

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2023

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

'FOURTH SUNDAY of ADVENT'

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: We sing of the steadfast love of the Lord.
All: **We proclaim God's faithfulness to all.**
One: The faithfulness and steadfast love of God
have come to dwell among us in Jesus Christ.
All: **The Lord is our God,
the Rock of our salvation.**

***OPENING HYMN** "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" GtG 82

1. **Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us;
let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.**
2. **Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a king,
born to reign in us forever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal Spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all-sufficient merit
raise us to thy glorious throne.**

Words: Charles Wesley, 1744
Music: HYFRYDOL, Rowland Hugh Prichard, 1830;
harm. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906
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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. Come to us again and again, and prepare us to receive Christ in our hearts and lives. Amen.

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON *(from Luke 2)*

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 OF THE ADVENT WREATH: The Candle of Love

One: During this Advent season, we affirm that God came down to dwell in our midst in a baby born in Bethlehem.

All: This one born of Mary fulfills our hope, is our peace, and gives us joy. He is the embodiment of God's love for us.

One: So today we light the fourth Advent candle to remind us that "God loved the world so much that God gave God's only Son." (John 3:16) Let us rejoice and be glad, for in Jesus Christ we are loved.

Let us pray.

(continued...)

Unison: Dear God, we are amazed at the love you have for us: a love so great that you gave us your Son, Jesus. As he embodies your love for us, so may we, in our thoughts and words and deeds, embody your love for others, not only during this season, but always. Amen.

Sing: Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling;
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion;
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation;
enter every trembling heart.

Words: Charles Wesley, 1747, alt.
Music: BEECHER, John Zundel, 1870
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SCRIPTURE READINGS II Samuel 7:1-11,16
Luke 1:26-38; 47-55

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON by Pastor Bill Vincent

***HYMN** "The Baby in a Manger Stall" [*Tune 152*]

1. The baby in a manger stall
is God Incarnate for us all,
as God, true God, the only One,
is born on earth as Mary's Son.

2. We cannot keep the Savior there,
for Christ is meant for everywhere,
not just for shepherds' watchful eyes,
nor for a wise man's valued prize.

3. As God's own person here on earth,
Christ came to show us human worth,
so Jesus cannot stay a child,
dependent, gentle, meek, and mild.

4. The Carpenter of Galilee
must leave his shop and home, as he
takes up the mission and the pain
of life and death and life again!

(continued...)

**5. So gladly let us sing and pray
since Christ is born for us each day,
and Christ is ris'n with God to reign.
Let earth repeat the glad refrain.**

Text by Jane Parker Huber.

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Music: PUER NOBIS NASCITUR, Trier ms., 15th cent.; adapt. Michael

Prætorius, 1609; harm. George Ratcliffe Woodward, 1910

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***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** (from "*A Declaration of Faith*")

**Jesus, the long expected Savior,
came into the world as a child,
descended from David,
conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of Mary, a virgin.**

**He announced to his people
the coming of God's kingdom of justice and peace on earth.**

**We affirm that Jesus was born of woman
as is every child,
yet born of God's power
as was no other child.**

**The coming of Jesus was itself
the coming of God's promised rule.**

**Through his birth, life, death, and resurrection,
he brings about the relationship between God and humanity
that God always intended.**

*"A Declaration of Faith" is Copyright 1977, 1991, the Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); adopted (1977) "as a contemporary statement of faith, a reliable aid for Christian study, liturgy, and inspiration, with the clear understanding that" it is not approved as a part of the *Book of Confessions*.*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: Coming God...

All: ...bless us by your presence.

THE LORD'S PRAYER (Traditional)

(next page...)

**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*

Our best we give to you, loving God, for you have given your best to us in the mystery of the incarnation. May our offerings proclaim Jesus in ways that will be received with joy. Send your Word to the world in this season through our caring service. May we share it with one another in ways that help us all to grow. Use what we offer, to enlighten all people to the truth of your coming, and bless all our endeavors as we seek faithfully in Christ's name to do your will. In his name we pray. Amen.

SENDING

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

**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.**

(continued...)

**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!**

Text by Ken Bible.

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Tune (BRING A TORCH) arr. by Eric T. Myers.

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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

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

All: ...Amen.

POSTLUDE

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