

December 19, 2021
Fourth Sunday of Advent

We Gather In God's Presence

Prelude: "O Little Town of Bethlehem", Lewis H. Redner, arr. by Bernadine Johnson

Lighting the Candle of Peace

(three Advent candles are lit)

Love is not always what we expect.

*It may come through unexpected people
and at unexpected times.*

God's love is not always what we expect.

*God's love comes to us in gentle whispers as well as
with an insistent voice that we can't ignore.*

May we allow God to love us into wholeness today,
so that we may share that love tomorrow.

May love be found in a manger and throughout the world.

(the fourth Advent candle is lit)

*Written by Eric Hebert-Daly.
Gathering, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2021-22,
page 69. Used with permission.*

Response VU 6 "A Candle Is Burning" vs. 4

A candle is burning, a candle of love,
a candle to point us to heaven above.

A baby for Christmas, a wonderful birth,
for Jesus is bringing God's love to our earth.

Birthdays, Celebrations, and Life and Work of the Congregation – see last page ...

Call to Worship

Come God

Come with the lonely

Come with the unloved

Come with the unlovable

Come with those who know only emptiness in their lives

Come and lead us to a place of love

Come and lead us to you

Hymn VU 36 "Angels, from the Realms of Glory"

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

Sages, leave your contemplations;
brighter visions beam afar;
seek the great desire of nations;
ye have seen his natal star:
 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.

Opening Prayer (*unison*)

God of unconditional love, we measure our loves against yours: your love is vulnerable, helpless as a new-born babe – our love is often cautious, well defended; your love is offered humbly – we often seek to impress with our devotion; your love is free, ours comes with strings attached. Loving God, forgive us. Heal our imperfect loves, purify our hearts, and teach us to love as you love us. Amen.

We Are Blessed By God

Anthem: "I Wonder As I Wander" Appalachian Carol Arranged by John Jacob Niles *Nancy Quinn*

Time for the Young and the Young @ 

Hymn VU 14 "To a Maid Whose Name Was Mary"

To a maid whose name was Mary,
 the angel Gabriel came.
"Fear not," the angel told her,
 "I come to bring good news,
good news I come to tell you,
 good news, I say, good news.

"For you are highly favoured
 by God the Lord of all,
who even now is with you.
 You are on earth most blest,
you are most blest, most blessed,
 God chose you, you are blest!"

But Mary was most troubled
 to hear the angel's word.
What was the angel saying?
 It troubled her to hear,
to hear the angel's message,
 it troubled her to hear.

"Fear not, for God is with you,
and you shall bear a child.
His name shall be called Jesus,
God's offspring from on high.
And he shall reign forever,
forever reign on high."

"How shall this be," said Mary,
"that I should be with child?"
The angel answered quickly,
"The power of the Most High
will come upon you shortly,
your child shall be God's child."

As Mary heard the angel,
she wondered at his words.
"Behold, I am your handmaid,"
she said unto her God.
"So be it, I am ready
according to your word."

Scripture: Luke 1:39-45

³⁹In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

Responsive Reading: Luke 1:47-55

My soul proclaims God's greatness.

My spirit rejoices in God my saviour.

For you have looked with favour on your lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed.

You have done great things for me, O Most Mighty.

Hallowed be your Name!

You have mercy on those who fear you,

From one generation to another.

You took action with a strong arm.

You scattered the proud in their conceit.

You pulled the mighty from their thrones.

You raised the lowly.

You filled the hungry with good things.

You sent the rich away empty.

You come to the aid of your servant, Israel,
**for you remembered your promise of mercy,
to our ancestors, Abraham and Sarah,
and to their children in every age.**

*For those of you who are interested, the other readings for this week are: **Micah 5:2-5a;**
Hebrews 10:5-10. You can look them up on www.biblegateway.com and search for the passage.....
in any translation you prefer (ie. King James – KJV, NKJV, NRSV, etc.)*

Meditation: “And then along comes Mary”

Hymn VU 473 “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence”

Let all mortal flesh keep silence,
and with awe and reverence stand;
ponder nothing earthly-minded,
for with blessing in his hand,
Christ our God to us approacheth
our full homage to demand.

