

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2020

First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

FOURTH SUNDAY of ADVENT

GATHERING

PRELUDE

Lighting the Fourth Advent Candle

God does not come from nowhere
but through a people named Israel,
a prophet named Nathan,
a king named David,
and a descendant of David named Jesus:

When King David had defeated his enemies
he wanted to build a temple, as a house for God's presence,
and consulted Nathan, who said,
"Do whatever you have in mind."
But God gave Nathan a different message
about a different kind of house:

Down to this day I have never dwelt in a house
since I brought Israel up out of Egypt.
I lived in a tent and a tabernacle. . . .
Your family and your kingdom
will be established for ever in my sight.
(2 Sam. 7:6, 16 REB)

Through an angel God speaks to Mary:
You will conceive and give birth to a son,
and you are to give him the name Jesus,
God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; . . .
his reign shall never end.
(Luke 1:31, 33b REB)

Through Mary, God speaks to us:
My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior,
whose name is holy,
who has routed the proud and all their schemes,
brought down monarchs from their thrones, . . .
raised on high the lowly,
filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.

(extracts from Luke 1:47–53 REB)

We light our fourth candle,
as a sign of God's love,
shining in the world
through people past and present.

**Living God, thank you for coming to our world.
Thank you for meeting us in real people,
whose stories we can tell,
and above all in Jesus.**

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Immanuel:
All: God with us.
One: Incarnation:
All: God in the flesh.
One: Into this world...
All: ...God comes, with us, in us, for us.
One: Come, let us worship the God who comes.

***OPENING HYMN** "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" GtG 129 (verses 1-2)

One: Lo, how a rose e'er blooming
from tender stem hath sprung,
**All: of Jesse's lineage coming,
by faithful prophets sung.**
One: It came, a floweret bright,
amid the cold of winter,
All: when half spent was the night.

One: Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
the rose I have in mind;
**All: with Mary we behold it,
the virgin mother kind.**
One: To show God's love aright
she bore for us a Savior,
All: when half spent was the night.

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***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

O God of compassion, have mercy upon us. You send forth your Spirit, yet we ignore your counsel. Christ dwells among us, yet we fail to obey him. We sing of peace on earth, yet hostility continues. Angels herald good tidings, yet we commit evil deeds. Forgive our deliberate and indirect misuse of your graciousness, and make us worthy to receive Christ in our lives. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION**

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON** *(from Matthew 1, Luke 2, & John 3)*

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: **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 II Samuel 7:1-11,16

Luke 1:26-38

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON by Pastor Bill Vincent

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**We trust in God the Holy Spirit,
everywhere the giver and renewer of life.
The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,
sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor,
and binds us together with all believers
in the one body of Christ, the Church.**

The same Spirit
who inspired the prophets and apostles
rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,
engages us through the Word proclaimed,
claims us in the waters of baptism,
feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,
and calls women and men to all ministries of the Church.

In a broken and fearful world
the Spirit gives us courage
to pray without ceasing,
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,
to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.

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!"

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

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Pastor: Most High God, Immanuel...
People: ...we are your servants.

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*

Source of light and unexpected life, thank you for sending Christ into our midst to provide for us in our needs and guide us in our lives. Use what we offer, to enlighten all people to the truth of his coming, and bless all our endeavors as we seek faithfully in Christ's name to do your will. Amen.

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** "Love Has Come" GtG 110

One: Love has come:

All: a light in the darkness!

One: Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.

**All: See, all heaven has come to proclaim it;
hear how their song of joy arises:**

One: Love! Love!

All: Born unto you, a Savior!

One: Love! Love!

All: Glory to God on high.

One: Love is born! Come, share in the wonder.

All: Love is God now asleep in the hay.

One: See the glow in the eyes of his mother;
what is the name her heart is saying?

All: Love! Love!

One: Love is the name she whispers.

All: Love! Love!

One: Jesus,

All: Emmanuel.

One: Love has come and never will leave us!

All: Love is life everlasting and free.

One: Love is Jesus within and among us.

All: Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.

One: Love! Love!

All: Love is the gift of Christmas.

One: Love! Love!

All: Praise to you, God on high!

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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

Pastor: ...And let the gathered people of God say...

People: ...Amen.

POSTLUDE

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