

**St. Mark's Presbyterian Church
Fourth Sunday of Advent – Christmas Eve
December 24, 2023**

Responsive Call to Worship – Advent Liturgy

The prophets call and the psalmists sing to announce that God is love.

“For the mountain may depart and the hills may be moved, but my steadfast love shall never depart from you...and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord who has compassion on you.” (Isaiah 54)

“Give thanks to the LORD, who is good...give thanks to the Lord of lords, whose steadfast love endures forever.” (Psalm 136)

From the mystery of God's love came our creation and we are nurtured daily by it. The power of God's love is transformative; because we have received God's love, we cannot remain the same. Love means seeking the best for others. Love is compassion for all creation. Love speaks the truth with kindness. Love is the way of seeing others as God sees them.

**Holy are you, Source of all new life among us. Jesus Christ is the love of God come into the world. We join with all creation and lift our hearts in joyful praise.
We light this candle to burn for love.
(while lighting the candle of love)**

Hymn 159 Oh come, all ye faithful verses 1 and 2

**1. Oh come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant;
oh come ye, oh come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold him,
born the King of angels:**

Refrain:

**Oh come, let us adore him;
oh come, let us adore him;
oh come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.**

2. God of God, Light of light,

**born unto Mary, the virgin blest,
very God, begotten, not created:**

Refrain:

**Oh come, let us adore him;
oh come, let us adore him;
oh come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.**

Christ Candle Liturgy

The angels sing the glory of God in the highest heavens.

“Be not afraid, for I bring you good news of great joy for all people. To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord... you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger. Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom God favors!” (Luke 2)

At Christmas, God speaks in signs. The baby in the manger is a sign of a new life and new governance shining in the world. Christ is born and the world is filled with the promise of hope, signs of peace, joy and the incarnation of God’s love.

**Holy are you, Source of all new life among us. All: Jesus Christ is the light of the world. We join with all creation in joyful praise. We light this candle because God has been made flesh and dwells among us.
(while lighting the Christ Candle)**

Hymn 159 Oh come, all ye faithful verses 3 to 5

**3. See how the shepherds,
summoned to his cradle,
leaving their flocks draw nigh with holy fear;
we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps:**

Refrain:

**Oh come, let us adore him;
oh come, let us adore him;
oh come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.**

**4. Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation;
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:**

'Glory to God in the highest!'

Refrain:

**Oh come, let us adore him;
oh come, let us adore him;
oh come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.**

**5. Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given;
Word of the Father,
now in flesh appearing:**

Refrain:

**Oh come, let us adore him;
oh come, let us adore him;
oh come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.**

Prayer of Praise *(minister)*

Hymn 161 **What child is this**

**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 Christians, 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, peasant, king, 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.

Prayer of Confession (congregation)

God of mystery and mercy, you came to offer us love, but we confess we can be stubborn and selfish in the ways we live. You came to reconcile all people, but we often nurse grudges and resist repairing relationships. Forgive who we have been, amend who we are, and direct who we shall be, through Jesus Christ who reaches out to us from the manger and the cross.

- silent confession -

The Lord's Prayer (Debts/Debtors)

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, the power, and the glory. For ever
and ever. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon *(minister)*

Hymn 141 Good Christians, all rejoice

1. Good Christians, all rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;

now give 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 Christians, all rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;

now you 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 Christians, all rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now you 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.**

Responsive Reading Luke 1:46b-55 p. 100 NT & Psalms

^{46b}Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.

⁴⁷ **How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!**

⁴⁸For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,
and from now on all generations will call me blessed.

⁴⁹**For the Mighty One is holy,
and he has done great things for me.**

⁵⁰He shows mercy from generation to generation
to all who fear him.

⁵¹**His mighty arm has done tremendous things!
He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.**

⁵²He has brought down princes from their thrones
and exalted the humble.

⁵³**He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away with empty hands.**

⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel
and remembered to be merciful.

⁵⁵**For he made this promise to our ancestors,
to Abraham and his children forever."**

New Living Translation (NLT)

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Scripture Lessons

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 p. 245 pew Bible

Romans 16:25-27 p. 282 NT & Psalms

John 1:1-14 p. 156 NT & Psalms

Reader: This is the word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God!

Sermon We are getting words for Christmas!

Prayers of the People (minister)

Hymn 149 Away in a manger

- 1. Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.**
- 2. The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.**
- 3. Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay
close by me forever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care,
and fit us for heaven to live with you there.**

Offering & Offertory

***Doxology 830 Praise God from whom all blessings flow**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
praise him all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heavenly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**

Prayer of Dedication (congregation)

**The fourth Sunday in Advent celebrates God's gift of love. At this time of year, we give gifts to express our love. So let our offering today be a sign of our love for God and for those in God's world who need love to brighten difficult times.
Amen.**

Hymn 154 Silent night

- 1. Silent night! holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child,
holy infant so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace;
sleep in heavenly peace.**
- 2. Silent night! holy night!**

**Shepherds quake at the sight:
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing 'Hallelujah,
Christ, the Saviour is born!
Christ, the Saviour is born!'**

**3. Silent night! holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from thy holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.**

Choral Blessing

**Go now in peace. Never be afraid.
God will be with you each hour of every day.
God will be there, watching from above.
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.**

Benediction

Three-fold Amen

Piano Postlude