

Worshiping God

December 18, 2022

In Light and Darkness The Fourth Sunday of Advent

**We invite those who are able to stand*

+Childcare is provided for those 4 and under in room 124, Worship Boxes are available in the Narthex for older children.

Centering Words

“God calls us to come home for Christmas. God calls us to come back from all those places where we have settled for less than the fullness of life promised to us in Christ. God calls us to come home and rest, to be embraced by one who knows us as we are.

God offers us a place where we can be fully known and also fully accepted.”

(Mary Lou Redding)

Chiming of the Trinity

Welcome to Worship

Piano Prelude

Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

arr. Victor Labenske

Call to Worship

Samantha Quailes

Greetings, and welcome to all who watch and wait for love to find us here and now.

Love dwells among us, between us, around us, and through us.

Come and find love in the light of salvation and darkness of rest!

God made both light and darkness because God loves us.

Ready your soul to be filled with good things as we gather to worship the living God.

We are ready. Let us worship in spirit, in word, and in song.

Instrumental Introit

I Saw Three Ships

arr. Larry Shackley

Opening Prayer

Dan Koger

*Hymn, 189

Angels from the Realms of Glory (Emmanuel)

arr. Paul Baloche

Angels from the realms of glory, wing your flight o'er all the earth;

You who sang creation's story now proclaim Messiah's birth:

Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ the newborn King.

Shepherds, in the field abiding, watching o'er your flocks by night,

God with us is now residing, Yonder shines the infant light:

Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ the newborn King

Saints before the altar bending, watching long in hope and fear,

suddenly the Lord, descending, in his temple shall appear:

Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ the newborn King

*Passing of the Peace

Dan Koger

May the peace of Christ be with you! **And also with you!**

Advent Candle Lighting – the Candle of Love

Deana Otwell-Clinton and Mark Clinton

In our most desperate times, by day or by night, the hope of Christ may be found. We watch and we wait to witness the hope of heaven making a place here on earth.

We light the candle of hope, because hope has come to us.

When we are overwhelmed with conflict without or within, the peace of Christ may be found. We welcome the peace of Christ, present among us and available to all.

We light the candle of peace because peace has come to us.

Whether we find ourselves in the dark, cozy realm of nighttime or the blazing brightness of day, God's good message of joy has come to us to cheer our hearts.

We light the candle of joy, celebrating the good news of a baby to be born in Bethlehem.
Love, the mightiest force in all the world, was also gentle enough to inhabit a tiny baby. And this mighty force compelled Jesus to demonstrate his love in his transformative message and sacrificial life.

Today we light the candle of love, which reminds us that when all else fails, when hope seems lost, when the night seems eternal, love remains. And love wins.

Welcome, love of Christ, which shows us how to care for each other, sacrifice for one another, and fully embrace ourselves. Expand our capacity to love more like Jesus loved.

Response *We Light the Advent Candles* NOEL NOUVELET
**We light the Advent candles against the winter night
to welcome our Lord Jesus, who is the world's True Light.
Four candles burning brightly announce that Christ will come,
prepare, my heart, believe it, and give the Christ child room,**

Morning Prayer Kim Miller

*Hymn, 180 *O Little Town of Bethlehem* arr. Heather Sorenson
(excerpt from "Carols," which will be presented on Christmas Eve)
Featuring Stephanie Horton, soloist
Verses 1, 2, and 4

(Verse 1, soloist)

**For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above.
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars together, proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth.

O Holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray.
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell.
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord, Emmanuel.**

Gospel Reading (Matthew 1:18-25; Pew Bible, p. 733) Rick Schollhammer

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. When Mary, his mother, was engaged to Joseph, before they were married, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband was a righteous man. Because he didn't want to humiliate her, he decided to call off their engagement quietly.

As he was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child she carries was conceived by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Now all of this took place so that what the Lord had spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled: Look! A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will call him, Emmanuel. (Emmanuel means "God with us.")

When Joseph woke up, he did just as an angel from God commanded and took Mary as his wife. But he didn't have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. Joseph called him Jesus.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Anthem *The Wexford Carol* arr. Howard Helvey
(Featuring Jeff Joyner, soloist)

Sermon

We Are Bethlehem

Dan Koger

Visual Reflection – “We are Bethlehem”

Thoughts for Reflection

*How has God been “with you” in recent days?
How do you need God to be “with you” as you approach Christmas?
What is God’s dream for your life?
What is God’s dream for our church?*

*Hymn of Response

Silent Night

arr. Chris Tomlin

**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**

**Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight, Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing, “Alleluia! Christ, the Savior, is born!
Christ the Savior is born!”**

**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.**

Life of the Community

Prayers for the Gifts We Give

Dan Koger

Thank you for giving faithfully to God through the ministries of our church!

*Doxology

PUER NOBIS

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

*Sending Forth

Dan Koger

*Response, 614

Let There Be Peace on Earth

**Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me;
let there there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.
With God our creator, children all are we.
Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.
Let peace begin with me; let this be the moment now.
With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow;
to take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.**

*Organ Postlude

O Come, All Ye Faithful

arr. Gordon Young