

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2022

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

3rd SUNDAY of ADVENT

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

- One: Come once more, with eager longing, to receive the promises of God.
All: **Out of the desert places of our lives, we gather with joy and gladness.**
One: Come expectantly, with all your questions.
Bring to this place all your hopes and dreams.
All: **Out of our weaknesses and fears, we assemble to gain new strength and courage.**
One: Come to behold the majesty of our God.
Draw near to God's Holy Way.
All: **Out of all circumstances that imprison us, we come to claim the joy of freedom in Christ.**

***OPENING HYMN** "Angels, from the Realms of Glory" GtG 143

1. **Angels, from the realms of glory,
wing your flight o'er all the earth;
you, who sang creation's story,
now proclaim Messiah's birth:
come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the newborn king!**
2. **Shepherds, in the fields abiding,
watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing;
yonder shines the infant light:
come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the newborn king!**
3. **Sages, leave your contemplations;
brighter visions beam afar;
seek the great desire of nations;
you have seen his natal star:
come and worship, come and worship,**

worship Christ, the newborn king!

4. **All creation, join in praising
God the Father, Spirit, Son,
evermore your voices raising
to th'eternal Three in One:
come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the newborn king!**

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UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**God of majesty and glory,
we are thirsty for your grace.
Our doubt and despair lead us to low and longsuffering places.
Our eyes downcast, we find no reason to rejoice.
We hide our eyes from your presence.
We do not listen to your word.
We are lifeless when we ought to dance
and speechless when we ought to sing.
Forgive us, O Lord.
Help us to resist the overwhelming forces that drag us down.
You call us to rejoice in a babe about to be born.
Lift up our eyes in hopeful anticipation of your coming.
Forgive us. Help us. Save us.
Speak peace to our fearful hearts,
strengthen our weak hands,
and make firm our feeble knees
as we seek to follow in your holy way. 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: **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

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH: THE CANDLE OF JOY

One: The first two candles remind us of the hope and peace we have in Christ. Today we light the third candle to remind us of the joy we have knowing that Christ has come, that Christ comes to us still.

All: This is a season of great joy. We enjoy the fellowship of family and friends. The lights and candles and songs and music all help to create a festive, joyful mood as we celebrate the birth of a baby.

One: But this is no ordinary baby, for angels sing at his birth, and shepherds gather to see, and wise men come from afar to worship the baby proclaimed a King.

For the angel said, "Behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." (*Luke 2:10-11*)

God's salvation comes to us wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. God has come in the flesh to dwell in our midst.

Let us pray.

Unison: Dear God, we thank you for the joy we know in Christ. May this joy so permeate our lives that others may see it and join us in worshipping Christ the King. Amen.

Sing: "There's a Song in the Air" (*Verse 2*)

**"There's a tumult of joy o'er the wonderful birth,
for the virgin's sweet boy is the Lord of the earth.
Ay! the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,
for the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!"**

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SCRIPTURE READINGS Isaiah 35:1-10
Matthew 11:2-11

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON "Rejoice...If You Can" by Pastor Bill Vincent

***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.

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***AFFIRMATION 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!"

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

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: God, hear us as we pray...
All: ...Grant us your strength and your mercy.

THE LORD'S PRAYER *(Contemporary)*

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.

OFFERING

Invitation

Reflection

**Unison Prayer of Dedication*

Thanks be to you, O God, maker of heaven and earth—
giver of justice, lover of righteousness,
hope of the afflicted, and friend of the poor.
Your faithfulness never fails.
Take and use the gifts we offer
to bring joy to those most in need of Christ's mission and ministry;
to further your purpose in the world

and to fulfill the promise of the world to come.
Through Christ we pray. Amen.

SENDING

***CLOSING 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!**

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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

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

All: ...Amen.

POSTLUDE

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