

**4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT / CHRISTMAS EVE
GATHER IN GOD’S NAME**

(*=**please stand if you are able**)

Prelude "Mary, Did You Know" - **Gregory Hunter, Bass Soloist**
Welcome **Rev. Jeniffer Rodriguez**

Lighting the Candle of Love

All: Creator of the stars of night, Your people's everlasting light, O Christ, Redeemer of us all, We pray you hear us when we call.

Reader 1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and set lights in the sky — sun and moon and stars. By these stars, our ancestors charted their journeys. By these stars, they knew God was with them.

Reader 2. Today we light four candles to bring the fire of the stars down from heaven to earth, to nestle among the greens.

Reader 1. We name this candle Hope. (Light the first candle.) We name this candle Peace. (Light the second candle.) We name this candle Joy. (Light the third candle.) We name this candle Love. (Light the fourth candle.)

Reader 2. We too are on a journey, and we do not always know the way. But we chart our path by the star of love. Even when sharp words rattle in our ears, and our hearts sit cold and numb, we set our face steadily towards the light.

Reader 1. Listen now to the wisdom of the early Christians: “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. God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:7-12).

Reader 2. Lord Jesus, as we search for signs of love this week, help us to become the signs of love that others are searching for. As these candles are but a glimpse of the light of the heavens, help us to be a glimpse of heaven’s love. Amen. (Liturgy by Rev. Carol Holbrook Prickett)

Opening Prayer

L: Do not be afraid. God is with us.

P: Savior of the nations, come.

Hymn of the Month GTG#462 “I Love to Tell the Story”

Call to Confession

On this Fourth Sunday of Advent, let us confess the sins that have kept us from glorifying and enjoying our God.

Prayer of Confession

Gracious God, we anticipate the birth of our newborn savior. Yet we are depressed by the suffering and despair of our world. Our hearts grow hard with hopelessness. What reason is there to rejoice? We question your power and doubt our faith. Emmanuel, help us resist the overwhelming forces that drag us down. Lift our spirits so we can experience your transcendent presence and incarnate grace. Amen.

Silent Confession

Assurance of Pardon

“The steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.” Know that you are forgiven and be at peace. Amen.

ALL: Thanks be to God! Amen.

***Gloria Patri “¡Gloria! ¡Gloria! ¡Gloria! Sing we to God”**

¡Gloria! ¡Gloria! ¡Gloria! Sing we to God
Glory!, Glory! Glory to the God of love.

Glory to God of the Andes, of the prairies, and all of the seas.
Let there be peace on the earth, filled with justice and no mis’ry.

Let there be peace on earth, filled with justice and no mis’ry
¡Gloria! ¡Gloria! ¡Gloria! Sing we to God
Glory!, Glory! Glory to the God of love.

Prayer for Illumination

Savior God, liberate us from the sins which distort our vision and disrupt our hearing as we approach your Word. Standing firm in your love, let us open ourselves to the truth you reveal to us today. Amen.

Scripture Reading 2 Samuel 7:1-11

When the king was settled in his palace, and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to the prophet Nathan, “Look! I’m living in a cedar palace, but God’s chest is housed in a tent!” Nathan said to the king, “Go ahead and do whatever you are thinking, because the Lord is with you.” But that very night the Lord’s word came to Nathan: Go to my servant David and tell him: This is what the Lord says: You are not the one to build the temple for me to live in. In fact, I haven’t lived in a temple from the day I brought Israel out of Egypt until now. Instead, I have been traveling around in a tent and in a dwelling. Throughout my traveling around with the Israelites, did I ever ask any of Israel’s tribal leaders I appointed to shepherd my people: Why haven’t you built me a cedar temple? So then, say this to my servant David: This is what the Lord of heavenly forces says: I took you from the pasture, from following the flock, to be leader over my people Israel. I’ve been with you wherever you’ve gone, and I’ve eliminated all your enemies before you. Now I will make your

name great—like the name of the greatest people on earth. I’m going to provide a place for my people Israel, and plant them so that they may live there and no longer be disturbed. Cruel people will no longer trouble them, as they had been earlier, when I appointed leaders over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. And the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make a dynasty for you.

