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior!
Love! Love! Glory to God on high.**

**2. Love is born! Come, share in the wonder.
Love is God now asleep in the hay.
See the glow in the eyes of his mother;
what is the name her heart is saying?
Love! Love! Love is the name she whispers.
Love! Love! Jesus, Emmanuel.**

(continued...)

**3. Love has come and never will leave us!
Love is life everlasting and free.
Love is Jesus within and among us.
Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.
Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas.
Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!**

Music: BRING A TORCH, French melody. *Public Domain*
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***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

One: How do you understand and live for the love of God?
All: **I love because God first loved me.
God loves me in Christ with a love that never ends.
In his life of compassion,
his death on the cross,
and his resurrection from the dead,
I see how vast is God's love for the world
– a love that is ready to suffer for our sakes,
yet so strong that nothing will prevail against it.
Amazed by grace,
I no longer live for myself.
I live for the Lord who died and rose again,
triumphant over death,
for my sake.
Therefore, I take those around me to heart,
especially those in particular need,
knowing that Christ died for them no less than for me.**

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PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: Hear us, O God.
All: **Your mercy is great.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER (Contemporary)

(next page...)

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

OFFERING

Invitation

Reflection

**Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**Holy God, with Mary we seek to magnify you
in our worship and in our deeds.
Accept these gifts
and bless them for Christ's ministry.
Use them, and use us,
to lift the lowly and fill the hungry;
to reveal your glory,
and to tell the world of the "good tidings of great joy"
which is born to us in a manger. Amen.**

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" GtG 119**

- 1. Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn king.
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise;
join the triumph of the skies;
with th'angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn king!"**

(continued...)

2. **Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come,
offspring of the virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the God-head see;
hail th'incarnate deity,
pleased in flesh with us to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn king!"**

3. **Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth,
born to give us second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn king!"**

Words: Charles Wesley, 1739, alt.
Music: MENDELSSOHN, Felix Mendelssohn, 1840;
arr. William Hayman Cummings, 1855
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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

One: ...And let the gathered people of God say...
All: ...Amen.

POSTLUDE

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