

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2025

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

FOURTH SUNDAY of ADVENT

GATHERING

PRELUDE

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH: The Candle of Love

One: *"Come, thou long-expected Jesus ... born to reign in us forever
... by thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all-sufficient merit raise us to thy glorious throne."*
 ("Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus, Glory to God," #82)

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

All: **We wait for love that casts out fear,
love that heals what hatred has torn,
love that binds neighbor to neighbor
and stranger to friend.
We wait for love embodied in Christ,
a love fierce, tender and eternal.**

One: Today we light four candles,
their brightness stretches across shadows.
Hope, peace and joy blaze together,
and now love joins the dance of light.
This love is not shallow or fleeting,
but deep enough to embrace all creation.

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.)
 We call this candle Love.
 (Light the fourth candle.)

(continued...)

One: O God of steadfast love,
you came to us in a manger,
not with force but in vulnerability.
You call us to love as you love ...
boldly, sacrificially, without condition.
Teach us to embody your love in word and deed,
until the world knows we belong to you.

Hear the testimony of Scripture:
“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God;
everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.
Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.” (1 John 4:7-8)

All: **We thank you for your endless, boundless love.
Make us vessels of compassion,
bearers of mercy, protectors of grace.
Come, Lord Jesus, and make love our witness.**

***OPENING HYMN “O Lord, How Shall I Meet You” GtG 104**

1. **O Lord, how shall I meet you,
how welcome you aright?
Your people long to greet you,
my hope, my heart’s delight!
O kindle, Lord most holy,
a lamp within my breast,
to do in spirit lowly
all that may please you best.**
2. **Love caused your incarnation;
love brought you down to me;
your thirst for my salvation
procured my liberty.
O love beyond all telling,
that led you to embrace
in love, all loves excelling,
our lost and fallen race.**
3. **You come, O Lord, with gladness,
in mercy and goodwill,
to bring an end to sadness
and bid our fears be still.**

(continued...)

**In patient expectation
we live for that great day
when your renewed creation
your glory shall display.**

Words: Paul Gerhardt, 1653; trans. Catherine Winkworth and others, 1863, alt.
Music: VALET WILL ICH DIR GEBEN, Melchior Teschner, 1614; harm. William Henry Monk, 1861
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UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Great God, as we welcome the birth of Jesus again,
we are mindful of how we have failed to receive the fullness of that gift.
The story points us to your glory.
Yet, we struggle to join in the song of praise and thanksgiving.
We are distracted and confused,
so focused on things that matter little
that we overlook the good news of great joy that you have prepared.
Tell us again that the Savior is born.
Tell us again that we are forgiven.
Tell us again that our lives can be abundant in faith, hope and love
because of what you have given us in Jesus Christ. Amen.**

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON *(from John 3 and 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

SCRIPTURE READING Isaiah 7:10–16

HYMN “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming” GtG 129 (*Verses 1-2*)

**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 READING Matthew 1:18–25

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON “Love...and Love!” by Pastor Bill Vincent

***HYMN** “Joseph Dearest, Joseph Mine” StF 2099

[Women] **1. Joseph dearest, Joseph mine,
help me cradle the child divine;
God reward thee and all that’s thine
in paradise,
so prays the mother Mary.**

(continued...)

[All] *Refrain:*

**He came among us at Christmastime,
at Christmas time, in Bethlehem;
let us bring him from far and wide Love's diadem:
Jesus, Jesus,
lo, he comes, and loves, and saves, and frees us!**

[Men] 2. Gladly, dear one, lady mine,
help I cradle this child of thine;
God's own light on us both shall shine
in paradise,
as prays the mother Mary.
(*Refrain*)

[All] 3. All shall come and bow the knee;
wise and happy their souls shall be,
loving such a divinity,
as all may see
in Jesus, Son of Mary.
(*Refrain*)

Words: Trad. German

Music: JOSEPH LIEBER, JOSEPH MEIN, Trad. German
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***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

(from *The Confession of 1967* and *The Study Catechism: Full Version*)

**God's sovereign love is a mystery beyond the reach of the human mind.
Human thought ascribes to God superlatives of power, wisdom, and goodness.
But God reveals divine love in Jesus Christ**

**by showing power in the form of a servant,
wisdom in the folly of the cross, and
goodness in receiving sinful men and women.**

**The power of God's love in Christ to transform the world
discloses that the Redeemer is the Lord and Creator
who made all things to serve the purpose of God's love.**

I love because God first loved me.

God loves me in Christ with a love that never ends.

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.**

(*next page...*)

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INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

One: "There are varieties of gifts."
All: **"But it is the same Spirit who gives them."**
One: "There are varieties of service."
All: **"But it is the same Lord who is served."**
One: "There are varieties of working."
All: **"But it is the same God who inspires them all in every one."**
One: "Each one is given a gift by the Spirit..."
All: **"...To use it for the common good."**
One: "Together we are the body of Christ..."
All: **"...And individually members of him."**

(from I Corinthians 12)

Constitutional Questions to Officers

Constitutional Questions to the Congregation

Do we, the members of the church, accept these people as ruling elders, chosen by God through the voice of this congregation to lead us in the way of Jesus Christ?

Do we agree to pray for them, to encourage them, to respect their decisions, and to follow as they guide us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?

Prayer

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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

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

**Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**O God, with faith and hope, we offer these gifts.
Use them, even as you use us,
to accomplish your purposes in Jesus Christ,
whose birth we celebrate and
whose love we proclaim.
Amen.**

SENDING

***CLOSING 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.**
- 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!**

(next page...)

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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

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

POSTLUDE

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