

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2025

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

THIRD SUNDAY of ADVENT

GATHERING

PRELUDE

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH: The Candle of Joy

One: *“Come, thou long-expected Jesus ... hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.”*
(“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus, Glory to God, #82)

One: Children of God, what are we waiting for?

All: **We wait for joy that cannot be stolen,
joy that wells up, even in wilderness places.
We wait for laughter to ring out in mourning,
for songs of gladness to rise in broken streets.
We wait ...
for joy that is more than happiness,
to rejoice in God’s unshakable love.**

One: Today we light three candles.
Hope still shines, peace still glows,
and now joy joins the chorus of light.
Their glow reminds us that Christ is coming,
filling our hearts with a delight no darkness can quench.

All: **We call this candle Hope.**
(Light the first candle.)
We call this candle Peace.
(Light the second candle.)
We call this candle Joy.
(Light the third candle.)

One: O Giver of life, you turn mourning into dancing.
You surprise us with beauty in unlikely places.
Joy is your gift and an invitation
to rejoice always, to pray without ceasing,
to give thanks in all things.
May we carry this joy like a lantern,
shining steadily through the waiting.

Hear the witness of the apostle Paul:
“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.
Let your gentleness be known to everyone.
The Lord is near” (Philippians 4:4–5).

**All: We delight in the joy of your presence,
 which no hardship can steal away.
 Come, Lord Jesus,
 and make joy our strength.**

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

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1697; arr. *American Lutheran Hymnal*, 1930. *Public Domain.*

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of majesty and glory,
we are thirsty for your grace.
Yet we confess that we have closed our eyes to what you are doing.
We hide our eyes from your presence.
We prefer to concentrate on problems, bad news and violence.
When we do,
we miss all the healing, freeing and helping you accomplish in our world.
We pass up opportunities to participate in your Good News.
We rob ourselves of so much joy.
Forgive us and give us eyes to see, ears to hear, minds to understand,
and hearts to treasure your mission in the world.
Fill us with unquenchable joy at the coming of Jesus. Amen.

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON *(from Matthew 1 & Luke 2)*

One: The One who comes in the Child of Bethlehem
is the One who comes to redeem and restore.
All: **His name is Jesus, “for he will save his people from their sins.”**
One: This is indeed “good news of great joy for all the people.”
All: **So let us rejoice and be glad,
for in Jesus Christ we are forgiven and loved!
“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

SCRIPTURE READINGS Isaiah 35:1–10
Psalm 146:5–10
Matthew 11:2–11

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON “Joy...and Sorrow?” by Pastor Bill Vincent

***HYMN** “Good Christian Friends, Rejoice” GtG 132

1. **Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
give ye heed to what we say:**

**Jesus Christ is born today;
ox and ass before him bow,
and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today!
Christ is born today!**

**2. Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye hear of endless bliss:
Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened heaven's door,
and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this!
Christ was born for this!**

**3. Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye need not fear the grave:
Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all
to gain the everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save!
Christ was born to save!**

Words: Medieval Latin; trans. and para. John Mason Neale, 1853, alt. *Public Domain.*

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***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** (from *A Brief Statement of Faith*)

**We trust in Jesus Christ,
fully human, fully God.
Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:
preaching good news to the poor
and release to the captives,
teaching by word and deed
and blessing the children,
healing the sick
and binding up the brokenhearted,
eating with outcasts,
forgiving sinners,
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.
Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,
Jesus was crucified,**

suffering the depths of human pain
and giving his life for the sins of the world.
God raised this Jesus from the dead,
vindicating his sinless life,
breaking the power of sin and evil,
delivering us from death to life eternal.

In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks
and to live holy and joyful lives,
even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,
praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

With believers in every time and place,
we rejoice that nothing in life or in death
can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: Come, Lord Jesus, come.
All: Come to us with joy.

THE LORD'S PRAYER (Traditional)

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 debts,
as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever. Amen.

OFFERING

Invitation

Reflection: "Comfort and Joy" (An Advent Carol)

Words and music by Pepper Choplin
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**Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**We thank you, God,
for all the ways you work and heal and bless and free us.
Accept these gifts given in great gratitude
and in anticipation of Christ's return.
Multiply them for your glory
and for the good of all people.
May these gifts bring joy
to those most in need of Christ's mission and ministry.
Amen.**

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN "Joy to the World" GtG 134**

- 1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her king;
let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.**
- 2. Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let all their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**
- 3. No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.**
- 4. He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.**

Words: Isaac Watts, 1719, alt.

Music: ANTIOCH, attr. George Frederick Handel, 1742; arr.
Lowell Mason, 1836
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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

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

POSTLUDE

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