

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2022

First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

4th SUNDAY of ADVENT

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP *(based on Isaiah 40)*

One: Prepare the way of the Lord!
All: **Lift every valley, lift every voice.**
One: Prepare the way of the Lord!
All: **And all flesh shall see the salvation of our God.**

***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.**

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UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**O Lord, we want to meet you,
but only on our terms.
You shower gifts on your people, and forgive their faults.
We keep accounts and settle old scores.
You make peace, sending Christ as a sign of reconciliation and hope.
We make war and call it peacekeeping.
You give us a source of confidence as your Spirit is sent into our midst.
We cause others to be restless, in our anxiety and self-concern.
Have mercy upon us, O Lord.
Forgive us for failing to meet you aright.
Forgive us, even as you greet us in ways unimagined and people unexpected.
Make us instruments of your coming.
Make us pliable to your way and your working.
Make us willing and eager servants of your presence,
with hearts true to you and lives true to your way,
even in your coming as a baby.
For it is in the Christ-child's name we pray. Amen.**

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON *(from Luke 2 and Matthew 1)*

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: **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

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH: THE CANDLE OF LOVE

One: The first three candles remind us of the hope we have in Christ's coming, the peace we know in him, and the joy with which we celebrate, not only in this season but always. Our hope and peace and joy all grow out of our experience of God's great love. So we light the fourth candle to remind us of God's love as we see it in the coming of Christ.

All: **What wondrous love is this, that God would come and dwell in our midst to save us from our sins and to give us new life.**

One: The angel said to Joseph, "Mary will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (*Matthew 1:21*)
"For thus God loved the world, giving God's only Son, that everyone who believes in him might not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him." (*John 3:16-17*)

Let us pray.

Unison: **We rejoice in your great love for us, O God. Kindle within us the fire of your love, that we might share it with others and spread the good news of Christ's coming. Amen.**

Sing: "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" GtG 129 (*Verse 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.**

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SCRIPTURE READINGS Isaiah 7:10-16
Matthew 1:18-25

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON "Wishing for Our Want List" by Pastor Bill Vincent

***HYMN** “What Child Is This” GtG 145

1. **What child is this, who, laid to rest,
on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the babe, the son of Mary!**

2. **Why lies he in such mean estate
where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
the silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear, shall pierce him through;
the cross be borne for me, for you.
Hail, hail, the Word made flesh,
the babe, the son of Mary!**

3. **So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
come, one and all, to own him.
The King of kings salvation brings;
let loving hearts enthrone him.
Raise, raise the song on high.
The virgin sings her lullaby.
Joy, joy, for Christ is born,
the babe, the son of Mary!** *(Public Domain)*

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**We trust in God,
whom Jesus called Abba, Father.
In sovereign love God created the world good
and makes everyone equally in God's image,
male and female, of every race and people,
to live as one community.
But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator.
Ignoring God's commandments,
we violate the image of God in others and ourselves,
accept lies as truth,
exploit neighbor and nature,
and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care.**

(continued...)

We deserve God's condemnation.
Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.
In everlasting love,
the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people
to bless all families of the earth.
Hearing their cry,
God delivered the children of Israel
from the house of bondage.
Loving us still,
God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant.
Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child,
like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home,
God is faithful still.

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

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: God who is with us...
All: ...hear our prayer and renew your people.

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*

You come to us with love, O Lord,
and our lives are filled with joy.
You come to us in grace,
and our hearts are filled with gratitude.
Be born in us again today,
that your life may be our life.
Receive the offering of our gifts and our hearts,
that your light might shine in our lives
to the sound of 'Glorias' and 'Alleluias'.
In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** “Gentle Mary Laid Her Child” GtG 146

1. **Gentle Mary laid her child
lowly in a manger;
there he lay, the undefiled,
to the world a stranger.
Such a babe in such a place,
can he be the Savior?
Ask the saved of all the race
who have found his favor.**

2. **Angels sang about his birth;
wise men sought and found him;
heaven’s star shone brightly forth,
glory all around him.
Shepherds saw the wondrous sight,
heard the angels singing;
all the plains were lit that night;
all the hills were ringing.**

3. **Gentle Mary laid her child
lowly in a manger;
he is still the undefiled,
but no more a stranger.
Son of God, of humble birth,
beautiful the story;
praise his name in all the earth;
hail the King of glory!** *(Public Domain)*

***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

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

POSTLUDE

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