L: This is the word God. **P: Thanks be to God.**

Anthem: “O Holy Night”

Scripture Reading: Luke 1:26-38

When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David’s house. The virgin’s name was Mary. When the angel came to her, he said, “Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!” She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. The angel said, “Don’t be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob’s house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom.” Then Mary said to the angel, “How will this happen since I haven’t had sexual relations with a man?” The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God’s Son. Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was labeled ‘unable to conceive’ is now six months pregnant. Nothing is impossible for God.” Then Mary said, “I am the Lord’s servant. Let it be with me just as you have said.” Then the angel left her.

L: This is the word of the Lord. **P: Thanks be to God.**

Sermon “What is our New Christmas Story?” **Rev. Jeniffer Rodriguez**

Hymn During Sermon GTG#115 “Away in a Manger” (verse 1)

Building our Christmas Story

Based on the book A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens

The Sacrament of Baptism **Nicole McCabe**
Baptism Hymn GTG #69 “I, the Lord of Sea and Sky / Here I Am Lord”

Hymn GTG #133 “O Come All Ye Faithful”

Words of Gratitude

With joy and gratitude for all we have been given, let us offer our tithes and gifts to God.

RESPOND IN GRACE
“Bring a gift of Love”

Bring a gift of love, bring a gift of love, bring a gift of love today.
Bring an offering to our Lord and King, tell the world He is “the way!”
Bring a gift of love, bring a gift of love, bring a gift of love today.
In this quiet hour of worship bring a gift of love.

*** Doxology “Sithi Bonga”**
Sithi bonga bonga bonga bonga
Sithi bonga, sithi bonga
Sithi bonga bonga bonga bonga
Enhle hlabele (Repeat x1)

Ukuhlabelela kuyathoko zisa
njengenyoni enhle hlabelela
Ukuhlabelela kuyathoko zisa
njengenyoni enhle hlabelela (

Sithi bonga bonga bonga bonga
Sithi bonga, sithi bonga
Sithi bonga bonga bonga bonga
Enhle hlabele (Repeat x1)

Prayer of Dedication

Gracious God, accept these gifts in grateful response for your generosity. May these gifts bring joy to those most in need of Christ’s mission and ministry. Amen.

Prayers of the People (See backpage)

Savior God, The season of Advent has led us to prepare our lives and hearts for the birth of your son, but we question the readiness of ourselves and our world. We know well what the poet Madeleine L’Engle writes:
“This is no time for a child to be born with the earth betrayed by war and hate.”

Yet, you, O God, risk being born in a world such as this. You risk taking on flesh that is fragile, vulnerable and new. Oh, wonder of wonders and joy of joys! Everlasting God, your promised presence is a stark reminder of hope.

As we find our way into pews and pulpit today, we come to give you honor and praise. We come grateful for all the good gifts with which we have been blessed. We come to pray for those who are especially in need of hope.

We pray for an end to the warring madness, for the people of Israel and Gaza, for the suffering in Ukraine, for the humanitarian crisis in the Congo, and for an end to terrorism across the globe. We pray for innocents trapped under falling bombs. We pray for peaceful, diplomatic solutions to age-old conflicts. May your kingdom come, Savior of the nations, and your will be done.

Gracious God, bind us together in faith and service. Enlighten us to the needs and the needy in our communities. Organize us for action to solve systemic problems. Help us make room in our communities for weary travelers, people like Mary and Joseph, in need of a safe place to stay. You've given us abundant resources. Help us to share what we have, extend the table of fellowship, and make room for those who long to belong.

God of compassion, bless us and those we love. Heal those suffering from the illnesses of winter. Strengthen those undergoing chemotherapy, radiation or other painful treatments. Comfort those who have recently lost loved ones, those mourning empty seats at holiday tables. Renew those needing respite, grant them the blessing of holiday sabbath. As you reach out to us through Jesus Christ, help us reach out to those who suffer and struggle.

Mighty God whose Word we trust and whose Spirit enables us to pray, accept our requests and further those which will bring about your purpose for our world.

Finally, hear us as we pray together the prayer Christ taught us, "Our Father..."

*Lord's Prayer

Hymn GTG #134

"Joy to the World"

Announcements

Benediction

God is Good! All the time! All the Time! God is Good!

Our Savior has come and is coming! Believe in this good news and proclaim Christ's birth to all the world. May the grace, hope, peace and love of God the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer be with us all, now and forever. Amen.

The Peace

Leader: The peace of Christ be with you

People: And also with you

Amen

Lighting Christ Candle

All: Creator of the stars of night, Your people's everlasting light, O Christ, Redeemer of us all, We pray you hear us when we call.

