

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2023

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

‘SECOND SUNDAY of ADVENT’

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP *(based on Isaiah 40)*

One: Comfort, O comfort my people!
All: **We welcome God’s tender words to us today.**
One: Prepare the way for your God!
Lift up every valley; lower every mountain.
All: **We gather for worship to prepare ourselves for the coming of the Lord Almighty.**
One: Christ is coming! The glory of God will be revealed!
All: **Thanks be to God for this good news!**

***OPENING HYMN** “Comfort My People” *[Tune 268]*

1. Comfort my people now;
speak tender love and grace
to those who fear God’s ruling might
or doubt God’s strong embrace.
Prepare the way for Christ
to make God’s pardon known.
In desert places, high and low,
God’s glory will be shown.
2. Look for the word of God
that constant will remain,
when grasses wither, flowers fade,
and some deny God’s reign.
Cry out God’s promises,
good tidings to proclaim;
lift up your voices to announce
forgiveness in Christ’s name.

(continued...)

3. Come, Holy Spirit, come;
baptize your church with power
to stand against all evil ways
that injure and devour
your children, great and small,
both innocent and strong.
Come, feed your flock and gather us
to sing your Advent song.

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Tune: DIADEMATA, George Job Elvey, 1868. *Public Domain*.

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Faithful God, we confess that we have not led lives of holiness,
nor served and followed you.
We make 'our god' in our own image
and for our own convenience.
We fail to acknowledge your sovereignty over our every move,
and fail to claim your tender care for our every moment.
We cherish our way of life
rather than preparing for yours.
Forgive our waywardness and foolishness.
Heal and forgive us
so we can welcome you and your way
with pure and genuine hearts,
and walk in righteousness
to the glory of your name. Amen.

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON *(based on Psalm 85)*

One: The steadfast love and faithfulness of God meet us in the coming of Christ.
All: **The righteousness and peace of God embrace us in arms of grace.**
One: In the Child born in Bethlehem we know pardon for our waywardness and healing for our brokenness.
All: **In Christ we are forgiven and restored. Thanks be to God!**

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 Peace

One: We say we want peace. We sing of peace. We yearn for peace. We pray for peace. But do we know what peace is?

All: **Peace is living in right relationship with God, with creation, with other people, and even with ourselves. Peace involves confession and forgiveness, mercy and compassion, humility and love. Peace is living a Christ-like life, reflecting his light.**

One: So "let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me" ... and you and you and all of us. As we light the candle, let us seek to be God's faithful people, living in God's peace. "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
(Philippians 4:7)

Let us pray.

Unison: **We thank you, God, for your gift to us of the Prince of Peace. May we truly know your peace as Christ dwells in our hearts. Teach us how to live in peace with others, sharing the love and mercy and understanding that we know in the babe born in Bethlehem. Amen.**

Sing: **It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth,
to touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, good will to all,
from heaven's all-gracious King":
the world in solemn stillness lay,
to hear the angels sing.**

"It Came Upon the Midnight Clear"
Words: Edmund Hamilton Sears, 1849, alt.
Tune: CAROL, Richard Storrs Willis, 1850
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SCRIPTURE READINGS Isaiah 40:1-11
Mark 1:1-8
II Peter 3:8-15a

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON “Envision. Prepare. Embody.” by Pastor Bill Vincent

***HYMN** “On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry” GtG 96

- 1. On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
announces that the Lord is nigh;
awake and hearken, for he brings
glad tidings of the King of kings!**
- 2. Then cleansed be every life from sin;
make straight the way for God within,
and let us all our hearts prepare
for Christ to come and enter there.**
- 3. We hail you as our Savior, Lord,
our refuge and our great reward;
without your grace we waste away
like flowers that wither and decay.**
- 4. Stretch forth your hand; our health restore,
and make us rise to fall no more.
O let your face upon us shine
and fill the world with love divine.**

Words: Charles Coffin, 1736; trans. John Chandler, 1837, alt.
Tune: WINCHESTER NEW, *Musikalisches Handbuch*, 1690;
harm. William Henry Monk, 1847, alt.
Public Domain.

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**In life and in death we belong to God.
Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,
whom alone we worship and serve.**

**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: Coming, Present God...
All: ...hear us as we pray for...

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*

Gracious God,
we give you thanks that in the coming of Christ
your steadfast love and faithfulness meet us
and your righteousness and peace embrace us.
May the gifts we offer this day
bring joy to those most in need
of Christ's mission and ministry...and coming. Amen.

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** "Prepare the Way, O Zion" GtG 106

1. Prepare the way, O Zion,
your Christ is drawing near!
Let every hill and valley
a level way appear.

(continued...)

**Greet One who comes in glory,
foretold in sacred story.
O blest is Christ who came
in God's most holy name.**

**2. He brings God's rule, O Zion;
he comes from heaven above.
His rule is peace and freedom,
and justice, truth, and love.
Lift high your praise resounding,
for grace and joy abounding.
O blest is Christ who came
in God's most holy name.**

**3. Fling wide your gates, O Zion;
your Savior's rule embrace,
and tidings of salvation
proclaim in every place.
All lands will bow rejoicing,
their adoration voicing.
O blest is Christ who came
in God's most holy name.**

Words by Frans Mikael Franzen, 1812; rev. 1819; trans. Augustus Nelson, 1958; adapt. Charles P. Price, 1980, alt.
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Tune: BEREDEN VAG FOR HERRAN, *Then Svenska Psalmboken*, 1697; arr. *American Lutheran Hymnal*, 1930. *Public Domain.*

***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

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

POSTLUDE

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