



Love -

Fourth Sunday of Advent



December 19, 2021

Draw near to God

for God is waiting for you.

* indicates where the congregation is to stand if able
italic type is spoken by the liturgist – bold is spoken by the congregation

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

All through this season of Advent, we have encountered Hope, Peace and Joy.

Today Belief and Love are the theme.

Today we will hear the story of surprising commitment.

We will learn of Mary and God's wonderful love.

Today we will be challenged to believe in all that God can do.

Open our hearts, Lord, that we may be ready for your love. Amen.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord, be with us this morning as we encounter Mary and hear of the wondrous news that she received. Remind us that, like Mary, each one of us is a bearer of your Good News. We are called to proclaim hope, peace, joy, and love in your name. Open our hearts and our spirits today to receive with great joy the love that you have for us. For we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

*HYMN #105 People, Look East

1. People, look east. The time is near of the crowning of the year. Make your house fair as you are able; trim the hearth and set the table. People, look east and sing today: Love, the Guest, is on the way.

2. Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare, one more seed is planted there. Give up your strength the seed to nourish, that in course the flower may flourish. People, look east and sing today: Love, the Rose, is on the way.

3. Birds, though you long have ceased to build, guard the nest that must be filled. Even the hour when wings are frozen God for fledging time has chosen. People, look east and sing today: Love, the Bird, is on the way.

4. Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim one more light the bowl shall brim, shining beyond the frosty weather, bright as sun and moon together. People, look east and sing today: Love, the Star, is on the way.

5. Angels, announce with shouts of mirth Christ who brings new life to earth. Set every peak and valley humming with the word, the Lord is coming. People, look east and sing today: Love, the Lord is on the way.

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

Samuel, Nathan, Terry and Kara Holton

We are a people who seek to be brought together by the love of Christ. Our faith teaches us that God gives us unconditional love and forgiveness. Acknowledging God's free gift of grace, we light the Candle of Love.

PRAYER FOR ADVENT

Dear God, as our Advent pilgrimage draws to completion, grant us the courage to share your love. Love for the unexpected challenge. Love for the vulnerable one. Love for the presence of God. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC Hark, The Herald Angels Sing!

Keegan Fullman, trumpet

FIRST SCRIPTURE LESSON Micah 5:2-5a

²But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. ³Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. ⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; ⁵and he shall be the one of peace.

TIME WITH THE CHILDREN

*HYMN #140 Once in Royal David's City

1. Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed, where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed; Mary was that mother mild; Jesus Christ, her little child.

2. He came down to earth from heaven who is God and Lord of all, and his shelter was a stable, and his cradle was a stall; with the poor and meek and lowly, lived on earth our Savior holy.

3. Jesus is our childhood's pattern; day by day like us he grew; he was little, weak and helpless; tears and smiles like us he knew; and he feels for all our sadness, and he shares in all our gladness.

4. And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own redeeming love; for that child so dear and gentle is our Lord in heaven above; and he leads his children on to the place where he is gone.

SECOND SCRIPTURE LESSON Luke 1:39-55

³⁹In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." ⁴⁶And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. ⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; ⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever." ⁵⁶And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

SERMON God of the Unlikely

RECOGNITION OF THE OFFERING

*DOXOLOGY

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise him, all creatures here below. Praise him above, ye heavenly hosts. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Dear God, you blessed Mary by making her the mother of your only Son, Jesus Christ. You have blessed us, as well, with the gift of your Son, and indeed, with the gift of life itself. Out of all these blessings, we give you back these offerings this day. Knowing that your promises will be fulfilled, we pledge our lives to you in anticipation of the coming of the one who brings us peace. Amen.

JOYS AND CONCERNS

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who is 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.

**HYMN #110 Love Has Come*

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!

**BENEDICTION*

Go with the love of God, who extends mercy from generation to generation. Go with the illumination of the Holy Spirit, who prepares us for the coming of our Lord. Go with the peace of the Christ child, who comes to partner with us to bring the kingdom that will never end. Amen.

POSTLUDE

Church Staff

Susan Fall, Pastor Leanne Yerkes, Director of Music
Susan Flanagan, Office Administrator Jason Gordon, Youth Director
Mary Ann Welsh, Treasurer Chris Miterko, Grounds Keeper

ANNOUNCEMENTS: December 19, 2021

Today: Caroling: Immediately following worship gather in Fellowship while we organize carpools and caravan to go caroling at the homes of some of our homebound members. Help bring holiday cheer to others!

Special Thanks to the Bromm Family: Our beautiful tree in the sanctuary is a donation from the Bromms and Bromm's Nursery. The evergreen tree is a reminder in the dark days of winter of the everlasting love of God. Thanks so much for this generous gift and reminder!

Christmas Service Schedule: Christmas Eve worship will be held both in-person and on Zoom at 6:00, December 24. This is a compromise to previous years. A special service is being planned that will involve many to portray those who were or might have been present at the birth of the Messiah. There is no rehearsal required but advanced sign up is requested for the various parts. These include Mary, Joseph, The Angel Gabriel, Magi (3 or more), Census Taker, Innkeepers (3 or more), a Bright Star, Stars (multiple) Shepherds (multiple), Angels (multiple), a Cow, a Sheep, a Horse, a Pig, and a Duck.

Each part has a single line to speak and will be given that line ahead of time. Lines are very short. Characters are asked to either create their own costume or ask Pastor Su if she has anything in her vast collection of dress-up costumes. If you would like to be an on-the-scene character, please contact Pastor Su.

God is our refuge and strength



Mayfield, Ky., Dec. 12, 2021. Courtesy of State Farm (CC BY 2.0)

Special offering: As night fell on December 10, a horrific line of powerful tornadoes ripped across several states, ending the lives of more than 100 people and wreaking devastation across many communities by the time morning had broken. One of these tornadoes was on the ground for a terrifying and unprecedented 250 miles, more than 200 of those miles in Kentucky alone, where the town of Mayfield saw the catastrophic destruction of much of the downtown area, including the Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist churches.

In the wake of these terrible and catastrophic storms, it is the role of ordinary people of faith like us to shine as light in this bleakest of winters. We are called to be the hands and feet of God as we reach out to shelter, feed, care for and help rebuild the lives of those who have lost loved ones, homes, work and a sense of safety as a result of the tornadoes. We are invited to stand with them — and to stand together — bearing witness by our gifts and prayers that God is indeed incarnate among us, no matter what.

If you are able, please make a donation to assist those in need following this storm. Please mark your gift “Tornado Relief.” All the contributions will be sent to the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance who are already on the ground in the areas of the recent devastation providing much needed help. This special offering will continue through January 2, 2022.

Wednesday noontime lunch: Bring your lunch and join us in Fellowship Hall, December 22 at noon. All are welcomed for a midweek get together.

Save the date – January 8 for “Trivia Night”: With the holidays behind us, we will gather as a church family in-person and on Zoom for a fun evening of trivia appropriate for all ages. A light supper will be offered of chili and chicken noodle soup. The whole event is from 4:00 – 6:00. Please join us! Sign up is available in Fellowship Hall as well as by calling Susan in the church office.

In our thoughts and prayers:

The Conner/Lang Family, Aleena Lang, Natalie Pizza, Bill Wark, Raymond Tinari, Dick Wright, Sally Thiessen, Faith Hyndman