King of kings, yet born of Mary,
as of old on earth he stood,
Lord of lords, in human vesture,
in the body and the blood,
he will give to all the faithful
his own self for heavenly food.

Rank on rank the host of heaven
spreads its vanguard on the way,
as the Light of light descendeth
from the realms of endless day,
that the powers of hell may vanish
as the darkness clears away.

At his feet the six-winged seraph;
cherubim with sleepless eye
veil their faces to the presence,
as with ceaseless voice they cry,
Hallelujah, hallelujah,
hallelujah, Lord most high!

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Glory to God in the highest!

And on earth, peace to all!

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to God.

Let us give thanks to God.

It is good to give God thanks and praise.

Blessed are you, gracious God, Creator of light, Giver of all life, Source of love. Your song of wisdom rang out before the world began; your ancient love still touches us and stirs within us. Even when we turn away from you, you keep faith with us. You send your messengers to prepare the way through the wilderness of our living, to guide us in the path of wholeness, to call us to repent. In Mary, woman of your promise, you showed us courage and faith; in the fullness of time, you sent us your greatest gift, Jesus, the Christ, our prince of peace and herald of hope. So it is that we join in the Advent prayer of all your people, "O come, Emmanuel." And as we wait and watch for your coming, we proclaim your goodness:

Holy, holy, holy God,

Power of life and love!

Heaven and earth are full of your glory!

Hosanna through the ages!

Blest is the One who comes to bring your justice to the world!

Let us remember together that vision of God's reign shown to us in Jesus at table:

he shared food with followers and friends,

with saints and sinners,

with crowds of thousands on the hillside,

and a few friends in an upper room.

On the night before he died, he had supper with his companions.

He took a loaf of bread, and after giving thanks, he broke it, and gave it to them, saying:

"Take, eat. When you do this, remember me."

Then, he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he passed it among them, saying"

"Drink this. When you do this, remember me."

Through this loaf and cup, Jesus lives within us.

In word and deed, Jesus lives among us.

God of majesty, with reverent hearts we name you also

God of self-giving love. We give thanks, blessing above blessing, for Jesus Christ, son of Mary,

Word of life.

We remember Jesus, faithful friend and living hope:

attesting truth before the powers;

seeking the forgotten and abused;

setting the prodigal and the righteous at the one feast of forgiveness. We remember Jesus,

risen and eternal One, Christ who comes to meet us.

Christ's death, O God, we proclaim.

Christ's resurrection we declare.

Christ's coming we await.

Send your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts. Make us one with Christ in his self-giving, that through us, he may:

bind up the broken-hearted, comfort the mourners, open the eyes of the blind, and proclaim liberty to the captives – until justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness life an overflowing stream.

Remember your church, O God, redeemed by Christ and strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Reveal its unity, guard its faith, preserve its peace, empower its witness. This week we pray especially for Newark Pastoral Charge.

Remember all your people and those who seek your truth, especially we remember the people of China, Hong Kong, and Macau.

Remember all who have died, and support their loved ones who mourn their deaths. Especially we remember the friends and families of Cathy Meeuse, Jim Parish and Alexandra Stemp.

Remember all who are ill or dying, awaiting treatment or recovering from medical intervention, especially we remember Cecil Jenkins, Marleen Parish, Marlene Smith, Mac Toner, and their loved ones and caregivers, and those known only in the silence of our own hearts

In union with all the saints we praise you and give glory to you.

Blessed be the Ancient of Days!

Blessed be the Beloved!

Blessed be the Comforter!

All this we pray singing,

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

Your kingdom come,

your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil

for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are

yours, now and forever.

Amen.

We Respond To God's Grace

Invitation to Invest in God's Mission

Friends, this is difficult. Hearing the words of Mary, too often we believe we are the chosen ones; we believe we are the ones God raises up and fills and protects. However, in a global context, we are the rich, the proud, and the powerful. Yet there is good news for us, too. When you choose to generously share all that God has given you—to feed and house, to comfort and heal, to seek justice and resist evil—you turn to ally yourselves with the love of God that you have found. Let us share our gifts, then, that all may know God's love.

