

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2024

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

**SECOND SUNDAY of ADVENT**

**GATHERING**

**PRELUDE**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: A messenger from God is coming.  
**All: Prepare the way of the Lord!**  
One: A new day of mercy is dawning.  
**All: Prepare the way of the Lord!**  
One: A voice is crying in the wilderness.  
**All: Prepare the way of the Lord!**

**\*OPENING HYMN** “Prepare the Way, O Zion” GtG 106

1. **Prepare the way, O Zion,  
your Christ is drawing near!  
Let every hill and valley  
a level way appear.  
Greet One who comes in glory,  
foretold in sacred story.  
O blest is Christ who came  
in God's most holy name.**
2. **He brings God's rule, O Zion;  
he comes from heaven above.  
His rule is peace and freedom,  
and justice, truth, and love.  
Lift high your praise resounding,  
for grace and joy abounding.  
O blest is Christ who came  
in God's most holy name.**
3. **Fling wide your gates, O Zion;  
your Savior's rule embrace,  
and tidings of salvation  
proclaim in every place.**

*(continued...)*

**All lands will bow rejoicing,  
their adoration voicing.  
O blest is Christ who came  
in God's most holy name.**

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Music: BEREDEN VAG FOR HERRAN, *Then Svenska Psalmboken*, 1697; arr.  
*American Lutheran Hymnal*, 1930. *Public Domain.*

### **UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**Holy God, we confess we prefer the crooked paths  
where we think we can hide from you.  
We'd rather you didn't examine us too closely,  
all we do and fail to do.  
We grope in the maze of our tangled alliances,  
and reap the pain of bad choices and ignorant gambles.  
Yet you come not to judge,  
but to save us from our sins and our love of sinning.  
So come, Lord, to enter our aching hearts.  
You promised that all flesh shall see your salvation.  
In the certainty of your grace,  
show us the straight path and the smooth way  
that lead to your righteousness,  
through Jesus Christ, who is the way. Amen.**

### **SILENT CONFESSION**

#### **ASSURANCE OF PARDON** *(from Mark 1 & Matthew 1)*

**One:** Good news! "The right time has come, and the Kingdom of God is near!  
Turn away from your sins and believe the Good News!"  
**All:** **God has done great things for us. We are loved; we are forgiven; we  
are claimed by God's grace.**  
**One:** Believe the Good News of the Child born in Bethlehem: his name is  
"Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."  
**All:** **So let us rejoice and be glad! For in Jesus Christ we are forgiven!  
Alleluia! Amen!**

### **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 Peace

- One: The angels sang of peace on earth, good will to all.  
All: **Peace. We long for it. We disagree on it. We lack it. We need it.**  
One: We must start somewhere in our quest for peace. But where? What is the beginning of our peace?  
All: **The beginning of our peace, and our wholeness, is the confession of our brokenness. Only then can we be healed. Only then can our hearts and minds be filled with "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding."** (Philippians 4:7)  
One: Jesus proclaimed, "The kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:15): the good news of the forgiveness of our sins; the good news of our reconciliation to God and our restoration to wholeness; the good news that the fulfillment of our peace is in Jesus Christ.  
All: **So let us join the angels in singing,  
"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace...."** (Luke 2:14)  
Sing: "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" GtG 123 (*Verse 1*)

1. **It came upon the midnight clear,  
that glorious song of old,  
from angels bending near the earth,  
to touch their harps of gold:  
"Peace on the earth, good will to all,  
from heaven's all gracious King":  
the world in solemn stillness lay,  
to hear the angels sing.**

Words: Edmund Hamilton Sears, 1849, alt.  
Music: CAROL, Richard Storrs Willis, 1850  
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SCRIPTURE READINGS Malachi 3:1-4  
Luke 1:68-79  
Luke 3:1-6

### PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON by Pastor Bill Vincent

**\*HYMN** “On Jordan’s Banks the Baptist’s Cry” GtG 96

1. **On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry  
announces that the Lord is nigh;  
awake and hearken, for he brings  
glad tidings of the King of kings!**
2. **Then cleansed be every life from sin;  
make straight the way for God within,  
and let us all our hearts prepare  
for Christ to come and enter there.**
3. **We hail you as our Savior, Lord,  
our refuge and our great reward;  
without your grace we waste away  
like flowers that wither and decay.**
4. **Stretch forth your hand; our health restore,  
and make us rise to fall no more.  
O let your face upon us shine  
and fill the world with love divine.**

Words: Charles Coffin, 1736; trans. John Chandler, 1837, alt.  
Music: WINCHESTER NEW, *Musikalisches Handbuch*, 1690;  
harm. William Henry Monk, 1847, alt.  
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**\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**We trust in God,  
whom Jesus called Abba, Father.  
In sovereign love God created the world good  
and makes everyone equally in God's image,  
male and female, of every race and people,  
to live as one community.  
But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator.  
Ignoring God's commandments,  
we violate the image of God in others and ourselves,  
accept lies as truth,  
exploit neighbor and nature,  
and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care.  
We deserve God's condemnation.**

*(continued...)*

**Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.  
In everlasting love,  
the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people  
to bless all families of the earth.  
Hearing their cry,  
God delivered the children of Israel  
from the house of bondage.  
Loving us still,  
God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant.  
Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child,  
like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home,  
God is faithful still.**

(from *A Brief Statement of Faith*, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Confessions)

### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

**One:** God of peace,  
**All:** ...hear our prayers.

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER** (Contemporary)

**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*

**Generous God, we thank you for all our blessings.  
Receive these gifts of gratitude,  
and the offerings of our lives.  
Purify them with your refining fire  
so that they may serve your purposes  
and shine your light into the world.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## SENDING

**\*CLOSING HYMN** “Blest Be the God of Israel” (Song of Zechariah) GtG 109

1. **Blest be the God of Israel, who comes to set us free;  
who visits and redeems us, who grants us liberty.  
The prophets spoke of mercy, of freedom and release;  
God shall fulfill that promise and bring the people peace.**
  
2. **God from the house of David a child of grace has given;  
a Savior comes among us to raise us up to heaven.  
Before him goes the herald, forerunner in the way,  
the prophet of salvation, the harbinger of day.**
  
3. **On those who sit in darkness the sun begins to rise,  
the dawning of forgiveness upon the sinner’s eyes.  
God guides the feet of pilgrims along the paths of peace.  
O bless our God and Savior with songs that never cease!**

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### **\*CHARGE AND BLESSING**

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

### **POSTLUDE**

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