Reader 1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and set lights in the sky — sun and moon and stars. By these stars, our ancestors charted their journeys. By these stars, they knew God was with them.

In the beginning, too, was the Word. And the Word, too, has come down from heaven to earth. By the Word made flesh, Christ our Savior, we know that God is with us.

Reader 2. Tonight we light five candles to bring the fire of the stars down from heaven to earth, to nestle among the greens.

Reader 1. We name this candle Hope. (Light the first candle.) We name this candle Peace. (Light the second candle.) We name this candle Joy. (Light the third candle.) We name this candle Love. (Light the fourth candle.) We name this candle Christ. (Light the center candle.)

Reader 2. Our lives are a journey, and we do not always know the way. But we chart our path by the star of Christ. Even when faith burns low and its promises seem too good to be true, we set our face steadily towards the light.

Reader 1. Listen to ancient words come true anew this night: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:2, 6).

Reader 2. Lord Jesus, as we search for signs of Christ's presence this week, help us to become the signs of Christ's presence that others are searching for. As these candles are but a glimpse of the light of the heavens, help us to be a glimpse of heaven on earth. Help us to shine like stars in the world. Amen. (Liturgy by Rev. Carol Holbrook Prickett)

Processional of Light Silent Night

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2023



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MINISTERS
All the Members

"A multicultural congregation worshipping together where Jesus Christ is Lord; where men, women, and children share in leadership; and where the strength of our fellowship builds bridges to the community."

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EVENTS HAPPENING IN 2023

In person hybrid worship is at 11AM

Zoom link is as follows:

By Computer

Join Zoom Meeting

Meeting ID: 870 270 865

One tap mobile

+16465588656

Coffee Hour with a Christmas twist following Worship today.

Hybrid English Bible Study Bible Study will reconvene on Thursday January 11, 2023 at 11:00AM in the Fellowship Hall.

Zoom Link bible study:

By computer

Join Zoom Meeting

Meeting ID: 376 838 854

One tap mobile

+16465588656,Spanish

Spanish Bible Study will be on Wednesdays.

Session Meeting January 8th 7PM

Worship Team Meeting January 9th at 9:30AM

Prayers and Praise

Please pray for everyone in leadership

Please pray for children/ families

Please pray for the Otu family

Please pray for the Supina/Ruess family

Please pray for the Sevilla family

Please pray for people struggling with cancer for healing

Please pray for people struggling with mental health

Please pray for leaders, people in a position of authority

Please pray for the Denzer Family

Please pray for Heather Blenkinsopp

Please pray for the Carretta family

Please pray for the Yumart family

Please pray for the Sippel family

Please pray for the Quinoy family

Please pray for Joy and Teresa Zeiden

Please pray for Boateng family

Please Pray for Orr family

Please pray for Kiara Taylor's family

Please pray for Bruce and family

Please pray for Bob

Please pray for Curtis

Please pray for the Bonapace family

Please pray for peace in the world

Praise Songs and Hymns

I Love to Tell the Story

I love to tell the story of unseen things above,
of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love.
I love to tell the story, because I know 'tis true;
it satisfies my longings as nothing else could do.

Refrain:

*I love to tell the story; 'twill be my theme in glory
to tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.*

I love to tell the story; 'tis pleasant to repeat
what seems, each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet!
I love to tell the story, for some have never heard
the message of salvation from God's own holy Word. *(Refrain)*

I love to tell the story, for those who know it best
seem hungering and thirsting to hear it, like the rest.
And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song,
'twill be the old, old story that I have loved so long. *(Refrain)*

Away in a Manger

Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

O Come, All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant;
O come ye; O come ye to Bethlehem! Come, and behold him,
born the King of angels! O come, let us adore him;
O come, let us adore him; O come, let us adore him,
Christ, the Lord!

True God from true God, Light from light eternal,
born of a virgin, a mortal he comes; very God, begotten, not created!
O come, let us adore him; O come, let us adore him;
O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angels; sing in exultation;
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above! Glory to God, all
glory in the highest! O come, let us adore him;
O come, let us adore him; O come, let us adore him,
Christ, the Lord!

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be all glory given; Word of the Father,
now in flesh appearing! O come, let us adore him;
O come, let us adore him; O come, let us adore him,
Christ, the Lord!

I, the Lord of Sea and Sky / Here I Am Lord

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Refrain:

Here I am, Lord.

Is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord, if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send? (*Refrain*)

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send? (*Refrain*)

Joy to the World

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.

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.

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.

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.