

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2023

First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

‘THIRD SUNDAY of ADVENT’

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP *(based on Psalm 126)*

One: The Lord has done great things for us,
All: **and we rejoice.**
One: Those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.
All: **For the Lord has come to us.**
Blessed be the name of the Lord!

***OPENING HYMN** “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” GtG 88 *(Verses 1, 6, & 7)*

1. O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

6. O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

7. O come, Desire of nations, bind
all peoples in one heart and mind;
bid envy, strife, and discord cease;
fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

(next page...)

Words: Latin prose, pre-9th cent.; trans. Composite. *Public Domain*
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UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Gracious God, have mercy upon us as we make our confession. The afflicted await good tidings. The brokenhearted would have their wounds bound. The captives still yearn for freedom, and those who mourn remain to be comforted. Yet we have focused on ourselves and neglected to help others. We have been far more concerned for our own welfare than for the building up of Christ's body. We look for what we can gain more than for what we can give. Forgive us, we pray, for we have failed to follow Christ's call to faithful ministry. Restore us and re-establish your rule among us, that we may share the healing and loving words of Christ with all the world, and love our neighbors as ourselves. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

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." So rejoice and be glad, for in Jesus Christ we are loved, in Jesus Christ we are accepted, 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 OF THE ADVENT WREATH: The Candle of Joy

One: The first candle reminds us of the hope fulfilled in Christ's birth and the hope we have in him. The second candle reminds us of the peace that Christ brings to the world and shares with us by his presence. The candle that we light today reminds us of the great joy surrounding the birth of Jesus.

(continued...)

All: Angels sang of "good news of a great joy for all the people." The shepherds went to Bethlehem to "see this thing which the Lord had made known to them, ... and returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen." (Luke 2:10,15,20)

One: For behold, a child is born. Behold, the King has come. And his coming means joy for all the world.

Let us pray.

Unison: Blessed Lord, we rejoice in your coming in mercy and peace. You cared enough to come and live among us. You taught us the meaning of love. You showed us the way of life. You share with us joy in communion with you. Thank you, Savior Christ. May our lives be songs of praise as we sing of our joy to the world. Amen.

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.

"Joy to the World" GtG 134
Words: Isaac Watts, 1719, alt.
Music: ANTIOCH, attr. George Frederick
Handel, 1742; arr. Lowell Mason, 1836
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SCRIPTURE READINGS Isaiah 61:1-4,8-11
Psalm 126
John 1:6-8,19-28
I Thessalonians 5:16-24

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON "Aligning with Joy" by Pastor Bill Vincent

***HYMN** "Come! Live in the Light!" GtG 749

1. Come! Live in the light!
Shine with the joy
and the love of the Lord!
We are called
to be light for the kingdom,
to live in the freedom
of the city of God.

(continued...)

**We are called to act with justice;
we are called to love tenderly;
we are called to serve one another,
to walk humbly with God.**

2. Come! Open your heart!

**Show your mercy
to all those in fear!**

**We are called
to be hope for the hopeless
so hatred and violence
will be no more.**

**We are called to act with justice;
we are called to love tenderly;
we are called to serve one another,
to walk humbly with God.**

3. Sing! Sing a new song!

**Sing of that great day
when all will be one!**

**God will reign,
and we'll walk with each other
as sisters and brothers
united in love.**

**We are called to act with justice;
we are called to love tenderly;
we are called to serve one another,
to walk humbly with God.**

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***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** (from “*A Declaration of Faith*”)

**To worship God is highest joy.
To serve God is perfect freedom.**

**God has sent God's people into the world
to worship God there and serve all humankind.**

**We worship God in the world
by standing before the Lord in behalf of all people.**

**Our cries for help and our songs of praise
are never for ourselves alone.**

(continued...)

**Worship is no retreat from the world;
it is part of our mission.
We serve humankind
by discerning what God is doing in the world
and joining in God's work.
We risk disagreement and error
when we try to say what God is doing here and now.
But we find guidance in God's deeds in the past
and God's promises for the future,
as they are witnessed to in Scripture.
We affirm that the Lord is at work,
especially in events and movements
that free people by the gospel
and advance justice, compassion, and peace.**

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PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: Come, Light of the world...
All: ...shine for us; shine in us.

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*

God of peace, in Christ you bring light to illumine the nations. He makes your will known to all who believe. We come in response to his call to us, seeking to follow and fulfill his commands. Accept the gifts we offer as symbols of our commitment to be used as you desire. Mold us and use us as instruments of your will. May all that we do be in accord with the good news of the Coming One of Bethlehem. For it is in his name that we pray. Amen.

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" GtG 119

1. **Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king.
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise; join the triumph of the skies;
with th'angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"**
2. **Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come, offspring of the virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the God-head see; hail th'incarnate deity,
pleased in flesh with us to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"**
3. **Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail the sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"**

Words: Charles Wesley, 1739, alt.

Music: MENDELSSOHN, Felix Mendelssohn, 1840; arr.

William Hayman Cummings, 1855

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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

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

All: ...**Amen.**

POSTLUDE

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