Offertory Hymn "Bless Our Hands" *to tune Good King Wencelas*

Bless our hands to do your work, bless the gifts we're bearing.

May your love and grace be known in the way we're sharing.

Peace and hope and joy and love – these are gifts worth giving.

These be ours to pass along when in Christ we're living.

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Prayer of Dedication

Loving God, we give you thanks for the grace and love you show us. As we share and give, may your love be revealed in our lives, in the lives of others, and in the world. Amen.

Hymn VU 62 "Once in Royal David's City"

Once in royal David's city
stood a lowly cattleshed,
where a mother laid her baby
in a manger for his bed.

Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little child.

He came down to earth from heaven
who, with God, is over all,
and his shelter was a stable,
and his cradle was a stall.
There among the poor and lowly
lived on earth our Saviour holy.

For he is our lifelong pattern;
daily, when on earth he grew,
he was tempted, scorned, rejected,
tears and smiles like us he knew.
Thus he feels for all our sadness,
and he shares in all our gladness.

And our eyes at last shall see him,
through his own redeeming love;
for that child who seemed so helpless
is our Lord in heaven above;
and he leads his children on
to the place where he is gone.

Commissioning and Benediction

'Twas the week before Christmas and all through God's house
the Spirit was stirring as soft as a mouse.

For Christmas was soon to bring Jesus the child:
a gift of in-breaking by The Undefined.

That gift of an infant so helpless and weak
was nurtured in God's heart the Gospel to speak.

**And so we go forth with a missional Love
sustained by the Spirit, sent out with a shove,
to live as disciples in faith and in trust
no matter our troubles; we'll get there or bust.
Thus singing and praising and lifting our hearts,
from worship we go forth to all do our parts.**

Sung Response: VU 45 "Joy Is Now in Every Place" vs.4

Now and ever may we find
your good news to fill our mind:
peace and love to humankind,
O hear us, bless us, holy Jesus.

Postlude: “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”, Felix Mendelsohn, Arr. by Cindy Berry

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dorchester:

Tax Receipts for 2021: Please ensure all offerings are received by December 26
(December 28 for e-transfers) in order to be included on your 2021 tax receipt.

2022 Offering Envelopes: Offering envelopes for 2022 are now available. To get your set,
Please contact Dianne at the church office at 519-268-3154 or dorchesteruc@gmail.com

Union:

Tax Receipts for 2021: Please ensure all offerings are received by December 28
in order to be included on your 2021 tax receipt.

ALL:

A Living Nativity will be staged at 276 Scotland Drive (just west of Westchester Bourne/Belmont Road) nightly from Sunday, December 12 until Saturday, January 1, 2022 from 5-7:30 p.m.
Donations for the food bank and/or feminine hygiene products are gratefully accepted.

Lectionary Readings for next week:

December 24: Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

December 25: Isaiah 62:6-12; Psalm 97; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:(1-7) 8-20

December 26: 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Glory to God in the highest!

And on earth, peace to all!

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to God.

Let us give thanks to God.

It is good to give God thanks and praise.

Blessed are you, gracious God, Creator of light, Giver of all life, Source of love. Your song of wisdom rang out before the world began; your ancient love still touches us and stirs within us. Even when we turn away from you, you keep faith with us. You send your messengers to prepare the way through the wilderness of our living, to guide us in the path of wholeness, to call us to repent. In Mary, woman of your promise, you showed us courage and faith; in the fullness of time, you sent us your greatest gift, Jesus, the Christ, our prince of peace and herald of hope. So it is that we join in the Advent prayer of all your people, "O come, Emmanuel." And as we wait and watch for your coming, we proclaim your goodness:

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Heaven and earth are full of your glory!

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Christ's death, O God, we proclaim.

Christ's resurrection we declare.

Christ's coming we await.

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bind up the broken-hearted, comfort the mourners, open the eyes of the blind, and proclaim liberty to the captives – until justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness life an overflowing stream. Remember your church, O God, redeemed by Christ and strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Reveal its unity, guard its faith, preserve its peace, empower its witness. This week we pray especially for Newark Pastoral Charge.

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Your kingdom come,

your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil

for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are

yours, now and forever.

Amen.